

SCHERZO

Interviews with the notable musicians & fascinating personalities of our day

with WESLEY FERREIRA

SARAH WATTS

British clarinetist Sarah Watts is a low clarinets specialist with a stellar international reputation for her performances, research, and teaching. She teaches at the Royal Northern College of Music and is Director of Performance at Sheffield University. Sarah takes time to answer some questions.

What's the best part about being a musician? Playing music! I also love the travelling, as well as meeting and performing with colleagues.

What's the hardest part about being a musician? It's hard work, with long hours and a lot of juggling. The nature of the job today means that it is a constant cycle of looking at ways to create performances and other work. It's rewarding, but can be exhausting!

Do you have a necessary vice? Coffee. Morning without coffee is a very bad thing. In general, don't try and communicate with me until the caffeine is inside me!

What really makes you laugh? My friends. There is nothing better than being with your friends and colleagues and simply enjoying life, having a few drinks, and laughing until you ache.

What do you love most about your life right now? I've started to make time for me. I've realized that self-care is vital and not optional, and that prioritizing my health is important. Simply having the self-made me-time has been brilliant!

How would you sum up your musical career thus far? Full of exciting twists and turns. It never stands still or gets boring.

What are you most looking forward to personally and professionally in the future? Being me! I took the decision to be me, and as a performer to have a career path that suited me as a musician. I'm now working with small chamber groups and doing various solo projects and love it! I also enjoy the academic side of my work and working in a university. For me, finding that balance has worked personally and professionally.

What do you do when you're procrastinating? Drink tea and just sit quietly thinking. I also love to sit outside in the countryside overlooking fields, mountains, or sea and enjoy the silence.

What worries you most about the classical music sector?

The term 'superstar' – I hate this concept and often find that I much prefer discovering the players who aren't termed as this. It also creates a false hierarchy of players and a feeling of disregard to musicians who take different or quirky paths but have equally amazing careers.



What's the craziest (or most adventurous or unique) thing you've ever done?

I purchased a house on a remote Hebridean island in Scotland. I'd never visited the island or seen the house prior to purchase. The first time I set foot on the island was with a vanload of furniture and a set of keys. It was the best thing I've ever done, and I now think of my wee cottage on the Isle of Raasay as my home!

What was your most meaningful performance? I did a performance of Rossini's *Introduction, Theme and Variations* for one of my A level exams in school. My father was terminally ill with brain cancer and that day we found out he was in final stages. I was determined to play the concert for him.

What's the best mistake you've ever made?

I once emailed the wrong composer to ask for a new work. It wasn't the person I thought it was, but I got a cracking work and ended up playing lots of their works! I won't say who it is!

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If you joined the circus, what would you be doing?

Playing the contrabass clarinet dressed as a clown, whilst riding a unicycle.

If you had a superpower, what would it be?

I'd fly! Wouldn't it be amazing to be able to do that like superman!

If you had to choose only one book for your library, what would it be?

At the moment it would be *Dracula*, by Bram Stoker as I'm writing the music to an adaption with my friend Jon Iles (for narrator and low clarinets). *Dracula Bite-sized* will be ready for recording and touring next year. Looking forward to leaving the audience "dying for more"!

If you could be another height, which would you choose and why?

I'd be taller – so I could tower over people and not have to look up to everyone!

If you ruled the world, what's the first thing you would change?

I'd ban gun ownership – we don't need them. Let's make the world a safer place.