

IN THEIR OWN WORDS
Get to Know the WVS Musicians
Lonnie Slawson, Percussion



Tell us a little about yourself and your musical journey:

I was born and raised in Sacramento California and lived there until 1992, when my wife, Lynn and I moved to Phoenix, where we added two children to our family.

I started drum lessons at age 10 and participated in public school music programs in Junior and Senior High School. Next I attended California State University in Sacramento and earned a Bachelor of Music with Performance concentration. I was a freelance musician in the Sacramento region for a few years, winning my first professional job with the Sacramento Symphony in 1981. After we moved to Phoenix, I played with the Phoenix Symphony for a few years, was a freelance musician and began playing with West Valley Symphony in 2012.

For 37 years my day job was with FedEx. I started with them in Sacramento as a delivery driver, then moved to Air Operations (unloading and loading airplanes, where I eventually began supervising the ramp crews). I spent a few years in the ramp crews, moving to Phoenix to continue that career. I became a Training Instructor, and that role required quite a bit of travel. Because of all that travel, I took a 15 year 'musical hiatus', until I retired from FedEx.



What keeps you busy now?

When my children began high school, they joined the percussion program at Corona del Sol High School in Tempe. I started as a 'band parent' moving equipment, loading and unloading equipment and driving trucks. That's where I met Scott Werner, another member of the WVS Percussion section. When my children graduated from high school, I began volunteering as a member of Scott Werner's instructional staff.

I've been involved with the school for 12 years now. In this volunteer role, my activities include percussion instruction and support for the Aztec Marching Band, three concert bands, three percussion classes and the Steel Drum band.



Here is photo of myself, Gene Cervantes (WVS Timpani) and Scott Werner behind the scenes at a performance with the rock band The Who in October 2022.

What kind of stories do you like?

I enjoy "good vs evil" movies (where good wins, of course!).

What person(s) would you like to spend time with?

My father served in the U.S. Air Force for 30 years (20 active, 10 reserve). I've always admired those who have served our country and have had the privilege of visiting with many service men and women over the years. I hope to continue that tradition.

Given an all-expense paid trip, where would you go and why? I would love to visit Africa to learn about its diverse musical heritage. My interest lies particularly in exploring traditional instruments particularly percussion instruments such as the Djembe (pronounced JEM-bay) and the Talking Drums. I would love to learn to play them. Plus, there are string instruments like the Kora, and reed instruments like the Algaita that I would love to learn more about. (Image Credit Pixabay-3centista)

