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Ty Sheets ('13) is Cruise Ship Performer, Teacher and Freelance Musician

Since his graduation from Gardner-Webb University, trumpeter Ty Sheets ('13) has performed on a cruise ship, placed in a national competition, played at Disneyland in Anaheim, Calif., and completed his master's degree on a full graduate assistantship.

He credits his successes to the teaching and mentoring of Tim Hudson, Gardner-Webb assistant professor of music.

"He taught me to start thinking of myself as a professional musician, even when I was only in my second year of music school," Sheets reflected. "In helping to shift my mindset, he made me raise my own standards."

While completing his Master of Music degree in Jazz Studies at the Cincinnati (Ohio) College-Conservatory of Music, Sheets studied with Dr. Scott Belck, Kim Pensyl, and Phil DeGreg, among others. He also played in the Blue Wisp Big Band and the Cincinnati Contemporary Jazz Orchestra. He placed third in the Jazz Solo division of the National Trumpet Competition, and won the jazz trumpet position with the Disneyland All-American College Band in Anaheim, Calif.

Sheets' opportunity to perform on the largest cruise ship in the world, Royal Caribbean's Oasis of the Seas, came shortly after he graduated. The orchestra on the ship provided music for the full Broadway production of Hairspray, and he also performed with a variety of visiting acts. He continues to work as a cruise ship performer, freelance musician and music teacher in Cincinnati, Ohio.

"The cruise ship job has its ups and downs, but there aren't many jobs that provide free accommodation and travel," Sheets described. "I've been to 20 countries in six months, and it has definitely been a whirlwind."

Whether he's performing, teaching or composing music for his first solo project, Sheets acknowledged that Hudson's guidance along with encouragement from Dr. Patricia Sparti, professor of music, prepared him for a career in music.

“Classes, like music theory and composition, helped me to gain a broader understanding of music itself, but Tim Hudson prepared me to become a true professional,” Sheets assessed. “Mr. Hudson always taught me to think about making the most beautiful sound I could imagine, when either practicing or performing. He thinks that every single note deserves full attention and intent. Dr. Sparti was also a big supporter of what the students were doing at school. She truly loves the students and does everything in her power to help them as much as possible. The individual attention I received meant more to me than I knew at the time.”

The two faculty members are also the reason Sheets chose to attend Gardner-Webb.

“I learned about Gardner-Webb when I met Tim Hudson at a concert in Bristol, Tenn.,” Sheets explained. “He found out I played trumpet and was auditioning for colleges, and he encouraged me to audition at Gardner-Webb. He was always quick to respond to emails and very personable with phone calls. He took a personal interest in me, so that was ultimately what made me decide to attend. Also, Dr. Sparti, who was chair of the department at that time, called me personally to answer any of my questions. The personal interaction was a big part of my decision.”