

David A. Wells

≈500-Word Bio

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David A. Wells is a bassoonist, teacher, and scholar who both explores the richness of his instrument's past and forges new paths for its future. He is Assistant Professor of Bassoon in the Hayes School of Music at Appalachian State University, a core member of the Carmel Bach Festival orchestra, and Executive Director of the non-profit Meg Quigley.

With a particular focus on historically-informed performance, he has given concerts of repertoire from the 17th to the early 20th centuries on original and copies of period-appropriate bassoons. In addition to the Carmel Bach Festival, he performs regularly with Sinfonia Spirituosa and the North Carolina Baroque Orchestra. He has also appeared with Opera Lafayette, the Aston Magna Music Festival, the American Bach Soloists, Philharmonie Austin, Bach Charlotte, and many other groups. He occasionally doubles on other period wind instruments, including recorders and oboe da caccia.

He is also adept on the modern bassoon and contrabassoon, equally at home with standard orchestral/chamber/solo repertoire and demanding modern works involving extended techniques or electronics. Beyond this, he seeks to push the instrument's perceived genre boundaries, and relishes taking the bassoon to unexpected places. Most notably, he spent nine years performing around Northern California with Hot Club Faux Gitane, a Django Reinhardt-inspired swing sextet. Other outside-the-box performances or recordings have included bassoon within choro, klezmer, country, indie rock, and straight-ahead jazz contexts.

At Appalachian State, Wells leads a vibrant studio of bassoonists, coaches the Blazing Bassoons and other chamber groups, and teaches courses in music history. Prior to coming to North Carolina in 2023, he taught for twelve years at California State University, Sacramento, with shorter teaching engagements at the University of California-Davis and California State University, Stanislaus. He has taught numerous performance classes at other schools, including the University of Texas at Austin, the

University of Michigan, Florida State University, Louisiana State University, Washington State University, and the University of Northern Colorado.

As a music scholar, he has a particular interest in historical bassoonists and the place of bassoon within society. He has presented papers at the annual conferences of the International Double Reed Society, the American Musicological Society, the Society for American Music, and the Association for Recorded Sound Collections, on topics including the history of the bassoon in jazz, rediscovering Abdon Laus (the bassoonist who first played the Rite of Spring solo), the effects of World War I on American orchestras, and the early history of bassoon recordings. In support of this work, he collects early bassoon recordings on 78rpm discs, as well as 19th and early 20th century bassoon photographs and ephemera.

Wells holds degrees in Bassoon Performance from the University of Wisconsin-Madison (DMA), Florida State University (MM), and Arizona State University (BM). His primary teachers were Marc Vallon, Jeffrey Keesecker, and Jeffrey Lyman, with additional Baroque studies with Dominic Teresi. He also holds a Master of Arts in Historical Musicology from UW-Madison.

When not playing or teaching, he can be found swimming, taking photographs, collecting records, and trying to keep up with his super-librarian/yogi wife, Veronica.