



# 10 things cool things about James Sommerville

1. **What's the most unusual place you've ever conducted a performance?**

Probably at the top of a mountain just outside of Lucerne, Switzerland. My colleagues were playing traditional quartets on Alphorns to an audience of bemused alpinists and cows.

2. **If you hadn't pursued a career in music, what do you think you'd be doing now?**

This is a tough one, since I've never had a 'plan B' since the age of 5 or 6. Maybe fiction writing? But truthfully, I never seriously considered anything else, and I was fortunate enough to become a full-time working musician early!

3. **If you could have dinner with any historical figure, living or dead, who would it be and why?**

It's hard to pick just one! I've lately been reading a lot about Hildegard of Bingen, the 12th Century German abbess (and later saint). She was a brilliant and revolutionary composer, but also a philosopher, seer, historian, playwright, historian, linguist, among many other talents. An amazing woman!

4. **Who would play you in a biopic about your life?**

Um...saying George Clooney is too obvious I think ;). Maybe Colin Farrell?

5. **Who is your favourite Canadian artist, outside of classical music?**

I can't stop listening to Gordon Downey; But Gord Lightfoot and Joni Mitchell made up the soundtrack of my childhood. Listening to Rush always brings me happily back to my teenage years. Leonard Cohen, Ron Sexsmith, Sarah Harmer, Bruce Cockburn, KD Lang; and more recently The Wailin' Jennys, Arcade Fire, Broken Social Scene. Tanya Tagaq is one of the most fascinating and creative artists I know. Too many to count, I'm just scratching the surface!

6. **What's the best piece of advice you've ever received, and who gave it to you?**

My horn teacher, the late Eugene Rittich. He taught me so many things, but the one word he said at exactly the right time was: "Listen." It sounds glib, but so many musicians (and listeners) lose the focus and desire to truly hear themselves, and to attend completely to what is happening around them. And it translates to pretty much every other aspect of life as well.

7. **What's a hobby or pastime you enjoy that might surprise people?**

I was a dedicated triathlete for many years. I may get back to it again soon, if I can find a way to not dread the boredom of swimming lengths.

8. **If you could instantly master any skill outside of conducting, what would it be?**

Making the perfect omelette. It was my pandemic kitchen obsession, and every time I thought I had it mastered, I'd ruin one.

9. **What sport, and what team, do you cheer for?**

Uh oh. Erm... Toronto Maple Leafs. Just once before I die!!

10. **What's your guilty pleasure?**

Fancy cocktails, in fancy bars, with smart and entertaining friends.

