

Joseph Singer (1909-1978)

*Joseph Singer was principal horn of the New York Philharmonic (1943-1974) and taught at Juilliard (1970-1974), but he is also known for his book *Embouchure Building for French Horn*. He was an influential player and teacher. His tenure of 31 years as solo horn is a record for the New York Philharmonic. He was a cousin of Arnold Jacobs.*

Singer was born in Philadelphia and started on violin at age six, changing to viola at age 15. He began his musical career as a viola player with the Detroit Symphony (1927-1933). He started playing the horn while in Detroit, playing extra with the symphony just a year and a half after taking it up, and later studied with Bruno Jaenicke, Walter Macdonald, and Joseph Franzl. He started in the Boston Symphony as seventh horn in 1933, then became third and alternate first horn and continued under Koussevitzky until 1943, when he was appointed principal horn of the New York Philharmonic under Artur Rodziński. Over his long career in New York, he performed a number times as soloist with the orchestra and was also active in chamber music ensembles.

Before becoming a member of the Juilliard faculty, Singer taught at the New York College of Music, the Mannes College of Music, and (as guest faculty) Brigham Young University.

Singer had absolute pitch and exactness for rhythmical subdivision. His years of playing viola in Detroit provided insights for analytical teaching. He continued to play viola occasionally and believed that his experience as a string player proved a good foundation for the horn. He taught concertos and orchestral excerpts, but no etudes; he said, "Practice them at home if you like, but don't bring them to the lesson!" He instructed his students to check scores to correct notes or articulations that were incorrect in the current excerpt books. He played a Wunderlich double horn, and also a Paxman.

Singer was a Class "A" amateur ham radio operator and built his own radio-phonograph. He repaired electronic equipment and was interested in traveling, photography, and cars.

*Dale Whitman wrote a tribute to Singer for the April 1979 issue of *The Horn Call*. Other material was generously shared by the New York Philharmonic Archives. The photo is by Sedge Le Blang, courtesy of the New York Philharmonic.*

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