

Meyer, Eileen, "Career Counseling: Interviews With Arnold Jacobs And Frank Crisafulli", JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL TROMBONE ASSOCIATION, 13:32 (1985)

Editor's note: Next to Emory Remington and his students, the Chicago Symphony Low-Brass Section has been the source of greatest influence on trombonists in this century. Edward Kleinhammer, Frank Crisafulli, and Arnold Jacobs will live forever in the memory of those who were touched by them. With this in mind, these interviews were planned; what better source of advice on careers than those who have had the most success in preparing others?

The interviews were conducted by Eileen Meyer, a trombonist studying at Indiana State University as a Music Theory major, and a student of David Manson. The Journal thanks her for the superlative effort.

Interview With Arnold Jacobs, 2/15/85

Who was your most influential teacher? Was there one thing above all others that made this individual the most influential?

That is difficult to answer. I would say that at an early age my mother was my most influential teacher. My father bought a trumpet for me when I was young, but he didn't buy me an instruction book. My mother was a very fine pianist, and we figured out the fingerings by playing notes on the piano and then on my trumpet. She was very influential as a musician, and she and I would play many things together that should have been difficult, but nobody told me!

Another influential teacher was Tabateau, the first oboist with the Philadelphia Orchestra. I had three years of phrasing lessons with him. My solfège teacher at Curtis Institute was also very influential. My tuba teacher, Phillip Donatelli, was also very influential; he didn't say much or play much in lessons, but I did hear him play at concerts and recitals, and that taught me a great deal.

Is there a common characteristic that all your students who have gone to play in a major orchestra share?

Application. They are all people who invested considerable time in practice and in the learning process and developing themselves as fine musicians and performers.

Is there a common characteristic that all your students who have gone on to be successful college teachers share?

I think it runs pretty much the same in the sense that application is very important. Talent and ability to learn and communicate is important because if one is going to be a teacher, one needs to have the ability to impart knowledge. A professional teacher must have a good sense of message, and the ability to deliver and influence a young person's mind. A teacher should be able to communicate as well with an instrument, because we are dealing with sound in this art form.

What are the present job prospects for these two professions, orchestral player and college teacher?

There are obviously not many positions available compared to the number of musicians there are to fill them. I say that if a person has an overwhelming desire to be a performer or a teacher, they should go with their feelings, but those who aren't sure should maybe study something along with music.

How early can you make an accurate assessment about whether a student will eventually be successful?

I don't make assessments like that. People who grow up in musical families do have a head start, but I believe that there are hardly any limits on the human brain, and that a person who is challenged can develop and learn to be successful. Whether a person will use his ability and be willing to make the sacrifices needed to lead the kind of life musicians often lead, is another consideration in answering that question.

A recent article in I.T.A. Journal postulated that for an orchestral player, the teacher is more important than the school, but for a college teacher, the school is more important than the teacher. Can you comment on this?

I feel that the academic side of a music student's education is the most important, even for my students who are performance majors. I also feel, however, that many studying to become teachers become more involved in the theoretical side of their education instead of the musical side, and consequently spend more time writing than playing. It is important that students learn in school how to acquire and impart knowledge.

What course of action would you recommend to a student who has just finished school (undergraduate) and wants to be an orchestral musician, but there are no openings?

He can use creativity to keep inspired. If there are no audiences or teachers to listen, one can use a tape recorder as an audience. The worst thing is to just sit and play for yourself. One should become an entertainer; a person should be ready to fill an opening in any style of music, even if it isn't the first choice. If you are in music, you should enjoy playing any style, and you will certainly need that versatility.

Same question for a college teacher?

A college teacher should finish all degrees required, and he needs to be an excellent musician in order to teach music. He should learn to understand more about people, and develop the abilities to communicate.

Interview With Frank Crisafulli, 2/17/85

Who was your most influential teacher?

My father was my first teacher and he was very influential. He was a very fine musician, but I think not too good of a teacher for me. Usually he would come home from work and hear me practicing and become very impatient with me - being his son I should know what he knew! It ended up generally with him taking the instrument and playing it himself. I didn't get specific instruction, but I learned a great deal from hearing. After my father, I had several other teachers that I referred to. I went to Philadelphia and took lessons from Reinhardt and got some reassurances that were very helpful to me. I spent considerable time coaching with Arnold Jacobs and learned a great deal from him. In my own particular case I think it was more important that I found myself, and reassured myself that I was capable. I think that my teachers helped me to learn to hear myself, and of course, especially with Arnold Jacobs, learn specific techniques. I think in teaching yourself all of this you become your own teacher.

Was there one thing that made these people the most influential?

They all helped me have confidence in myself. Of course a teacher has to be critical, but I think they gave me the feeling that I was capable. This was very important because I had let my problems bloom to great proportions and I had to realize that they were surmountable.

Is there a common characteristic that all your students who have gone on to play in a major orchestra share?

All had excellent physical equipment, either naturally or developed, and a good deal of musical talent. They had the ability to apply themselves, to be patient, and to not concern themselves with whether there was a job at the end of the line, but to enjoy themselves at what they were doing, because they are doing everything FIRST because they enjoy being a musician. That is very important; it is not easy to continue working after coming very close to getting a position and still not get it.

Is there a common characteristic that all your students who have gone on to become successful college teachers share?

I don't consider or make any differences in students.

What are the job prospects for these two professions, orchestral player and college trombone teacher?

They are poor, especially for the player, and I think it is very difficult to have auditions and find a suitable way to judge, because we have a great many talented players to choose from. This means a lot of heart-break for people who are very capable. I think the teaching profession does offer more opportunities, and for that reason, I think students should

consider an education degree first, and pursue their performance degree after, so that they have an opportunity for employment after graduation.

How early can you make an accurate assessment about whether a student will eventually be successful?

I don't ever do that. No matter who comes to me to study, I don't give any thought to that. I just work to the best of my ability to improve them.

What do you do if you think the student cannot be successful?

I can't make decisions for students. If I really feel that someone's chances are very slight, I might say that to them, but someone who might not be an excellent player might be an excellent teacher, more than a person who didn't have to work as much to accomplish everything. I'm not going to tell anybody to quit.

A recent article in the I.T.A. Journal postulated that for an orchestral player, the teacher is more important than the school, but for a college teacher, the school is more important than the teacher. Can you comment on this?

That is true to a degree, for a person who wants to be a professional player will seek a good teacher. A college teacher wants a fine school all around, and in all phases of music taught. I want to mention that I teach students who want to be teachers no differently than those who want to be players.

The same article suggested that for an orchestral player, the undergraduate education is more important, but for a college teacher, the graduate education is more important. Would you comment on this?

In a sense that is true. In order to teach, the more degrees you have the better off you are. If all you want to do is play, you don't really need a degree at all, but I feel that education is important in both occupations, because one should be well rounded in their field.

What course of action would you recommend to a student who has just finished school (undergraduate) and wants to be an orchestral musician, but there are no openings?

You have to do something to eat and live, but hopefully something that is not too taxing, so that you can devote time to practicing and studying. You have to keep your interest and have some goal to prepare for all the time. When one is on his own, he will accept things that a teacher wouldn't. It is very necessary that the student does not let up on his playing.