

Rocco, Roger. THE ARNOLD JACOBS THAT I KNOW

At the professional level, there are many highly accomplished brass players on all the instruments. However, truly great teachers of brass instruments is much less common. In my career, I have been fortunate to know a few such teachers. One stands out above the rest! I once heard Harvey Phillips refer to him as "our national treasure". Certainly, that phrase aptly describes the sentiments of many in the brass performance world.

Dr. Arnold Jacobs, or "Jake" as he is affectionately known by his students and friends possesses the attributes that define a great teacher.

I'll never forget that day in September, 1966 when I got off the CTA bus on 87th street with a tuba under my arm. I walked down Normal Avenue to a modest brown house on the South side of Chicago. The great "South Side" is where I was born and grew up. I expected to see a huge mansion at 8839 S. Normal! When I first saw the house, I was sure that I had the wrong address. I rang the doorbell anyway. If it was the correct house, then I was positive that the door would be answered by the butler or maid. I was surprised when Jake answered the door with a smile saying, "Come on in". He spoke in the same deep tuba voice that I would hear say "Hellooooo", when I called him on the phone. Well, if the house was not a mansion and the door was not going to be answered by the butler or the maid. Then surely Jake would be dressed like "Royally" when he came to the door! No, he had on an old unassuming smoking jacket. I'll never forget the house, smoking jacket or his smile because that was the day that my life changed forever!

For much of my professional career, I have been involved in the education and training of instrumental music teachers. I have always thought that my most important responsibility to the students was as a role model. The students could only learn what it was to be a good teacher by observation and imitation of others. I wouldn't have understood what it was to be a teacher if I had not had my own models. My students have received the benefit of Jake's work because he was and still is a great inspirational model for me.

It was the first time that I would have an opportunity to meet him personally after several months of calling for an appointment. My introduction came through Frank Brouk, a wonderful horn player who was one of Jake's colleagues in the Chicago Symphony. Frank heard me play the tuba in my high school band when he came to hear his daughter, also a horn player, perform on the same program. He approached me asking about my goals in music. I responded by saying, "I hope to study with Mr. Jacobs someday". He and his wife spoke to Jake several times about me. Finally, he said, "Have the boy call me". I think that he told that to Frank Bronk's wife just so that she would stop pestering him about me!

Jake's first test of his students is the test of their will to overcome his rejection. He puts them off at first to determine if they really want to study with him or if they are just curious. He usually asks new young students to make several calls over an extended period

before they get their first lesson appointment. I called at the exact minute that he requested. After several months of reintroducing myself over the phone, he realized that I was going to keep calling until I got my appointment. I finally passed my first test! What Jake did for me that first day was extraordinary! After one hearing, he told me that he was going to put me in the Civic Orchestra, which is the training orchestra of the Chicago Symphony, and give me a full scholarship to study with him! I played my first concert as a substitute for him in the Chicago Symphony seven months later. I was still in high school!

It is my opinion that if you were not fortunate enough to have had your lessons at his home on Normal Avenue. You did not receive the total experience of studying with him. Although I had several lessons after he moved to his downtown studio, it just didn't quite seem the same. I remember that the students from Northwestern University had to take trains and busses for half a day to get to his house. There always was some concern for the safety of the students traveling to the neighborhood. I think that issue is what ultimately motivated Jake to stop teaching at home and to move his downtown studio. Jake would have gone to Northwestern to teach but there was no studio available for his exclusive use. He felt that was necessary because of all the expensive equipment that he used.

He was always behind schedule with his teaching appointments. I usually waited in his living room which was directly above the small studio in the basement. My lessons always first began by listening to what was occurring with the person before me. I was usually the last lesson of the day.

Jake was aware that I was waiting upstairs. He would have a student demonstrate something on the instrument for my benefit. I might not be able to hear what Jake was saying to the student but I could certainly hear what was coming from their instrument. I could also feel the vibrations on the floor. It was like getting a fool message.

Jake had a small dog who would bark at me continuously. I was always nervous about my lesson. The dog only made it worse! That's how Jake knew that I was waiting upstairs.

He would always bring the student had just finished their lesson upstairs to the living room for an introduction. There were many great players. Some of them, such as Ron Bishop, Toby Hanks, and Dan Parentoni are among the most famous tuba players in the world today.

As he was saying good- bye to the previous student, he would send me downstairs to the studio to warm-up. He really wanted to listen to me in order to find out what music I had been playing during the previous week. Jake could detect everything! I felt very transparent. I couldn't hide a thing!

The studio was crammed with the various breathing apparatus and electronic instruments that are now familiar in the downtown studio. However the psychological

impact of that equipment was much greater in the small basement where there was just enough room to sit in a chair with your instrument. It was like being in the space shuttle or a cramped doctor's office. I was surrounded by blinking lights. Meters. Gauges, and anatomical charts. Even though he rarely used any of that equipment with me, its presence still had an intimidating effect. I was I well aware of the importance of what was occurring during my lesson time. This was serious business! I was there to be cured by the great doctor.

If the phone rang. Jake would answer it and bang on some pipes to signal that it was for his wife. There were important calls from conductors and musicians from all over the country.

I'll never forget about one call that, by coincidence, came in about me during one of my lessons. I had auditioned several months earlier for Antal Dorati, who was the conductor of the Israel Philharmonic. At that time, he offered me the position as tubist with the orchestra, but he asked me to think about it for a few months until he returned to Chicago with the Stockholm Philharmonic. Several weeks later. Dorati was back in town and happened to call Jake on a Saturday morning when I was having my lesson. The year was 1967. I was eighteen years old and there had just been a major war, the "Seven Day War" between Israel and Egypt. Jake explained to Dorati that I was sitting there in his studio. Without warning, he asked me if I wanted the job. I was completely surprised and somewhat paralyzed by the decision that was I had to make. After about two or three seconds of hesitation on my part. Jake told Dorati. "No. he doesn't want the job". I hadn't said a word but as I said. Jake knew everything! I don't think that similar experiences like that have occurred in the downtown studio. There is no phone!

I lived for those lessons with Jake. They were the most important events in my life all the time. Jake was like a father to me. He gave me a lot more than just the knowledge of tuba playing and opportunity in the business. He was a caring mentor who had an interest in other aspects of my life, not just the music. I know that over the years other students had similar experiences as well.

What are the qualities that allow him to be so successful as a teacher? I believe there are three that stand out.

First is his love of teaching. When I really played well, his eyes would light up and he would give me a little pat on the leg to let me know that he approved. For me, that encouragement was a tremendous reward for working hard and achieving a higher level of playing.

I think that the joys of teaching were even a greater reward to Jake than playing. Although it is my opinion that Jake is the greatest musician to ever play the tuba. In addition to his great performances in the Chicago Symphony, the legacy of his life must include his learned contributions to the field of brass pedagogy as a whole.

Jake devoted twenty to twenty-five hours per week to his students. Naturally, his duties performing in the Chicago Symphony placed a great demand on his time and energy, but it was his greatness as a player that gave him the freedom to devote so much time to teaching. He didn't have to endlessly practice the tuba. The only time that he really had for personal practice was just before concerts. They weren't warm-up periods, they were brief practice sessions. Which, by the way, is Jake's philosophy of warming-up! He says that it should be thought of as a mini practice session.

The second quality that I attribute to Jake's greatness is his understanding of the motivation of motor function and knowledge of human anatomy. Although his knowledge is common in other fields such as dance, sports, and medicine. It was his special interest in these areas that motivated him to bring that knowledge and understanding to his work both as a brass player and pedagogue. It is my opinion that it was a combination of two circumstances that caused him to acquire that knowledge.

First, he always had a special interest in the field of medicine. His first choice as a profession was to be a medical doctor. It was only because of his great success as a musician that he did not pursue that career.

Secondly, he has always had personal health problems. Jake knew that he had to find ways to overcome his own physical limitations and disabilities in order to maintain his career. I recall a time in the late 60's when Jake's career as a player was in jeopardy because of continuing respiratory health problems. His doctors were telling him that he would have to retire from the orchestra. He even told me to be prepared to finish the season for him if he could not continue. Just in time, a new drug came on the market that allowed him to continue playing. He was told that the side effects of the drug might shorten his life, but he was willing to take the risk. Fortunately, the drug did not shorten his life. Safer and more effective medications were developed later. In acquiring the knowledge to help himself, Jake knew that he could also apply that knowledge to help others.

Jake is a master of the motivation of function. He completely understands how the brain creates a physical accomplishment which is what playing a brass instrument is. He had to overcome his own physical weakness with mental strength! He is a master of the psychology of playing!

When I was a young student, he used to tell me that he wished he could put his brain in my body. It was his powerful mind that forced his weak body to work! Jake teaches that great physical strength is not necessary in playing. What is required is the right type and amount of mental strength. A favorite quote of his is, "Strength is your enemy and is the primary reason for his great success as a player. There is a lot of misconception in the field of brass pedagogy regarding this matter. Jake's philosophy of teaching is expressed in the words "Song and Wind". However, he says that "Song", which is the mental aspect of playing, is 85% and awareness of "Wind" should be limited to only 15%. In my own teaching, I do whatever I can to help the student focus primarily on the "Song" concept.

If the mental awareness of the sound is vivid. Then the motivation of wind and all other playing elements will occur. Wind is necessary that air be present in the lungs in sufficient quantity for the mind to realize the "Song" with an instrument.

Jake describes this process as "ordering a product". If none is ordered, then none will be delivered! Products are ordered by a vivid mental awareness of the product itself. This is achieved by singing the notes in the head simultaneously while playing. This is precisely what is occurring when Jake plays.

The third element of Jake's greatness is his musical artistry. He is as great a musical genius as any who has ever lived! If he was a singer, he would have been as famous a Caruso or Pavoratti. Or as accomplished as Perlman on the violin or Horowitz on the piano. If put a tuba in his hands and he became the finest tuba player in the world.

In the lessons, Jake's artistry is communicated in two ways. First, by demonstration with an instrument in his hands, or more often, by his singing. He is a wonderful singer and master of the art of solfeggio. When Jake would sing along with me when I played, I could play effortlessly! It was magic! He was providing the "Song" concept for me. It was as if he was playing the instrument. Not me!

He would motivate me to provide my own "Song" by stimulating my imagination. He suggested that I think of a great singer like Renata Tibaldi. or trumpeter Bud Hereseth, When I would follow his suggestion, the sound coming from my bell would instantly be transformed to the level that was in my imagination. I also noticed that it would be much easier to play. It sounded good and felt wonderful which was exactly what I wanted! It is Jake's philosophy that a vivid musical imagination is necessary to create the mental "Song". This, in turn, will provide an opportunity for the subconscious brain to create the physical conditions in the body that are necessary to produce the sound. Jake's own "Song" is very powerful and vivid! He knows how to communicate his awareness of the song to his students or any audience. When I watched his face while he played, it seemed to glow with the expression of the music! I was able to experience the music that he was creating from the bell of his horn and the picture on his face. It was

Intense and mesmerizing!

The Arnold Jacobs that I know is someone who is uniquely gifted as a performing artist and teacher. He is a master of the psychology and physiology of playing. He is someone who has dedicated himself to his work for six decades and continues to do so even though he is eighty years old this year. His work as a teacher has influenced countless brass players and their students. He has personally change the philosophy of brass pedagogy for many of his followers in the world. There will be many more who will understand his teachings in the future. .

Jake's performances on the tuba has given great pleasure to the thousands of listeners in concerts and on recordings. I heard him make an audience rise to its feet in jubilation with a powerful high "C" at the end of the "Symphony Fantastic". Or he could play the

soft, low brass chorale in the Finale of the 6th Symphony of Tchaikovsky with a beautiful cantabile style that fully expressed the pathos of the music.

Like the greatness of the music of Mozart and Bach. Jake's work will stand the test of time. Today, he continues to influence brass pedagogy and performance with his private teaching and lectures. In the future, many of the people whose musical Jives he changed, will carry on his ideas in their own way.

We are all very grateful!

Thanks Jake!