

"Who is Arnold Jacobs?", T.U.B.A. JOURNAL May, 1988 p 30-34

By this time you have already read Dee Stewart's biography of Mr. Jacobs on other pages, and that, along with Dan Kohut's presentation about Mr. Jacobs as an educator, gives you an inkling of who thus man is and what he has done for hundreds, even thousands of musicians. In order to get a little closer, however, we decided to ask those who have been his friends, students, and colleagues about. Mr. Jacobs - who he is to them and what his influence has been. Here are a few - more of the responses we received.

Music Director

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

"I am happy to offer these few lines in tribute to our dear Arnold Jacobs."

"His tenure of over forty years with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra represents, to my mind, one of the most important contributions made by any single brass player to the history and development of symphony orchestras in our time. He is that rarest of jewels, a great and devoted musician combined with a warm and generous personality. Through his unstinting support and encouragement of generations of brass players the world over, he has justifiably become a legend in his own lifetime."

"We are going to miss him terribly but I wish him many years of happy retirement and I feel sure, if I know him at all well, that these years will continue to be most fruitful for him and for those lucky enough to be his colleagues and friends. "

Associate Professor of Music

Arkansas Tech University

Arkansas Symphony Orchestra

Though it has been more than twenty years since my first hearing Arnold Jacobs in live Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chicago Symphony Quintet concerts and since making weekly pilgrimages to his now famous "basement of wonders" studio in his home on South Normal Avenue, the thrill of those experiences remains freshly memorable and invigorating. As would also be readily attested by other of his former students, his powerful influence on our professional lives is felt virtually every day. What is there about this individual that has earned him such worldwide acclaim and admiration?

There is great awe of Jacobs' understanding of the physical and mental processes of brass playing. His insightful studies and explanation of these areas make so much "sense" and are so successful that these principles have indeed become the basis for what is often referred to as the "Arnold Jacobs school of brass playing," which will be felt for many generations yet to come. This is a landmark achievement in itself, but these are also many who respect and appreciate the man even though they have never studied with him or with any of his students. What of them? Why do they regard him so highly? To me this is the very highest tribute to his true greatness.

Any listener hearing Jacobs is at once captured by his vibrant tone and ever energetic style. Whether on the stage with his big York tuba or in the studio demonstrating with as little as a mouthpiece rim, he leaves no doubt that being able to actually communicate through his music is his most prized gift to the world. He is more than a performer with great tone and skill, for these are only the tangibles of an enthusiastic musical message from Arnold Jacobs, the dreamer of dreams and the visionary of hope for mankind. He convincingly pumps out a buoyant and effervescent optimism through his playing, stressing repeatedly his conviction that life can indeed be as good as one deems it so, that the listener can take heart and dare to meet the challenges of life. Adversities and concerns have not been strangers to Jacobs, but he has continued to uphold his promising message that the energy and optimism one can express through music can keep those aspirations alive within all our lives.

This is Arnold Jacobs, the musician, the teacher, and the messenger. We are indeed fortunate to have such a person in our lifetime.

Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra

It was Christmas, 1952 and I was just thirteen when my mother gave me a recording by the Chicago Symphony Brass Quintet. Just by chance, the first work on the record I heard was a transcription of the Allegro from the Beethoven String Quartet, Op. 18, No. 2 with Arnold Jacobs playing essentially the cello part.

I didn't know what hit me. Nothing was the same after that.

I first met Jake on my way home to Los Angeles from the National Music Camp in 1957. That meeting determined the course of my musical path.

Arnold Jacobs, with his superb performances, vast knowledge, and enormous pedagogical gifts, has helped and influenced thousands of wind players since the time he joined the Chicago Symphony.

Good luck on the next phase of your career, Jake. We all look forward to the lectures and books I know you're planning.

Spring, 1988

Open Letter to Arnold Jacobs

Dear Jake,

When Gene and I started The Canadian Brass in 1970, we were surprised and excited to discover that both of us had been serious students of yours at various points in our lives. We each felt that you had

been, in no small way, responsible for our own approach to performance. You instilled in us the confidence to our chosen instruments as vehicles for both musical and personal expression. In fact, your teaching revealed a path for achieving our performance potential that's still guiding us. Your stellar performances in the original Chicago Brass Quintet, along with our other friends and mentors Ron Schilke and Bud Herseth, pointed out the great musical potential that the brass quintet medium was to hold for us.

You know that no teacher can ever be fully aware of the impact he has made on his students' lives, but we have always hoped that you would be particularly proud of the Brass' efforts over the years to popularize brass music. Perhaps this is the only way these two students can ever repay you for your care, nurturing, and advice in our formative years. We are very fortunate to count ourselves as continuing students, friends, and admirers of a truly unique and enlightened performer and teacher.

Your friends,

Chuck Daellenbach & Gene Watts

The Canadian Brass

Principal Tuba, Victoria Symphony

Faculty, School of Music, University of Victoria

I am one of countless people who are in Arnold Jacobs' debt. Many of them are tubists. Many others are singers, oboists, and countless musicians who have made the pilgrimage to Chicago to work with Jacobs. Some have been helped to overcome debilitating injury or playing slumps. Others have been progressing students trying to make the transition to professional level playing. All have come away astonished at his vast array of knowledge and the magic transformation in their abilities that took place in the confines of his studio. The sound of his voice as well as the sound of his tuba is a permanent memory for all of us.

His new role after retirement from the Chicago Symphony will be exciting for the musical community at large which will no doubt see many more people exposed to his ideas in print and in person. Jacobs treats me more as a colleague than a student now. Perhaps I might even call him "Jake" if I could summon the nerve, but he's still Mr. Jacobs and still my teacher - a never ending source of encouragement and inspiration.

Chicago Chamber Brass

Arnold Jacobs, musician, teacher, philosopher, scientist and gentleman, continues to make remarkable contributions to our world. His legacy in terms of tuba sound and style alone is significant enough to secure his place as one of history's most distinctive instrumentalists. I would hazard a guess that even the most uninitiated reader of the Tuba Journal would be able to identify a recording of an Arnold Jacobs performance. He surely has one of the most unmistakable tuba voices. A sound and style he conceived over half a century ago is now generally accepted as the standard by which all others are judged. It is also remarkable that his sound and style developed to a highly individualistic signature so early in his career. What a record! Fifty years of the same thoroughly conceived and consistent presentations of his musical ideas.

The legacy of Arnold Jacobs as a teacher is indeed a legacy of vivid images - bigger than life. Like a great actor, he has poured out image after image for our consumption. Images of the ball rising to meet its appointed task, of the dials on the gauges, of the sound of wind being blown through his mouth. Images of his hands on the valves, images of him under the bell of that glorious old York. And tonal images that are the very definition of musicality with a "tuba voice." All of these images are described and reinforced by some of the most lucid, eloquent, beautiful prose that has ever graced humanity, improvised on the spot. Every time I hear the rich, rolling bass voice of Arnold Jacobs answer the phone, I am overwhelmed by a flood of positive images. Images that indeed help me and many others come down on the scale of intellectual complexity to a childlike simplicity and naivete of thought. Later generations will be privy to all of the data that Arnold Jacobs has compiled, but we are most fortunate in having the additional blessing of being touched by these images firsthand. Every time I practice or perform I reflect on the privilege of having lived during Arnold Jacobs' time in history.

Gotham Jazz

Dear Mr. Jacobs,

You gave me so much during my years at Northwestern University and also encouraged me in my favorite musical idiom: jazz.

You are the finest musician and teacher with whom I've had the honor to work one-on-one. May you be blessed with a long life, good health, and much love.

University of Illinois

Grant Park Symphony

Arnold Jacobs has had and continues to have the most profound influence in my approach to the tuba: his sense of phrasing, sound, and pedagogy are my role models. The many wonderful recordings he has

made with the Chicago Symphony and the even more amazing performances he has given with this ensemble at Orchestra Hall and Ravinia will stay with me for the rest of my life. His concepts in pedagogy are unparalleled in their wide influence in this century. He has removed myth from the respiratory function in wind performance and replaced it with provable fact. Most importantly, he gives us his performance examples and shows us just how essential is commitment to music as the primary motivator.

Mr. Jacobs will become even more renowned in the coming years as he devotes his time to clinics and lectures around the world. Generations of musicians are going to be indebted to this incredible musician, teacher, and man.

University of North Texas

On the Road with Mr. Jacobs...

It's 12:55 p.m., December 13, 1987, and I'm driving my aging Volkswagen Rabbit on the old Dallas-Fort Worth turnpike on my way to a Sunday matinee performance of the Tchaikovsky Nutcracker with the Dallas Ballet Company. My tuba, resting on the torn back seat, is still a little warm from John Rutter Christmas carol arrangements performed at the morning service of the Broadway Baptist Church of Fort Worth. I recall the occasion when John Rutter came from England to conduct some of his music in Dallas, and I wonder if John Fletcher played the Rutter arrangements as often as we do. It's a cold winter day for us by Texas standards, and the wind reminds me of that as it blows through the taped-up passenger vent window. My mind drifts and I begin to think about Mr. Jacobs and the commitment I made to myself to write a few words about him for the Journal.

It is always easy to think about Arnold Jacobs, of course I do so quite frequently. But how will I write about this amazing man who has had such a tremendous, almost immeasurable, impact on my life? Although over eighteen years have passed since my first session with him in the basement at South

Normal Avenue, I still think of Mr. Jacobs or hear his words - and the sound of his York tuba - in my mind practically every day of my life. Virtually every note I play on the tuba and every lesson I teach are affected by my relationship with him. How can I possibly put this into words in some meaningful way?

It's a few minutes past one o'clock, and I'm about halfway to Dallas as I unconsciously reach for the radio dial and turn on the local FM station. The combination of the whistling wind and the constant undertone of the diesel engine makes the radio difficult to hear, but nonetheless my thoughts are interrupted when Kim Corbet announces that the next selection will be the Bruckner Symphony No. 6 performed by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Ironic, I think. Or is it?

As the first sounds of Bruckner begin, a flood of memories ensue. I think again of those marvelous Friday afternoon concerts in Chicago when we would cling to every magical, glorious sound we heard from Mr. Jacobs and his colleagues in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra as they played Tchaikovsky, Bruckner, Mahler, and so many others. I remember coming back to Northwestern University after those concerts feeling more inspired than ever and practicing until we were thrown out of the building. One could actually hear and feel the inspiration of the afternoon concerts in the sounds of the Northwestern practice rooms on those evenings.

Most of my lessons with Mr. Jacobs were concentrated in the very late 60s/early 70s at a time of changing lifestyles and some socio-political unrest. It was a wonderful and terrible time to go to college, and during those days I was about as alienated from society as I would ever be. Like many other young people of that age, I found it difficult to relate to authority, parents and conventional life. New ideas, music and the tuba were everything. Perhaps at times I was on the delicate fringe of reality. The most cohesive aspect of my life at that time were from the musical thoughts and training which I received from Mr. Jacobs through lessons, coaching sessions, and CSO concerts. I know that I owe much more than my musical concepts to Mr. Jacobs, but how can I express this on paper?

The first movement of the Bruckner concludes as I turn onto Commerce Street and drive into Dallas...

Arizona State University

I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to have Arnold Jacobs as a teacher and friend. Since I first met him he has had strong influence on me as a person and as a professional musician. Positive approach, expertise, total musicianship, and sincere caring for his many friends and students are just a few of the attributes of this great man.

Arnold Jacobs' illustrious career has brought dignity to our instrument and profession. I consider him to be the most important teacher of the brass world in this century. I hope that his active retirement will give him the time to continue his research and perhaps publish the wealth of information that he has accumulated.

"Jake," I wish you and Mrs. Jacobs the very best.

The St. Louis Symphony

It is difficult to write just a few things about such a great individual on the eve of what is in all likelihood going to be a very active retirement (that is, if any brass players have much of a say in his future years).

The key to Arnold Jacobs' approach to the tuba seems to dwell on the simple and most natural technique of trying to imitate the dream of the sound in the mind. For me, his approach to the tuba is more of a lesson in living all facets of life... a strong drive through simplistic means of living your own dreams. How beautiful and how true!

All musicians are fortunate to have him as one of our own. We, as tubists, should be honored that his chosen means of expression is our own instrument. He has added and continues to add a class and dignity to the tuba from which we all benefit.

As his life becomes simpler with obligations lessening at Orchestra Hall, I wish him joy in the continued pursuit of his dream. Good luck, Jake!

Formerly Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and

Chautauqua Symphonies

What ingredients go into the making of an artist who can stand at the top of his profession for nearly half a century? Great natural gifts, certainly, but this is never the whole story. To these, Arnold Jacobs has added unremitting labor from childhood onward, a generous and positive attitude, intelligence imaginatively cultivated, and at the bottom of all, uncommon resources of character.

As a craftsman in music, he has gained the respect and admiration of hundreds of colleagues; through his teaching, lecturing and writing, he has inspired thousands of students, and as a performing artist, he has contributed to the pleasure of millions, Arnold - please accept my warm congratulations on your personal "recognition day." Brass people everywhere stand a little taller by the influence of your fine career.

Vandercook College

I will never forget that day in September, 1966, when as a seventeen-year-old student, I stepped off the CTA bus on the south side of Chicago and walked down Normal Avenue to his house for the first time. Naturally, I was frightened, but I was also excited about the opportunity that I was about to have. That day was a turning point in my life. I owe my career in music to him because he expressed an interest in me, helping me grow and giving me opportunities that are too numerous to express here.

My students are also thankful for his work as well. "Song" and "Wind" are words that echo around Vandercook College. Those words are going out to music educators all over the country and they will use his concepts to teach others how to play brass instruments.

A couple of years ago, Vandercook College awarded Mr. Jacobs an Honorary Doctorate of Music. He seemed pleased about the honor and asked me what he might do to return the favor. My obvious reply was that we all will be forever indebted to him for what he has given to us.

Thanks, Jake! We all love you!

Your friend,

Roger Rocco

The University of Michigan

Philadelphia Orchestra, retired

Arnold Jacobs and I go back many, many years, about 54 to be exact. When I started to play tuba in a brass band in the Philadelphia area, my late brother, Jack, who was an excellent reed man, thought I had some talent and should have the best teacher available at that time. He had done a lot of club dates with Arnold (who played string bass on these dates) and knew of his incredible talent as a tuba player. Arnold was in Curtis Institute at the time. Arnold became my first teacher and a life-long friend. He recommended me for my first symphony job, the Southern Symphony, under Hans Schwieger, and covered for me when the Philadelphia Orchestra went to England on their first international trip. (I couldn't go because I was still obligated to the NBC Symphony.)

I owe so much to Arnold not only for his help as a teacher, but also for so much professional advice that helped in my career until I finally reached what I consider the apex of my career, the Philadelphia Orchestra. I honestly think that one of the highlights of my career was when the record, "The Antiphonal Music of Gabrielli," was recorded with the brass sections of the Chicago, Cleveland, and Philadelphia Orchestras. To have been able to work with someone I so respected, and cared for over all the years is something for which I am deeply grateful.

Now that he is retiring (as I will be at the end of April, 1989), I hope that I might get to see him and his wife a lot more than I have in the past. Here's hoping for a healthy and fun-filled retirement, for you have earned and deserve it!

Professor of Music

Chadron State College

Dear Mr. Jacobs,

I have always admired your high ideals in whatever you have tried to bring about in the understanding of the performance of music by all musicians. Your presentations of breathing as applied to wind instrument performance have had a profound influence on instrumental teaching in public schools, colleges, universities, and professional studios. Your willingness to help all, from the young player to the proven professional, is a tribute to your interest in helping people.