

# Cornucopia

News and articles for anyone interested in the horn

March 2008



Jerome Ashby

## Jerome A. Ashby (1956 - 2007)

by Robert L. Watt

Jerry looked good when Marshall Sealy and I visited him in April 2007. He was stronger, his hair was growing back, and we were so happy that he was beating prostate cancer. Thus it was a shock when he died on Dec. 26th.

A native of Charleston SC, Jerry began his studies in the NYC schools, including the High School of the Performing Arts, then studied at Juilliard with James Chambers. He joined the NY Philharmonic in 1979 under Zubin Mehta. He was a faculty member of Juilliard, Manhattan, Curtis, and Aspen and an Honorary Member of the IHS.

In 1989, Jerry played the fourth horn solo in Beethoven's Ninth when Leonard Bernstein conducted members of the NY and Berlin Philharmonics in a historic broadcast to celebrate the fall of the Berlin Wall.

I met Jerry after he had become a member of the NY Philharmonic. We talked for many hours, played together in the orchestra building, and became fast friends. I learned that I had been Jerry's idol when he was growing up. At the time, I was the only black horn player - and one of the very few blacks - in any major orchestra. Unfortunately, with Jerry's death and my retirement last January, the only black horn player that I know of in any professional orchestra is Nicole Cash in Dallas TX. And black

players on any instrument are few and far between.

Jerry and I played together in the Gateway Festival at Eastman, a gathering of black musicians. One time we played the first Brandenburg, and about 16 local horn students and players came to hear us and cheered the performance. Another time we played the Beethoven 9th, also to great acclaim.

Jerry had a difficult time believing some of the difficulties I endured by my showing up in a city like LA when I did in 1970, as a black horn player in a major orchestra. He couldn't understand because his experience was totally different. He would not have had the same experience because he came on the scene at a much later time. I had already "broken the ice," so to speak, for black horn players in symphony orchestras. I was glad that he had a different experience.

Jerry was a fantastic player, a caring teacher, and a wonderful friend. I'm devastated at his death and will miss him. ❖

*Bob retired from the LA Philharmonic after 37 years, is now writing a book, performing, and giving clinics. See an extended tribute to Jerry in the May Horn Call.*

### Cornucopia

is published four or five times a season. It is free, although contributions are welcome.

For further information, to add your name to the mailing list (email or regular mail), to send a contribution, or to submit material, contact:

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Northeast Horn Workshop**  
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**International Horn Society**  
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www.hornsociety.org.

## On *not* warming up

by Lydia Busler-Blais



Why do we warm up? When I warm up I want it to be meaningful and efficient. After all, why waste time? A warm-up should target the part of the anatomy that needs warming - perhaps embouchure flexibility, contact and articulation, or free airflow. Whatever is needed, I avoid warming up the stuff that's already working well because the warm-up must not wear me out before I perform.

A warm-up should be specifically effective, thoughtful (not mindless!), and feel gradually warming. And if something is in need of warming up, it might not sound great - don't worry! The point is to sound good at your gig. Speaking of the gig, when you're there, neither settle on the safety of what sounds good in front of others nor rely on too vigorous a routine. Remember, the point is to sound good in rehearsal or concert - that's all that matters, and it won't happen with a blown-out lip.

And sometimes, when you're practicing, just play without warming up! Start right out playing delicately, loudly, high or low. There's a reason: certainly we do not always have time to warm up. We may get caught in traffic or even get called for a gig at the very last minute. That has happened to me plenty of times.

Let me describe a scene. I had been in New York City barely two weeks. My husband went off to teach cello and I settled into my pajamas and started to work at my computer for the evening. I had my feet up, a bowl of

popcorn next to me, and at 7:55 p.m. the phone rang. It was the orchestra manager from the NYC Ballet. He said that I had been recommended by the principal cellist and asked if I was available to play right at that very moment. I said that I was. When asked where I lived and I told him Washington Heights (way uptown), he sounded a bit disappointed but asked me to get there as quickly as I could. Dropping a black outfit over my head, I called a cab, which got me to Lincoln Center quickly. I was hastened to the orchestra pit at 8:10 where the orchestra was already playing. The hornist next to me pointed and I started to play Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty*.

I played what I saw, including a single but rather loud eighth-note that rang out as a prominent solo. Everyone snickered, but another hornist leaned over and said, "Forgot to tell you about that - mistake in the part." Very embarrassing! But you know what? The hornists took an instant liking to me because that note proved that I wasn't afraid to play out. Plus I got there fast, and played with no warm-up. After that I was offered many gigs and was on call lists for major groups. All because I got myself there and didn't worry that I wasn't warmed up. ❖

*Lydia is a teacher, performer, and composer in Montpelier VT. She is participating in the Northeast Horn Workshop as clinician and organizer (see p. 2).*

## News and Events

The Carter Horn Concerto and interviews with Elliott Carter, James Levine, and Jamie Sommerville are online at [wgbh.org/classical](http://wgbh.org/classical). Jamie will perform the concerto again with the BSO at Tanglewood on July 24th.

**Jed Hacker** (614-937-8976 [jhchg@aol.com](mailto:jhchg@aol.com)) hosts Columbus Horn Day on April 6 at Ohio State University School of Music featuring small ensemble master classes with Prof. Bruce Henniss and others.

**David Wick** (Principal) performs Kenneth Fuchs' *Canticle to the Sun* with the Virginia Symphony Orchestra, JoAnn Falletta, conductor, at St. Bede Church, Williamsburg VA, September 18, 2008 and Regent University, Virginia Beach VA, September 20, 2008. [www.kennethfuchs.com](http://www.kennethfuchs.com)

**Marcay Dickens** (Goshen IN) has moved from Oak Ridge TN to be in a retirement community near family. She has already played two gigs in her new town.

**Bob Newlin** ([rnewlin@cox.net](mailto:rnewlin@cox.net)) is now with the USAF Heritage of America Band at Langley VA.

**Jeffrey Agrell** (U of Iowa) has published a book, *Improvisation for Classical Musicians*. See [www.giamusic.com/products/P-7173.cfm](http://www.giamusic.com/products/P-7173.cfm).

**Karl Kramer-Johansen** ([modikarl@bestweb.net](mailto:modikarl@bestweb.net)) hosted Rowan Horn Day at Rowan (NJ) University in February with featured artists Jennifer Montone, Jeff Lang, John Clark, and Liz Pfaffle.

**Bob Watt** (LA) was profiled in the LA Times on January 27. The article is available at [www.latimes.com](http://www.latimes.com).

**Joan Watson** (Toronto) presented an International Horn Day Concert in February. Students, amateurs, and professionals from the area performed in mass horn choirs.

**Michael Thornton** (Colorado Symphony, University of Colorado) conducted master classes in February at Osmun Music, New England Conservatory, Boston Conservatory, and Boston University.

**Susan Termyn** (Medfield), and **Bob Pyle** (Cambridge) have sent contributions. Susan writes that son Nicholas, a sophomore at Milton Academy, will tour Prague and Budapest with the orchestra and son Christian, a sophomore at Yale, plays in the wind ensemble.

**Lost:** Tim Tsukamoto (Boston), Ashleigh Theberger (Orr's Island ME).

**New members:** **Linda Blacken**, Weehawken NJ; and **Richard Schwenterly**, Watertown, Boston Repertory Orchestra. ❖

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## Piston à la Carte - Romantic salon music

March 7, U Maine Gorham 207-780-5555, Universal Piston Quartet  
John Boden, R.J. Kelley, Paul Avril, Richard Serafinoff



## Handel & Haydn Society

March 7 & 9, 2008, Symphony Hall [handelandhaydn.org](http://handelandhaydn.org)  
Jamie Sommerville in Mozart and Haydn Concertos



## Danny Katzen Farewell Concert

Sunday, March 16, 8 p.m. at NEC Jordan Hall. Free  
Bach Cello Suite, Poulenc Elegy, mass choir, BSO colleagues



## Kenneth Fuchs Concerto Premiere

April 29 & 30, 2008, 8 p.m., Bushnell Center, Hartford CT  
Hartford Symphony with Timothy Jones, London Symphony  
*Canticle to the Sun*. [www.hartfordsymphony.org](http://www.hartfordsymphony.org)



## 2008 IHS International Symposium

July 22-27, University of Denver CO  
Host: Susan McCullough, Professor at University of Denver  
Master classes, lectures, amateur corner, concerts, exhibits  
40th Anniversary Celebration, [www.ihs40.com](http://www.ihs40.com)



## 2008 Northeast Horn Workshop

March 14-16, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs NY

Host: Patrice Malatestinic 518-587-9365 [nehc08@gmail.com](mailto:nehc08@gmail.com)  
Peter Kurau, Julie Landsman, Eli Epstein, David Amram  
Lydia Busler-Blais, "Music of Living Composers"  
Solo competitions, master classes, recitals, lectures  
Improvisation, mouthpieces, instruments, exhibits  
Wellness sessions, mass horn choir, social events  
[www.NortheastHornWorkshop.org](http://www.NortheastHornWorkshop.org)



## Nordic Horn Seminar

June 18-22, 2008, Reykjavik, Iceland  
Host: Joe Ognibene and Icelandic Horn Club  
Featured artists from all Nordic Countries  
Reykjavik Chamber Orchestra and Iceland Symphony Orchestra  
with Radovan Vlatkovic. Direct flights from Boston via IcelandAir.  
Post-seminar tours. [www.nordhornfest2008.com](http://www.nordhornfest2008.com)

