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Review of *Mr. Tuba* by Harvey Phillips

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This book is an autobiography, published posthumously, about the legendary man who started TubaChristmas (<http://tubachristmas.com>) and has been a featured tubist throughout the world. The name "Mr. Tuba" came from his extraordinary playing and his selflessness in building the reputation of the tuba. The book begins with his humble beginnings in Missouri and continues through his career at Indiana University, including time spent performing with various music groups in New York City. The end of the book finishes with chapters on the growth of the tuba as a solo instrument, his principles of tuba teaching, and tips on being a professional musician.

At first glance one may think this book will only be useful to tuba players but there are many valuable lessons throughout for performers, teachers, and students. Among the numerous anecdotes throughout the book one of the biggest lessons learned throughout is how small the music world is. His high school band director was a former circus band director and recommended Phillips for a job performing with a circus band during the summer before college. This one opportunity spawned a network of connections with musicians throughout the rest of his life, including his membership in the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus Band, his cofounding of the New York Brass Quintet, his position as vice president of financial affairs at

the New England Conservatory, his teaching at Indiana University, and his friendship with composer Alec Wilder.

The strengths of the book include a wealth of information not found in other sources, such as the connection between the philosophical beliefs of the author and the way he lived his life, and the lessons he learned as a musical entrepreneur. Phillips worked tirelessly to expand the repertoire of the tuba as well as its overall musical role. One way he did this was through performing five recitals at Carnegie Hall in a span of nine days. No matter how much he performed and traveled, Phillips made time for his family. His emphasis on family in negotiations to perform and teach during the summer allowed him to spend weeks in locales such as Japan, Spain, and Australia accompanied by his wife and three sons. By being a thorough professional, he was often in charge of hiring musicians for recording sessions, including those led by Leonard Bernstein and Igor Stravinsky. With so many people referenced in the book it can be difficult to remember who they are when they reappear.

This book is highly recommended for those who want to learn what the music world of New York City was like in the 1950s through the eyes of one of the most respected musicians of the era. His insights into practicing and navigating the world of music near the end of the book would be handy for any young, aspiring musician.

About the Authors

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