

Marvin Howe (1918-1994)

The Singer of Smooth Melodies

by
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"Believing as I do that the horn is best as a singer of smooth melodies, I have laid heavier stress on legato playing than is usual in most beginning brass methods." [Foreward—Method for French Horn—Marvin C. Howe, Remick—MPH, New York, 1950.]

"...and an older teacher, Marvin Howe, showed that music is more than mere notes with a moving performance of Saint-Saens "Romance". ["19th Annual Horn Symposium, British Horn Society, Summer Newsletter 1987, John N. Wates]

Marvin Howe, this singer of smooth melodies, was born February 26, 1918 in Fort Wayne, Indiana. He was educated in the public schools and graduated from Harding High School in Marion, Ohio in 1935. A lifelong scholar, Marvin's collegiate studies began at the Oberlin Conservatory—where he was the first person to earn a Bachelor of Music degree in Horn in 1939. He also earned from Oberlin his bachelor's degree in School Music in 1940, (Phi Kappa Lambda). (1) Oberlin was the location of Marvin's first work as a hornist in a woodwind quintet. There, as a member of the Oberlin Woodwind Quintet, working under his mentor and friend, George Waln, he participated in early radio broadcasts of that ensemble. A college roommate at Oberlin—Fred Myers—later became the father of the Principal Hornist of the New York Philharmonic—Philip Myers. His horn teacher at Oberlin was a member of the Cleveland Orchestra—William Namen. Also, he was influenced by other members of the Cleveland Orchestra at that time—Martin Morris and Philip Farkas.

*Decades later, when lessons centered on a legato passage, Marvin would often tell the story of how Martin Morris brought him to the backstage area before a concert by the Cleveland Orchestra. There, he recounted, on the other side of the curtain, he heard the most memorable slurs performed by a young Philip Farkas at the end of a performance of the Schubert **Unfinished Symphony**. (2)*

After college, his early career was teaching instrumental and vocal music in public schools in Lexington, Ohio, and Glens Falls, New York, before volunteering to serve in World War II. He was a band director in the U.S. Army—serving as a warrant officer at the Army Music School in Arlington, Virginia, and also in the European sector until 1945. (3)

During the time Dr. Howe was in the Army, he was stationed at Fort Benning, Georgia, before being sent to Europe. There he participated in a performance of a new work—**Night Watch** for Horn, Flute, and Timpani, by a young timpanist and composer Ellis Kohs—who was later to teach at The University of Southern California. Other performers on the premiere were his colleagues in the band—flutist Robert Cantrick, and hornist Marvin C. Howe—who described the first performance in a letter in 1988.

Ellis Kohs was a Warrant Office Junior Grade, as were Robert Cantrick, flute, Paul Calloway (later Washington Cathedral Organist) and myself—all recent (July 1943)

graduates of the Army Music School. The four of us put on a concert with our three bands...and half the concert was "chamber music." (Flute solo, Horn solo, Piano solo (Paul Calloway) plus the trio, in which Kohs was the "drummer." Wisely, I think, Ellis used a rather Hindemithian approach with the kettledrums limited to E-flat, B-flat—perfect fourth). (4)

Like Messiaen's **Quartet for the End of Time**, **Night Watch** speaks to the universal spirit, and shows how the language of music can transcend the conditions of wartime which discourage artistic expression.

Before entering the Army, Dr. Howe did graduate work at the University of Michigan (1941). However, after returning from Europe, he studied at the Juilliard School of Music and Columbia University in New York City in 1946. While at Juilliard, he studied with New York Philharmonic hornist Robert Schulze. Schulze was an important early influence on Marvin: he often quoted Schulze and used his exercises for the next five decades.

A simple do-re-mi-re-do long tone pattern was one Marvin adopted from Schulze. He insisted on singing the slurs smoothly with a doo ("rhymes with moo", he would say with a twinkle in his eye) syllable—with no bumps and no moaning. "Have you just been to a funeral?", he would ask—quoting Schulze. "No?" the embarrassed and quizzical student would reply. "Well, why does it sound like you are crying then?" he would ask—again quoting Schulze. The intensity of Schulze's listening—and his insistence on a smooth, singing quality were important models in Marvin's teaching. (5)

THE TEACHER OF MANY STUDENTS

From 1946 to 1948, Professor Howe taught horn and brass instrument pedagogy at Ithaca College, while completing his Master of Science in Music Education there in 1948. At Ithaca, he worked with trumpeter and brass pedagogue Walter Beeler. Marvin's **Method for French Horn** was begun at that time—and he often credited Beeler—who was writing his **Method for Cornet** at the same time—as a particularly helpful consultant.

From 1948—1953, he taught at The University of Illinois. As an important center for the study of contemporary music, The University of Illinois brought him into contact with several prominent composers. He performed works such as the Paul Hindemith's **Sonata** for Horn and Piano (1939) and the Igor Stravinsky's **Dumbarton Oaks Concerto** under their direction there. The **Maine Sketches** for Horn and Piano (1952) by Eugene Weigel was inspired by Weigel's hearing Marvin's low register exercises in a nearby studio!

After taking a year off to take care of the family farm in Ohio, Marvin moved his family to Cedar Falls, Iowa, where he became an Instructor of Music at Iowa State Teachers College. In addition to teaching horn, brass instruments, and pedagogy, Marvin toured the State of Iowa as a consultant for music teachers. One of the music teachers he assisted was a Band Director in Leon, Iowa—Claire Faust:

I always enjoyed his visits to Leon. He always had good observations of the student band. I was always amazed at how he could keep students spellbound—just by showing them how many different ways they could play a single phrase of a melody from their music. He always let me know when he was arriving, and he was always ON TIME. (Often when the

cinnamon rolls would be fresh from the oven at the school lunchroom—where we would have coffee.) (6)

A performance with George Waln's Woodwind Quintet on a Post-Camp NACWPI Conference at Interlochen, Michigan in 1956, led to his employment at The National Music Camp in 1957. Soon, Interlochen became the summer home for his wife-Arline Howe, his daughters-Nancy and Peggy, and his son Michael. While teaching at the National Music Camp, Dr. Howe touched the lives of many students who are now performing in major symphony orchestras, teach in major universities, and actively support the fine arts throughout the world.

"The first summer I was teaching at Interlochen, I had to take out a loan to pay the grocery bill. I decided to keep coming back—so the kids would have a place on the lake during the summer." (7)

Dr. Howe's teaching at Interlochen became a centerpiece of his teaching career. He taught at several colleges and universities, but his summer teaching and subsequent retirement at Interlochen became a returning focus of his career. A complete list of Marvin's former students at Interlochen and various colleges and universities would exceed the size of this article. (His Interlochen alumni alone would exceed 600 names. Former students are performing in orchestras and teaching in universities from New York to California and many in between.) However, the accompanying photos from about 30 years ago are an interesting and representative sample.

IOWA-SYRACUSE-ITHACA-EASTERN-INTERLOCHEN

From 1960-1962, he did further graduate work at The University of Iowa. After completing his Master of Fine Arts Degree and residency for the Ph.D., he was appointed Principal Hornist of the Syracuse Symphony and Professor at the University of Syracuse in New York. The next year, he accepted an invitation to return to teaching at Ithaca College in Ithaca, New York. At both Ithaca and Syracuse, he performed as a hornist with the faculty quintets.

1966 was an important year for Professor Howe for two reasons: first, he completed the final dissertation requirements for the Ph.D. at The State University of Iowa, and second, he moved to Michigan to teach at Eastern Michigan University. The State of Michigan, then, became his home—teaching at Interlochen during the summers and at Eastern Michigan University during the winter months. Upon retirement in 1979, he moved to Interlochen—and then finally to Traverse City in 1993.

Dr. Howe loved to teach! Whenever the opportunity would present itself—he would be there. When his friend Philip Farkas had a heart attack in 1978, he flew to Bloomington, Indiana on weekends to make sure the students received their lessons. Later, in 1982, he taught for James Winter at the California State University—Fresno during Dr. Winter's sabbatical leave. Later, when officially "retired", he would give clinics, lectures, and recitals, as well as conducting the horn choir at Interlochen. His energy was remarkable!

When Marvin died on August 3, 1994, the word went out that horn players were invited to play in a horn choir at his Memorial Service. The word was that this horn choir would have a brief rehearsal at 8 A.M. and travel to the church for the Service at 11 A.M. Almost like magic, a horn choir of over 25 members emerged! What was remarkable was that this horn choir, conducted by his colleague Douglas Campbell, included former students from the 1940's, 1950's, 1960's, 1970's,

1980's, and 1990's. This distribution of students from six decades appeared spontaneously. Their performances of several of Marvin's arrangements was a testimony to his long and fruitful career as a teacher.

THE MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL HORN SOCIETY

Marvin was an active and avid member of **The International Horn Society**. In addition to contributing to **The Horn Call**, he served on **The Advisory Council**, and performed and/or presented clinics at International Horn Workshops in Canada (1975), Provo, Utah (1987), Potsdam, New York (1988) and Texas (1991). In 1990, he was honored with the Society's **Punto Award**, and in 1994, he was elected to **Honorary Membership** in the **International Horn Society**. However, as much as his "official" duties, he enjoyed the camaraderie of the workshops and the chance to be a participant. He and his wife Arline provided support to performers, encouragement to exhibitors, and fellowship to hornists young and old alike. Workshop cafeteria meals were a time to meet friends and revel in the development of his many former students. In addition to the opportunity to see colleagues and hear former students, he relished the chances provided by workshops **to learn new truths, rediscover old truths, and to affirm important values**. Some of these are documented in his **Horn Call** article: **Thoughts Triggered by the 1993 IHS Convention, Charleston, Illinois**. However, there were many more! For example, after the 1972 Workshop he loved to recount the good humor of Alan Civil, after the 1985 Workshop he loved to recount the discussions (in German) between then President of The International Horn Society James Winter and then President of the Wiener Waldhorn Verein Siegfried Schwarzl, and after 1987 he could not discuss the topic of tone quality without mentioning his new discovery—Radovan Vladkovic'. In fact, he purchased a copy of Radovan's recording of the Mozart **Concerti** and gave it to his local public radio station. The morning after he passed away, that station played a selection from that recording—in memory of Marvin. His participation in International Horn Workshops continues to have an impact today—on hornists and non-hornists alike!

THE WRITER FOR AND ABOUT THE HORN: THE TEACHER AS RESEARCHER

The Howe Method

The Howe "Method" was, and is, more than the book of tunes and exercises known to his punning students as "Howe to play the horn." On the contrary, it is a way of thinking and a matter of language. In some cases it was language(s): Marvin would quote the words of a song—sometimes in German or French. Sometimes, he would use a pun which crossed over linguistic barriers. His use of puns was more than a humorous method of relieving the tension of hard work in a lesson. He truly believed that a student who could develop an ear for the subtleties of linguistic humor could also develop a better ear for the shadings of tone color and musical communication. In one lesson he stated that the real purpose of poetry was the preservation of the language. Likewise, he pointed out, the preservation of our musical language was dependent upon the musical poetry we make with it. Consequently, the wording of his ideas is not just interesting. It is critical. In **The Method for French Horn**, the pithy descriptions, admonitions, and/or punctuation marks are a critical part of the book.. Likewise, his well-worded commentaries on the concepts of horn playing are particularly useful.

A Critical Survey of Literature, Materials, Opinions and Practices as Related to the Teaching of the French Horn, his dissertation, is a major pedagogical work in size, scope, and content. However, most important are the descriptive commentaries of the given subjects. Many are quoted in the following section.

Dr. Howe earned both his Master of Fine Arts in Horn in 1962, and his Doctor of Philosophy in Music Education in 1966 from the State University of Iowa in Iowa City, Iowa. His dissertation, **A Critical Survey of Literature, Materials, Opinions and Practices as Related to the Teaching of the French Horn**, stands as an important survey of horn teaching today—and an important critique of the state of horn pedagogy as of 1966.

Observations of Paul Anderson

As Horn Professor at The University of Iowa, Paul Anderson supervised an outstanding number of doctoral dissertations about horn playing. As Dr. Howe's supervising professor, Mr. Anderson can testify to the size and scope of this document. Consequently, Mr. Anderson's comments about him are notable.

The main thing I remember about Marvin is his all-consuming love of the horn and of horn playing. I have known no other person so completely committed to the horn. I therefore thought that he had a purity of purpose that few others could equal. For this reason, it was always a joy to talk to him and be associated with him. (8)

Supporting Correspondence

During the time of his work on the dissertation, he was a frequent correspondent with hornists and authors around the world. One of them was Robin Gregory—(Author of **The HORN**). During the 60's, they exchanged correspondence on several occasions discussing repertoire, instruments, and horn players. (9) Philip Farkas—with whom Marvin had studied during the summer of 1955—was another who gave support to the project—and was acknowledged accordingly in the dissertation. Thanks to the international interest in Marvin's work, he acquired a broad base of information and attitudes. Furthermore, this dissertation has served as a basis for additional research by many current scholars of horn playing and teaching—including the current editor of **The Horn Call!** (10)

Topics of the Dissertation

This document surveyed a broad base of literature and materials. He solicited many opinions and practices. However, he went on to discuss many of his own opinions and practices. It should be observed that the opinions he expresses were genuine. They were not academically entombed in this dissertation; rather, a review of the topics covered among these opinions and practices gives a great insight into the pedagogical concepts of this master teacher.

Mental Concepts and Attitudes

Mental concepts and attitudes are vital; not only in the biological sense must conception precede creation. The student who realizes the true meaning of re-creation will work and play more imaginatively. (11)

Practice Habits

Practice habits govern progress to an alarming (or gratifying) degree. The practice routine should never deteriorate into a mere routine. Every moment should have purpose, every challenge should be enjoyed. (12)

Warm-Up

For emphasis, rather than disagreement, this writer limits the purposes of warm-up to the "three R's: respiration, response, and resonance." This is done in the (sometimes vain) hope that his students will become thoroughly addicted to the necessity of establishing those "three R's" daily, to the exclusion of all other concerns, especially if time is very limited. (13)

Professor Howe then proceeds to discuss the "exhale warm-up" and the observations of Philip Farkas in his **Art of French Horn Playing** and **Art of Brass Playing**:

"This writer's "exhale warm-up" differs from that of Farkas in two important ways: rather than "HA," he uses "WHO," which is 1) more gentle and 2) more resonant as to choice of vowel color. If the embouchure and resonating cavities are exactly coordinated, this very gentle approach will suffice to "float" a beautiful and pure pianissimo sound. (14)

As a student of Marvin's for over 30 years, I can vouch that the "exhale warm-up" was a cornerstone of his playing and teaching. For Marvin it was more than just an exercise: it was the quickest and most efficient way to focus the mind, embouchure, and breathing apparatus on the production of a beautiful horn tone. (Respiration, Response, and Resonance). He found it to be a wonderfully self-correcting exercise.

Resistance

Dr. Howe was also interested in the "other" "R's:" one of them was resistance. He proceeds to thoroughly discuss six points of resistance to the passage of air:

"1) the throat, 2) the mouth cavity, 3) the lip, 4) the mouthpiece, 5) the instrument, and 6) the right hand in the bell (plus 7) a mute in the bell)." (15) [In lessons he would also caution us to avoid resistance in the mind!]

Relaxation

Dr. Howe was also sensitive to the importance of relaxation as an important element in horn playing long before it was a topic for International Horn Workshop panel discussions or **Horn Call** articles. In his discussion of Tomasi's **Fanfares Liturgiques** he states:

*"The opening phrases.... are quite difficult in endurance, agility, and range, but the intonation on the high a-sharp" and b" is very difficult, and improbable of solution if even one player has a weak embouchure, unsteady nerves, or uses poor judgement. (16)
At [rehearsal letter] 4, the first horn had best be calm, strong, and relaxed—even then, the high a-sharp" entry in the fifth measure is not insurable by any firm." (17)*

Tone Quality

"There were two things he always insisted on—a beautiful tone and perfect intonation. ...and if you had those, then you could do everything else on the horn." (18) Marvin's goal with every student was the development of a beautiful, singing tone quality. His conceptual approach required imagination on the part of the student's mind and heart:

The imagination (or lack of same) of the mature player has very direct consequences on the type of tone quality or qualities employed. It is this writer's conviction that a feeling or

lack of feeling of sensuality is also very directly related to the player's feeling or lack of feeling for warmth of tone." (19)

The player needs to co-ordinate all of his efforts with the concept or concepts he has of tone color. The lip should feel comfortably relaxed, the vibration free and easy. The throat also should be relaxed although it will vary in its state of openness, both according to register and to volume. Vowel colors employed offer great and gratifying varieties of tone color with a maximum of embouchure comfort. All players must concentrate on making difficulties seem easy through mastery. Since most young players have comparatively small thin tones, it becomes necessary to concentrate upon a darker mellower sound as they mature. There is some danger that the student will overdo his efforts to the point of forgetting the utility of being able to produce a light tone also, to say little of all the thousands of variations found between the lightest and the darkest tone colors.

A feeling of resonance in the head, mouth, throat, and lungs is (to this writer) so much a necessity as to comprise a "way of life" for horn playing. For example, if one sings "OOO" (as in "who") and whistles simultaneously, a turbulence, a disturbance or vibration, is felt on the roof of the mouth. This writer has a similar sensation when achieving a satisfactory degree of internal resonance behind the horn.

*While a beautiful and pure quality of tone **can** be produced with shallow breathing, it will lack drive, stability, and depth as compared to a well-supported sound. Likewise, every sound, however soft it may be, should be an aggressive act of the will and breath. (20)*

Pedagogy

It seems to this writer that a major difficulty is found in developing concepts of warmth of tone, richness of resonance, a soaring musical line, and a clearly throbbing pulse and rhythm—all before one attempts the physical act of producing what is in mind. It appears difficult if not impossible to describe concepts of tone color, brightness, mellowness, purity, projection, etc., with and degree of accuracy. It would appear that necessity has brought about a proliferation of writing on "how to do it," and a scarcity of writing on what is desirable. (21)

Ear Training

"Singing is a venerable, honored, and too often neglected means of training the 'ear.'" This writer has stimulated more than one would-be horn student by refusing him horn instruction until satisfactory proof of sight-singing skill was produced. (22)

Low Register

A consistent part of Dr. Howe's teaching was his emphasis on the development of the low register. He considered it an important part of the development of the "Three R's of Tone Production—Respiration, Response and Resonance" As a transfer to the horn from the cornet, I found that his emphasis on the low register helped to correct some of my bad habits. I have found that I am not the only one who experienced his emphasis on this aspect of playing. Seventeen years after my first study with Dr. Howe, current Advisory Council member and Penn State Horn Professor Lisa Bontrager had a similar experience at her first lesson:

I am writing to tell you one small story of Dr. Howe. He was my private teacher in 1977, when I was in High School Girls [Division of the National Music Camp]. During my first lesson, he

asked me to play down, chromatically, from middle C. I did my best, but it must have been terrible! (I was in the World Youth Symphony Orchestra, but like lots of High School players, never played below a low G!) Well, Dr. Howe slapped his knee and said "I don't know whether to laugh or cry!" He then laughed! After the lesson was over, I trudged back to High School Girls, and I cried! I certainly played lots of low exercises that summer! (23)

The fact that Dr. Howe believed in the importance of the study of the low register is seen on the emphasis he gives to its study in his **Method for French Horn**. Furthermore, he often told a story of how horn-maker Carl Geyer supported this concept. He included this story in his dissertation:

This writer confesses a certain bias toward the benefits he professes to find in developing the low register of the horn. He remembers with gratitude Carl Geyer's angry remarks to a student of this writer who was interested only in playing as far above c" as possible; "Young man, you want to play the horn? Then learn the low register—you have no tone and you'll never be a horn player until you have a low register." (24)

Pedagogical Literature

This dissertation includes an Annotated Bibliography of Literature. It also includes some colorful opinions of the many materials covered. He finds the Maxime-Alphonse books "musically rewarding." He also speaks of the unique qualities of Gally's **Twelve Etudes for Second Horn** and the Wendell Hoss transcriptions of the **Six Suites for Violoncello Alone** by J.S. Bach. Most interesting is his discussion of modern studies:

*"Modern' studies are often outdated a decade after they are written, but we should include those by Bitsch, Chaynes, Dubois, and Alain Weber. ...At an advanced level, Verne Reynolds's **48 Etudes** are musically fascinating and extremely challenging technically, somewhat in proportion to the seriousness with which one regards Reynolds's metronomic markings." (25)*

It should be noted that he had a **very** high respect for the etudes and other compositions of Verne Reynolds. Furthermore, he had a high respect for Mr. Reynolds abilities as a player. Once when he was asked if even Mr. Reynolds could play the **48 Etudes**, he responded by asking "Do you have \$500?" "I will bet \$500 that Verne Reynolds can play these!" he answered. (Needless to say, that was the end of the discussion!).

New Music for the Horn

Marvin had a sincere interest in new literature for the horn—new and transcribed. His participation in the Fort Benning performance of Koh's **Night Watch** was previously noted—as well as the inspiration he gave to the writing of Eugene Weigel's **Maine Sketches**. William Presser composed his **Sonatina** for Horn and Piano for Marvin in 1978. My **Prelude** for Horn Alone and the **Prelude/Nocturne** of my **Concerto** for Horn and Wind Ensemble were written as responses to his treatise— **Stopped Horn**. As the content of his dissertation indicates, he was always seeking out new music which treated the horn with affection. Among others, he helped support and encourage Robert King's publication of the **Sonata** for Horn and Piano by Edith Borroff and the **Sonata** for Horn and Piano by Halsey Stevens. In addition to an interest in other's new compositions, he always was transcribing and arranging new works for the horn himself. (As I prefer to support the composition of new music—instead of the transcription of old music—Dr. Howe and I always had a constant, but friendly, debate. He liked to tell a rather long, funny story—with the punch line essentially being that he never saw or heard a work that wouldn't sound better with a choir of hornists.)

More on Etudes vs. Other Literature

*"Horn players may seem to be prolific and talented composers, but they generally are **not** first rate composers. Nearly one hundred books of etudes are represented in this study, but the deep and satisfying musical experiences are still to be found in major works, whether solo, chamber music, or orchestral writing." (26)*

He loved the works of Brahms: "I think I like to play Brahms better than I like to eat." (27) The famous solo from the **Symphony No. 5** by Tchaikovsky was another of his favorites. However, his musical interests were not limited to the standard works of the nineteenth century. For example, his dissertation includes discussions of works such as the **Háry János Suite** by Zoltán Kodály (28), and Riegger's **Nonet** for Brass (29). Likewise, unique works from the twentieth century were always showing up in his lessons.

"Physical development is a necessity as a means to carrying out the composer's wishes; perhaps there is need for a strictly muscular-technical text for the horn. Better still, one might require his students to write their own technical studies as the need becomes apparent. Since most teachers cannot give the student the individual attention and the time such a procedure would require, etudes and methods appear to be here to stay. " (30)

Marvin **did** use etudes in his teaching, but he was more interested in good music than he was in etude books. Among his favorite teaching materials were the **Suites for Violoncello** by Bach transcribed by Wendell Hoss, the collection of **Solos for the Horn Player** edited by Mason Jones, and the **Six Sonatas** by Johann Schenk transcribed for two horns by Verne Reynolds. In addition, he would often transcribe melodies or write specific exercises to help a student solve a specific problem.

The Great Stopped Horn Debate

Marvin was in the midst of the "Great Stopped Horn Debate" which raged in the pages of the **Horn Call** throughout the 1970's— and seemingly to this day. However, the genesis of his thoughts can be seen in an experience he had with New York Philharmonic hornist James Chambers decades earlier:

"This writer saw James Chambers demonstrate in this fashion: Chambers (with a continuous, uninterrupted sound) gradually lowered a written g' a major 2nd to f'; one would assume that the 6th member of the F horn harmonic series had been lowered to become (in effect) No. 6 of a concert E-flat series. But no! Still without interruption of the sound, Chambers proceeded to slur up and down the new harmonic series proving that the 6th member of the F series had, in effect, become the 5th member of a new series one-half step higher, i.e., of a 'horn in F-sharp or G-flat!'" (31)

The apparent contradictions in his observations of Chamber's demonstration and the writings of Schuller, Farkas, Coar and Gregory are discussed in this section of his dissertation. (32) Furthermore, in his practicing for performances of **The Serenade** for Tenor, Horn, and Strings, he also observed that this principle of lowering the pitch via stopped horn was also applied by Benjamin Britten. (33) Subsequently, to help improve the performance of stopped horn technique, he worked out a treatise and a series of exercises based on this principle. He self-published his treatise **Stopped Horn** in 1968. In autumn of 1973, James Winter, Editor of **The Horn Call**, published an excerpt of this treatise with the following commentary:

*Editor's Note: This article by Professor Marvin C. Howe first came to the attention of the editor in the Spring of 1970, in the hands of David Krehbiel, then principal horn of the Detroit Symphony. It struck me then that Howe's discussion of what happens when the horn is hand-stopped was the first explanation of my acquaintance that was consistent with observable events and logic. The article will be greeted in some cases with skepticism, but I am convinced that it is a correct description of the hand-stopping phenomenon; I have been able to achieve precisely the same results as Mr. Howe with the hand as well as with the transposing mute, and with a variety of horns and bells styles. During the course of the Fourth Annual Workshop, at Bloomington, I asked Mr. Howe for permission to print his article in the **Horn Call**; he has granted permission to publish an excerpt, and it is given here. (34)*

The Essence of "Stopped Horn"

"It has long been the custom and the practice to assume that stopping the horn in F raises the pitch a minor second (1/2 step). This apparent change is corrected by fingering the stopped passage 1/2 step lower than written. As far as fingerings are concerned....

*...It is not the intention to negate the practicality of the above assumptions, for the fingerings obtained are certainly workable. However, it will be shown that the above assumptions are false. In fact, the hand **always** lowers the pitch—albeit unevenly—to a new pitch one half step above the next lower member of the harmonic series being employed! This does result in a series one half step above those obtained when playing "open" horn, but the new pitches are (and always were!) derived from above. Practice of this derivation results in better and quicker control of stopped horn than is generally obtained by the horn student." (35)*

The subsequent series of articles and letters found Marvin involved in one of the longest-running debates in the history of the **Horn Call**. Several other articles went into more acoustical detail from the science of physics. However, **his** purpose in writing the treatise was to develop a series of exercises for "better and quicker control of stopped horn than is generally obtained by the horn student." Many students have found his exercises helpful. I, for one, have found this to be true in over two decades of pedagogical application. Furthermore, I have been so captivated with the effect that I have composed a well-used **Prelude for Horn Alone** as well as several other compositions based on these exercises.

Stopping Mutes

Dr. Howe was always thorough in the investigation of a subject. During the 1970's, he went about purchasing every available stopping mute. In part, he was interested in how the use of the stopping mute related to his stopped horn treatise. Without exception, they all reinforced his ideas. More importantly, however, he enjoyed comparing the tone quality, response, and articulative qualities of the existing models.

Howe to Make Mutes

One of the favorite puns of his horn studio was the fact he knew "Howe to make mutes." Dr. Howe was a life-long builder of non-transposing horn mutes. His wife, Arline, relates how he built his first mutes back in the 1940's using tuna fish cans and various cardboard tubes. As a woodworker, he later made various models with wooden parts. In the mid-1960's, he developed a tunable mute made of "high-impact styrene", with the plastic parts manufactured at Ithaca Plastics in Ithaca, New York. The parts were assembled in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Always socially-

conscious, Marvin contracted a firm that employed handicapped workers to assemble his tunable, styrene mute. This mute was marketed through his own "Marvin's Musical Products."

Instruments

Like many hornists, Dr. Howe's instrumental odyssey is quite interesting. His first instrument was an Alexander Single F Horn. He often recalled that he loved the sound of the instrument. However, he also related that the top f" was so treacherous that it made him anxious about that note for years. Later, he used a variety of instruments: a Conn 8-D, a Chambers Model Reynolds ("you could throw a cow through that thing and not get any edge!"), and various Farkas Model Holtons ("the most consistent intonation"). When Max Pottag retired, he purchased Max Pottag's personal Pottag Model Reynolds. He carried on a correspondence with Carl Geyer for many years and even hosted him as a guest at Interlochen. During the 1970's, he had the good fortune of obtaining three different Geyer horns. When Steve Lewis started his business, Marvin purchased one of his early instruments. At the age of sixty, Marvin surprised students, friends and colleagues by purchasing a Paxman Model 40 Descant Horn. Ever the student himself, Marvin drove to East Lansing and took a lesson from Douglas Campbell on his new instrument. He also wrote to Paxman's instrument designer and author of the text "**The horn, the horn**".—Richard Merewether— regarding his observations about the instrument's intonation and other qualities. Merewether's letter, dated 28th March, 1978, responds by quoting Marvin's inquiries about "mucho besser" fingerings with good tongue-in-cheek humor and obvious pride in his work.

... "Yes, your 'mucho besser' fingerings are the ones, and also for the fifth below in each case. Do not use 1 & 3, and 1, 2, & 3 except in passing when it's too quick to matter much, on the Bb horn...

... Color/colour match eminently possible, but only with strict observance of chapter 13 chapter 13 in the book the book...

... The notes you find flat are so on every brass instrument in the world (i.e., 5th 'harmonics' in each case.) Your horn will not be inferior to any other you tried in Hartford—please be assured... "

"...I'm a little concerned that you must draw the + slide nearly 1". A lot less should be enough. See my chapter on stopped horn. So pleased you're getting the valves to move—so necessary. I find."

... "Do keep me posted how it all goes.

But do remember—Chapter 13 Chapter 13 is A MUST A MUST.

Yours ever..." (36)

A frequent visitor to the instrument tables at the International Horn Workshops, he constantly marveled at the high quality of the many fine models of instruments by many manufacturers—large and small—around the world. In the last month of his life, he was talking about getting a new dual-bore horn "when he recovered."

The Final Lesson

...The. French horn was Marvin Howe's lifelong music love. He played it. He taught it. He arranged music for it. He told puns about it. "All horn players are punsters," Dr. Howe's wife, Arline, said. "It seems to go with the instrument."

...Sunday morning, four French horn players from the faculty of the music camp at the Interlochen Center for the Arts showed up at his home. Dr. Howe, 76, was in a wheelchair with cancer. The quartet's appearance was a dress rehearsal of two songs by Franz Schubert that Dr. Howe had arranged.

...He critiqued the playing and sent the quartet on its way for a performance later that day at the Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship of Grand Traverse.

...Wednesday, he died. (37)

What had started out as an extra rehearsal for a church performance he had organized months earlier turned out to be a final lesson from Marvin. In spite of his ill health, he laughed heartily at his own ability to start a rapid exchange of bilingual puns about the title of one of the Schubert songs.

On the first run-through of **Ihr Bild**, the ensemble was not good. One of the ensemble members asked, "What did you think of the tempo?" "Which one?" he replied! Then we asked, "Dr. Howe, when you conduct this, do you conduct it in two or in four?" Marvin thought for a second. "In four," he replied—holding up four fingers. The second reading was much improved! Even at the end, his ears were working, his humor was there, and he enjoyed teaching!

The ensemble of five players—rotating on quartet parts as well as performing the quintet version of the "Sarabande" from the **Holberg Suite**—played at the church service that morning. Marvin's sudden, subsequent death brought repeat performances at Memorial Services that week at Interlochen and Traverse City. Particularly memorable to this author was Ellen Campbell's playing of the opening solo of Marvin's arrangement of a Russian Folksong—**Someone's Horse is Standing There**. The arrangement of this quartet and the Schubert songs are now available from The Hornist's Nest. One of his solo transcriptions has been published by Encore Music. Several other works have been published—including studies, solos, and horn ensemble arrangements. These publications, like his **Method for French Horn**, are available from Faust Music via www.faustmusic.com. Thanks to Marvin Howe, many hornists continue to be singers of smooth melodies.

In 1988, the Marvin Howe Horn Scholarship Endowment Fund was created by former students of Dr. Howe. Those interested in contributing to this fund in honor of Dr. Howe may contact the Director of Advancement, Interlochen Center for the Arts, Interlochen, Michigan 49643.

NOTES

- (1) Nancy Howe Webster, Marvin C. Howe—Obituary, *Traverse City Record Eagle*, August 5, 1994.
- (2) Marvin C. Howe, *Horn Lesson*, 1968.
- (3) Webster, *op.cit.*
- (4) Marvin C. Howe, Letter to Randall Faust, Oct. 11, 1988.
- (5) Marvin C. Howe, *Horn Lesson*, 1966.
- (6) Claire E. Faust, Conversation with the author, August, 1994.
- (7) Marvin Howe, Conversation with the author, June, 1991.
- (8) Paul Anderson, Letter to the author, Feb. 27, 1996.
- (9) Robin Gregory, Letters to Marvin Howe, Oct. 1961—Feb. 1964.
- (10) Johnny L. Pherigo, "Horn Study Materials: A Survey of New and Reissued Publications Available in the United States with a 1965-1985 Copyright", **The Horn Call Annual**, No. 2, 1990, p. 9.
- (11) Marvin C. Howe, **A Critical Survey of Literature, Materials, Opinions, and Practices and Related to the Teaching of the French Horn**, p. 274.
- (12) *Ibid.*, p. 275.
- (13) *Ibid.*, p. 277.
- (14) *Ibid.*, p.278.
- (15) *Ibid.*, pp 279-282.
- (16) *Ibid.*, p. 175.
- (17) *Ibid.*, p. 176.
- (18) Louis Stout Sr., Marvin Howe Memorial Service, August 8, 1994.
- (19) Howe, **A Critical Survey...op. cit.**, p. 282.
- (20) *Ibid.*, 283-284.
- (21) *Ibid.*, 370.
- (22) *Ibid.*, 294-295.
- (23) Lisa Bontrager, Letter to the author, August 7, 1995.
- (24) Howe, **A Critical Survey...op. cit.**, p. 371.
- (25) *Ibid.*, p. 372.
- (26) *Ibid.*, p. 375.
- (27) Marvin Howe, Rehearsal of **A German Requiem** by Johannes Brahms, National Music Camp, August, 1967.
- (28) Howe, **A Critical Survey...op. cit.**, p. 149.
- (29) *Ibid.*, 150.
- (30) *Ibid.*, p. 366.
- (31) *Ibid.*, p. 230-231.
- (32) *Ibid.*, 230-235.
- (33) Benjamin Britten, "Elegy" from **Serenade** for Tenor, Horn and Strings Op. 31, (Boosey & Hawkes, London, 1944), p. 15.
- (34) James Winter, "Editor's Note" **The Horn Call**, Volume IV, Number 1, Autumn 1973 p. 19.
- (35) Marvin Howe, Stopped Horn, **The Horn Call**, Volume IV, Number 1, Autumn 1973 p. 19.
- (36) Richard Merewether, Letter to Marvin Howe, March 28, 1978.
- (37) David Hacker, Master of the French horn kept sense of humor about it. *The Detroit Free Press*, August 6, 1994.

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he also contracted cancer—and spent the rest of the year in treatment at Sloan-Kettering Hospital. In 1995, he returned to Auburn University to complete his degree. When he returned from cancer treatments, he walked in the door saying, "Is anyone interested in seeing a bald-headed horn player?" "Bald-headed horn players have always looked great to me!", I replied.

N.B. This article first appeared in *The HORN CALL* 26.3/May 1996. It is reprinted here with the permission of the Editor.

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Divertimento No. 8—W.A. Mozart
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Exaudi Deus—Orlando di Lasso
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Finale-Viennese Sonatina No. 6—W.A. Mozart
 trans. for Horn Trio by Marvin C. Howe
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Ihr Bild—Franz Schubert
 arranged for Horn Quartet by Marvin C. Howe
 (The Hornist's Nest)

Largo from the Violin Concerto in a minor—Vivaldi
 transcribed for Horn and Piano by Marvin C. Howe
 (Encore Music Publishers distrib. Faust Music)

Madrigals arr for Horn Quartet by Marvin C. Howe
 2 volumes—(The Hornist's Nest)

Madrigals for Brass Sextet—arr. by Marvin C. Howe
 (Elkan Vogel)

Quando Corpus— G. Rossini
 arranged for Horn Quartet by Marvin C. Howe
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Seventeen Horn Duets—arr Marvin C. Howe (Hornist's Nest)
 (presented at the International Horn Workshop Quebec, Canada, 1975)

Someone's Horse is Standing There—Russian Folk Song
 arranged for horn quartet by Marvin C. Howe
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Three Tuba Solos—arr. by Marvin C. Howe
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Andante Cantabile-Tchaikovsky
 arranged for Horn Quartet by Marvin C. Howe

Cherubim Song—Bortniansky
 arranged for Horn Quartet by Marvin C. Howe

De Coelo Veniet—Jacobus Gallus
 arranged for Horn Quartet by Marvin C. Howe

Jesu Dulcis Memoriam—Thomas Luis de Victoria
 arranged for Horn Quartet by Marvin C. Howe

The Solo Hornist (12 Solos)—arr. for Horn and Piano
 by Marvin C. Howe

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 Marvin C. Howe

MUSIC written for, premiered by, or dedicated to Marvin C. Howe

Elegy and Caprice for Horn and Piano (1994) by William Presser

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