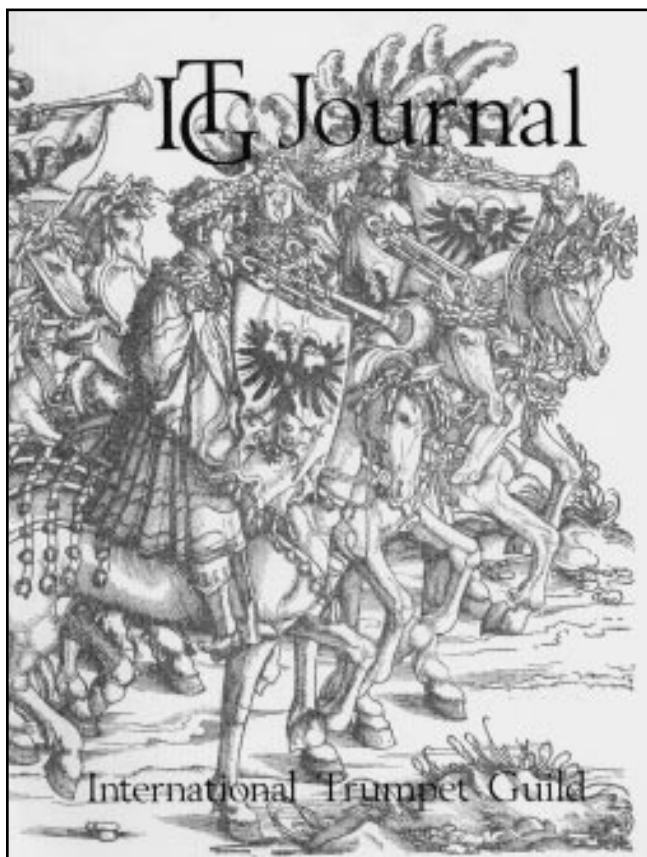


Reprints from the

# International Trumpet Guild Journal

*“The Meaning of Art” – An interview with Art Farmer*  
– John La Barbera, Jazz Editor (Dec 96)



*to promote communications among trumpet players around the world and to improve the artistic level of performance, teaching, and literature associated with the trumpet*

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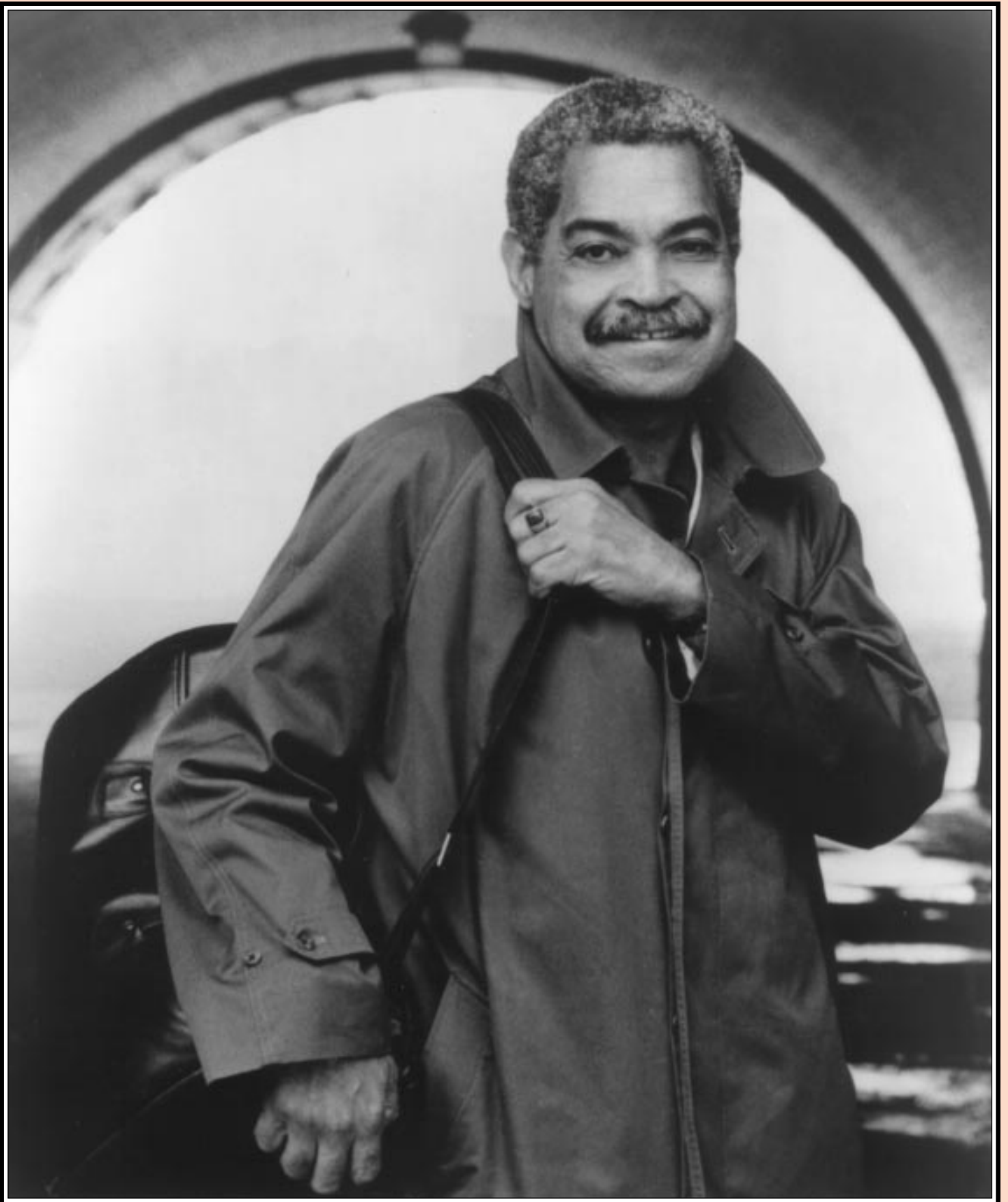
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# “The Meaning of Art”

## An interview with Art Farmer

JOHN LA BARBERA

One of my earliest jazz memories is hearing this beautiful trumpet and flugelhorn sound on a well-worn LP. My brother Pat had borrowed it from someone with jazz records and it made a lasting impression on me. That unique sound was that of the great Art Farmer, a monumental jazz trumpet artist of the past four decades. Art, his identical twin brother Addison, and composer/tenor sax player Benny Golson founded the legendary Jazztet that gained international fame in the early 1960s. Some of our greatest jazz classics came from their repertoire. Now in his late 60s, Art still demonstrates his natural technique and individual sound on a horn as unique as his trumpet style. Surely anecdotal, it is told that an interviewer once asked Art how you can tell the two brothers apart. Art is said to have replied, “Well, when I get up in the morning I pick up the bass, and if I can’t play it, I must be Art.” That’s one question I did not ask Art in our interview during his appearance at the annual University of Louisville Jazz Week.

**JLB:** I’m sure many people who have seen you play recently wonder what kind of horn you’re playing.

**AF:** Well, it’s called a Flumpet made by Dave Monette. It has two separate crooks on it and sort of looks like a big cornet. It’s supposed to be in between a trumpet and a flugelhorn but it doesn’t play like either. What I mainly like is its dark sound. It has a beautiful sound when you play it soft and I like to play soft. One problem I have with this horn is that it’s very heavy and when it gets cold it’s difficult to play. A guy in L.A. made a trumpet stand that warms up the horn, but it takes a while to warm the whole horn. Some of those big halls can get chilly.

**JLB:** How about the upper register, is it easier to play?

**AF:** Yes, it gives you a little more help and doesn’t close off or ‘V’ in on you. It doesn’t get so narrow upstairs like a flugelhorn.

**JLB:** What mouthpiece do you use?

**AF:** Around a [Bach] 7. Of course this mouthpiece is built into the horn.

**JLB:** Do you experiment with horns and mouthpieces?

**AF:** No, I don’t like to experiment. Once I find something that plays halfway good, I have the idea that if I hang with it, it’s gonna’ get better. Some guys

have a drawer full of mouthpieces, and I feel all that changing around is kind of a waste of time.

**JLB:** How did you start playing trumpet?

**AF:** Well, the first instrument I studied was the piano when I was around seven years old.

**JLB:** How about Addison?

**AF:** He, my sister, and I all started on piano. Then my family rented a room out. The guy who rented it had a violin, and he gave it to me because he wasn’t using it. So I studied that for about a year.

**JLB:** Where was this?

**AF:** Phoenix, Arizona. There was a church there with a youth band and the only horn available was a tuba. So I played that in the band. That tuba was a very undemanding instrument. But then the Second World War started and the kids started to get drafted and it left me with a choice of horns to play. I decided to take the trumpet (it was really a cornet) because it had the same fingerings as the tuba. I was around 13 or 14 then. The reason I wanted a trumpet is because I heard some guys jammin’, and I didn’t see anyone with a tuba so I figured I’d make a change. I thought since it had the same fingering as the tuba that the embouchure would be the same. Boy was I mistaken. But once I started on it I didn’t feel like putting it away. I heard some pros play on it and I definitely didn’t want to stop. I and my brother and a few guys from school started a dance band. We bought some stock arrangements and started to get jobs.

**JLB:** Is there any special trumpet teacher you want to mention from that period?

**AF:** There was no trumpet teacher in school. This was in the days when the schools were segregated. One lady taught English, home economics, and music. She couldn’t say anything about the trumpet other than “that’s the wrong note.” She’d say, “Boy you play more wrong notes than anybody I ever heard.”

**JLB:** Any recordings of you guys back then?

**AF:** My sister an old acetate of a radio broadcast, but it’s so bad it sounds like a parody or put on.

**JLB:** You and your brother moved to California when you were 16. Tell us about the move.

**AF:** It was summer vacation and we were reading in *downbeat* about everything that was going on.

**JLB:** So you were interested in music enough at that time to know that you wanted to be in music.

**AF:** Oh yeah. We went to listen to all the great musicians and decided to stay there.



Art Farmer with his Flumpet

**JLB:** How did you pull that one off?

**AF:** Well, we just told our mother we wanted to stay there, and with much hesitation she said OK as long as we finished high school. So we rented a room and got some playing gigs and other types of work to keep going.

**JLB:** You told me last night about school and excuses.

**AF:** Yes, we used to write our own excuses from school. [much laughter] We got away with murder.

**JLB:** So would you write your brother's excuse and he would write yours?

**AF:** No, we would just write our own. We never even thought of anything that subtle. Our attendance wasn't that bad, but it was hard 'cause if you hang out until two or three o'clock in the morning it's hard to be in school at eight o'clock doin' gym.

**JLB:** So you're 16 and on your own. Was your mother sending you rent money?

**AF:** No, no. We did it on our own. She didn't have to send us anything.

**JLB:** What school was it?

**AF:** Thomas Jefferson in Los Angeles. Dexter Gordon went there, Sonny Criss, Hampton Hawes, Ed Thigpen, and Billy Higgins. By then I had a King trumpet. I kept that until I saw in *downbeat* where

Diz, Roy Eldridge, and Miles were playing a Martin. So I went down to the store and got a Martin Committee. This must have been around 1945.

**JLB:** Did you take any trumpet lessons while you were in L.A.?

**AF:** Not a one. Until then I hadn't had a lesson. That's why I've had trouble – because of developing bad habits.

**JLB:** What kind of gigs were you getting?

**AF:** The really competent musicians were still in the army, so I was able to get some work with big bands like Horace Henderson's and a guy named Floyd Ray. I also worked with a band led by an arranger named Jimmy Mundy. Jimmy used to write for Earl Hines and Benny Goodman. Then in 1946 I got a job with Johnny Otis whose band was like a Basie band. This gig took me back East.

**JLB:** What trumpet players were you listening to at that time?

**AF:** That's easy – Miles, Fats Navarro, and Kenny Dorham. I wasn't interested in what came before them. My vision then was very narrow. That's pretty typical, when you first get into something you're interested in what's popular and contemporary. You tend to listen to guys your own age. I eventually lost the job with Otis because of my lack of knowledge. When the more competent players returned he said he was going to have to let me go.

**JLB:** When you say lack of knowledge do you mean the physical playing of the horn?

**AF:** That's right. I played till I got a big hole in my lip. That's why he let me go. Bad habits. Pressing like crazy and my tooth got loose. I went to the dentist and had the tooth filed down because he couldn't put it back up. A trumpet player named Fred Webster recommended a teacher in New York named Morris Grupp. He wasn't a trumpet teacher, but he knew something about breathing and how it was necessary to play in tune. [more laughter]

**JLB:** Were you and your brother together most of the time?

**AF:** No. When I went east he stayed in California. He was working with Jay McShann.

**JLB:** What did you do musically after Otis's band?

**AF:** Benny Bailey gave notice on McShann's band so my brother got me on that band. We worked our way back west to California. The band sort of broke up then. When I got back to L.A. after my stint with Johnny Otis, I was a more seasoned player and started sitting in and getting gigs with guys like Teddy Edwards, Wardell Gray, and Dexter Gordon.

**JLB:** Did the word get out that you could play?

**AF:** I don't know if they said I could play or if they said something like he's not so bad. [much laughter]

**JLB:** Were you still playing the Martin?

**AF:** Yes, I liked the sound. It was a large bore

horn, and I didn't realize how hard it was to play. I finally took some lessons in L.A. There was a social organization called the Humanists Club that was involved in the amalgamation of the two unions. There was a white union and a black union. This organization would go into the black neighborhood and make it possible for us to rehearse with a symphony orchestra. These guys were pros who were working in Hollywood. They would come in once or twice a month. Benny Carter was involved along with Buddy Collette and Jerry Fielding – guys of that caliber. That's the first time I ever worked with a conductor who didn't say 1,2,3,4. That experience was a Godsend!

**JLB:** Where are we chronologically now?

**AF:** This was around the late 40s to early 50s.

**JLB:** Be-bop was really in full swing by then.

**AF:** I can't think of a single person my age who wasn't attracted to be-bop except for Big "J" (Cecil McNeely) who became a famous rock 'n roll tenor player. He used to lay on his back – he started that whole thing. We were in the same high school together. He played bop at first, but his brother came back from the army and said "you won't make a quarter playing that stuff." So he changed.

**JLB:** Did you have aspirations of being a band leader then?

**AF:** No, the joy was in the playing. I just wanted to play the music.

**JLB:** Did you have any contact with Bird (Charles Parker) at that time?

**AF:** Yes. He came out with Dizzy (Gillespie) and was hanging out with a tenor player named Gene Montgomery. We would stop by Gene's house after school and hang with him. We had already met him at Billy Berg's club, and he was a warm and friendly person, not like what you read in the books.

**JLB:** What was your first professional recording?

**AF:** That was with Jay (McShann) backing a singer named Big Joe Turner.

**JLB:** How about your first recorded solo?

**AF:** That would be with a band led by a drummer named Roy Porter. He used to work with Howard McGhee. Roy put together what we would call studio band. It was all young kids in their late teens. Eric Dolphy was in it as was Addison. It was out of tune and not very good, but somehow he managed to get us a deal with Savoy to cut four sides. It sounds like a joke.

**JLB:** Did you and Addison work together all the time?

**AF:** Sometimes, being a bass player, he worked a lot more than I did. He was the real bread winner.

**JLB:** When did it really start to take off for you?

**AF:** When I got the job with Lionel Hampton I knew I could make it as a musician. I was gigging with Dexter, Wardell, and a lot of guys at that time, but I had to work as an X-ray file clerk at a hospital



**Benny Golson & Art Farmer (1996)**

to make it. I was at a jam session one night and some of Hamp's band were there. Quincy (Jones) was there and so was James Cleveland. A few days later I got "the call" and that got me out of the hospital. It was great for me because to get a job with Duke or Basie you had to be a seasoned pro. With Hamp, as long as he had a hot tenor player and a trumpet player who was a screamer, he was happy. He had Leo Sheppard on lead and he could scream. We used to call him "the whistler." He'd play high notes only a dog could hear. He'd play fifth (chair) and scream. I was with Hamp's band for about a year.

**JLB:** Did you quit to go with another band?

**AF:** The band sort of broke up. That was in Europe, when we did what I call unauthorized recordings. Lionel said we couldn't record for anyone else in Europe because he brought us over there. We had already made arrangements to record for these Europeans, and when we got back to New York, we didn't give or receive our notice, it was just good-bye. Later, he admitted in his biography that he was wrong to make those demands and that we did what he would have done. Those recordings did help us.

**JLB:** Then what happened?

**AF:** I hooked up with Gigi Gryce, who was a part of that Hamp tour. We formed a co-leader quintet and worked around town. We'd do Monday nights at Birdland and any other gigs we could find. We did three recordings for Prestige. We never actually went on the road, but we did make short excursions out of town to nearby cities. I also worked with Lester Young during that time. He had a trumpet player named

# So Beats My Heart For You

Transcribed by Dick Washburn

Ballard, Henderson, Waring

♩ = 186

The musical score consists of ten staves of music in 4/4 time, with a tempo of 186 beats per minute. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The chords and other markings are as follows:

- Staff 1:  $F^{maj7}$ ,  $A^{min7} \flat 5$ ,  $D^7$ ,  $G^{min7}$
- Staff 2:  $C^7$ ,  $A^{min7}$ ,  $D^7$ ,  $G^{min7}$ ,  $C^7$ ,  $F^{maj9}$
- Staff 3:  $A^{min7} \flat 5$ ,  $D^7$ ,  $G^{min7}$
- Staff 4:  $C^7$ ,  $F^{maj7}$ ,  $B^{min7} \flat 5$ ,  $E^7 \flat 9$ ,  $A^{min6}$
- Staff 5:  $A^{\flat 7}$ ,  $A^{\flat min7}$ ,  $D^{\flat 7}$
- Staff 6:  $G^{min7}$ ,  $C^7$ ,  $F^{min7}$ ,  $C^7$ ,  $F^{maj7}$
- Staff 7:  $A^{min7} \flat 5$ ,  $D^7 \flat 9$ ,  $G^{min7}$ ,  $C^7$
- Staff 8:  $F^{maj7}/A$ ,  $D^7 ALT$ ,  $G^{min7}$ ,  $C^7$
- Staff 9:  $A^{min7}$ ,  $D^7$ ,  $G^{min7}$ ,  $C^7$ , 2nd Chorus  $F^{maj7}$

Articulations include slurs, accents, and triplets (marked with '3'). Measure numbers 9, 17, and 25 are indicated.

Amin7 b5      D7      Gmin7      C7  
 Amin7      D7      Gmin7      C7      Fmaj9  
 Amin7 b5      3      D7 b9      Gmin7  
 C7 b9      Fmaj7      Bmin7b5      E7 b9      Amin6  
 3      Ab7      Abmin7      Db7  
 Gmin7      C7      Gmin7 b5      C7      Fmaj7  
 61  
 Amin7 b5      D7 b9      Gmin7  
 C7      Fmaj7/A      D7 b9  
 3  
 Gmin7      C7      Fmaj7      Dmin7  
 3  
 Gmin7      C7 b9      Fmaj7

Recording: Art Farmer  
 Recorded September 1960 at Nola Studios in New York City.  
 Argo Records LP-678 (12" LP) and GRD-809 Chess (CD).  
 Form: AABA+tag – 36 bars  
 Range: g-d"

Jesse Drakes who didn't want to play any more, so he called me for the three or four weeks a year he'd do at Birdland. I also worked pretty steady for a year or so with Horace (Silver), and from there I went straight to a gig with (Gerry) Mulligan. That was about 1959. They were both great to work with, although they were completely different. You know that common dream where you're walking around without any clothes on? Well, that's what it was like working with Mulligan. [Referring to the piano-less quartet.] Coming from Horace's group where the piano was definitely there, it was scary to be up there on your own. I learned a lot working with him.

**JLB:** Who were your biggest influences on trumpet at that time?

**AF:** Brownie (Clifford Brown), Miles, and of course, Dizzy Gillespie. Dizzy was a great man and a natural teacher. You'd have to muzzle him to stop him from teaching somebody something. That's the way he was. Your mentioning that he brought his own cymbals when you worked with him reminds me of a story. We were on a tour in Europe (with drummer Kenny Clarke), and here comes Dizzy with his cymbal. He says to Kenny, "When I'm playing I want you to play this cymbal." And Kenny says, "Look, I don't bring a trumpet and tell you to play it when I'm soloing do I?" So Diz left it in the hotel room. That was a fertile time for me. As a freelance player worked with a lot of great musicians like Teddy Charles, Gil Evans, and George Russell – guys like that. I was also doing commercial jingles. The first jingle I ever did was with Billy Taylor. I hadn't even met him. That was a great time.

**JLB:** Were you still playing the Martin?

**AF:** Yes, I never really experimented with horns. I have a friend in New York who's got over a hundred horns and he tries one after another. The first real change for me was the flugelhorn. The first guy I ever heard play one was Chet Baker at a jam session. Then I heard Clark (Terry) play one and then Miles recorded with it. Benny Golson and I had been working with the Jazztet for a couple of years. Our manager was a friend of the owner of Boosey & Hawkes and he arranged for me to get a cornet and flugelhorn. I ended up leaving the cornet and sticking with the flugel. I used the stock mouthpiece that came with it – it had a nice rim. With the Jazztet I use the trumpet for the bright tunes and the flugel for the easier tunes. After that time I started making recordings where I used just the flugelhorn like the one Oliver (Nelson) wrote for me with the big band. When Jim Hall joined my group I never touched the trumpet, I just played the flugel. I did go back to the trumpet for awhile when I got a pit job for the Broadway show *Apple Tree*. The trumpet was a virtual stranger to me by then. That's when the studio guys suggested I go down and speak to Carmine (Caruso). That helped



Art Farmer & John Labarbera (1996)

me a lot. He helped a lot of guys. Some studio players used to say things like, "I owe this man my swimming pool."

**JLB:** What prompted the move to Europe?

**AF:** I took my quartet with me to Europe in '64 and '65. I had some dates to do on my own there. I ended up judging a jazz competition in Vienna along with Cannonball (Adderley), Mel Lewis, Ron Carter, J.J. (Johnson), and Joe Zawinul. It was a world-wide competition and it took about two weeks to do. I think Randy Brecker came in first in the trumpet category. During that time I met the woman who would become my wife, and I started to get to know the local musicians. At that time the radio system was organizing a jazz band and I fell into that. The U.S. was becoming a war zone, so I thought it might be a good idea to stay in Europe for awhile. Things were much more mellow over there. I only work ten days a month for the radio and was free to do other gigs. It gave me a great opportunity to work on my music.

The radio scene did change after awhile and became unbearable. The band leader started taking it in a very commercial direction, and I couldn't take time off to tour with my own group. I had the opportunity to take a group to Japan (Jackie McLean, Cedar Walton, Billy Higgins, and Sam Jones), but the leader wouldn't let me send in a sub. So I left the radio gig and continued working out of Vienna as a freelance artist. I find that I spend about half my time in Europe and half here in the U.S.

**JLB:** Before I let you go I want to ask if you do a regular warm-up.

*continued on page 51*

## Notes

- 1 St. Petersburg was founded in 1703. The German name was abandoned in favor of the Russian form, Petrograd, on August 31, 1914. Petrograd was then renamed Leningrad on January 26, 1924. In 1991 the name was changed back to the original, St. Petersburg.  
From 1917-1991, Russia was one Republic of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.), which included 14 other constituent states. The U.S.S.R. was dissolved in 1991, at which time Russia became an independent nation belonging to the Commonwealth of Independent States (C.I.S.). Thus, the city of Leningrad, U.S.S.R. became St. Petersburg, Russia. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the names of many institutions and smaller geographical entities also changed after the establishment of the Communist government in 1917. Most of these names have been changed back to their original names since 1991. For example, the Marinsky Theater of Opera and Ballet was re-named the Kirov Theater in 1935 (Kirov was a hero of the Communist revolution), but was again re-named the Marinsky Theater in recent years.
- 2 Edward H. Tarr, "Willy (Vassily Georgyevich) Brandt – The Early Years," *ITG Journal* 20, no. 4 (1996): 56.
- 3 *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 5th ed., s.v. "Leningrad," (1954).
- 4 Veniamin Sovelievich Margolen, telephone conversation with author, August 5, 1996.
- 5 Margolen, telephone conversation.
- 6 Yuri Fokin, a former student of Bolshoyanov, described to the author Bolshoyanov's role in the trumpet section of the Leningrad Philharmonic during conversations in spring 1996.
- 7 Fokin, conversations.
- 8 Fokin, conversations.
- 9 Margolen, telephone conversation.
- 10 Margolen, telephone conversation.
- 11 Margolen, telephone conversation.
- 12 Fokin, conversations.
- 13 *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. "Leningrad," (1980).
- 14 Edward H. Tarr, *Willy Brandt und die Russische Trompeten Tradition- eine Ausstellung*, pamphlet from symposium held in Coburg, Germany (date unknown).
- 15 Yuri Fokin, telephone conversation with author, July 15, 1996.
- 16 Fokin, telephone conversation.
- 17 Leonid Corkin, telephone conversation with author, July 20, 1996.
- 18 *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. "Leningrad," (1980).

19 The term *perestroika* can be literally translated as "re-building." It is commonly used to refer to the period following the collapse of the U.S.S.R. to the present, and is associated with the former U.S.S.R. political leader Mikhail Gorbachev. This period has been characterized by major political, economic, and cultural transitions. The end of the "Cold War" has meant increased freedom for cultural and scholarly exchange between the former U.S.S.R. and the rest of the world.

*About the Author:* Leah Schuman graduated from Northwestern University in 1991, where she studied with Vincent Cichowicz. She continued graduate studies at the St. Petersburg State Conservatory as a student of Veniamin Margolen. She was a member of the St. Petersburg State Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Ravil Martinov, from 1991-1993; and a faculty member at the Merit Music Program (Chicago) from 1993-1996. Leah is currently in her first year as a master's student at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, where she studies with Charles Geyer.

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### *Art Farmer... continued from page 44*

**AF:** Yes, I do. I practice a lot and do the usual things like long tones, slow intervals, and tonguing. I've always had a problem with getting a clean, consistent, fast tongue technique. The intervals are very important for insurance. Jazz players work harder than classical players in regards to the amount of time the horn is against the chops in a given playing situation. The classical players have it rough because they may sit for 100 measures in a symphony concert and then have to nail some notes out of the blue. But jazz players physically play more. I find it's always better to warm up with slow, soft, long notes. Snooky (Young) told me that one day, and I've found it to be true.

**JLB:** What's on the horizon for you, and what recordings would you recommend to our readers?

**AF:** I'll be recording in June [1996] with a sextet. My most recent recording is available now called the *Meaning of Art* with Slide Hampton, and the one before that is called *The Company I Keep*.

**JLB:** We usually include a solo transcription along with our interviews. Is there a particular solo of yours that stands out in your memory?

**AF:** There's a recording on Chess Records called *Art*. I like almost every solo on it, especially *So Beats My Heart (For You)*. All the years I have been playing, I haven't played nothing that I like better than that.

**JLB:** It's been an honor talking with you and I wish you continued musical enjoyment and success.

**AF:** Thank you, John.