

LIVING MUSIC: A Glimpse into the Professional Lives of the Musicians of the KSCC

By Monica Buffington

It's 10 minutes before the start of the KSCC concert. You settle into your seat and hear the sounds of musicians warming up on stage. You watch final preparations, conversations between colleagues, oboists working on their reeds. The lights dim, the music begins, and you enjoy the art of the orchestra. Ever wonder about the people behind those glorious sounds? Join us this season as we peek inside the professional lives of the musicians of the Kennett Symphony of Chester County.

If you are ever lucky enough to have the chance to talk in depth with **Alan Start, KSCC Principal Tuba**, about his life in music, at least some part of you will undoubtedly come away from the conversation wishing you, too, played the tuba. This is not only because of all the interesting past and current activities of his musical life that you'll learn about, but also because you'll quickly draw the conclusion that he has managed to reach that place in life to which the philosopher Cicero tells us we should all aspire - that of creating a life well spent.

Al's early tuba studies came from an unorthodox source. It was the 1950's, and at the time, there was not a lot of literature written for solo tuba, so he and his teacher and mentor, Carol Humphrey, routinely listened to old recordings of the John Philip Sousa Band where Al learned to reproduce the tone and style of the musicians performing with the famous "March King". Al went on to graduate from the U.S. Navy School of Music with a tuba performance major and string bass minor. As a member of the Navy Band, he performed in the march, big band and jazz genres, and upon leaving the Navy performed with numerous traveling big bands including Tex Beneke, Les Elgart, Warren Covington and Ray McKinley. He subsequently served on the faculty of the University of Delaware from 1967-2000 where he performed with the Faculty Brass Quintet on tuba and the Faculty Jazz Sextet on string bass.

In addition to the KSCC, Al currently performs with the Lancaster Brass Band, Atlantic Brass Band, The Renaissance Brass Quintet and The Brandywiners. He arranges music for brass quintet - a must hear is his arrangement of West Side Story's "I Feel Pretty" featuring the tuba! He lists tuba solo and duet composition among his current goals.

Music influenced Al's family life as well. He met his wife, Cindy, in the summer before 10th grade while they were both performing in a local symphonic band. They've been together ever since, have recently celebrated 52 years of marriage, and prize spending time with their three children and three grandchildren. Al also enjoys working as a ham radio operator within the Weather Emergency Notification Program, and tinkering with electronics.

Now, back to that conversation you should have with Al: Even with all of his musical success over a long and varied career, you won't hear him be anything but genuinely humble and grateful for all of his experiences. After chatting with him, you'll forgive yourself for not playing the tuba, and if you haven't already, you'll be inspired to take his lead and start straight away creating experiences for your own life well spent.

Especially for you: Here's what Al would like KSCC audiences to know about Living Music:

“I have enjoyed every minute of my life in music, and would not trade it for anything. I would like to encourage KSCC audiences to bring young people along with them to concerts because when I look out in the audience and only see people my age, I begin to worry!”



Al Start, on string bass, during his Navy days, 1959