

John Eckert

Musician

John Eckert is one of the busiest freelance trumpet players on the East Coast. He can play it all: jazz, latin, pop, classical, even opera. John juggles his engagements, often working one or two recording or rehearsal sessions during a day followed by a bebop big-band gig or an evening at the Carlyle with Bobby Short later that same night.

John has played on concert stages worldwide as well as in orchestra pits of operas and Broadway shows. He is equally comfortable in the lead trumpet chair of a big band or small jazz ensemble, and enjoys playing all types of music with all kinds of musicians. "The variety just presents itself," says John, explaining how he can play Benny Goodman or Stan Kenton arrangements one day, then work with the Simon & Garfunkle Reunion Band, the Smithsonian Jazz Orchestra, Deodato's 2001 Orchestra, or the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra the next.

"I remember liking music at an early age, maybe 3 or 4," John recalls. A child of the 1940s, he grew up in New Jersey. "We had a piano and my mother played a little, but I was always whistling and singing songs I heard on the radio." At the age of ten John began studying trumpet and playing in the grade school band. A few years later when his sister, influenced by her trumpet-playing boyfriend, began bringing home jazz records, the sounds of Chet Baker, Shorty Rogers, and other proponents of the West Coast jazz sound caught his attention.

By his second year in high school, he and some friends had formed a small jazz ensemble and began playing weddings and other parties. During this time John also studied with Ed Treutel from the Julliard School of Music. "I loved playing music; that and working on my car. But my parents were academics and I was expected to go to college." When the time came, a compromise was reached. John agreed to get a liberal arts degree and his parents agreed that he could major in music. He graduated from the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester in 1961.

Instrumental education back then was primarily classical and Sid Mear, the principal trumpet player with the Rochester Philharmonic, was John's teacher. In addition to his classical studies, John found time to work three nights a week with a sextet at a local club called The Pythodd Hall. And on the weekends, he was likely to be in the Pythodd audience listening to Ray Bryant, the Mangione Brothers, or one of the other national acts that played there. Come summertime, John honed his skills playing with the house band at a resort in the Pocono's.

At Eastman, John received a superior musical education and his reading skills and

technical expertise were top-notch. But after attending a Stan Kenton clinic, John realized that he lacked the ensemble experience he would need to find steady work in New York. So after his Eastman graduation he headed to North Texas State University where the daily drill in the graduate jazz program included ensemble and big-band practice.

After two years John returned to New York, began playing locally, and continued his graduate studies at Columbia University Teacher's College. He also joined an Anny Reserve Band. By the late 1960s, Eckert was the lead trumpeter in not one, not two, but three big bands: the Buddy Merrow Orchestra, the Maynard Ferguson Orchestra, and The American Brass Quintet with whom he recorded. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Eckert is a modest man who is content just to be able to practice and play music. But modest or not, the list of leaders and ensembles with whom Eckert has worked and recorded over the last thirty years reads like a "who's who in jazz." The short list includes the bands of Toshiko Akiyoshi, Louie Bellson, Benny Carter, Buck Clayton, Benny Goodman, Junmy Heath, Woody Herman, Thad Jones/Mel Lewis, Lee Konitz, John Lewis, Gerry Mulligan, and Stan Kenton.

John has recorded with many different ensembles and orchestras, but he views recordings as past events and refers to keep his eye on the next gig. When asked what he likes best about being a musician John says, "I just love to play. I always want to go to work. I'm glad to be busy."

by Devra Hall
September 2000

JOHN ECKERT

Student Of: William Brooks Broadway Trumpeter, Educator.

Ed Treutel. «Julliard School of Music

Sid Mear 1st Trumpet. Rochester Philharmonic.

John Haynie North Texas State University

Harry Glantz: 1st Trumpet, New York Philharmonic

Carmine Caruso Clinician. New York City

Academic Background:

Leonia High School, Leonia N.J 1953-1957 H.S. Diploma

University of Rochester, Eastman. 1957-1961 B.A. in Music

North Texas State University 1961-1963 Graduate Credits

Columbia University Teachers College 1963-1964 Graduate Credits

PERFORMING EXPERIENCE

Former Member:

Buddy Morrow Orchestra 1964-66 Lead Trumpet

Maynard Ferguson Orchestra 1965-67 "

*The American Brass Quintet * 1964-69*

New York Neophonic Orchestra 1974-84 Jazz

*Ten Wheel Drive * 1969-71.*

*Deodato 2001 Orchestra * 1974-75 Jazz*

*Sam Jones - Tom Harrell Big Band * 1979-80*

*Lee Konitz; Nonet * 1971-83 Lead & Jazz*

National Jazz Ensemble 1973-76 Jazz

Sam Rivers Big Band 1974 Lead & Jazz

Sinton & Garfunkel Reunion Band" 1981-83

*Louie Bellson Big Band * 1983-86 Jazz*

*Benny Goodman Orchestra * 1985-86*

Gerry Mulligan Band 1987 Jazz

*American Jazz Orchestra * 1988-92 Jazz*

Buck Clayton Orchestra 1990-93 Lead &- Jazz

*Toshiko Akiyoshi New York Jazz Orchestra **

*Jazz Loren Schoenberg orchestra * Jazz*

Currently:

Howard Williams Jazz Orchestra Lead, Jazz

Cecilia Coleman Big Band Jazz

Lou Caputo Not So Big Band Lead, Jazz

Joris Teepe Jazz Orchestra Jazz

New York Jazz Nine Lead, Jazz