

# ITEA Journal

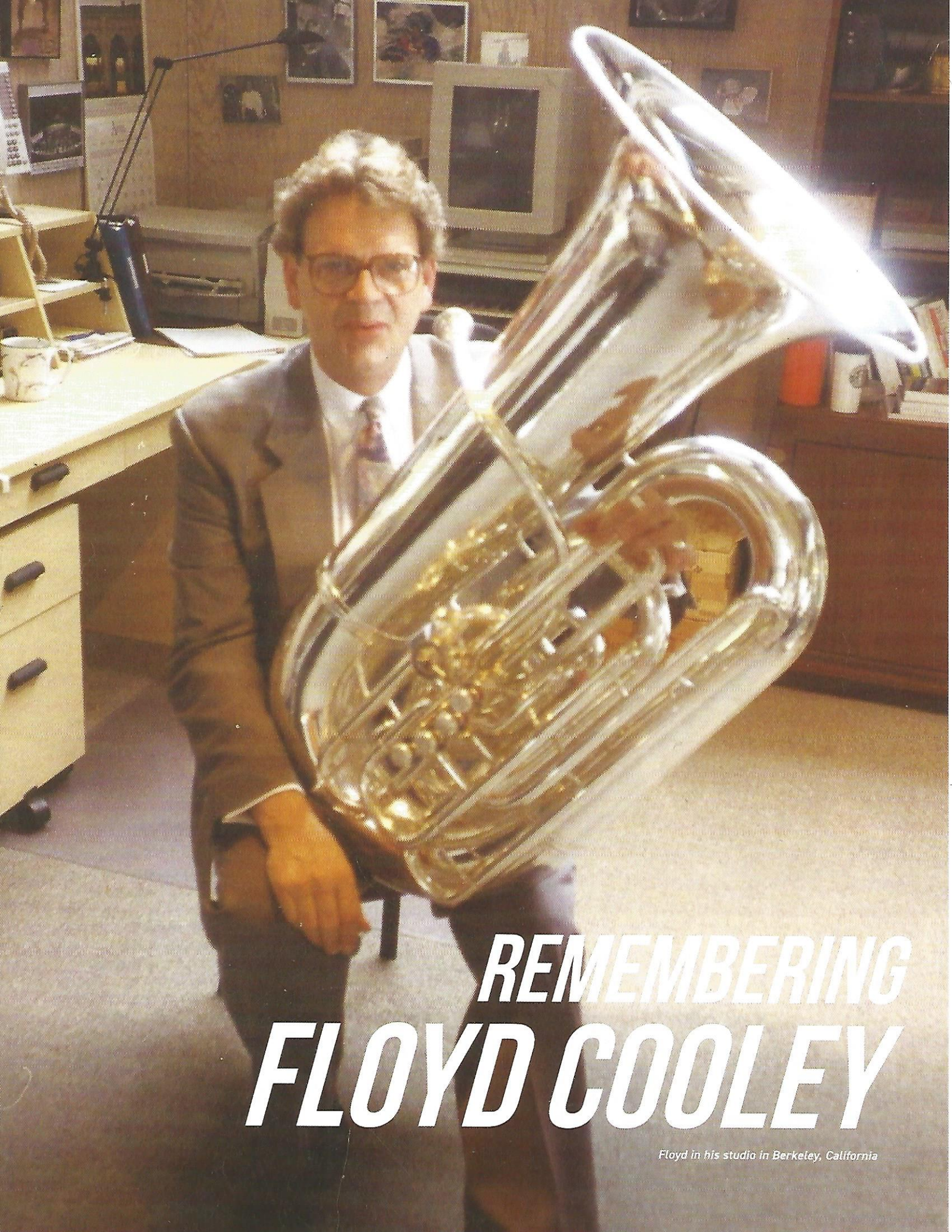
SPRING 2023

+ **ALONG THE  
AUDITION TRAIL**  
with Aaron McCalla

+ The 1st International  
Tuba Euphonium  
Symposium Workshop

Remembering  
**FLOYD  
COOLEY** |





***REMEMBERING  
FLOYD COOLEY***

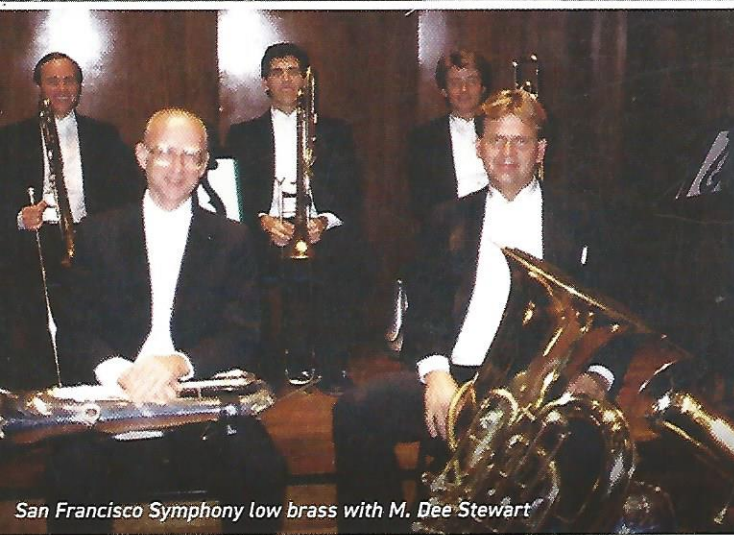
*Floyd in his studio in Berkeley, California*



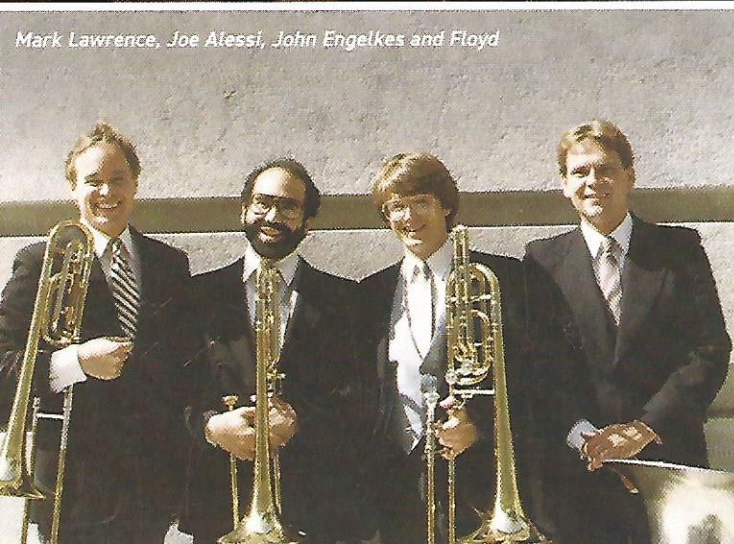
Floyd after a solo performance



William Bell and Floyd rehearsing the Rite of Spring with the Aspen Festival Orchestra in 1969



San Francisco Symphony low brass with M. Dee Stewart



Mark Lawrence, Joe Atessi, John Engelkes and Floyd

**Editor's Note:**

Many thanks to Aden Berry, Warren Deck, Brian Frederiksen, Gene Pokorny, and Andrew Miller for their contributions of memories and photos. Please visit [floydcooley.com](http://floydcooley.com) for an incredible library of over 300 live and studio recordings as well as several videos of Floyd Cooley's teaching.

Internationally known for his orchestral career, his solo recordings, and his masterful teaching, Floyd Cooley passed away in late 2022 at the age of 74. Floyd was a native of Iowa, the son of a tuba player and grew up in a home full of music. He attended the University of Kansas for one year, before pursuing and completing a performer's certificate from Indiana University where he studied with William Bell. During his time at Indiana University, he also studied with Mstislav Rostropovich, Jacob Krachmalnick, and Mark Lifschey. He had additional studies with Arnold Jacobs from 1968 to 1998.

Floyd performed at the Aspen Music Festival in the summers of 1968 and 1969, then joined the San Francisco Symphony in 1969, at the time the youngest tuba player in any major orchestra in the United States. During his 31-year tenure with the San Francisco Symphony, he recorded an incredible catalogue of commercial releases with Herbert Blomstedt for the Decca label.

Floyd appeared as a soloist with the San Francisco Symphony on two occasions, performing the Vaughan Williams Tuba Concerto in 1978 under the baton of Seiji Ozawa and in 1982 under the baton of Jahja Ling. Regarding the performance in 1978, Heuwell Tercuit of the San Francisco Chronicle wrote:

*One suspects that Cooley and Ozawa made more of the Vaughan Williams than is really on the page. Clutching his instrument like an abstract brass jewel, Cooley stood to the conductor's left. The sheer beauty of tone and technical accuracy - intonation, trills, filigree whirligigs and all that - were amazing.*

As a musician of extremely varied interests and activities, Floyd could be equally at home performing a solo recital at Carnegie Hall during the Tuba Recital Series of 1975-1976, performing with the San Francisco Tuba Quartet which he founded, or playing with the San Francisco 49ers Jazz Band and Perry's Turkey Bowl Pep Band. No matter the activity, Floyd was praised for his sensitive playing, his mellow tone, and his singing melodic line.

While he was with the San Francisco Symphony, Floyd taught at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and Stanford University. In 2001, he turned exclusively to teaching, becoming a full-time instructor at the DePaul University School of Music where he had begun teaching part-time since 1992. At DePaul, his dedication to teaching and to preparing students for a professional life in music could be seen in innumerable ways. He taught tuba lessons, producing many successful musicians, and coached brass players through his pedagogy, orchestral repertoire, and excerpts classes. In 2000, he began teaching a course entitled Studio Teaching as a Career, instructing performance majors specific skills and techniques to effectively teach in a studio setting. This course not only gave students strategies for developing a private teaching practice, but also provided them with detailed information and guidance on the art of teaching and entrepreneurship, and it was one of the most popular courses in the performance area.

At an earlier time in his life, Floyd shared:

*Music students naturally wish to study with the most skilled players. As a result, top performers consistently teach. However, it's rare to find a highly skilled musician who is also a naturally gifted teacher. I have been teaching for 45 years and I can say it was not an enjoyable beginning. My fear of teaching was very similar to my students' fear of playing in front of me. As a result, those early lessons were not especially productive or fun.*

*All studio teachers draw on their personal experiences as a student, and most pass along their teacher's style and syntax. The studio is a dynamic environment, and experimentation is the name of the game. Everyone learns differently and in order to maximize the potential of each student, teachers must recognize the best way to motivate and communicate with every individual. I strongly recommend that those who are beginning their career as a studio teacher view the Memletics personal skills inventory, an extremely useful tool to help teachers understand their strongest learning and teaching skills.*

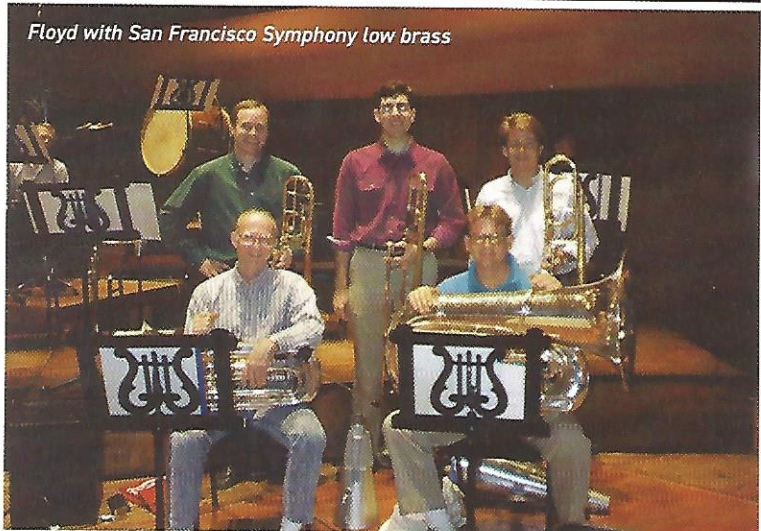
*In Studio Teaching as a Career, I teach observation skills as the base for effective teaching. Without this, necessary fundamental teachers' directions are more like a blast of scattershot than the pierce of a silver slug. We all know from personal experience that a teacher's ability to inspire has a direct relationship to the students' desire and ability to learn. With astute observation and musical skills, today's teachers can be the best ever.*

Upon learning about Floyd's passing, the DePaul University School of Music shared:

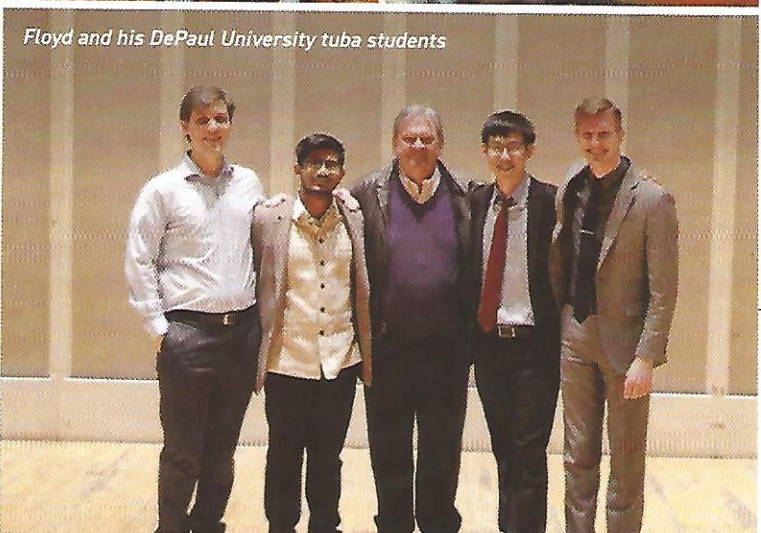
*Cooley was more than the heart of the tuba program; his contributions to the school were enormous. He was instrumental in bringing recognition and renown to DePaul's brass program, demonstrating a level of excellence that inspired his students and colleagues. His influence continues to resonate throughout the brass studies areas following his retirement from teaching in June 2022 after 30 years of excellent service to the DePaul community.*



Charlie Vernon and Floyd



Floyd with San Francisco Symphony low brass



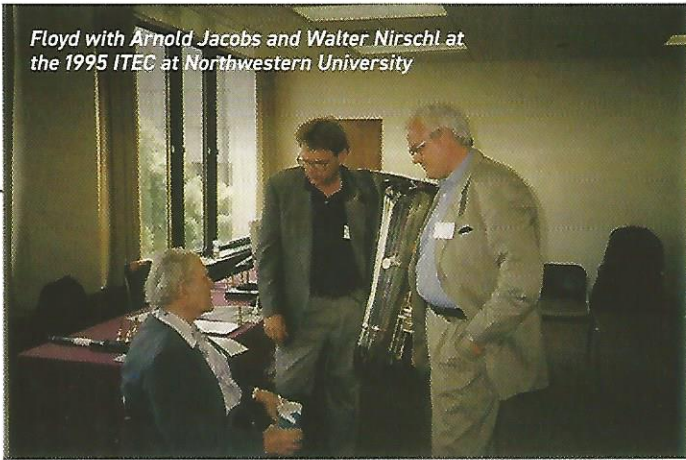
Floyd and his DePaul University tuba students

Floyd with DePaul brass students



## Nirschl York Tuba

While playing with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for the 1992–1993 season, Floyd took measurements of the vintage York 6/4 CC tuba played by Arnold Jacobs during his 44-year tenure with the CSO. These measurements were taken with the help of Tom Curski which were then shared with Walter Nirschl of Geretsried, Germany and used to begin the design for the new prototype instrument in 1994. This handmade instrument featured a .750 bore, four pistons and one rotary valve, and a bell diameter of 19 and 7/8 inches. The first prototype was shown at the Frankfurt Musikmesse in March 1995 and later at the International Tuba Euphonium Conference at Northwestern University in June 1995. In 1996, the first three Nirschl York tubas were sold to Simon Styles, Richard Nahatzki, and Floyd Cooley. Many professional orchestral tubists have performed on the Nirschl York model in the nearly 30 years since.



Floyd with Arnold Jacobs and Walter Nirschl at the 1995 ITEC at Northwestern University

## Jabba the Hutt

Floyd recorded the Jabba the Hutt solo with John Williams in the winter of 1990 at the Skywalker Ranch soundstage in Marin County, California. This was the first recording made there, and it was a fitting kickoff for the impressive post-production studio. The sound recording engineer was Shawn Walker, a tuba player himself, who knew exactly where to place the microphone so that the solo would sound great on the recording.

Cooley shared:

*I performed the solo once before with Mr. Williams at a Pops concert with the SFS and had plenty of notice before the recording date. We recorded it in just two takes! I chose my Alexander F tuba to represent Jabba, and if you listen carefully, you can hear it on other cuts – cleverly disguising itself as a CC tuba. When I first listened to the recording, it was a good reminder that we control the sound we make; it's not the instrument. Although it's worth noting that if you listen to the entire set, you can also hear me playing a Holton CC and Hirsbrunner 4/4 rotary tuba. You can hear the recording on Sony Classics SK45957, Star Wars Trilogy.*



The recording can be heard here ▶

## The Romantic Tuba

Floyd Cooley recorded three solo albums, *The Romantic Tuba* on Crystal Records, *A Schumann Fantasy* on Summit Records, and *Friends in Low Places* on Albany Records. While all of these were superb examples of Floyd's incredible solo playing, perhaps the most influential of these was *The Romantic Tuba*, which was recorded in the early 1980's with Naomi Chaitkin Nimmo on piano and harpsichord. This album featured Floyd's transcriptions of J.S. Bach's Sonata for Flute in E flat Major, Johannes Brahms' Vier Ernste Gesange, Earl Zindar's Trigon, and Armand Russell's Suite Concertante, and it received exceptional critical acclaim.

The Romantic Tuba, a digital remastering of previous recordings, is an example of Floyd Cooley's musical versatility... he demonstrates an emotional approach to music and his instrument and displays the tone quality of a fine singer. – *The Instrumentalist*, October 1996

This excellent recording, a reissue of an early 80's LP, offers beautiful tuba playing in some unusual instrumental combinations. It's not often that we get to hear tuba accompanied by harpsichord, and if you wonder why we would want to, you should hear Floyd Cooley play Bach. This is one of the nicest brass recordings of Bach anywhere – Cooley's style is buoyant, expressive, and impeccable – *American Record Guide*, September/October 1995

Solo tuba part to Jabba the Hutt, autographed by John Williams

This record has always been one of my favorites. It was originally released on the Avant label, but now has been reissued by Crystal Records, so perhaps it's time for a second look. Floyd Cooley got the job with the San Francisco Symphony when he was just 21 years old. He's one of this country's finest orchestral tuba players. What's unusual is that he is one of the finest performers of solo and chamber music as well. In this recording we find delicate transcriptions juxtaposed with brilliant modern works creating one very fine record album.

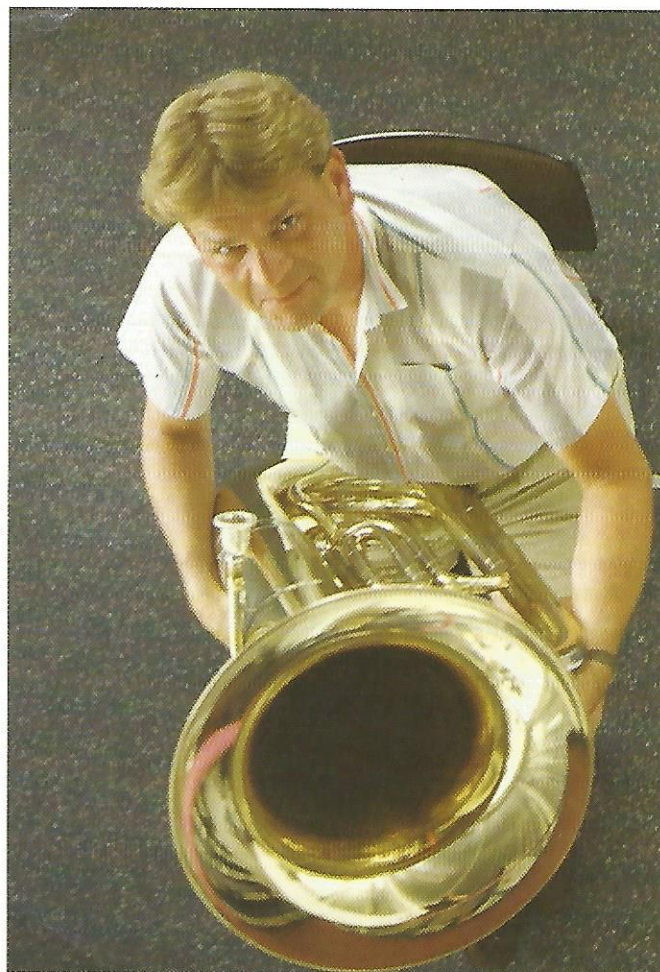
Side one contains two transcriptions, the first being the *E flat Major Flute Sonata* of Johan Sebastian Bach. For anyone doubting the agility of the tuba, look no further than this performance. Cooley flies up and down the range of the instrument with the deftness and delicacy of Rampal. The balance with the harpsicord is perfect and the phrasing and ornamentation is well throughout. It becomes obvious listening to Cooley play, that Bach must have had the tuba in mind when he wrote the *Sonata*; it is tailor-made for the instrument. That Bach had no tuba to write for is made incidental by Cooley's performance.

The other work on side one is Johannes Brahms' Four Serious Songs. Here Cooley is at his romantic best. This is vocal music, and there is no better instrument to interpret vocal style than the tuba. Cooley sings through the work with charged emotion and exquisite phrasing. His control is awesome. It is important in interpreting vocal music that the spirit of the text not be lost even though no words are sung. Cooley captures the desolate spirit of Brahms' last work; one can imagine his plaintive song "Oh Death, How Bitter".

Side two brings us *Trigon*, a work for unaccompanied tuba composed in 1971 by Earl Zindars. *Trigon* is *tour de force*, a virtuoso showpiece which exploits every element of the tubist's art. In meeting the challenge, Cooley is a wizard. The first movement is slow, brooding; the mood is reflective. This moves into a blazing display of technique, leaping through octaves with ease. There is an underlying thread of tonality in all of this, made evident by the last movement; a four-part chorale based on an American Easter melody. Cooley dubs the parts to create his own quartet.

The final work on this recording is for tuba with woodwind quintet. *Suite Concertante* by Armand Russell is a jaunty, tuneful piece which features the tuba in concertante style as soloist with the accompaniment of the woodwinds. While the tuba doesn't often blend well in works with woodwind quintet, the concertante style separates the solo from the ensemble enough to make it sound well. Once again Cooley amazes with his nimble-fingered dexterity.

Floyd Cooley is obviously one of the foremost practitioners of his craft. He should be recording more records of both transcriptions and original works. Those who are fortunate enough to live in the San Francisco area must hear Mr. Cooley play every week; perhaps it's time for another enlightening album for the rest of us. – *TUBA Journal*, Volume 11, No. 3, Winter 1984



## TRIBUTES

### Gene Pokorny

It was in the early 1980s when I met up with Floyd in San Francisco while seeing my college buddy, George Russell. We were talking about “big” tubas. Until that time, I considered my Miraphone 186 a large tuba because it was certainly bigger than models 185 or a 184, the main tubas used by my teachers Tommy Johnson and Roger Bobo, respectively. The Miraphone line were the instruments we (in Los Angeles) were steeped in. We had no interest in big, woofy-sounding tubas with little clarity. The Miraphone 188s and 190s were relatively new and I was still OK with my 186. However, Floyd convinced me to take his 5/4 Holton back with me to Salt Lake City where I was playing in the Utah Symphony at the time. I played that instrument as if it was a Miraphone 186. I would not back off blowing until I felt the resistance coming back to me (which was the way I played back then). I remember performing Shostakovich: Festive Overture with that instrument in concert and had the performance recorded in the hall. It was HUGE and completely took over the orchestra! In fact, I think I left the opening fanfare of that piece as an outgoing message on my telephone answering machine for a while. In any case, with that one simple action of letting me borrow that large instrument, Floyd opened up my professional playing life to “big tubas.” I shall be thankful for that introduction.



Floyd with Gene Pokorny and Sergio Carolino

We collaborated a year ago in bringing Sergio Carolino to Chicago. Both Floyd and I personally funded bringing in Sergio since DePaul University and Northwestern University did not fund those activities (while Roosevelt University did). We were to have dinner this past autumn, but, regrettably, that never happened.

I appreciate having had Floyd in my life.

### Andrew Miller

I was fortunate to be in my 4th year at DePaul University when Floyd was invited to sub in the Chicago Symphony (and teach at DePaul) for the year. Musically, it turned out to be one of the best things to ever happen to me. Subsequently, I stuck around for grad school, and Floyd continued to be our teacher.

The last 10 minutes of our lessons almost always ended the same way: I'd get him to tweak my tone until I received a Floyd-approved “now that's a good sound”, then I'd run to the Wenger practice rooms to cut and paste the sound before I'd lose it. I needed to establish what a good tone was in those horrible rooms!

One of my favorite moments of wisdom from Floyd was prior to my attendance at the NOI summer festival. I asked him what to do should I encounter a bass trombonist who might play a little too, um, overzealous. His advice has been my philosophy ever since: just sit back and make the biggest, most beautiful *tuba* sound you can make; they can't sound like us, so there won't be any issues. However, if you try to “compete” with their sound by attempting to sound like them, you'll always lose.

And beautiful big sound was what he did! One night, a fellow tuba student and I were at a CSO concert and were dumbfounded by the sound he was creating. It just *enveloped* Orchestra Hall! We busted in on him teaching the next day and demanded he play a lick or two at the exact dynamic level so we could hear up close what he had done the night before. What he played was simply big, beautiful tone without tons of volume. We couldn't believe it. He laughed his hearty laugh and said that it “might” have been a tad louder due to the excitement of performance, but not much.

While in grad school, I'll never forget driving home one night after teaching in the suburbs. One of the local classical radio stations was playing Bruckner 9, but I had no idea what orchestra was performing it. Once I heard the tuba, I said to myself “I don't care who that is, *that's* the sound I want to emulate forever!” When it ended, I was surprised it was a live performance of the San Francisco Symphony; I was floored that it was my current teacher! I quickly bugged Floyd for a copy of the performance. He was happy to oblige but was too modest to notice it was such a serious life-changing moment for me.

Every time I pick up the tuba, I try to recall and emulate his tone and musicianship. I will always fall short.



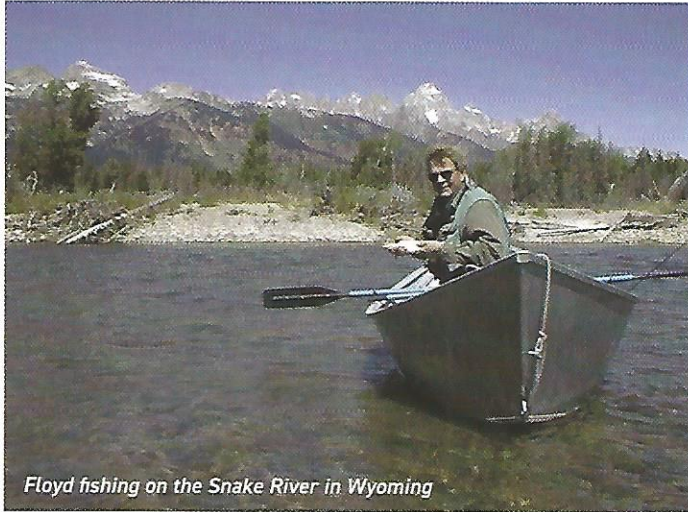
Floyd with Daryl Johnson at the Kentucky Derby

### Brian Frederiksen Windsong Press

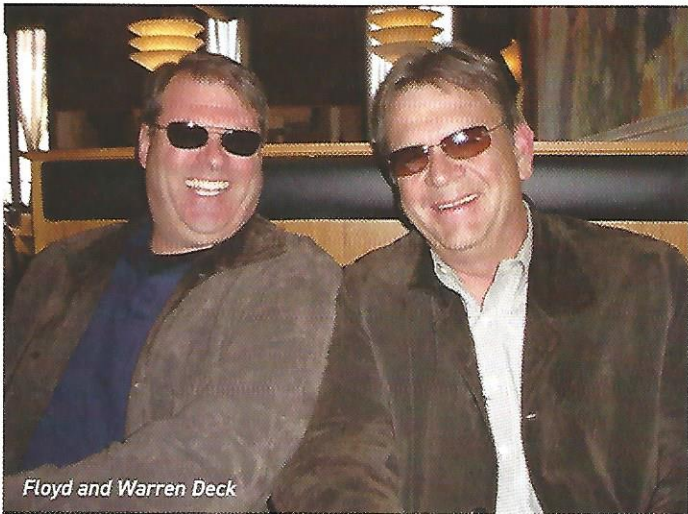
Floyd's career spanned worldwide but was primarily in two cities, San Francisco and Chicago. I met him at Arnold Jacobs' studio while he was playing with the Chicago Symphony in 1993. For the next thirty years I worked with Floyd on various projects. Once a year I took over his Brass Pedagogy class so students

could hear much of what he had taught them directly through videos of Mr. Jacobs. I also helped him with his computer presentations and continue to distribute his Tuba Classics music.

In January 2022, due to the covid pandemic, Floyd could not leave his home in Portugal but wanted to update his webpage. Over a few months we worked on this, and he stated to me that this was his legacy. He shared recordings, teaching videos, his work on the Nirschl/York tuba and photos from his professional and personal life - what a legacy! Little did I know that this would be one of Floyd's final projects. I encourage everyone to visit Floyd at [floydcooley.com](http://floydcooley.com).



*Floyd fishing on the Snake River in Wyoming*



*Floyd and Warren Deck*

### Warren Deck

I first met Floyd when he came through Aspen for a visit in 1974. John Stevens and I were fellows at the Music Festival and John introduced us. Floyd had been in the San Francisco Symphony for a few years and he was kind enough to sit with me and play duets. As a 20-year-old, that session rocked my world. He sounded amazing, and I vividly remember thinking if this is how good you have to be to win a job, I have a long way to go and had better get to work. From that day going forward, Floyd has been nothing but an inspiration to me. Every time I had the opportunity to be around him, I was reminded of the same thought I had the first day I met him. When he performed, I came away in awe of all the beautiful elements of his playing that I needed to work on. Later, we became friends and shared several masterclasses.

True to form, when he taught, the effectiveness of his words left me thinking of what I needed to work on in my own teaching. I'm going to miss my friend and the inspiration he offered. I'm grateful for the time I had with him and for all he taught me. I'm also thankful for the legacy of his recordings as well as his teaching, as demonstrated in his magnificent and successful students around the world today.

Floyd dedicated himself to teaching students through his impactful pedagogy and by demonstrating an extraordinary level of musical excellence that produced so many successful professional musicians. Floyd Cooley's influence on countless students will be felt in ensembles worldwide for generations.

Catalogue of recordings:



Floyd Cooley's recital at the First National Tuba-Euphonium Symposium-Workshop at the University of Illinois in 1975:



Floyd Cooley's recital at the Second National Tuba-Euphonium Symposium-Workshop at the University of North Texas in 1980:



Floyd Cooley's recital at the International Tuba-Euphonium Conference at the University of Texas at Austin in 1986:



Floyd Cooley performing the Vaughan Williams Tuba Concerto with the San Francisco Symphony under the baton of Seiji Ozawa in 1978:



Floyd Cooley with the San Francisco Symphony performing Nielsen Symphony No. 4 with Herbert Blomstedt:



Floyd Cooley with the San Francisco Symphony performing Brucker Symphony No. 4 with Herbert Blomstedt:



Floyd Cooley with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra performing Prokofiev Symphony No. 5 with Leonard Slatkin (live recording):

