

Mel Broiles

Biography

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The trumpet world lost one of its most influential personalities of the 20th century on August 26, 2003. Mel Broiles learned to play the trumpet in second grade in Salina, Kansas. In his later school years (1940s), after moving to California, he played in dance bands around Hollywood and Los Angeles where he listened to the music of Charlie Parker, Howard McGee and others.

In 1950, Broiles entered The Juilliard School where he was a student of William Vacchiano. His education was interrupted with an invitation to perform with The Symphony of the Air (NBC Symphony) for a tour of the Far East. This three-month tour entertained servicemen in Japan, Korea, and many other countries in that part of the world.

On his return, Mr. Broiles did considerable work freelancing in New York City. He played many studio dates and Broadway shows, and was the brass coach for the National Orchestra, a student training orchestra in NYC.

From 1951 to 1955 Mel Broiles served with the West Point Military Academy Band in the United States Army. He spoke fondly of his time with this organization and told John Sartoris, a later member of the band who studied with him, that his playing improved dramatically during his four years at West Point. The section during Broiles' tenure included Robert Nagel, Frank Kaderabek, Thomas Stevens, and many other fine players.

In 1956 he was engaged by the Metropolitan Opera to play trumpet in the stage band. He left in 1957 to play a season with the Philadelphia Orchestra. During this time he was married to Teresa Yergo; their daughter, Karen, was born a year later. He returned to the Metropolitan Opera in 1958, where he remained as principal trumpet until his retirement in July of 2001.

In 1971 Mel Broiles was appointed to the faculty at The Juilliard School where he taught for more than thirty years. He was prolific as a composer for trumpet ensemble, brass ensemble, and he wrote many etude books for trumpet. A library of his music is being established by Fred Mills, professor of trumpet at the University of Georgia, Athens.

Mel Broiles' interests went beyond trumpet. He was an accomplished pilot, and owned a Cessna single-wing four-seat aircraft. He also excelled as a photographer, using many sophisticated still cameras, movie cameras, and various other photographic techniques to record the world and the people around him.

Source: Karen and Teresa Broiles, compiled by Gary Mortenson

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