

Abe Torchinsky

Biography

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Abe Torchinsky, a native of Philadelphia began playing tuba in a Boy Scout band. In 1935 he began taking lessons with a young student at the Curtis Institute named Arnold Jacobs. By the time he was in high school, he was performing professionally on tuba and bass, even playing with Isham Jones Orchestra. He enrolled at Curtis in 1940 and studied with Philip Donatelli, the tubist of the Philadelphia Orchestra until the wind department at the Institute was shut down at the beginning of World War II. Mr. Torchinsky played in the Southern Symphony Orchestra and with the National Symphony Orchestra for one season (1942-1943). He then moved to New York City for concentrated study with William J. Bell. He performed in the original cast productions of Billy Rose's *Seven Lively Arts*, and Rogers and Hammerstein's *Carousel* and *Allegro*, and was in the cast of the movie *Carnegie Hall*. He performed with the Cities Service Band of America under Paul LaValle, and the NBC Symphony with Arturo Toscanini (1946-1949). Torchinsky joined the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1949, and served as principal tuba until 1972. Mr. Torchinsky and trombonist Henry Charles Smith hosted a radio program about the orchestra. After retiring from the Philadelphia Orchestra, Torchinsky became a member of the faculty of the University of Michigan (1972-1989). A Philadelphia Brass Ensemble recording, *The Glorious Sound of Brass* earned a Grammy in 1967. The Philadelphia Brass Ensemble's recording of the *Antiphonal Music of Gabrieli* with the Chicago and Cleveland Brass Ensembles won a Grammy in 1969. The Philadelphia Brass Ensemble as soloists were also nominated in 1976 for a two album set of Hindemith's sonatas for brass instruments with pianist Glenn Gould. A less-familiar, early recording called *Catch the Brass Ring* by the Philadelphia Brass Ensemble, masquerading as the "Torchy Jones Quintet" had the distinction of being pulled from distribution by Columbia after Eugene Ormandy objected to orchestra members making a "jazz" recording. His scholarly efforts in publishing full parts to orchestral works were an innovation and a vast improvement for students over previously available excerpt books.

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