

VINCENT CICHOWICZ ON ARNOLD JACOBS

BY LUIS LOUBRIEL

In the winter of 2004 I met with my former trumpet teacher, Vincent Cichowicz, to talk about the years he spent as a colleague of Arnold Jacobs. Our conversation began with the first meeting Cichowicz had with Jacobs, with the lessons Cichowicz had with Renold Schilke, and it ended with the discussion of general brass playing concepts.

Vincent Cichowicz was born and raised in Chicago where he received his early music training. He went on to study with Renold Schilke, played with the Houston Symphony,

the Grant Park Symphony, and in 1952 he became a member on the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Cichowicz taught at Northwestern University from 1959 and became professor of trumpet in 1974.

Today Cichowicz is retired, as Professor Emeritus, from full time teaching but stays active as music director of the Millar Brass Ensemble and by giving master classes in the United States and in Canada.

Loubriel: *I know that you studied with Arnold Jacobs early on in your career.*

Cichowicz: Right, I had three or four lessons but most of my experience with him was in the orchestra. When we went on tour we often spent a lot of time together just talking so in a sense it was not so much actually taking lessons but instead it was a sharing of ideas.

At the beginning I was very skeptical of Jacobs' ideas. I told him that and he said, "Well, yes but in order to prove or disprove you have to give it an honest trial." I agreed and I said, "Absolutely, it is the only way to make a decision." Often at the beginning of something that you do not fully comprehend there is no way you can make an intelligent judgment. After working with it over a considerable period of time, and keeping in mind certain perceptions, I was convinced. It answered a lot of questions that in my previous ways of going about my work never seemed to be fully solved.

Loubriel: *What part of it did you understand?*

Cichowicz: I did understand that so much of what I did was instinctive and, except for a few things, we did not have to do any serious changes in what I was doing. Instead, we needed to clarify why, as a trumpet player, one has a good day or a bad day. What is the difference between those two?

Many times when you really understand principles properly you find that there is less of a deviation. So it's really a question of making a discovery and saying, "Yes, there is a practical way of going about this." Certainly in teaching you must have the basis for what you are trying to do in order to present it to someone. It's important to have a clear understanding of principles. You can't just say, "Okay, make a beautiful sound." The student might say, "I'd like to but I can't." Then you have to go into the principles of what goes into making a good sound. If you don't have a conception of a good sound you can't get to it through mechanical means alone. You must have a clear image in your head, and then you can apply the technical aspects to achieve your goal. If there is something that is not functioning correctly, you can take steps to correct your approach.

Loubriel: *It sounds like a lot of psychological as well as technical input went into that approach.*

Cichowicz: Absolutely. Both internal and external psychology is required in thinking on these levels. The other aspect I found interesting in terms of conceptual ideas was the Alexander Method. There is a book about it that talks about "end gain." "End gain" is about the "making of music" part going step by step. Well, how do I get there? You have to have steps to get there. On the other hand, children learn to speak without any instruction but instead are guided by what they hear.

Loubriel: *You are right. I remember learning to talk when I was young and listening to my sister pronouncing the letter "r" and trying to imitate the sound of it. Now, it is interesting that the process of learning to play the trumpet is so similar.*

I would be curious to know that when compared to the teaching approaches of the 1950s and 1960s, was Jacobs' teaching different?

Cichowicz: I would say definitely different. All you have to do is to go back to some of the trumpet method books of this period and you will find that many are extraordinarily analytical. I make the comparison with going to the doctor because you have a temperature, so it's obvious that you are sick. If all he does is to give you aspirin, or give you some ice to lower your temperature, then he is not a good doctor. A good doctor would say, "What's making your temperature rise?" I have to find out in order to deal with that. It is the same thing with the theories of the 1950s. When I studied with Renold Schilke, for example, he said, "Make your stomach hard." I tried that and it was terrible. So I asked, "Why is he telling me to do this?" It occurred to me that if you play a high "C" forte you would find that your stomach area gets hard. However, you can't start out that way. It has to be a result of what you are doing rather than something that you begin with.

It was a big discovery for me to find out that people were trying to analyze the symptoms, or the outer things, in trumpet playing. So they would say, "This person plays beautiful high Cs" and they found that their abdominal muscles were firm so they said, "Well, the tighter you make it the better it



Vincent Cichowicz and Arnold Jacobs touring Europe with the CSO, 1971

is." Rather than saying, "No, that is just the result of the exertion that you have to apply to play that high C."

Loubriel: *It is easy to see the danger in the approach that was in use.*

Cichowicz: Yes, it can be very dangerous.

Loubriel: *It's so easy to get the muscles to work against each other.*

Cichowicz: Yes. It becomes isometric so nothing gets done. It is two groups of muscles fighting each other. So those ideas

are the kind of things that, as you begin to understand this, you begin to work at what Arnold used to call "the process." When I studied with him there was a much larger concentration on wind than on song. Later he started to move with more emphasis towards the song. And yet, without that wind part it can't evolve into the song. It just can't evolve without that. In the years I taught I could not dismiss either. The two had to be

working together in order to achieve results. You could not say, "Here is a good sound. Imitate that." Because if your breathing is corrupted there is no way you can achieve your goal.

Loubriel: *Yes. The correct breathing has to set you up.*

Cichowicz: Exactly.

Loubriel: *In your own playing, did you find some of the things*

Jacobs talked about to be helpful?

Cichowicz: Yes. As I began to understand the system and to find my way through the logic of what he was teaching then some of the questions I had about playing were much easier to deal with. Also, they were more successful than the path I was following before. I say that because it was very fashionable at the time to say that if you had any playing problems it had to be the lip. It had to be: too big, too little, or placement. As I look back I think how silly that was because sound does not

depend too much on the physical shape of the lip. Also, you can hear and see in all of the successful players how wonderful they sound but how different they look.

Loubriel: *It sounds like they were using a behaviorist approach to teaching.*

Cichowicz: As I said before, during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s everything was on the lips. That's the temperature.

That's the fever because everything you feel in your playing you feel in your lip. You don't feel it anywhere else. You know it is not working so it is easy to draw the conclusion that there is something wrong in the lips it is wrong in the lip because something else is not functioning correctly.

Loubriel: *Psychology is such a young science that makes me*

think that the books written, such as William James' *Talks to Teachers on Psychology* or Percy Buck's *Psychology for Musicians*, did not get to the general public until the second part of the twentieth century; so they did not have time to absorb the information and apply it. For that reason I can see why the older teachers tried to find the answers in the physical aspects and not in the psychological aspects of playing. However, I know from conversations I had with Jacobs that he was familiar with most psychology books I mentioned to him.

Cichowicz: You know he had a deep interest in medicine so he obviously started to study, I assume, medical books and then as you go from that connection into behavior you have to go into psychology. I say that because the study of medical books does not explain muscle function by simply saying, "this muscle is attached here and does this, etc." That does not give you enough of the picture unless you understand how the brain makes the application. So if I pick this tape recorder up I am not telling my arm "now, contract the finger, the elbow, etc."

Loubriel: It's the study of motivation.

Cichowicz: Yes. It's what I want to do so you begin to apply the same process as in so many other activities. Which reminds me when I give lectures and master classes for people who have never studied with me, I give them an outline. One of the topics that come up is tongue position. Well, I say, "it's language and whenever you say 't' it's the same position for tonguing. With the vowel it becomes 'too' so your tongue does not need to be educated to do that." It simply imitates. When you are a baby you hear the sound and you imitate the sound. So it is the same with articulation. It is the same kind of process. Then you have to hear the characteristic sound of the articulation you want: sforzando, normal, something in between or perhaps legato... the shape of the syllable changes based on the musical instruction that the brain is sending.

Loubriel: Just like the acquisition of language.

Cichowicz: I think it is very much like language. For example, foreign people who speak English as a second language can speak it very well but often have the flavor of their native tongue in their accent. I think that is a marvelous thing. It is like cuisine. You do not want everything to sound the same way and the little flavors of your heritage are important.

Now, from whom did that come about? Because you heard your parents and siblings speak and that is the way you picked up the accent. The accent also is what gives your identity so you do not simply conform to what the majority of the population sounds like.

Loubriel: It is interesting to note what you are saying because today we have so many people sounding the same.

Cichowicz: That is very true and now that you bring that up I think we are losing something. However, I also think that everything is a series of compromises. When I was growing up

there were more players with an individual character. So you could tell this person from that person and that is harder to do now. If you listen to orchestras now they all play wonderfully but I miss the individuality.

Somebody like Mager, who had this individual sound, did not sound like Vacchiano or Ghittala. Today it seems like there is a general bureau of standards.

Loubriel: So as you started to work in the late 1940s did some of the ideas you heard from Jacobs influence your teaching?

Cichowicz: Well, it is hard to quantify or qualify as you go through your life and say, "I had this or that influence." Like I said about Schilke's teaching, I did not apply playing with a hard stomach directly but it made me curious as to why was he telling me to do that.

Schilke was very inspirational in so many other ways and I learned other things from him that were very valuable. Prior to Schilke

I had studied with another man who was a cornetist and who also was my first trumpet teacher. I learned a lot from him. His name was George Albrecht. He saw me playing with an embouchure, like the old French horn players who played in the low register, and did not change it because I played everything he gave me well. It was when I went to Schilke that he helped me through an embouchure change. That was a difficult year but it was also another period of time to look into what I was doing to satisfy my curiosity.

My teaching grew out of this sense of curiosity. I wanted to understand. I wanted to say, "Why does this person play so well and why do I have difficulties with this or that." Reading as much as I could I had to decide what made sense and what did not. It was a whole process and like I said, Jacobs was clearer than most people about the function, teaching, and the principles of brass playing. He had medical knowledge and vocal experience so those two things combined enabled him to get away from the brass part. He was able to say, "Now, how does all of this tie together?"

Loubriel: So in your conversations with him what kind of things did you talk about?

Cichowicz: We talked about many things. Sometimes we talked about politics and we exchanged ideas. I would also ask him questions about things and he would give very logical

answers that appealed to me because he gave you the reasons why. So that was part of the learning process. When I got into the orchestra I was 24 years old so listening to all those great musicians and working with all of those great conductors was a learning experience.

Loubriel: Were some of the ideas you discussed with Jacobs helpful in dealing with the performance situations you found on the concert stage?

Cichowicz: My exposure to Jacobs refined and clarified many things. It was not a dramatic change in what I was doing but there was deeper thinking involved. Just to get the idea, for example, that respiration was critical in brass playing and understanding why instead of just saying, "I took a breath and

"Jacobs was clearer than most people about the function, teaching, and the principles of brass playing. He had medical knowledge and vocal experience..."

that's all there is to it." It is a combination of how you employ that with what you are doing plus the musical thought you are trying to project. It was a slow process and for me it was simply to stimulate new ideas.

Like I said, I had three or four lessons with him in the beginning before I got into the orchestra and he did not persuade me at that time. It was not until I gave it some time that it started to have a very big effect in changing my thinking about how things work.

Loubriel: *It sounds like it was instinctual for you to follow.*

Cichowicz: Most of it was and as a consequence I could not understand it completely. So this gave me a perception, not only to understand it, but also to improve what I was doing as well... it made me more effective as a teacher.

Loubriel: *So once you started teaching college students what kinds of things did you see?*

Cichowicz: I think the same sort of things one sees in a lot of students over a period of time. It would be the ideas on connecting technique with making music. Then the dimension I added, to what I learned from Arnold, was special attention to the choice of materials. Because it is one thing to say, "I want to play the Haydn." Well, "Are you ready to play the Haydn?" Then it is important to have a series of programs or plans one can use to move the student from one point to another. Then you can play the Haydn. So I spent a lot of time trying to construct a study plan. Also trying to fit it to the individual player and not just to say, "Okay, this is the way and you have to fit into it." The individual needs to know what the goal is and where they need to start. Not everybody starts in the same place.

When I joined Northwestern they had a curriculum in the catalog that said that in the second year you had to play the Haydn and on the third year you play this and that. I said, "I can't do this. I refuse to have a set curriculum." I say that because not everybody is ready at the same time. Besides, we will cover most of the important pieces in the repertoire in the four years of study. If there is something we missed I hope that by then the understanding of music and of their instrument will help them to proceed by themselves.

So if you have five or six solos listed in the catalog and you are scheduled to play those, even if you are not ready to play them, I don't think that is a good teaching practice or education. I would much rather say, "Don't worry so much about the pieces, let's focus our attention on what we are doing. What are the musical materials that you need to develop? From that let's evolve into the repertoire?"

Loubriel: *They had the curricula like they were textbooks.*

Cichowicz: Yes. Exactly.

Loubriel: *I think I read somewhere that Jacobs saw more trumpet players than any of the other instruments of the brass family. I was curious; do you think that trumpet players run into more trouble than trombone or tuba players?*

Cichowicz: Well, I would imagine there are a number of things you could say. I think there are more trumpet players than tuba players or trombone players. Once Jacobs' reputation got away from just being a tuba teacher I think more peo-

ple began to go to his studio.

When he first began, in the middle 1940s, he taught tuba and maybe trombone and not much else. Then more people began to talk about his particular theories and gifts. So if it was useful for the tubists why could it not be useful to trumpet players? Then more players got curious and took lessons from him to get another perspective. I myself, even after many years at the university would say, "We are having many difficulties here so maybe you should go to Jacobs and see if we can get this point more effectively." So there was that kind of exchange. So then some would ask, "Can I take a lesson with Mr. Jacobs?" and I would say, "Of course, because he can state his ideas in his own way." Even though the facts are the same maybe the manner in which they are presented is more effective. Understanding that I do not think you would hear anything from Jacobs that is all that different except that he is going to say it in his own way and it might work better for you.

In some instances there were some reversals of Jacobs' approach. There were some students who were doing what I call "tuba breathing" and I said, "No, you can't use that for the trumpet. There is a modification there that needs to happen." Other than that we had no conflicts. He would occasionally send people to me as well, especially if he felt he had gotten his point across and the student needed more of a trumpet player's viewpoint.

Loubriel: *I see that in my students as well. They take such a large breath that they end up displacing everything.*

Cichowicz: Right, and they take much too much air. You have to realize that with the tuba you have different requirements in the sense that there is much less resistance in the instrument resulting in a really fantastic flow rate. So you have to have tremendous capacity to be able to sustain a musical phrase on the tuba. On the trumpet we have tremendous resistance and much more intensity to the way the breath is used when compared to the tuba.

If you take Jacobs' experiments done at the University of Chicago where he had the various members of the brass family play a middle "C" you find in the results that the playing efforts were the same in all of the instruments. As the trumpet goes up from that low "C" the physical effort always goes up not just by degree, but by significant percentages. So when we play a high "C" it is an experience that you can only get by playing a high "C" on the trumpet and not a high "C" on the French horn or the trombone.

Another interesting thing for me was the "wind patterns." That came about by watching flute players. I observed that of all of the wind instruments, the one that seemed to have the best breathing was the flute. I thought, "What is it? Are they smarter than we are? I don't think so. Maybe they are taught in a better way." So I talked to Wally Kujala (former piccolo/flutist with the Chicago Symphony) and I asked, "I have been watching your students play and their breathing is so smooth and direct. How do you teach them respiration?" He said, "I just tell them to take a breath and blow." That was it. The flute is the one instrument that is outside the embouchure so the brain has a much stronger connection of not just blowing



L - R: Frank Kaderabek, Vincent Cichowicz, and Adolph Harseth performing with the CSO, 1963

against something but out into something. So, I thought, "How could I apply this to trumpet playing so the player could experience taking the breath and blowing freely without having to worry about notes or about embouchure." So I came up with the wind patterns.

Loubriel: Right. You used those often when I studied with you.

Cichowicz: Yes, and the idea that once the body experiences that, once you put the mouthpiece in front of the embouchure there is resistance of course, but you will have the im-

pression of what the release must be like. As soon as you hold back a little on the breath there are compromises in what you are doing. Whereas if you take a breath and blow, without the trumpet, there are no inhibitions and everything is very direct. Now you say, "Take the instrument and get as close to that as you can."

Loubriel: I always found the "wind patterns" to be the connection between the things Jacobs was teaching about breathing and trumpet playing. The "wind patterns" really focused everything.

Cichowicz: When I first started using that, to be quite honest, I was kind of amazed at how effective it was. I knew it would help and up to that point I had used quite a bit of mouthpiece practice if something was not working properly. I would say, "Play it on the mouthpiece." However, a little inhibition would still be there. Something was needed that would take away of all those concerns, whether the note is going to be right or the embouchure is going to be set. So I said, "This is what the basic breath should be." Over the years, even with very advanced players, it worked very well.

Loubriel: We are such creatures of habit that if we start to do the "wind patterns" they start to stick.

Cichowicz: And they do something else that I think not many people discuss but I think is very important. When you look at notation it is vertical, it goes up and it comes down, but all sound is horizontal whether it is a high "C" or a low "C." The "wind patterns" emphasize that.

Think about the violin. The bow moves horizontally. For us it is in the blowing. From personal experience I can see that because the notes go up and down on the page that affects the way you blow. You want to reach up for the high notes and you want to reach down for the low notes. Instead, you must think of everything in a linear way.

Loubriel: Sure. There are less physical changes.

Cichowicz: Right. When you deflect the air, like you are reaching for a note, it becomes thinner, and when you bottom down for it, it loses direction and energy. It is a modified air stream that is not the most effective. So the general idea is if you are making a sound you are going to think in a linear way.

I remember experimenting with the teaching methods of Max Schlossberg and Herbert L. Clarke many years ago. They suggest to tongue the lower notes using "too" or "tee" for playing the high notes but I thought, "Where does it change to 'tee' and how much?" I started to consciously manipulate the tongue and my playing just fell apart. Yet if I played listening for the sound I produced on the trumpet I could notice that,

"Yes, the tongue rises a little bit when I go into the higher register but I cannot make it a conscious thing." So getting back to what you asked, "What was the teaching like?" These books insisted, "Make sure your tongue is in the 'teeth' position" and

as soon as you do that you start to endanger producing the tone of the trumpet properly. The tongue, by all its natural abilities, will rise as you go up just the right amount. You really do not need to calculate how much.

Again, it comes back to the idea of learning to talk. Your parents did not teach you about vocal chords or tongue position, but instead they kept repeating the same words until you got it.

Loubriel: It is funny because just last week I had a student ask me about his tongue position. Where did he have to place his tongue to play? I did not know where to start.

Cichowicz: I also had a former student of mine, who took lessons from me thirty-five years ago, who told me that he was getting these new students who were setting their lip in over their teeth. I thought, are there people still teaching that way. Somewhere in their imagination they think this might be something fantastic.

Loubriel: Maybe, and I have to be careful how I say this, that came from ideas developed by lead players who found them useful for their own needs.

Cichowicz: Many years ago I bought a book by Car Anderson and the most amazing thing was that his warm up was a middle "G." It sounds strange but, in a way, he established the sound in the middle register where it makes the most sense. You don't want to establish the sound in the high register or in the low register. Of course he was famous for his high trumpet playing. So I am sure that might be the answer. They have this lead player's imagination saying, "What do I do to reach the 'high double C'?" Then they teach from there downward.

Loubriel: I played with this salsa orchestra and the first trumpet player was very good. We talked about breathing and he told me that he always took the breath through the nose and yet he had this huge beautiful sound.

Cichowicz: He is absolutely right because if you study Yoga, which sets the principles of healthy function, you breathe through the nose. The only problem is unless you have plenty of time to prepare for a phrase or have very short phrases, there is usually not enough time to breathe in this fashion. So it has been discarded as a useful breathing technique because of the timing factor but as a wind instrument breathing technique it is wonderful. It's perfect. So he was on the right track and fortunately he was playing the type of music that allowed him to play like that.

When Bob Lambert, who was principal trombone in the Chicago Symphony for many years, had a high note entrance he would breathe through the nose. He did that to position the lips in the shape needed for the note, and taking breath in this way would not disrupt the embouchure.

Loubriel: Dokshizer talks about that in his method book. When little kids start out, they often breathe through the nose, maybe instinctively, and develop their embouchures beautifully.

Cichowicz: I think that that is preferable as a way of taking a breath at the beginning stages because all they are going to be playing are long tones and what you want to establish with

them is good tone production and a good shape. Once they get more skilled and they get into more complicated music they will need to take the breath through the corners of the mouth.

Loubriel: Right, until they develop the kinetics of what they are doing with the embouchure. I would be curious to know, since you have taught lead players, anything different there?

"I tell everyone that comes into the studio, 'I am going to teach you to play the trumpet and however you want to direct your trumpet playing is your decision.'"

Cichowicz: No. I tell everyone that comes into the studio, "I am going to teach you to play the trumpet and however you want to direct your trumpet playing is your decision. You are going to basically get a classical training and obviously some of the repertoire which goes into it."

Loubriel: Can you comment on Jacobs' concept of "round sound?"

Cichowicz: Like I said, the concept of sound was in the orchestra. I did not hear any references about "round sounds" but you just tried to fit in. It is hard to put the characteristic of a sound into words and I think most people have individuality in their sound but all the good players have similar qualities. You can call them round sounds, full sounds, or dark sounds.

Loubriel: You could also call them vocal sounds.

Cichowicz: Yes. Singing sound and sometimes those words strike a chord with some people. Most of the time if you refer to a free sound or natural sound it also works.

Someone once asked me, "Could I explain the kind of unity that was in the brass section of the Chicago Symphony?" I said, "One way I can think of is that we were trying to do our job at absolutely the same level as the principals." In my case I said, "I am the second trumpet player and I will be at the same level as the first." You have to suppress your ego and think what the whole has to be like instead of thinking, "I want some attention." The other thing is that the section has to be together for a while so they have the time to adapt to each other.

About the author: Luis Loubriel, was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico where he studied at the "Escuela Libre de Musica" of the same city. He joined the American Federation of Musicians at age 16 to play with the Puerto Rico Philharmonic, Orquesta de Zarzuelas, and the Puerto Rico Symphony. He studied at Northwestern University with Vincent Cichowicz and Luther Didrickson concurrent with private studies with William Scarlett and Arnold Jacobs, at University of Minnesota with David Baldwin, Manny Laureano, and Gary Borden; and at the University of Illinois with Ray Sasaki, Michael Ewald, and Ronald Romm. Loubriel has performed with the Minnesota Orchestra, the Canadian Brass, the Arctic Shaw Orchestra, and the Orquesta Arabu among others. He has served as faculty member at Western Illinois University, North Central College, St. Xavier University, and at Benedictine University in Lisle, IL.

