

HUBERT LAWS

The flute has existed since ancient times. In fact, its existence is memorialized within the pages of the Holy Bible. Psalm 150 verse 4 recalls service to God through music and the use of instruments, "Praise him (God) with strings and the Flute."

As the time passed, we were introduced to many who mastered the art of playing this wonderful, expressive, voice-like instrument which has a soothing yet penetrating sound like no other. There were many notable names that developed over the course of many years. And within the realm of 20th Century came another master named Hubert Laws. Yes, an extraordinarily talented personality from Huston, Texas. Hubert eventually found his way to New York City where he continued to assiduously hone his craft to the sharpness of a surgeon's scalpel. Though he leaned toward jazz, his talent had no quadrilateral boundaries whatsoever. He didn't feel or have any limitations as he soared swiftly and undauntedly into the future. Thus, he played his superb flute with the New York Opera Company for a while and in many, many other unusual situations.

Over a period of time his flute became known internationally. At one time he found himself playing with Mango Santa Maria, and there were many other jazz groups of consequence that followed.

It seems he is only known for his flute, but he also plays beautifully on his tenor saxophone. In fact, years ago he replaced me in "The New York Jazz Sextet" led by Tom McIntosh, playing both his flute and his saxophone. Today, however, he concentrates only on his obedient flute.

He does not just have a beautiful sound on his instrument, he well understands the tapestry of this music we lovingly call jazz. The inner workings of notes and concepts are an indelible part of his musical psyche so that he is currently the world's most renowned jazz flutist.

I've had the privilege of being on recordings with him. Watching what he does while recording is absolutely amazing. He can do and play anything. He can play a fast-moving battery of notes that delightfully 'blinds' you, or hold one note that can move you to tears because of its all-embracing beauty. Making himself a consequential part of any form of music is what he does. All notes emanating from his copious imagination have deep and significant meaning ... nothing is ever arbitrary in nature. There are many things about his playing that can be explained, whereas there are some that remain ineffable and can only be heard, felt, and enjoyed. This is what makes him who he is and like no one else. But, really, what is it that makes him who he is? Let's take a close, intensive look.

He has:

1. A beautiful sound
2. Perfect articulation
3. Mastery in moving in or out of chords
4. The ability to play jazz and classical literature authentically
5. Knowing when not to over play
6. The ability to tell a 'story' rather than merely playing right notes
7. The ability to reach the deepest grotto of our motivational heart's core

The name Hubert Laws has long since become synonymous with the flute. Be assured, he will take his overwhelming sound and his iconicity forward into the awaiting arms of tomorrow as he successfully writes his name on the naked bosom of each of its days. How blessed we are to have Hubert Laws in our midst constantly and delightfully moving our hearts emotionally this way and that way at will.

Benny Golson
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