

# Review from the First Annual West Chester University Trumpet Festival

## Mike Vax

The culmination of "Trumpet Fest" was Jazz legend Mike Vax with one of the most anticipated clinics of the day. Vax launched into his informal discussion of what he has learned over his extensive, fifty-year career. He mentioned that during his career he has never been without work, attributing this amazing fact to his philosophy: "Know what to do to make people happy."



**Mike Vax**

Vax impressed the audience with his vividly colorful sound and beautifully lyrical phrasing, but jaws dropped in the audience when he mentioned that he had throat surgery just two weeks prior to the clinic; we should all remember this amazing feat when our chops are a bit stiff from too much (or too little) playing.

Vax mentioned that in his experience, the hardest part of practicing is opening the case. He instructs students to intersperse trumpet practice and homework. Since one cannot play the trumpet without rest, or focus on work without a break, the two activities could act as a break for each other, yielding many more productive hours of work and practice.

Vax called a member of the audience to demonstrate Don Jacoby's "high notes are not higher, just farther away" philosophy. He had three members of the audience stand to represent different parts of the trumpet register. Then, the audience volunteer played an arpeggio up to G<sup>'''</sup>, thinking of each note as out instead of up. The product was a huge, powerful sound with little strain or effort.

Mike Vax reminded us all that being a great musician is far more important than being a great trumpeter; he exemplifies this concept with every fiber of his being.

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