

## ABQ Welcomes Kevin Cobb

The ABQ is pleased to announce the appointment of trumpeter Kevin Cobb. Kevin comes to the ABQ with extensive quintet experience as a member of the Manhattan Brass Quintet (1995-1998). He has also toured as solo trumpet with the Israel Camerata, and was recently soloist with I Musici de Montreal. Kevin has a Bachelors degree (1993) from The Curtis Institute of Music and a Masters (1995) from The Juilliard School where he participated in the ABQ Seminar for two years.

## Selecting a New Member

by Raymond Mase

On October 19, 1998, Chris Gekker played his final concert with the ABQ in Glens Falls, New York after eighteen years of membership. Chris has left the Quintet to take the position of trumpet professor at the University of Maryland. We are very sad to see Chris leave and will miss him enormously, but wish him all the best with his new post and thank him for the significant contributions he has made to the ABQ over the last two decades.

In the life of a chamber music group, nothing is quite as traumatic as a change in personnel. Misplaced music, forgotten tux pants, and "less than the best" hotels are remembered as minor scratches compared to the major surgery of a personnel change. But while there is fear and anxiety associated with change, there is also opportunity. In my twenty-six years in the group, I have seen each chair change at least once and in every instance new players have brought new ideas, renewed enthusiasm, and made us reevaluate long standing ABQ traditions. We have had only one other personnel change in the last fifteen years--the longest stable membership in the thirty-eight year history of the group--so this current change is a particularly significant one for us. The search for a new trumpeter began in earnest during this past summer. The five of us (including Chris) sat down and talked about players we knew of that should be considered for the position. We also spoke with colleagues in the field to find out about players we possibly had not heard of. We knew that a New York player would be preferable since they would already have roots here, but we did not rule out a worthwhile candidate because they would need to relocate. We ended up with over a dozen excellent prospects; and after lots of phone calls, faxes and sending off music to the applicants, we were ready for the preliminary round of auditions. These took place in September with each candidate playing a short solo and then about six excerpts from the ABQ repertoire with the ensemble. Hearing these auditions made me realize what a dual personality we expected these trumpeters to assume. Not only did they need to blend seamlessly into our already well established sound and style, but since we split the first trumpet responsibilities in the group, they also needed to play with a strong individual personality and sense of assertiveness--no easy task for any performer. After the first round, we narrowed the list to six players for a more intensive final round that included not only hearing each player for nearly an hour, but also interviewing each person to find out how the ABQ lifestyle and schedule would fit with their lives. Being a member of the ABQ is not a full-time job, but it does demand a full-time commitment, so this needed to be explored. As is often the case with auditions, we ended up with several outstanding players who were suitable for the position. But after this final exhausting round of playing and interviewing, it became apparent to all of us that Kevin Cobb was the special player and person we were looking for. There are many weeks of hard work and agonizing that go into finding a new quintet member. Countless details have to be considered to insure that the audition process will be fair and reasonable and that it will produce the best person for the job. Most often, when the auditions are over, we deliberate for a time and then notify the winner by phone. But by coincidence, Kevin's audition turned out to be the last one that we heard. So after the four of us made our decision (with Kevin waiting outside wondering what was going on) we realized that there was no reason to not offer him the job right then and there. I will remember asking Kevin if he would like to join us and his "I do" as one of the most special quintet memories. We are enormously excited to welcome Kevin Cobb into the ABQ family and are looking forward to the new challenges that lie ahead.

## ABQ News Nuggets

The ABQ is pleased to announce that its most recent grant from the National Endowment for the Arts provides for the commissioning of a new work from David Sampson. This will mark Mr. Sampson's third work for the ABQ and it will be premiered next summer at the Aspen Music Festival in celebration of the Festival's 50th Anniversary and the ABQ's 30th Anniversary as Ensemble-in-Residence.

A recording of Gunther Becker's *Scanning* made by the ABQ while on tour in Germany in 1970 has recently been reissued on the Cybele label (based in Germany). The original recording was made by WDR. *Scanning* may be found on a double compact disc titled *Portrait: Gunther Becker* (Cybele 660.202).

The ABQ was pleased to present the inaugural concert of the revitalized chamber music series at Brookhaven National Labs, Long Island, on Sunday, October 18, 1998.

### On Leaving the ABQ

by Chris Gekker

This September I began a new job, Professor of Trumpet at the University of Maryland. Since the birth of my daughter five years ago, I have been trying to cut down on my traveling and constantly working at night. So I eagerly accepted Maryland's offer and am finding it a wonderful change for my family, as well as a great place to work. With one very large regret: that I must, after 18 years, resign from the American Brass Quintet. I'd like to congratulate Kevin Cobb, one of the best young trumpeters, anywhere. At age 27 (my age when I joined the ABQ), I know Kevin will contribute a new dimension to the Quintet, as well as find it a continually educating experience. Being in the American Brass Quintet means many things: challenging concerts and recordings, exciting travel, rewarding work with gifted and hardworking students. Most of all, it means closely collaborating with an amazing group of musicians. To Ray, Dave, Mike and John go my very deepest respect and gratitude. I must also include Bob Biddlecome, who retired from the ABQ eight years ago after 29 years in the group: The whole world of brass chamber music will be forever indebted to him. These really are among the finest brass players on the planet, as well as true gentlemen who know how to function as a real team. And tough? Forget about it. Some of the tour itineraries are quite exhausting yet all done with grace and good humour. I will continue to play in New York on occasion with members of the ABQ in various musical ensembles and orchestras. There is much that I will miss: my colleagues, of course; those recitals where my last written note is also the last note that I am able to play; and, yes, even those tours. In leaving the Quintet I join that fortunate group of listeners that know the ABQ offers its audiences brass chamber music that is, in all the world, beyond compare.

### Mase in Prague

by Todd Stanton

As the ABQ manager, fund raiser, and friend, I am privileged to work closely with the ABQ on many levels--and often with its members on individual projects as well. In April of this year, I had the pleasure to serve as executive producer on an orchestral recording of works by David Sampson (one of only two composers who have received three commissions from the American Brass Quintet) with the Czech Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra in Prague. By the way, chamber orchestra is a misnomer when you have over 70 people in the recording studio. Sampson's *Triptych* for trumpet and orchestra was commissioned by Raymond Mase and the International Trumpet Guild and received its orchestral premieres with Raymond Mase as soloist at the Aspen Music Festival in 1992 and at Carnegie Hall with the American Composers Orchestra in 1994. An extraordinary cast was assembled for this Sampson recording project: Alan Balter, a Sampson champion who passed away unexpectedly on August 21, 1998, was engaged as the conductor. The Grand Prix du Disque-winning producer Jiri Gemrot was engaged. Anthony Plog, trumpeter and composer recently commissioned by the ABQ, served as tonmeister. The indefatigable Pavel Prantl served as concertmaster, translator, general fix-

it man, and co-host (with his

<Photo Caption> Raymond Mase recording David Sampson's Triptych with the Czech Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra in April 1998 in Studio One of Czech Radio, Prague. <End Photo Caption>

pianist wife Martina) of a wild game post-recording dinner. Center sound-stage stood Raymond Mase of the American Brass Quintet. During five hours of recording over two days, Ray played the best I have ever heard from any trumpeter. Amidst the hub-bub in the booth, Mr. Gemrot exclaimed, "I have never heard anyone play like this. This is truly world-class talent we are recording here." Everyone in the booth nodded agreement including the late maestro's wife, former Louisville Orchestra hornist Niki Zito Balter, who said, "What a musician. We certainly don't retake for Ray's benefit...my god, can he play." Though Ray's time in Prague was brief due to his schedule, he enjoyed the city and gave a masterclass attended mostly by trumpeters of the best orchestras in Prague. He also performed the first trumpet part during the recording of Sampson's Hommage: JFK (commissioned by the National Symphony in Washington) with the other trumpeters being the principals of the Prague Radio Symphony, the Czech Philharmonic and the son of the Czech Philharmonic principal. Mase's recording of the Sampson Triptych will release on the Summit Records label on an all-Sampson disc in early 1999. Advance ordering information will be posted to the following websites as soon as it becomes available: [www.americanbrassquintet.org](http://www.americanbrassquintet.org); [www.stantonmgt.com](http://www.stantonmgt.com), and [www.summitrecords.com](http://www.summitrecords.com). My very biased advice to all is to be among the first to get this disc.

## ABQ News Nuggets

ABQ's previous NEA grant (1997-98 season) provided for the commissioning of Mosaics from Anthony Plog. The work will be published by Editions BIM (Switzerland) in late 1999. The ABQ plans to record the work in 1999.




Eric Ewazen's Shadowcatcher, a concerto for brass quintet and wind ensemble, received its New York premiere by the ABQ at Alice Tully Hall on March 19, 1998 with the Juilliard Wind Ensemble conducted by Mark Gould. The orchestral premiere of Shadowcatcher takes place in September, 1999 with the ABQ and the Orquesta Sinfonica Carlos Chavez, Mexico City.

Brass students participating in the ABQ Seminar at Juilliard present two free concerts annually. The concerts this year are November 24, 1998 at Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center and March 29, 1999 in Paul Hall at The Juilliard School, Lincoln Center.

## Please Help Support Brass Chamber Music in America

The American Brass Chamber Music Association, Inc. wishes to publicly thank the National Endowment for the Arts, and the New York State Council on the Arts for their recent major support in the areas of touring, commissioning, and general operating support. During this time of tenuous state and federal support for the Arts, the ABCMA has been pleased to receive increased support from the NEA and NYSCA in recognition of its commitment to the cause of serious brass music in America. As in past years, we are pleased to report that nearly 80% of our operating budget comes from earned revenue. However, our organization also relies upon the support of individuals in order to continue our efforts. Please consider making your first contribution or renewing your contribution to the ABCMA, Inc. Your assistance at any level is appreciated. Please check the appropriate box below and return this section of the newsletter to: ABCMA, Inc., 30 Lincoln Plaza, Suite 3N, New York, NY 10023.

I would like to support the ABCMA as a:

-  Friend - \$35 and up
-  Supporter - \$70 and up
-  Patron - \$100 and up





Leader - \$250 and up

Brass Circle - \$500 and up

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Your contribution is tax-deductible as allowed by Law.

Do you know brass and chamber music enthusiasts who should be on the ABQ mailing list? If so, please provide their mailing information below and we will be delighted to add them.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

(If you are providing us with the name of a student, please provide a permanent home address rather than a university or college a

## ABQ On The Net by David Wakefield

Last February, the American Brass Quintet joined the information age with the launch of its web page. The site ([www.americanbrassquintet.org](http://www.americanbrassquintet.org)) contains a history of the group as well as biographies of its members. There is a complete listing of all the recordings of the ABQ as well as a "family tree", which includes all of the former members of the ABQ and their dates in the group. Another feature of the web site is a complete listing of the repertoire that the American Brass Quintet has performed during the last 38 years. The web page has helped us to be more up to date with our news. When we commission a new work we can announce it immediately. When Kevin Cobb joined the group we were able to announce this within days (as soon as the other finalists were notified). Many web sites of chamber music groups tend to be sort of an electronic brochure for the group. While our site certainly contains these elements, we hope to include much more. We have a vision of our web site being a crossroads of serious brass chamber music, a resource for brass groups interested in performing serious brass chamber music. For example, a trumpet player and graduate of the University of Kentucky, Dr. Bill Jones (who also wrote the article on "brass quintet" in the new Groves), has compiled an impressive list of original brass quintets written during the latter half of this century (well over 1300 works). We are currently working on making that list available to surfers on our web page. For those of you more technically curious, I have used FrontPage 98 to design the site. I will be using Visual InterDev 6.0 to connect the page to an MSAccess database. Perhaps you will have already seen this newsletter posted to the site before it gets sent to you via snail mail. If you have an Internet connection, I hope that you will visit our site and send feedback. We invite you to make suggestions or comment on our site.

## On the Road Alone This Time

by John Rojak

Although the ABQ is the foremost musical endeavor in the lives of its members, it can lead to some other interesting experiences. When I joined the group in 1991, I was an established New York freelance musician playing in various orchestras, Broadway shows, an Easter Sunday brass quartet with Ray Mase and Mike Powell, etc., but my association as a member of ABQ opened some doors I did not know even existed. One of these opportunities came about when our manager Todd Stanton got a call from the director of Quad City Arts on the Mississippi River for a musician to do two weeks of community outreach. A violist had cancelled and they were actually looking for a tuba player to fill the void. Todd said he bet they had never had a bass trombone player before and recommended they ask me. I jumped at this opportunity and had one of the greatest experiences of my career. My pianist Sara Watkins and I gave two or three recital/demos a day for audiences ranging from a group of a hundred preschoolers to Rotary Club luncheons to mentally challenged adults to a shopping mall crowded with families. We performed for thousands of people there and our lives were at least as

touched as we could hope to touch theirs. My two greatest compliments came from small children: In one performance, after I had finished my first solo, a four- year-old ran from his seat on the floor and said, "Mister, that was cool!" The other came during a question-and-answer section of my show in the elementary school when a second grader commented, "Nice clothes." Of course I plugged the American Brass Quintet as often as I could and returned to New York relieved of all of the quintet CD's I had taken along. Another interesting experience resulting from my ABQ membership was the chance to judge the Fischhoff Chamber Music Competition last May in South Bend, Indiana. The panel consisted of six judges who were divided for the semi-final rounds into a committee for strings and one for winds. After hearing a full day of senior division ensembles, my wind team picked three finalists (as did the string judges) and we united the committees for the final round. However, before that final round a truly inspiring day took place. That was the junior division competition for musicians under 18 years old. The level of playing was so high it was difficult to think of judging these groups--I was enjoying just listening to them! Beautiful performances of string quartets by Bartok, Prokofiev, Brahms, a Vivaldi cello quartet, and a wind quintet by Nielsen proved these to be excellent chamber musicians regardless of age. The competition concluded with the finals, and thankfully our full panel reached a decision easily. (Actually, the string judges needed a little more discussion than the winds--we wanted to get on with the buffet.) The only potentially awkward moment came at the grand banquet at which the finalists were announced. Then the judges were to meet casually with the non-finalists to give them comments on their playing. Most of the groups I spoke to were very gracious and anxious to hear my critique. So ended a fun-filled four days and I was proud to represent the American Brass Quintet at Fischhoff. The last ABQ-spurred event that I will relate here is my appearance at the International Trombone Association Convention in late May at the University of Colorado. (The previous year the whole quintet had performed at the ITA at the University of Illinois and while there, I had made arrangements to participate as a solo clinician this year.) This finally gave me a performance date for a concerto I had been trying for three or four years to commission from Eric Ewazen (the prolific composer of many works for the ABQ and its members). Eric wrote a beautiful piece entitled Rhapsody for bass trombone and string orchestra and I had the thrill of premiering it in front of 600 trombone players! Besides performing the concerto and a solo with piano accompaniment, I gave a masterclass and two clinics. For the masterclass, I drew on my experiences from ABQ quintet classes, which we now give in conjunction with almost every concert on the road. I coached three different trombonists of varied abilities, as I do in an ABQ class, and found challenges and satisfaction in their improvement. My clinics were entitled "The Non-Orchestral Life of a Bass Trombonist" and I described my career, how it came about, and the wonderful diversity it encompasses. This diversity existed before my tenure with the American Brass Quintet, but has been enhanced and enriched a great deal since. I can't wait for my next adventure!

The American Brass Quintet on stage at the Aspen Music Festival's Harris Hall in an All-American program on July 4, 1998. 1999 marks ABQ's 30th year in Residence at the Aspen Music Festival. Photo: Robert Biddlecome/Aspen Music Festival



## The American Brass Chamber Music Association [information](#)

For Touring, Masterclass, Mini-Residency inquiries:

[Stanton Management](#)

25 Cimarron Rd

Putnam Valley NY 10579

Telephone:

620-563-7312

Email: [TDStanton\[@\]StantonMgt.com](mailto:TDStanton[@]StantonMgt.com) (for booking inquiries only)

