



**INTERNATIONAL**

# TROMBONE

**ASSOCIATION JOURNAL**  
THE QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE ITA



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INTERNATIONAL

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Advancement of Trombone Teaching, Performance, and Literature.



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Keith Brown – Page 12

# KEITH BROWN



Keith Brown, c. 1971.

# Renaissance Man

BY DOUGLAS YEO

We all had them, and we had them all. You could not have only nine. You had to have all ten. Because when the call came—and you prayed and prayed and prayed that it would come—you had to have them. If you didn't have them, you couldn't play. And the thing you wanted to do more than anything else was to play.

The call usually came on a Friday afternoon. You had organized your day so you could be in your dorm room, sitting by the telephone, waiting. Hoping. And when the phone rang—it had that iPhone ring that today is called “old phone” but this really was an old phone, a heavy one, a black one with a dial with holes in it—you smiled. It was happening. And you were ready.

The voice on the other end was familiar. The sentences were short, like those breathless conversations in low voices you heard between gangsters in those old movies in black and white you used to watch on TV with your dad. Words shot out like machine gun fire. Short. On point. But he wasn't talking to Mugsy or Al Capone. He was talking to you.

“Tonight. Room MA-004. 7 o'clock. Bring your Brown books. Yellow, red, blue, and green. But bring the others, too. You never know.”

“Yes,” you said. “You never know.”

“Jim and Andrea are coming. Dan, too. Oh, and bring a music stand.”

You paused, so as not to sound too eager. Then, “I'll be there. I'll have my Brown books.”

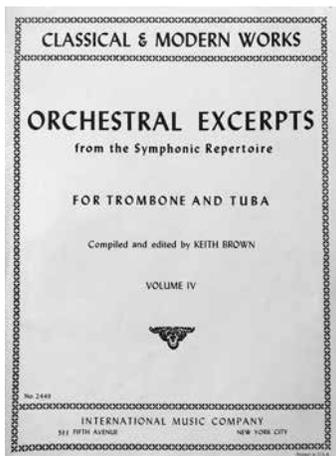
Click. The phone went dead. You sat back and looked at your watch. Your eyes drifted up to the shelf above your desk. There, next to a dog-eared *Harvard Dictionary of Music* that you bought used for \$8.00 and your pristine copy of *Grout*—it was brand new, the most expensive possession you owned apart from your trombone, purchased with every penny you earned from two Saturday shifts working at the *7-Eleven* because you thought it would impress your girlfriend (she wasn't impressed)—you saw them. They were there—all ten of them. And with them, you would play.

And so, the ritual began once again; that weekly meeting of friends, four who played trombone and one with a tuba. We gathered to play orchestral excerpts. We sat in Room MA-004, or any room that was available, all in a row, imagining that Solti, or Bernstein, or Ormandy, or Ozawa was standing in front of us, conducting. Opening our Brown books, we played our hearts out. We played our favorites. And then we played them again. And again. We had developed a shorthand, a kind of secret language to identify them. We didn't need many words. Prok 5. O to the end. The Ride. Then we played the solos for each other. *Bolero*. *Tuba mirum*. *Hary Janos*.

And when we were done—when we were done sitting in chairs where we pretended we were our heroes, heroes like Friedman and Crisafulli and Kleinhammer and Jacobs; Herman and Cohen and Ostrander and Novotny; Boyd and Kofsky and Anderson and Bishop; Dodson and Stewart and Harper and Torchinsky; Gibson and Barron and Hallberg and Schmitz—we imagined the conductor would turn to us and, using his baton like King Arthur's sword, Excalibur, touch us on the shoulder, and say, “Rise, you who have proven yourself worthy. Gather your

Brown books; come and join us.” This was our dream. This was our passion. This was our quest: to attain a position in a symphony orchestra. And the Brown books helped us get there.

Somewhere, someone knows how many copies of *Orchestral Excerpts from the Symphonic Repertoire for Trombone and Tuba* Volumes I–X compiled and edited by Keith Brown were sold. I don't know. I've tried to find out, but apparently a number that large has not yet been invented. Thousands? Tens of thousands? A zillion? It doesn't matter. It is enough to know that from 1964 into the early 2000s, every trombone and tuba player in the United States and many others around the globe who aspired to an orchestral career probably had all ten volumes. And also, his separate excerpt book of works by Richard Strauss. Keith Brown's orchestral excerpt books were used by an uncountable number of low brass players in an era before the internet,



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*Keith was my associate in the Philadelphia Orchestra for several years. He was a great friend and wonderful colleague. He was one of the finest trombonists I have ever heard.*

— Henry Charles Smith III  
Principal trombone, Philadelphia Orchestra, 1956–1967

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Cherry Classics, *The One Hundred*, and IMSLP. They were how we learned the orchestral repertoire. All of it. The standard, the mundane, and the obscure. This is how so many trombonists knew Keith Brown. He was the name behind the Brown books.

And so much more.

Our libraries had the Handel *Oboe Concerto*, the Corelli and Galliard *Sonatas*, the Speer *Sonata* for four trombones, Kopprasch and Kreutzer and Mueller and Rode and Blume and Slama and Stephanovsky and Werner Studies. They all bore his name. So did Debussy's *Romance* and the Schumann *Romances*, Marcello's *Sonatas*, the Bach *Cello Suites* and the Baroque master's viola da gamba *Sonatas*, Rachmaninoff's *Vocalise*, and Vivaldi's *Sonata "Il Pastor Fido."* And sixty other solos and books of exercises for trombone as well as chamber works for trombone and brass ensembles. Our music cabinets were veritable rainbows, filled with editions by International Music, all with colorful covers emblazoned with the name KEITH BROWN. His name was all that many people knew about him; his editions never carried his biography. But behind those words—KEITH BROWN—was a superb artist/musician/trombonist who had a long career at the highest level. This he did as an orchestral player and soloist, a gifted chamber musician, a conductor, clinician, editor/arranger, and musical ambassador. At the heart of his character, he was a loving husband, father, grandfather, and uncle. And to many, he was our teacher, the one who showed us the way. When Keith Brown died on May 9, 2018, at the age of 84—Parkinson's disease slowly sapped life from this vibrant man—the trombone world bowed its head and placed its collective hat over its heart in honor of one who did so much for so many.

How quickly we forget. Today, most aspiring orchestral trombonists can name the trombone section members of dozens of the world's top orchestras. They are role models, heroes, the ones young players strive to emulate. But as these titans of the trombone get older and retire, the next younger generation often forgets the old heroes as new heroes appear who seem to play ever higher, faster, and louder. It has always been so. Which is why we do well to remember those players and teachers of years past who, in their time, were the heroes of an earlier younger generation. My heroes. Your heroes. Our heroes. Keith Brown was one of them. Here is some of his story.



**Keith Brown dressed as a conductor, Columbia Elementary School, c. 1939.**

## EARLY YEARS

It was in Colorado Springs, Colorado, at 4:35 a.m. on October 21, 1933, where Vernon Keith Brown—the oldest of two sons born to Kenneth Vernon and Audrey Lucille Nelson Brown—took his first breath. While his full name appeared in his school and military records, Keith never cared for his first name and never used it. He later told his son, Bob, that his father had “stuck me with Vernon,” one of those family things that, once you are old enough, you can shed as you stake out your own identity. Young Keith exhibited an early interest in music. He was the drum major/conductor with a baton for the Columbia (Colorado Springs) Elementary School rhythm band when he was five years old, the same year he began piano lessons, and his lips first buzzed through the mouthpiece of a used King trombone his family bought from the high school band director in town two years later.

By high school, Keith was a gangly teenager and was involved in band, orchestra, choir, baseball, football (he lettered in both sports), drama club, and the school's yearbook staff. Just before his graduation from Colorado Springs High School in 1951,<sup>1</sup> Keith was informed that he had been accepted to University of Southern California (USC) in Los Angeles with a \$300 scholarship to study



**Keith Brown in his USC Marching Trojans uniform, 1951. Photo by Jerome Jansen.**

trombone with Robert Marsteller. Marsteller—who was in the midst of his long career as principal trombonist of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Hollywood Bowl Orchestra (1946–1971)—was, in Keith’s words, “an imposing teacher, quite demanding and yet thoughtful . . . my father figure away from home, tennis coach, academic and love-life advisor (sometimes effective, many times not)—and, yes, my teacher of music, trombone—and life.”<sup>2</sup>

While at USC, Keith played in the USC Trojan marching band, symphonic band, and orchestra. He also freelanced; he substituted in the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and was a member of the Pasadena Symphony, the Burbank Symphony (the orchestra’s trombone section also included Hoyt Bohannon, who later became well known for the legendary weekly gathering of trombonists at “Hoyt’s Garage”) and the Harbor Symphony (conducted by Marsteller). Keith’s education at USC was interrupted in 1953 when he was drafted into the US Army; he served in the 179th Army Band at Fort Carson, Colorado, (while concurrently playing first trombone with the Colorado Springs Symphony) and after his discharge on May 7, 1956, with the rank of Technical Sargent, he resumed his studies.

The connection between Marsteller and Brown was proven in a special way when, in January 1957, Keith gave a recital on which he and Marsteller played several duets. The recording of the recital has survived, and the compatibility of sound, technique, and musical concept is so similar between the two players that it is impossible to tell who played which part. His senior recital (April 22, 1957), included Heiter Villa-Lobos’ *Bachianas Brasileiras* No. 5 for soprano and violoncelli, performed by soprano Meg Seno accompanied by an ensemble of trombones (including Brown, Bohannon, Lloyd Ulyate, and Byron Peebles) and tuba (John Thomas “Tommy” Johnson) conducted by Marsteller. While most of his peers anxiously awaited their entry into the workforce, by the time he graduated, Keith Brown’s illustrious career was already underway.

## ORCHESTRAS

Two and one-half months before Keith received his bachelor of music degree from USC—he graduated *cum laude* on August 2, 1957—he received a telegram from the Indianapolis Symphony, offering him the position of second trombone with the orchestra. The celebrated composer Ingolf Dahl, who had been Keith’s conducting teacher at USC, wrote a letter to support his hiring. Citing Keith’s recent performance of Donal Michalsky’s *Trombone Concertino*, Dahl effusively wrote, “I can say without qualification that it would be a privilege for any conductor to have such a fine musician in his orchestra.” Dahl also praised Keith’s wife, Leslee Scullin Brown, who he said was “an unusually gifted double bass player.”<sup>3</sup>

Keith drove a hard bargain. For the orchestra’s twenty-two-week season, he was offered the position at \$90 a week; on the strength of Dahl’s letter, Leslee was offered a contract for \$80. After some negotiations, they signed contracts for \$100 and \$85 a week. To generate some additional income, Keith taught in the Indianapolis Public Schools for a semester. It was while in Indianapolis that Keith came to the attention of renowned violinist Alexander Schneider who was assembling the orchestra for the 1958 Casals Festival in Puerto Rico. The offer to play principal trombone in the Festival Orchestra for \$300 a week came by telegram and he accepted the position. He played at the Casals Festival annually for twenty-two years.<sup>4</sup> After returning home, Keith and Leslee—citing



**Philadelphia Orchestra low brass section, c. 1961. (left to right) Keith Brown (associate principal), Henry Charles Smith III (principal), Howard Cole (second), Robert Harper (bass), Abe Torchinsky (tuba).**

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*I had the great fortune to know Keith as a student and later as a colleague. His door was always open to me; it was exhilarating to interact with such a giant in the field. His vast and all-important contributions to our literature—solo, study, and orchestral—are unparalleled. I relished being in the room with that compendium of knowledge. Many years later it was equally exciting and rewarding to share lunches together and be regaled with stories of a lifetime in music. Keith was a treasure, a jewel whose luster will shine for generations to come.*

– Peter Ellefson  
Professor of Trombone, Indiana University

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the lack of work in Indianapolis outside the symphony's season—informed the Indianapolis Symphony that they would leave the orchestra to look for playing opportunities in New York City.<sup>5</sup>

The year in New York was influential in many ways, not the least because Keith began work on a master's degree at Manhattan School of Music, joined the New York Brass Quintet, played principal trombone with the Symphony of the Air (the successor orchestra to the NBC Symphony), and successfully auditioned for the assistant principal trombone position with the Philadelphia Orchestra. Thus began his three year tenure (1959 to 1962; Keith was named associate principal for the 1961–1962 season) under the baton of Eugene Ormandy where he played in a section alongside Henry Charles Smith III (principal), Howard Cole (second), Robert Harper (bass), and Abe Torchinsky (tuba), and played on dozens of recordings the orchestra made for Columbia Records during that time. While in Philadelphia, Keith enrolled at Penn State University (but withdrew after taking one class) and taught at the Settlement Music School.



**Philadelphia Orchestra softball team, 1962. Keith Brown is in the center of the second row; concertmaster Anshel Brusilow is to his right. Trombonist Douglas Edelman, an extra player for the tour, is seated in the front row wearing a Beethoven sweatshirt.**

It was while with the Philadelphia Orchestra that Keith reignited his youthful enthusiasm for baseball. Along with the orchestra's concertmaster, Anshel Brusilow, he organized a fast-pitch softball team. When the orchestra went on tour, the team, sporting specially made uniforms of blue and white, played college intra-mural squads and teams from other symphony orchestras. Keith was the team's pitcher, and on the orchestra's 1962 United States tour, the team went 6–2, including a 22–1 victory against the Youngstown Symphony that was suspended after five innings, a sportsmanlike application of the "mercy rule."

In the summer of 1962, while teaching at the Aspen

Music Festival before joining the Met, Keith took his love of baseball to the mountains. Harold C. Schonberg, the celebrated music critic of the *New York Times*, wrote a lengthy article about a faculty/student softball game that Keith organized. Keith's dominant, competitive spirit was evident from the start,

Keith Brown pitched for the faculty. He was trombonist with the Philadelphia Orchestra and goes to the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra this year as first trombone. He is a well-built young man who hits a long ball (a switch hitter, yet), throws a faster one, and in general handles himself on the ball field like a semi-pro. While he was pitching, the score in three innings was Faculty 12, Students 0. By mutual request, he was removed from the mound and another faculty member went in. After the next inning, the score was Faculty 12, Students 11.<sup>6</sup>

Schonberg reported that the Dean of the Aspen music school, Norman Singer, took "a dim view of musicians playing baseball, and has constant visions of the diamond littered with expensive fingers and arms, disconnected from their respective bodies." The game played on.

On April 5, 1962, the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra held the final rounds of its audition for associate first trombone. The Met, still at the old opera house on Broadway between 39th and 40th Streets, was a coveted job then as it is now. After hearing eight players in the semi-final round, the committee agreed to advance three for a second, final hearing. One was a player who, a year later, would begin a nearly thirty-year career as bass trombonist with the American Brass Quintet, Robert Biddlecome. Yes, Robert Biddlecome, who at the time of the Met audition was playing tenor, not bass trombone. Another was Glenn Dodson, then principal trombonist of the New Orleans Symphony who, three years later, won the position of



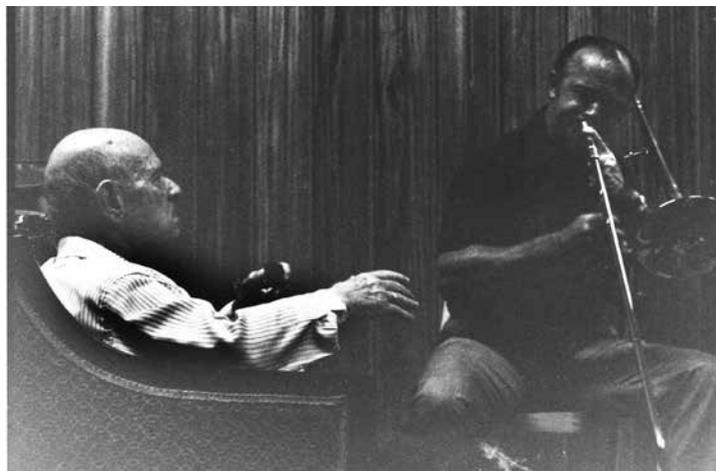
**Keith Brown at the Metropolitan Opera, 1964.**

assistant principal trombonist of the Chicago Symphony and a few years later, succeeded Henry Charles Smith III as principal of the Philadelphia Orchestra. The third was Keith Brown, then associate principal trombonist of the Philadelphia Orchestra. The three played a final round for an audition committee of three staff conductors (George Schick, Joseph Rosenstock, Jean Paul Morel) and two members of the trombone section (Roger Smith, principal trombone, and John Clark, bass trombone). The result was clear. "After playing a second time, the vote went unanimously to Keith Brown, with Dodson placed second and Biddlecome third," Metropolitan Opera Manager Felix Eyle wrote in his memorandum to the Met's Artistic Administrator, Robert Herman. "Mr. Brown was offered

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*Keith Brown was one of the greatest people I have ever met. He was invited to Puerto Rico by the great Pablo Casals and for many years he touched the lives of so many people there with his kindness and musicianship. Many of us decided to travel thousands of miles to come to study with him at Indiana University where he gave us so much. I remember that my lessons with him were always very early in the morning and no matter how early I woke up, he was in his studio practicing earlier than me. We will always remember you, Maestro!*

– Miguel Rivera  
Trombonist, Puerto Rico Symphony and Casals Festival Orchestra



**Pablo Casals and Keith Brown, c. 1971.**

and accepted the contract.”<sup>7</sup> Keith Brown, trombone rock star, was 29 years old.

After joining the Met (where he played from 1962 to 1965), Keith took over leadership of the orchestra’s softball team. While it didn’t enjoy the success of the Philadelphia Orchestra team, it received copious coverage while playing games during the opera company’s annual spring tour. New York’s second “Mets” team (Keith always referred to the opera’s team as the “New York Met” but writers usually failed to make the subtle difference in name between the Met and professional baseball’s New York Metropolitan, known as the Mets) was the subject of another article by Schonberg,<sup>8</sup> but it was not only the *New York Times* that reported on Keith and the Met Opera’s softball team. *Sports Illustrated* reported on the team twice, in 1963 and 1965, each time singling out Keith Brown as the team’s star player. “After him,” the leading sports periodical opined, “the class falls off sharply.”<sup>9</sup> *Sports Illustrated*? A major symphony orchestra trombone player inside its pages? This doesn’t happen every day.<sup>10</sup> Keith managed to get the Met to pay for uniforms and equipment, and was the recipient

of the orchestra’s Anthony Bliss/Rudolph Bing Perpetual Challenge Trophy in each of his three years in the orchestra, given annually to, as Keith recalled, “the person in the orchestra who did the most for the organization outside of performing.”<sup>11</sup> Upon his leaving the Met in 1965, he was presented with a large trophy, inscribed, “Keith Brown: To an Outstanding Sportsman and Wonderful Colleague.” The trophy held pride of place in his home office.

Keith’s annual appearance with the Casals Festival Orchestra was an event he treasured. He was often reunited with old friends he had worked with in other connections, including Robert Nagel (trumpet), Byron Peebles, Lewis van Haney and Robert Harper (trombones), and Harvey Phillips (tuba). A photo of Keith playing for Casals proudly hung in his studio. Through the haze of an underexposed image, Casals can be seen conducting Keith, pipe in his left hand, the two men lost in music. What a moment. What was he playing? The *Sarabande* of Bach’s *Cello Suite 6*? Faure’s *Après un rêve*? I never thought to put the question to Keith. I wish I had.

---

*Not only was Keith Brown an excellent trombonist and musician, but he was able to utilize his vantage points to pinpoint voids of pedagogy and performance that offered great meaning to students and performers worldwide. His numerous publications, including his ten-volume set of orchestral excerpts for trombone, contributed mightily to the musical and technical development of thousands of aspiring musicians and is but one example of the outstanding legacy of Keith Brown.*

— M. Dee Stewart  
Professor of Trombone (retired), Indiana University

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**New York Brass Quintet promotional brochure, 1959. Left to right: Frederick Schmitt, Keith Brown, Harvey Phillips, John Glasel, Robert Nagel.**

## CHAMBER MUSIC

Founded in 1954 by trumpeter Robert Nagel, the New York Brass Quintet was in need of a new trombonist when Erwin Price left the group in 1958. When Keith and Leslee Brown moved to New York City that summer, Robert Nagel asked Keith to join the quintet, and Harvey Phillips recalled that “his playing had a profound effect on the other members.”<sup>12</sup> It was Keith who insisted that if the group was to succeed, it needed to branch out from its primary work of giving concerts for children under the auspices of Young Audiences, Inc. All of the quintet’s members were active New York freelancers; Keith encouraged the group’s members (in addition to Nagel, Brown, and Phillips, the NYBQ at that time included John Glasel, trumpet, and Frederick Schmitt, horn) to devote their primary energy to the quintet, seek out artist management, and increase concert bookings. Another result of Keith’s passionate advocacy was the group’s self-produced master recording for an album, recorded in the spring of 1959. The tape was quickly picked up by Golden Crest and released as “The

New York Brass Quintet in Concert.” The album included a performance of Eugene Bozza’s *Sonatine* for brass which even today—sixty years later—remains one of the most highly respected interpretations of the piece.

From 1957 to 1969, Keith was associated with the Aspen Festival, as its trombone teacher and principal trombonist of the festival orchestra. In 1962, the Aspen Faculty Brass Quintet was formed with Robert Nagel and John Head, trumpet (at that time he was principal trumpet of the Birmingham Symphony, and, beginning the following year, the Atlanta Symphony), Philip Farkas, horn, Keith Brown, trombone, and Harvey Phillips, tuba.<sup>13</sup> For Keith, the quintet was a reunion of sorts since it brought him back with his friends from his year with the New York Brass Quintet, Nagel and Phillips. It also looked ahead to the years (1971–1982) when Brown, Farkas, and Phillips would serve together on the brass faculty at Indiana University. For several programs in the Aspen quintet’s inaugural season, the group was expanded to a sextet with the addition of trombonist Mildred Kemp, who joined the Louisville Orchestra in 1957 before moving to New York City to play in Leopold Stokowski’s American Symphony Orchestra and a freelance career that included playing Broadway shows and a tenure in the Goldman Band.<sup>14</sup>

Through a number of connections—his friendship with Bob Nagel, and his recordings for Columbia Records with the Philadelphia Orchestra—Keith participated in a series of recordings conducted by Igor Stravinsky. These included “Igor Stravinsky Conducts, 1961,” which included the *Octet for Wind Instruments* (Richard Hixon played bass trombone) and a second recording of the *Octet* conducted by Stravinsky that appeared on “Igor Stravinsky Conducts Music for Chamber and Jazz Ensembles” (recorded in 1971) along with *Ragtime for 11 Instruments* and the *Concertino for 12 Instruments*.



**Aspen Music Festival, 1965. Left to right: Keith Brown, Mildred Kemp, Harvey Phillips, Philip Farkas, John Head, Robert Nagel.**

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*I came to Indiana University without realizing what a huge influence Keith Brown would have on my life, let alone my career as a trombonist. He was incredibly supportive of his students, including me. I felt I could go to him at any point with any issue (personal, school, registrar, etc.) and he would help me resolve the situation. We spent many lessons simply talking about sports and how it relates to music. He would compare fielding a ground ball to playing Bolero. “Play the ball, don’t let the ball play you!” he would say after a tentative start to Bolero. He just knew what to say to connect with me.*

— Stephen Lange  
Trombonist, Boston Symphony Orchestra

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For three years (1971 to 1973) Keith was the trombonist at the Marlboro Music School and Festival in Vermont. Founded in 1951 by pianist Rudolf Serkin, Marlboro was—and remains today—the premier chamber music festival in the country. Trombonists were called upon sparingly at Marlboro and were mostly used on twentieth century repertoire. Arthur Kerr was the first trombone player at Marlboro (1953) and he was followed by players including Douglas Edelman and Donald Hunsberger (1961), Alan Raph and Ralph Sauer (1964), and John Swallow (1965–1970). Keith recalled his summers at Marlboro with special affection. From 1969–1988, Keith performed regularly with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. Among his many concerts were all-Stravinsky programs conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas that featured the *Ragtime for 11 Instruments*, and one conducted by Leonard Bernstein that included the *Concertino for 12 Instruments* and the *Octet*; David Taylor played bass trombone alongside Keith. Symphony, opera, chamber music. Keith did it all with the very best.

## ARRANGING AND EDITING



**J. S. Bach, Cello Suites, edited by Keith Brown, IMC 3148, 1972 (author's copy). The date in the upper left-hand corner (April 12, 1974) is in Keith Brown's hand, an indication of the date when the movement needed to be prepared for a lesson.**

In 1963, Keith was approached by International Music Company (IMC) of New York City to embark on a project to arrange and edit music for trombone. He agreed, and from that time through 2001, he published over eighty publications. As mentioned earlier, these included books of études and studies that are staples of trombone pedagogy including those by Kopprasch, Blume, Slama, Werner, and Stephanovsky. He arranged dozens of solos as well as music for four trombones (the Speer *Sonatas* were among his first editions) and three trombones (the Bruckner *Equale* were his final publication, in 2001). But Keith's work as an editor is perhaps best remembered for his ten volumes of orchestral excerpts for trombone and tuba and an eleventh that was devoted to works of Richard Strauss.

Before Volume 1 of *Orchestral Excerpts for Trombone and Tuba from the Symphonic Repertoire* was published in 1964 (the title was a bit of a misnomer since the books contained many excerpts from operas), players had limited options to study such repertoire. At that time, the marketplace featured several excerpt book collections, but most were expensive and difficult to obtain in the United States. Volume 10 of Keith's series was issued in 1970 and "The Brown Books," as they were universally called, filled an important need for young players who were preparing for auditions.

They were very useful, important, and absolutely essential. But they were not perfect. I recall sitting in Keith's studio at IU in the fall of 1973 when he pulled his copy of all ten volumes of his excerpt books from a shelf. The pages were covered with red pencil. He was furious that the books were published with so many mistakes and that he did not see a final proof before they went up for sale. He wished he had included more rehearsal and measure numbers. But Keith was never given the opportunity to hand his corrected copies to the publisher. The books were selling like hotcakes as they were; the incentive for the publisher to pay for re-engraving (International Music had all of their music engraved on metal plates in South Korea, an expensive and time consuming process in a time before computers and desktop music programs like Sibelius and Finale) simply wasn't there. Still, we were ecstatically happy to have them, and for those of us who studied with Keith, we were very, very proud that our teacher was the man behind these books that were owned by every trombonist we knew.

## TROMBONE TEACHING AND CONDUCTING

After the Philadelphia Orchestra's tour concert at University of Wisconsin-Madison on May 10, 1962, Keith received an offer to join the University's faculty as Assistant Professor of Music and trombone teacher, effective September 1963. The discussions went far along, continuing after Keith won the assistant principal trombone position with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra in April 1962. In the end, after a year with the Met during which he resumed work on his master's degree at Manhattan School of Music (he graduated in 1964 and also taught trombone there from 1962-1965), Brown declined the University's offer. S. T. Burns, chairman of Wisconsin's search committee, expressed his disappointment at Keith's decision but closed a letter with what would prove to be a prophetic remark, "I am sure after a few years that openings just as good or even better than Wisconsin will come your way. Good luck."<sup>15</sup>

Clearly, teaching was on Keith's mind. But having worked under some of the greatest conductors of the late twentieth century including Leonard Bernstein, Eugene Ormandy, Fritz Reiner, Charles Munch, Pierre Monteux, Georg Solti, Karl Böhm, and Eugen Jochum, he had his sights set on more than teaching trombone. He wanted to be a conductor. In 1965, Keith accepted the position of Director of Instrumental Activities at Temple University's College of Music in Philadelphia. He leveraged his contacts with renowned conductors to bring artists like Eugene Ormandy, Zubin Mehta, William Revelli, and Frederick Fennell to lead rehearsals and concerts with Temple's ensembles. In addition, Keith conducted several opera productions, and his orchestral repertoire extended to choral works including the Verdi *Requiem*. While he was not Temple's trombone professor, he continued to perform with orchestras in Aspen and Puerto Rico and gave trombone recitals in 1967 and 1970. Both were effusively praised in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, where Samuel L. Singer wrote, "The trombonist's playing was a marvel of technical perfection. There were sonority, legato and dynamic expression in slow passages, while fast sections were remarkably smooth."<sup>16</sup> One wonders how the man found time to sleep; Keith Brown had his fingers in everything.

Keith's work at Temple was highly regarded, and it was at that time he began conducting high school district, region, and all-state ensembles. Keith also conducted the Main Line Symphony in Wayne, Pennsylvania from 1968-1971. In 1967, Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music took notice and offered Keith a faculty position, but given his full-time status at Temple, he was forced to decline. "I consider the offer of a teaching position at Curtis to be a great honor," Keith wrote to Curtis Director Efrem Zimbalist. "My only regret is that I'm not allowed to accept the position."<sup>17</sup>

Regrets were short lived. In 1970, Keith was visiting professor of trombone at Indiana University's summer session. Clearly, he made an impression. Henry C. Smith III, who left the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1967 to teach trombone at IU, decided to leave the University in 1971 to concentrate on his conducting career. At that time, Indiana reached out to Keith and hired him as professor of music where his duties included conducting orchestras, directing the contemporary chamber ensemble, teaching a brass literature course, and teaching trombone. Lewis van Haney and Thomas Beversdorf also taught trombone at IU at that time. Later, Edwin Anderson and M. Dee Stewart joined IU's trombone faculty alongside Keith. Somehow, in the midst of his varied duties at Indiana and his ongoing orchestral and chamber music performances, Keith found time to be conductor of the Bloomington (Indiana) Symphony from 1975-1981 and, from 1989-



**Keith Brown conducting an all-Bach program at Temple University, 1966.**

**Keith Brown conducting the Indiana University Contemporary Chamber Ensemble in a program of music of Scott Joplin, Studio 6, WTIU television, April 25, 1974. Back row, left to right: Tom Walsh, tuba; Andrew Russell, trombone; Dave Brown, trumpet.**





**Keith Brown in recital, Shanghai, China, 1982.**

1996, artistic director and conductor of Bloomington's Camerata Orchestra. And not to be overlooked is his tenure as chairman of the brass department and conductor at the Music Academy of the West (1978–1982 and 1985–1987).

A featured artist at the 1982 International Trombone Workshop held at Belmont College in Nashville, Keith gave a presentation on trombone literature and also conducted the Workshop's concerto program. The ITW Orchestra (a pick-up group of professional Nashville area musicians) accompanied Dennis Smith, Carsten Svanberg (who played the world premiere of Leif Thybo's *Concerto*), and Hal Janks. "Thank you for your organized literature session and especially handling the concerto program so smoothly!" wrote Tom Everett, founder of the ITA. "Great job!!"<sup>18</sup>

Not content to stay in the United States, Keith developed deep relationships overseas. In addition to his work in Puerto Rico with the Casals Festival where he also conducted the Festival de Orquestas Sinfónicas Juveniles de las Américas, he was coach and advisor of the Joven Orquesta Nacional de España from 1984–1994. He had a long and fruitful association with the Orquesta Sinfónica Venezuela and the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra, often conducting concerts that featured trombone soloists including Felix Rodriguez and Angelo Pagliuca. His globe-trotting took him to China in 1982 (and again in 1988), where he was the first American trombonist (and, since Alois Franz Bambula's visit in 1960, only the

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*Keith's solo recording on Golden Crest had a profound influence on me. I listened to it more times than I can count, played the pieces myself, and tried to match his phrasing. There was such an elegance to his playing. It was never garish or forced; he really knew how to shape a line. Looking back at it all, I don't know what my life would have otherwise been, but Mr. Brown was the man who gave me the inspiration and guidance to pursue my dreams and provided many years of compassion and encouragement. My debt to him cannot be repaid, I can only pay it forward, and I think that is just what he would have wanted.*

— Stephen Fissel  
Bass Trombonist, Seattle Symphony

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**Keith Brown, Trombone.**  
**Golden Crest Records, 1971.**



second western trombonist) invited to give recitals and masterclasses at conservatories in Beijing and Shanghai where he was also made an honorary professor. Professor Bing Yu Hu, former trombone professor at Central Conservatory in Beijing, credits Keith's visits as being highly influential in the development of trombone teaching and performance in China.<sup>19</sup>

By now, readers are getting a picture of Keith Brown that extended to countless areas of musical life, a life built of days that had more than twenty-four hours and weeks with more than seven days. "But wait," as the late-night television advertising host breathlessly announces, "There's more!" During his first years at IU, Keith released four trombone solo albums. At that time, such recordings were rare, and they were important additions to the trombone's discography. His first recording (Golden Crest RE 7043), released in 1971, included a collaboration with his friend Robert Nagel. In addition to solo performances of his own arrangements of Handel's *Oboe Concerto* and Tartini's *Adagio in G*, and the Halsey Stevens *Sonata*, the album included Boris Blacher's *Divertimento for Trumpet, Trombone, and Piano*. In 1973, he released three albums for Music Minus One (MMO 8053, 8055, 8057). They featured repertoire with piano accompaniment with tracks that included the soloist's performances as well as tracks with piano alone so a trombonist could play with the record. Keith's play list included both standard and lesser known works, including the *Solo de Concours* of Bernard Croce-Spinelli, the John Davison *Sonata*, Walter Watson's *Concertino*, a Galliard *Sonata*, and Alexandre Guilmant's *Morceau Symphonique*. Also in 1973, Keith performed as soloist with the Bloomington Summer Band where his playing made a dramatic impression on the music critic who expected something different from the trombone,



**Keith Brown and Douglas Yeo in Brown's studio at Indiana University, May 3, 1974.**

Musically, the highlight of the concert was Keith Brown performing the Rimsky-Korsakov *Concerto for Trombone and Military Band*. I never knew the trombone could be played so lyrically and sensitively. Brown coaxed an effortless, velvety, warm tone from the instrument that could melt the icy heart of any critic, especially one expecting a noisy, guttural blast. His technical suavity belied the difficulties on the printed page, making the music sing rather than shout, and slip easily past rather than march gruffly forward.<sup>20</sup>

Keith's students from his years at IU recall his office was decorated with posters on musical themes (including Pablo Picasso's 1921 *Three Musicians* and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's 1893 poster of Jane Avril, a café-concert dancer in Paris, rendered from the point of view of a bass player in the orchestra pit), southwestern art, and photos of his children and Pablo Casals. His Conn 8H trombone was always carefully placed on the lid of the piano. By the 1980s, Keith had brought a piece of his passion for baseball to his studio. Just inside the door to his studio, students had to step on home plate when they came and left their lessons. This was a metaphor both for safety and security inside Keith's studio—"home"—as well as encouragement as one rounded the bases of life and scored. We forgave him for smoking cigars during lessons from time to time during the 1970s—something he later gave up in favor of a pipe before he quit smoking all together—and were fascinated by his collection of southwest bolos that adorned his open collar shirts. His deep baritone voice is remembered by all who knew him, and when he addressed us with the words, "Very honestly. . .," you knew something important was about to be delivered.



**Stephen Lange, Toby Oft, Keith Brown, and Douglas Yeo at Yeo's home in Lee, Massachusetts, July 11, 2011.  
Photo by Patricia Yeo.**

## LATER YEARS

Keith retired from Indiana University in 1997, after twenty-six years of teaching in Bloomington. At that time, Harvey Phillips, his friend of nearly forty years since they first met in the New York Brass Quintet in 1958, wrote the tribute to Keith that appeared in the University's publication, *To Honor Retiring Faculty*. "However great his reputation and professional accomplishments," Phillips wrote, "Keith Brown remains an artist and teacher committed to excellence in every musical activity and discipline."<sup>21</sup> Truer words were never spoken. The two remained the closest of friends, and when Phillips was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, Keith faithfully visited and helped him up until his death in 2010. Ironically, it was Harvey Phillips' wife, Carol, who was the first to notice some early onset symptoms of Parkinson's disease in Keith; the lives of Phillips and Brown thus became intertwined in yet another way, even to their ends.

As Professor Emeritus, Keith continued his avid interest in music, teaching lessons from time to time and enjoying visits from former students and colleagues. He was active in Bloomington's Rotary Club and First United Methodist Church, and spent as much time as he could with his grandchildren, the apples of his eye. His interest in sports continued unabated. A life-long New York Yankees fan, he was not a "homer" or such a fan that he could not appreciate excellence by other teams. When I visited him at his home in Bloomington in 2010, he was wearing a St. Louis Cardinals t-shirt; his daughter, Kris, lived there and had given it to him. The Cardinals had beaten the Yankees in the 1964 World Series when Keith was with the Metropolitan Opera. None of that mattered; the shirt was a token of love from one of his children and Keith was just as happy to celebrate the success and good play of the Cardinals as that of his beloved Yankees.

You can tell a lot about people by the books they keep on their shelves. After his death, I had the opportunity

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*I felt very welcomed by Keith when I joined the Jacobs School of Music faculty, and I value having known him as a retiree and neighbor, and in his final years and months. I gladly attest to the power of Keith's tennis serve (and forehand) and remember luring him out of retirement to play softball one summer afternoon, only to note his disappointment that we were playing slow pitch. "Get behind the plate," he told me. "I'll show you something." And he did: a commanding and accurate fast pitch.*

— Carl Lenthe  
Professor of Trombone, Indiana University

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to look at Keith's library. Of course, he had many books on music. *Testimony* by Dmitri Shostakovich and Simon Volkov. Harold Schonberg's *The Great Conductors* and *The Lives of the Great Composers*. Erich Leinsdorf's and Zubin Mehta's books on conducting. Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau's *Reverberations*. Stravinsky's *An Autobiography*, and *Evenings in the Orchestra* by Hector Berlioz. Leo Beranek's *Music, Acoustics & Architecture*. And two books about the great orchestras in which he played, *Those Fabulous Philadelphians* by Herbert Kupferberg, and Francis Robinson's *Celebration: The Metropolitan Opera*. What impressed me about his music books was their breadth. No musical subject was out of reach of his curiosity.

After music, books on sports were numerous. Part of this, I suspect, was simply Keith's love of the game. All of the games. He had two books about Michael Jordan, and Phil Jackson's *Eleven Rings: The Soul of Success*. He also owned a well-worn copy of George Will's *Men at Work: The Craft of Baseball*, and George Flynn's *Vince Lombardi on Football*. These books told the story of extraordinarily successful athletes, and Keith often used sports metaphors in his teaching. Baseball was about patience and strategy, resting (while, at the same time, concentrating), and then performing at a peak level for short bursts. Basketball was full out, non-stop engagement at warp speed. Football was a combination of the two, a life of pianissimo between plays followed by fortissimo when the quarterback shouted, HUT! Most interesting to me was to see a copy of Joe Garner's *And the Crowd Goes Wild: Relive the Most Celebrated Sporting Events Ever Broadcast*. With its two companion compact discs, the book gave Keith the opportunity to experience some of the most memorable events in sport history as they were called on radio or television. The book includes one of the most poignant moments ever recorded, Lou Gehrig's farewell. Diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), what later became known as "Lou Gehrig's disease," Gehrig, baseball's "Iron Horse" who played in

2,130 consecutive games, stood before a capacity crowd at Yankee Stadium on July 4, 1939, and announced, in spite of the disease that would ravage his body and take his life, "I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth . . . I might have been given a bad break, but I've got an awful lot to live for." That sounds like something Keith Brown would say.

In 2011, Keith traveled to Vermont to take part in the Marlboro Festival's 50th anniversary celebrations. On the way, he stopped at Tanglewood, the summer home of the Boston Symphony. Our trombone section—Toby Oft, Stephen Lange, and I—had all studied with Keith at IU. I was there early in his tenure; Steve was Keith's last student, graduating in 1997. We invited Keith and his wife to hear the Boston Symphony give a concert that included Jennifer Higdon's *Loco* and Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 6*, "Pathétique," conducted by Miguel Harth-Bedoya. We made sure to get Keith tickets where he could sit front and center with a good view of the trombones. To see him in the audience, watching three of his former students playing together in a great orchestra, beaming ear to ear, is a scene I will never forget. After the concert, my wife and I hosted a cookout at our home with our families. Keith—by then he had changed into his ubiquitous USC t-shirt—held court, telling stories about each of us and our time at IU, and reveling in a moment that only one who has been a teacher for over 60 years could really and truly understand. I met him for breakfast the next morning and all he could talk about was how proud he was of each of us. As he was of *all* of his students. It was the last time I saw him.

As Parkinson's disease took its toll, Keith remained sharp of mind even as his body was failing. He knew what was coming, having seen Harvey Phillips die of the disease before him. He moved from home to an assisted living facility, then to Hearthstone Skilled Nursing in the summer of 2017. For his 83rd and 84th birthdays, trombone students and faculty from Indiana University came to play for him; one recent graduate even drove back to Indiana from Washington, DC, to take part. The groups

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*Keith Brown, KB, Mr. Brown, Coach Brown. My mentor was known by many names, and my favorite happened to be on his license plate: KB ESQ. Mr. Brown was a man of conviction; no one can ever teach in the manner in which he instructed me. Through teaching or conducting, Mr. Brown had an influence on every student he taught. The trombone world will miss Mr. Brown, and I will forever be grateful that my life crossed paths with KB ESQ.*

— Nathan Zgonc  
Trombonist, Atlanta Symphony

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**Keith Brown's 84th birthday celebration with members of the Indiana University Trombone Choir, Dr. Denson Paul Pollard (center), and Professor Carl Lenthe (second from right).**

**Indiana University Trombone Choir and other participants at the Celebration of Keith Brown's life, First United Methodist Church, Bloomington, October 26, 2018.**



played some of Keith's arrangements and talked with him about what he meant to them. For some students, it was the first time they had met the man who they knew only by the name on their music. They sensed they were in the presence of trombone royalty, a rock star whose light was fading but who still towered tall even while sitting in his wheelchair. Keith entered hospice care in March 2018 and died comfortably and at peace on May 9.

Keith's remains were entombed in the columbarium at First Methodist Church in Bloomington and it was there that a celebration of his life was held on October 28, 2018, just a few days after what would have been his 85th birthday. The IU trombone choir, directed by Peter Ellefson and Carl Lenthe, played the prelude, including Elwood Williams' arrangement of Johannes Brahms' "How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place" from *Ein Deutsches Requiem*. Five of Keith's friends—Carl Lenthe, Blake Schlabach, Loy Hetrick, Jared Rodin, and Robert Graham—accompanied the congregation in the singing of "How Great Thou Art," and four of Keith's students—Nathan Zgonc, Stephen Lange, Stephen Fissel, and I—played Keith's edition of Daniel Speer's *Sonata à 4 Trombones*. After spoken tributes by Keith's son, Bob, as well as former students Stephen Fissel, Miguel Rivera, and me, all trombonists in the sanctuary gathered to play "Let There Be Peace on Earth" conducted by Carl Lenthe.

Keith's children Bob, Lise, and Kris had brought his

home plate to the Celebration and I made a point to step on it one last time. When I did so, a chapter in my life closed but that chapter has a window on its last page through which Keith Brown is still smiling, sitting in his chair in his office at Indiana University. I still hear him say, "Very honestly . . .," a sentence I could complete in a thousand ways and countless others can do the same.

As I reflect on the life, work, and person of Keith Brown, I can think of no one in the history of our noble instrument who has accomplished so much at such a consistently high and diverse level. We look with admiration at superb orchestral players and trombone soloists. Professional brass chamber music is a relatively new genre, but we now recognize notable practitioners. The same can be said for master teachers, and editors, and arrangers. Gifted conductors have always been in our midst, and libraries are full of outstanding trombone recordings from Arthur Pryor to today. We can call to mind special artists who have excelled in two or even three of these pursuits. But a person who has made such

a deep mark in *all* of them? I can think of no individual who has done so apart from Keith Brown. He was the definition of a polymath, a Renaissance man, a jack-of-all-trades and master of, well, *all*. To the one who cared so deeply for those who knew him—his family, students, colleagues, and friends—and made such remarkable, lasting impressions on so many, we say, with gratitude, "Very honestly, Keith, you changed our lives."



Keith Brown's home plate.



*I would like to express my thanks to Keith Brown's children—Bob Brown, Lise Brown Urbaczewski, and Kris Brown Piskulic—for providing me with access to Keith Brown's personal papers and library. They also supplied, unless otherwise noted, the photos that accompany this article. Keith Brown's papers have now been donated to Indiana University where they will be catalogued and contextualized by a doctoral student at the Jacobs School of Music so they can be studied, and their lessons and the inspiration derived from them enjoyed and appreciated by others. The Brown family is grateful to Professor Carl Lenthe for his advocacy in encouraging Indiana University to accept this valuable donation.*



**Douglas Yeo** was a student of Keith Brown at Indiana University during his freshman year at Indiana University, 1973–1974, before transferring to Wheaton College, Illinois, (where he studied trombone with Edward Kleinhammer) for the love of a girl, now his wife of 44 years. He was bass trombonist of the Boston Symphony from 1985–2012 and Professor of Trombone at Arizona State University from 2012–2016. The recipient of the 2014 ITA Award, his explorations into the history of the trombone, its instruments, music, and players have resulted in many articles for the *International Trombone Association Journal* including *Edward Kleinhammer: A Life and Legacy Remembered* (2014), *Evolution: The Double Valve Bass Trombone* (2015), *Take it, Big Chief! An Appreciation of Russell Moore* (2017), and *Finding Marguerite Dufay* (2019). His most recent books are *The One Hundred: Essential Works for the Symphonic Bass Trombonist* (Encore Music Publishers), and *Serpents, Bass Horns and Ophicleides in the Bate Collection* (Oxford University Press).

# KEITH BROWN

## NOTES

1. In 1959, the school's name was changed to General William J. Palmer High School.
2. Keith Brown, "Robert Marsteller Remembered." *International Trombone Association Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (January 1985), 8.
3. Letter from Ingolf Dahl to Alan Meissner, Manager, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. May 17, 1957. Keith Brown papers.
4. Telegram from Alexander Schneider to Keith Brown, February 18, 1958. Keith Brown papers.
5. Letter from Keith Brown to Izler Solomon, Music Director, Indianapolis Symphony, May 30, 1958. Keith Brown papers.
6. Harold C. Schonberg, "Musical Softball: Students Play the Faculty in Aspen with Brahms in the Background," *New York Times*, July 29, 1962.
7. Office Memorandum (Metropolitan Opera) from Felix Eyle to Mr. [Robert] Herman and Mr. [George] Schick, "Result of the Associate First Trombone Audition, 1 p.m., April 5, 1962." I am grateful to the Metropolitan Opera Archives for providing this enlightening document.
8. Letter from Keith Brown to Harold C. Schonberg, Music Critic, *New York Times*, April 18, 1965. Keith Brown papers. "The goodwill and excellent public relations that have been brought about as a result of the organization of the teams in Philadelphia and at the Met are certainly a worthwhile result of something that was originally created for exercise and relaxation."
9. "Scorecard," *Sports Illustrated*, May 27, 1963, 13–14. Also "People," *Sports Illustrated*, June 14, 1965, 66.
10. The mention of trombone players in *Sports Illustrated* seems to be a Philadelphia Orchestra thing. Glenn Dodson and M. Dee Stewart were mentioned in the October 15, 1973, issue in an article about the Philadelphia Orchestra's 1973 tour of China where they, along with trumpeter Don McComas, introduced the Frisbee to a group of 200 children.
11. Ted Hale, "Keith Brown Retires," *International Trombone Association Journal*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Fall 1997), 40.
12. Harvey Phillips (Mary Campbell, amanuensis), *Mr. Tuba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 167.
13. Keith Brown's papers include an Aspen Brass Quintet program from July 18, 1966, held at the Colorado College Summer Program in the Arts. The personnel for that concert were, in addition to Nagel, Farkas, and Brown, Walter Myers, trumpet, and William Bell, tuba. Harvey Phillips recalled that he had worked at Aspen for expenses only as a favor to Brown so there could be an Aspen Brass Quintet. See Harvey Phillips (Mary Campbell, amanuensis), *Mr. Tuba*, 226.
14. Steven Krolak, "International recognition for Mildred Kemp, pioneering trombonist and IU Southeast adjunct instructor." <https://now.ius.edu/2017/07/international-recognition-for-mildred-kemp-pioneering-trombonist-and-iu-southeast-adjunct-instructor/>.
15. Letter from S. T. Burns, Chairman, University of Wisconsin trombone search committee, to Keith Brown, April 4, 1963. Keith Brown papers.
16. Samuel L. Singer, "Trombonist Performs in Rare Recital," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 5, 1967. Also Samuel L. Singer, "Faculty Recital Presents Solos By Trombonist," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 27, 1970.
17. Letter from Keith Brown to Efrem Zimbalist, Director, Curtis Institute of Music, February 3, 1967. Keith Brown papers.
18. Letter from Thomas G. Everett to Keith Brown, June 6, 1982.
19. Email correspondence from Wei Wang, bass trombonist, Singapore Symphony, to Douglas Yeo, March 21, 2019.
20. Susan Edelman, "Brown's Trombone Outdoor Highlight," *Daily Herald-Telephone* (Bloomington, IN), July 19, 1973.
21. Harvey G. Phillips, "Keith Brown," *To Honor Retiring Faculty* (Bloomington: Indiana University), April 17, 1997..