

Little did we know, PSO trumpet player Neal Berntsen has a passion in addition to mastering classical music. As an orchestra musician, Berntsen has to be a team player. But he's also an accomplished coach who has introduced all three of his children to the world of basketball. What began as a childhood pastime continued to shape Mr. Berntsen's life—and, it also has influenced him in music. He talks about the parallels between music and sports and shares his experience:

"Basketball has always been a large part of my life. I played through high school and credit my high school coach for convincing me to attend a college that had a good school of music rather than the small schools that had given me basketball scholarships. In my coach's words, 'You'll never make any money playing basketball.'

"As my life and career in music

of excellence in any endeavor. I truly believe the words of the great basketball coach John Wooden, 'Failing to prepare is preparing to fail.' These are the key messages that I try to pass along to my trumpet students and to the kids I coach in basketball.

"I have been coaching basketball teams since I was in college. I currently have three teams in the Mt. Lebanon recreation league: 2nd grade boys, 5th grade boys and 8th grade girls - (I have three kids!). While this keeps me extremely busy, it's a labor of love. The primary objective is that every child on the team has fun and enjoys coming to basketball. We focus on fundamentals, learn a few plays and keep it simple. I try to teach the kids that we 'plan our work, and then work our plan.' Even the 2nd graders run plays - everyone has a responsibility. I ask that our parents cheer for both teams and praise their children



Symphony

SLAM DUNK

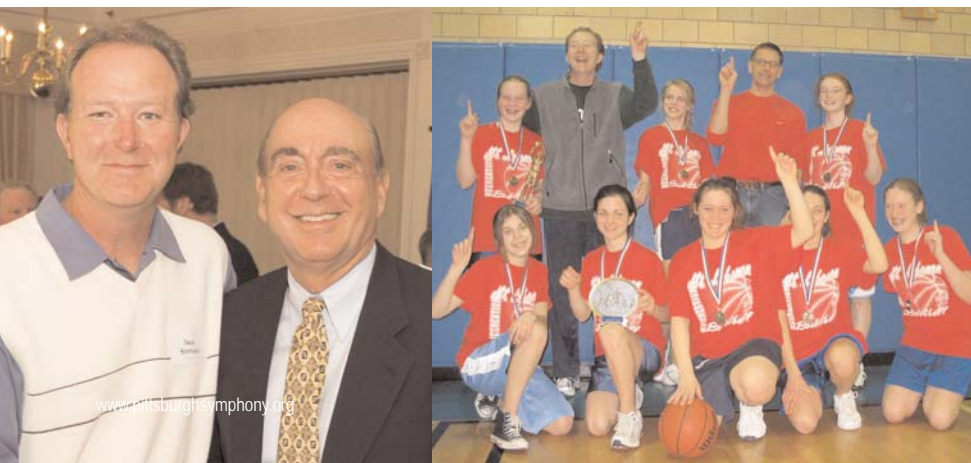
NEAL BERNTSEN BREAKS DOWN TRADITIONAL STEREOTYPES OF MUSICIANS AND ATHLETES

progressed, I began to realize that many of the lessons I learned in basketball were also applicable to music and to life in general. Playing in an orchestra requires many of the same skills as playing on a championship team. Discipline, hard work, selflessness, commitment and a positive mental attitude are all important life skills that are critical to the pursuit

for passing and rebounding more than scoring baskets.

"We try not to keep score with the younger kids but the kids usually keep track on their own. However, I believe this leads to one of the best lessons you learn from sports. How to lose. Sports is a great metaphor for life and in life there are disappointments. I try to

teach my teams that all you can do is work hard and give your best effort. Sometimes things go your way, and sometimes they don't. It doesn't matter if it's basketball, math, music or life - if you work hard and do your best, that's all you can control. I want my teams to understand what Michael Jordan said, 'I can accept failure, but I can't accept not trying.' "



top: Neal blocking son Charlie's defensive maneuvers [credit: Jason Cohn]

bottom left: Neal with Dick Vitale, former NBA coach and ESPN basketball analyst

bottom right: Neal's daughter Molly's championship team photo.

far right: Neal at a public court in Mt. Lebanon with his children--Jacob (11), Molly (14) and Charlie (8) [credit: Jason Cohn]



written by Neal Berntsen
intro by Kristi DePaul