



EDITORIAL

REMEMBERING VITO PASCUCCI

Gleblanc founder Vito Pascucci had tremendous charisma, an extraordinarily broad range of interests, and a boundless enthusiasm for fine French burgundy. These three traits made for a memorable dinner at his home in Kenosha some two decades ago. As the long evening came to a close, he pulled a copy of Kahlil Gilbran's *The Prophet* off a shelf and paged through it until he came to a heavily underlined epigram that read "work is love made visible." Pressing the book into my hand, he said "This is something important. You should remember it."

With Pascucci's death last month, "Work is love made visible" now seems like an appropriate epitaph for one of the more illustrious careers in music industry history. The company Vito built, the instruments he designed, and the countless marketing innovations he pioneered all flowed from his all-consuming passion for music. Vito was a profit-driven businessman, as evidenced by his tough credit policies and his visceral resistance to dealing on price. But what really animated him was a desire to advance music making—by creating the products and programs to reach a larger swathe of the population.

Looking back at the fifty-plus years he was active at the helm of G. Leblanc Corp., it's hard to overstate his impact on the school music industry. Retail meetings that he sponsored and guided gave rise to the rent-to-purchase agreements that have become standard practice. The gatherings also dramatically boosted the industry's level of professionalism. He was among the first to truly appreciate the importance of the educator and campaigned tirelessly to forge productive alliances between teachers, manufacturers, and retailers. His advertising set new standards, especially the memorable tag line, "The investment is not in the instrument...it's in the child."

Vito combined the sensibilities of an engineer and an artist. He was forever scrutinizing manufactured

products, whether it was a fine piece of luggage, a camera, or a watch, with an eye towards finding ways to improve the function or visual appeal of his instruments. This fanatical attention to detail resulted in a product line that redefined prevailing industry quality standards.

Every manufacturer pays lip service to product quality, but Vito took it as his responsibility to ensure that every product Leblanc shipped was perfect. At the beginnings of the company he personally inspected each instrument before it left the factory. After production rose to the point where it was no longer possible to check every product, he had special carts built so that random samples could be wheeled into his office for scrutiny. And he was the world's toughest critic. As far as he was concerned, the slightest imperfection, whether it was the spring tension on a clarinet key or buffing wheel marks on a French horn bell, was a disaster. In a 1985 interview he said, "Opening the case on my first good trumpet was one of the biggest thrills of my life. I want to make sure that everyone who buys one of our instruments has that same thrill...that's why they have to be perfect."

Vito had only a high school education but was a lifelong student, reading voraciously to expand his knowledge. Over a lifetime of study he became a masterful instrument designer, a brilliant manufacturer, and a deft marketer. What made him special was that he applied these considerable skills relentlessly to better the industry and make music more accessible. I think I speak for legions in the industry in saying that it was a privilege to have spent time with him. The company he created and the industry as it exists today are his unconditional love made visible, and we are all in his debt.

Brian T. Majeski
Editor

email: brian@musictrades.com