

JAMES HOULIK'S COMPLETE BIOGRAPHY

There are many things in life that are debatable, but in the music world there is one absolute, that being when *The London Daily Mail* hails classical tenor saxophone giant James Houlik as, “The world’s great saxophone virtuoso,” you can believe it. They are not alone in this assessment. *The Washington Post* calls Houlik, “The Andres Segovia of the Tenor Saxophone.” The *American Record Guide* continues this train of thought, “(Houlik’s) playing is technically secure, his tone is big and cello-like, and musicianship is never in doubt. Houlik is as good a classical saxophonist as one is likely to encounter.” Even those who know Houlik well are unusually enthusiastic when discussing the Duquesne University Professor of Music. Orchestra conductor and long time friend David Bragg writes, “That Jim Houlik is a superb player is very clear, but equally important is that he brings in his playing and teaching an enthusiasm and excitement for the saxophone and its literature.”

Born on December 4, 1942, in Bay Shore, New York, Houlik was encouraged by Sigurd Rascher, from an early age, to focus on the tenor saxophone as his primary means of musical expression. Houlik’s academic career started as a music major at the State University of New York at Fredonia, followed by earning a master’s degree in music from the University of Illinois and then more post-graduate saxophone study with Cecil Leeson at Ball State University (which Houlik states as not being very helpful). Still in his 20s, Houlik became the first teacher of saxophone at East Carolina University (ECU). Four years later Houlik, while still holding his teaching position at ECU, accepted a position as adjunct saxophone professor and the first teacher of saxophone at the North Carolina School of the Arts. After building the saxophone studio there, just as he had a ECU, Houlik was offered a full time position as saxophone professor and Assistant Dean of the School, a position he held for 20 years before retiring.

While there he founded the North Carolina School of the Arts Community Music School and served as its Director. Now, as Chair of Woodwinds at Duquesne University, he oversees a large adjunct faculty made up primarily of members of the Pittsburgh Symphony. Houlik has served as board member of the World Saxophone Congress, and was a board member of the North Carolina Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts. As if this isn’t enough, Houlik participated in a directed study of the anatomy and mechanics of the forearm and hand at Bowman Gray School of Medicine and today works with the Department of Physical Therapy at Duquesne University in connection with his ongoing interest in repetitive motion disorders. Even with all of this going on Houlik has still found a way to serve as adjunct professor of saxophone at other schools such as Boston, Duke, Catholic, and Wake Forest universities.

As a concerto artist with orchestras worldwide Houlik has soloed with The London Symphony, Czech Radio Orchestra, Orchestra Internazionale Italia, Orchestra Classico di Milano, Presidential Orchestra of Turkey, New Arts Philharmonia, Grant Park Orchestra, Phoenix Symphony, American Symphony, and the North Carolina Symphony, to name just a few; many times performing works written for him. With wind groups a few of the ensembles he has soloed with include the Symphony Winds of Leiria, Air Force Band of Belgium, United States Navy Band, El Paso (Texas) Wind Symphony, Keystone

Winds, and too many college and high school ensembles to ever hope to list. He has lectured at the Smithsonian, given a collegiate commencement address, is the principal teacher of the yearly James Houlik Saxophone Retreat at Wildacres in Little Switzerland North Carolina, has given recitals at locations worldwide, is a noted author, a clinician so popular he has no ability to accept all of the invitations offered, developed the Career Perspectives Seminar program for the National Repertory Orchestra, and has appeared on countless national and local television news programs.