



Joseph "Joe" Anthony Labuta

October 7, 1931 - June 13, 2025

Joseph Anthony Labuta, a devoted family man, educator, and scholar, passed away peacefully on Friday, June 13, 2025, at his home in Saline, Michigan, at the age of 93. He was preceded in death by his first wife, Beverly Labuta, and his daughter Karen LaForge (John). Survivors include his loving wife Mary Labuta, his sons Joseph W. Labuta (Ray Esper), Steven Labuta (Claire) his grandchildren Jacqueline LaForge, Alexandra LaForge Uberti (John), Kyle Labuta (Tierney) and Kelly Labuta (Brandon), his great-grandchildren George, Stephen and Emilia Uberti, step-children Scott Orwig (Sarah), Amy Waddell (Kip), and step-grandchildren Harrison, Grace, Kennedy, Shepard Orwig and Ted Waddell.

Joe's academic and professional life was devoted to music. He spent 35 years at Wayne State, where he served as the head of the music education department and authored four books, including the much-used textbook "Basic Conducting Techniques." In 2004, Joseph and his wife, Mary Labuta, founded the Saline New Horizons Band. Joseph also had a deep love for jazz trumpet, performing in various local groups throughout his life.

A Celebration of Joe's Life will be held on Saturday, August 16th, where friends, family, and colleagues can gather to reminisce and celebrate his life. Please email Jlabutacelebration@gmail.com for details. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions in Joe's name may be made to the Saline New

Horizons Band, 1439 Wildwood Trail, Saline, MI 48176 or to Arbor Hospice, 2366 Oak Valley Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48103. To leave a memory you have of Joe or to sign his online guestbook please visit www.rbfhsaline.com. Arrangements entrusted to the Robison-Bahnmler Funeral Home of Saline.

Tribute Wall

AW

“ Thank you, Joe, for including me in the wonderful world of SNHB, but especially the trumpet. I enjoyed the Greenhorn Band and your caring tutelage.

Anne Wright - July 18, 2025 at 09:16 AM

JG

“ Dr. Labuta was a sincere, kind, funny, and always let you know how you were doing. He wrote a recommendation letter that helped me get my band director job in Utica Community Schools. He told me that I would have a great career in music education, and I did. Positive thoughts and memories for the Labuta family's, especially Mary and Scott.

Jeff Groth - June 26, 2025 at 12:37 PM

MC

“ Joe Labuta was a fine conducting teacher and a lovely human being. He had a great sense of humor, I can still picture his smile and hear his laugh! As a teacher he was always willing to lend a hand and help you navigate your way through the winding paths of academia. Joe was the kind of man we all hope to have as a friend!

Maria Cimarelli - June 25, 2025 at 05:49 PM

JR

“*Dr. Labuta made a tremendous impact on the music ed profession. I have so many fond memories of Dr. Labuta as a brass, conducting, and music ed professor at Wayne State. Not just the instruction, which was excellent, but the stories and the relationship-building. He had a great sense of humor and made us all feel supported. He was an inspiration and a role model for my own music ed career. I wish his family prayers and peace as they live in his legacy.*

Johanne Ray-Hepp - June 24, 2025 at 01:06 PM

PS

“*Jim Lentini, Thanks for letting us know. Joe was a prince of a guy, and I had the pleasure of working with him for my nine years at Wayne State. He was my Associate Chair for most of it, and headed the Music Ed program. He was a fine musician, and excellent teacher of conducting, He and Bev, his late wife, were a terrific couple as she accompanied him on occasion on the piano. Later he married Mary, who had worked in the Music Office, and whose son was a student of trombone. She is a lovely person, and I was so happy they got together. I was occasionally in touch with him over the years, and saw them in Saline at least once. I owe him many happy memories of my time at Wayne State whatever difficulties we encountered as administrators there.*

Peter Schoenbach - June 24, 2025 at 12:00 PM

GK

“ *Dr. Labuta was one of the finest teachers I ever had. He was my professor in conducting classes at Wayne State. He was so meticulous and thorough. I could always discuss things with him and he was a very kind and gentle man. I learned many wonderful concepts from him and made it a point to incorporate his ideas and methods into my Teaching of instrumental music. He will be deeply missed.*

Gary Kaback - June 23, 2025 at 04:36 PM

DR

“ *Joe was passionate about music and always made time for others. All of my interactions with him were pleasant and fruitful. I and many others will miss him.*

David Rhoads - June 23, 2025 at 12:11 PM

DM

“ *Joe is a great friend and a great musician. He will be missed by all of us in SW Florida.*

Dave McDonagh - June 21, 2025 at 06:52 PM

RC

“ *He was a very caring and helpful teacher at Wayne State. I never felt like I was just another student. He had a way to make each of us feel welcome and we could approach him about anything. God bless his family and friends. He'll be dearly missed.*

Randy Casteel - June 21, 2025 at 12:36 AM

JZ

“ I sat next to Joe for years in the church orchestra. He was always so kind, light-hearted and witty. Getting a thumbs-up and smile from Joe after a solo or challenging part meant true accomplishment. I am so sorry to hear of Joe’s passing, and hold wonderful memories of knowing him.

John Zemba - June 20, 2025 at 09:10 AM

DG

“ Joe Labuta was a positive friendly influencer to our Burwyck Park Condominium Association and community. He always shared his musical expertise and provided ongoing support to our association leaders and families. He will be missed.

Dennis Gerlach President Board of Directors BPCA

Dennis Gerlach - June 16, 2025 at 11:16 AM