

## Meeting the Challenge

By Oscar Petty, Jr.  
Newark, New Jersey

**F**or those of you who have never attended an IDRS conference, get with it — you missed a great one!

The 1998 International Double Reed Society (IDRS) conference was held at Arizona State University in Tempe. It was a great conference for me.

The ASU campus was beautiful and the facilities at the School of Music were wonderful! I was very impressed with the rehearsal studios and my accompanist, Gail Novik — a recent graduate of ASU.

I must admit before flying out to the conference, I felt nervous - what about my reeds in that very warm and humid climate? I had many reasons for being nervous; airplanes are not my favorite means of transportation, and what about the reaction of my peers? While en route to the conference many questions went through my mind. Did I really want to be around so many oboists and bassoonists? What would these double reeders be like? Moreover, would they enjoy my performance? — after all this was my first performance for the world's most important international double reed organization; but a solo performance at 9:00 a.m. — not being an early riser — this was also a challenge. One thing I was especially sure of, I had practiced a great deal for this very important performance. I felt I would meet the challenge! In my opinion, the oboe is one of the most challenging double reed instruments on the planet. As a professional oboist, a music educator in an urban public school district — some of my most important goals are to be exciting and to inspire young people to meet the challenges in education.

I am challenged daily by my students, so it is important for me to incorporate new ideas, teaching strategies and new materials into my classroom environment. As a performer, it is important for me to continue to search for new

works for the oboe that will speak to the hearts of my audience. This philosophy motivated me to select the *Concerto for Oboe* by Mario Lombardo and the *Incantation and Dance* by William Grant Still, the dean of African American composers. I believe the music of these two great American composers will continue to touch the hearts and souls of people beyond the next century.

Let us tip our “reeds” to the hosts — Professors Martin Schuring, oboe, and Jeffrey Lyman, bassoon; not only were their performances first rate, these gentlemen displayed professionalism, hospitality and a good sense of humor. The musical repertoire at this conference was exciting and interesting; there was something for everyone.

It was an honor for me to have met some of the world's great oboists, bassoonists, clinicians and vendors displaying many important double reed products. Moreover, I felt that my conversations with these international performing artists was a new educational experience for me that I could share with my students in class.

The '98 IDRS Conference lived up to this years conference philosophy. It was truly people playing music from their culture; music particularly important to them and people sharing their history. I am looking forward to performing works by Ulysses Kay and others at the 1999 IDRS Conference at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

### **About the Author ...**

*Oscar Petty, Jr. is a native of Newark, New Jersey, and an alumnus of the Newark Community School of the Arts and Arts High School. Mr. Petty continues to perform throughout the United States and abroad. He has been a teacher at Newark's Art High School since 1994.*