

Gilbert Audin and *L'Association Bassons* (A Conversation)

By Ronald Klimko
Moscow, Idaho

On Saturday and Sunday, March 20-21st, 1999, I was very fortunate to attend the first *Congrès International de Basson* in Colmar, France. This exciting event marked the emergence of a new French organization called *L'Association Bassons*, founded by bassoonist **Laurent Lefèvre**, in close conjunction with **Alain Deleurence**, professor of basson at l'ENM Conservatoire of Colmar, where the activities were held, with the further assistance of **Gilbert Audin**.



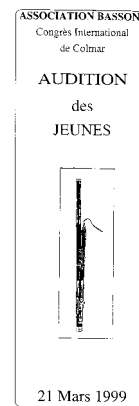
Gilbert Audin

To most of us bassoonist **Gilbert Audin** needs no introduction. Born in 1956, he had his early training on the bassoon at the Conservatoire de Nîmes, and received his Premier Prix de Basson à Unanimité from the Conservatoire Supérieure de Musique de Paris in the class of **Maurice Allard** in 1975. Between 1974 and 1982 he won several international competitions in bassoon, including the following: 1974: 2ème Prix at the Geneva Competition (no 1er Prix awarded); 1975: 3ème Prix at the Munich Competition; 1980: 1er Prix at the Geneva Competition; 1982: 1er Prix at the Toulon Competition. He is currently Basson Solo in l'Orchestre de l'Opéra de Paris and Professeur au Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris, where he replaced his mentor, Maurice Allard, in both positions. **Laurent Lefèvre** is perhaps the most famous of Gilbert's many students. Laurent received his Premier Prix from the CNSM of Paris in 1987, and has won the following international bassoon competitions: 1988: First Prize at the Toulon Competition; 1989: First Prize in the Fernand Gillet Bassoon Competition of the IDRS in Manchester; and 1995: First Prize at the Geneva Competition. Currently Laurent is Principal of l'Orchestre de l'Opéra de

Paris and Professeur at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Lyon. (See the review of the wonderful new CD by the Bassoons of the Opéra Orchestra elsewhere in this issue.)

There have been other organizations of bassoons in France in the past. The organization *Les Amis du Basson Français* was founded by **Maurice Allard** and remained active until about 1983 with annual meetings and a periodical publication. Unlike the present organization, *Les Amis...* was basically established to unify the players of the French-system bassoon, who at that time were under increasingly strong pressure from various conductors, orchestral managers, etc., to switch to the German-system 'fagott'. While this pressure sadly continues to exist today, it is clear that-given the excellence and artistry of the current players of the French bassoon-they will without doubt persist in the continuance and preservation of this exquisite bassoon system. Moreover, the new *L'Association Bassons*, unlike the previous organization, is devoted to the inclusion of all bassoon systems at present use in France-German-and French-system alike.¹ Their ultimate goal is to join with the newly-formed *Association Français du Hautbois* and another bassoon organization called *Fou du Basson* and hopefully to form a national organization of French double reed artists.

Here are the programs of the various performances that took place in Colmar in March, 1999. As one can see from the following programs, the meeting was filled with exciting performances. Particularly noteworthy was the performance of the Vanhal *Concerto* where fagottist **Martin Drescher** of the Staatskapelle Orchester-Karlsruhe, and Professor von Fagott at the Hochschule der Musik, Mannheim, Germany, joined Laurent Lefèvre on the basson for a beautiful union of the two instruments. Also performing were **Jean-François Duquesnoy**, 1992 Gillet winner and currently Basson Solo with l'Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France.



PROGRAMME

- 1 - Habanera de DORSELAER
Élève : Guillaume SIBREL
Professeur : Alain DELEURENCE
- 2 - Concertino n° 18 de J. PONET
Élève : Alexandra MENEGOUZ
Professeur : Alain DELEURENCE
- 3 - Burlesque de E. ROZZA
Élève : Guillaume SIBREL
Professeur : Alain DELEURENCE
- 4 - 1 - 2 de VACHIEY
Élève : Emile MELSTERRIN
Professeur : Dominique DEREUVALLET
Accompagnement piano : Emile HEINIMAN
- 5 - Sonate en sol mineur de DEVIENNE - 2ème et 3ème mouvements
Élève : Aurèle KUNTZ
Professeur : Brigitte CARDINA
- 6 - Duo
Élèves : Aurèle SLMONT et Emmanuel DESLANDES
Professeur : Jean-Claude MONTAC
- 7 - Venie de Nicole PHILIBA
Élève : Lisa SLMONT
Professeur : Jean-Claude MONTAC
- 8 - Concerto en la mineur de VIVALDI
Élève : Luc LEMARE
Professeur : Jean-Claude MONTAC

Au piano : Karine GARSAULT

Besides the performances, there were also a number of double-reed exhibitors, including: Buffet Crampon, Schreiber, Selmer, Moosman, Wolf, Glotin, Neuranter, Egele, Accolade Musik, and FNAC. Some of the exhibitors, such as Bernd Moosman and Guntram Wolf, were given a chance to present their German-

Congrès International de Basson
CONCERT RECITAL
Ensembles de Bassons

Programme :

Quatuor "Les Francs Bassons" du CNR de Strasbourg
professeur : J.C. DASSONVILLE

FRITH *Alto lied*
STETHENSON *Little suite*
Laurent LEFEVRE, basson solo à l'Opéra de Paris et professeur au CNSM de Lyon

BOUTRY *Interférences*
ALLARD *Variations sur le 24ème caprice de Paganini*
Jean-François DUQUESNOY, basson solo à l'Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France

WEBER *Andante et Rondo hongrois*

Quatuor de bassons de l'ENM de Colmar
professeur A. DELEURENCE

VIVALDI *Concerto pour 4 bassons*
transcription du Concerto Per due Violoncelli archi e Cembalo en sol mineur PV 411
par J.C. DASSONVILLE

avec la participation des
Quatuor de bassons du CNSM de Lyon
Quatuor de bassons du CNSM de Paris

Piano : Karine GARSAULT

Entrée libre

Samedi 20 Mars 1999 - 20h30
Auditorium de l'IUT - Place du 2 Février - Colmar

system instruments for trial by the predominantly French-system players, many of whom had an opportunity to try out a 'fagott' for the first time. All in all it was an exciting and trail-blazing meeting which had the effect of sweeping away most of the restraint which may have existed between the French and German-system instruments in the past.²

The Parisian contingent of the meeting arrived by bus, and I was able to 'hitch' a ride on the bus back to Paris. This also gave me the excellent opportunity to tape record a conversation with Gilbert Audin on the way. So I turned the tape recorder on, and the following is a transcription of our conversation:

CONCERT de CLÔTURE
du Congrès International de Basson
avec
l'Orchestre de Chambre
et
l'Orchestre Symphonique du Conservatoire de Colmar
Direction : E. MAEGEY

Solistes :

G. AUDIN *Basson solo à l'Opéra de Paris et professeur au CNSM de Paris*
M. DRESCHER *Fagott solo de la Staatskapelle de Karlsruhe et professeur à la Musikhochschule de Mannheim*
P. HANON *Basson solo à l'Orchestre National de France*
L. LEFEVRE *Basson solo à l'Opéra de Paris et professeur au CNSM de Lyon*

et la classe de basson de l'ENM de Colmar
Professeur : A. DELEURENCE

Oeuvres de :
Berwald, Borodine, van Dorsselaer, Rachmaninov, Verdi, Vivaldi et Wanhall

DIMANCHE 21 MARS 1999 - 17h
Eglise St Matthieu - Colmar

Entrée libre

RK: Gilbert, do you find the Poulenc works difficult? I am thinking in particular of the difficult downward slurs in the slow movement of the *Sonata* for clarinet and bassoon, which is very touchy on the German instrument.

GA: Yes, for us it is also very difficult. I often play together (with other musicians) the *Trio*, the *Sextet*, and the *Sonata* with clarinet. Nobody enjoys playing the *Sonata*. I think for us it is more difficult than for your instrument. It's difficult for us to descend slurs because they often break. So I prefer to play like it is written in the old edition—the first edition—where it was written without the slurs (tongued) It was especially written: 'ben legato-accompagniemento.' Here you can play legato, but you are not obliged to do slurs. It is for me an interesting paradox to play softer and more legato without to play legato!

RK: That's a difficult spot for any bassoonist. It is interesting, though. Having played fagott and a LITTLE BIT of French bassoon, I have noticed that the French instrument has this wonderful quality of 'locking into' a note. My favorite note on the French instrument is si (b right above the bass clef). (Sings the note.)

GA: For me this is not a special note.

RK: What is a special note for you on the Buffet?

GA: For me it is the third e flat, the first note of the second movement of the Mozart *Concertante*. Because we have many possibilities of playing with or without color. If we want to play with expression we don't use the thumb E flat key and

PROGRAMME

<p>Ouverture de l'opéra <i>La force du destin</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Giuseppe VERDI (1813-1901)</p>	<p>Danse Symphonique op. 45 n° 1</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Serge RACHMANINOV (1873-1943)</p>	
<p>Concerto en Fa Majeur pour <i>deux bassons et orchestre</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Johann Baptiste WANHAL (1739-1813)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Allegro moderato - Andante grazioso - Allegro</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Solistes : Martin DRESCHER Laurent LEFEVRE</p>	<p>Konzertstück op. 2 pour basson <i>et orchestre</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Franz BERWALD (1796-1868)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Soliste : Philippe HANON</p>	
<p>Dans les steppes de l'Asie Centrale</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Alexandre BORODINE (1833-1887)</p>	<p>Apothéose The Big Ben Song</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Willy van DORSELAER</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>avec la classe de basson de l'ENM de Colmar</i> Professeur : Alain DELEURENCE</p>	
<p>Concerto en mi mineur pour <i>basson, cordes et continuo F VIII n° 6</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Antonio VIVALDI (1678-1741)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Allegro poco - Andante - Allegro</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Soliste : Gilbert AUDIN</p>		

we begin a little dark. After we can 'go inside' the note. We have this key and have many possibilities for color, but it is a little dangerous because it is a little sharp. For me it is a note easy to make beautiful.

RK: When I studied for a time with **Cecil James** in London on the Buffet, he called that key (left thumb-E flat) the 'doctor key', because the 'doctor' "fixes" the music!!

GA: He has died?

RK: Yes, just recently. And **Sol Schoenbach** too. It is very sad. We have lost two of our Honoraries in two months!

GA: I hope that **Maurice Allard** will be with us for many, many more years.

RK: Gilbert, tell me first of all about your feelings concerning the so-called "War" between the French and the German-system bassoons.

GA: I am sure the solution for us is certainly not a "War", just a competition, because we need competition to prove what we can do. I never say to my students or to my colleagues that I am sure the French bassoon is 'better' than the German bassoon. What means "better" in art? I think that the French bassoon is so beautiful that it is necessary to keep it alive. It is another opinion. I think that we have to prove every day that we play so beautiful, it is not possible to envision that we will not continue.

RK: I don't think the tradition of the French bassoon will ever die. It is too beautiful an instrument.

GA: I hope so. Earlier French bassoonists felt

that we didn't have to prove anything that the German bassoon was not very interesting. I think that this is not true at all. My students listen to many different records, and I really enjoy listening to **Dag Jensen**, or **Anders Engstrom**, for instance. Wonderful musicians. Wonderful sound. The sound of **Milan Turkovic**, for instance-the sound, the direction, the 'school' is wonderful. We can also speak about **(Richard) Ranti**. He is the American who won Second Prize in Toulon (1982). I think it is impossible to do the sound better. Every one can do it a little different. I am proud that my students do not all have the same sound and feeling of playing as me. But if it is complete, I say: 'OK'.

RK: ...a complete artist...

GA: There is nothing to say. He is my student and he enjoys playing even if he doesn't play like me. You have **Jean-François (Duquesnoy)** and **Ludovic (Tissus)**. They wish to grow in the future, but without me. And perhaps we will not be always in the same direction, but we will "plow through". Nobody can say which is better, but just that there is difference. For me, Laurent Lefèvre is not better or less good than Gilbert Audin-just different. And for me the German bassoon is the same-not better, just different. If everybody can understand that, (then) life is beautiful! Life with the French bassoon has to be different (in the future).

RK: I have always felt that Maurice Allard was a fantastic 'maître'. But he was so much a 'force'

that everyone basically played like Maurice Allard....

GA: Yes.

RK: ...instead of having a difference of style. You did not have the Selmer bassoon then-only the Buffet. The Selmer was not perfected yet. And now I can see what is happening. You have the different artists going in different directions, but it is still in the French style.

GA: But you know for us I think that it is an error to say: "You play a different instrument, so you are obliged to play different." We have a different instrument, so we have naturally a different 'manner' to play something, but we don't have to be different by our way of playing.

RK: No...

GA: Now we have something different in France. I have a few who come to me playing the German bassoon-French people. And they play the German bassoon well. But they want to continue to study music with me. Naturally, I cannot refuse them. I cannot play the German bassoon naturally, but I have many records and I know the problems of the speed of the air in the instrument-the darkness or the color. We have many fingerings which are the same and if not the same-similar. For instance on the recording of **Dag Jensen** he plays in the Jolivet (*Concerto*) (sings: "A flat-D flat-A flat-G,D flat -G -G flat") different fingerings, but the same like us: Not the same fingerings, but you have one which is more open and brighter but higher. It is the same with us. And when my student has problems with the notes, I say: You must listen to the German bassoon. When you are a student you must keep your ears open to all bassoon sounds. If I said: "Don't listen to that", then every student would want to hear it! They think that you have something to hide, to protect. I gave them a record I like: the Winter *Concertino*, the recording by **Lazlo Hara**. I like his playing. I don't want to play anything like him, however. His articulation, his vibrato-crying-is not for me. It is marvelous for the authenticity of the musical impression. For a student it is a good time to hear it. It is good for them to learn to choose what they can copy or not.

When I was young I had the records of **Milan Turkovič** and he played for me so beautiful in the low register. On the French bassoon everybody played always hard the low "do" (C). It is possible on the French bassoon, but you have to know that you can have a very soft "do", with color, but very light. But one note (that I do not like on the German bassoon is the low "re" (D). This note, fortunately, is no problem for me (on the French).

RK: The low D is beautiful on the French bassoon. On the German it is too high.

GA: And the color is not so good.

RK: The color is terrible!

GA: And another one that is not perfect, because you have to search for it, is (middle) g. On the German bassoon you add the E flat key or not the key. But it is too sharp, if you add it.

RK: It's interesting because in America we fight about whether or not to add that key (E flat to the middle g). When I hear bassoonists who don't use it, I don't like it. The note is always too high, even if they are trying to play it low. Fa (open f) can be a problem with German bassoons as well. With some (German) bassoons you can add the (rh, 3rd finger) g key to stabilize it-or the (lh,thumb) D key to make it softer, as in the final open f of the Tchaikovsky (Andante solo in the *4th Symphony*) to make it more quiet, more stable.

GA: It is not really easy to attack on the Buffet. It is not real good intonation. Often it is too low. And all the notes (fa,mi,me,re) are often too low. We are working on the Buffet to change that.

RK: When I was studying with Allard, and I would play in the low register, I would do what German bassoonists do. (Demonstrates lowering the jaw to lower the pitch.)

GA: (Laughing)It was not necessary! But for facility it is better to play open in the low register (and not have to favor the notes). This can cause many, many 'accidents'. When I played the Vivaldi ... (Earlier that evening Gilbert had played the Vivaldi e minor *Concerto*. Ed) it was difficult for me because the instrument was very cold and not warmed up. I was in the back and there was no heat. And the hall was very cold so the pitch was low. You try to adjust, but it is difficult.

RK: Now tell me what happened when (Daniel) Barenboim was going to take over the direction of the Opéra.

GA: The problem was politics-it was political. They said to him: "You can have the orchestra of the Opéra and you will be able to change what you want. You are the boss." He said: "OK, I will do auditions for every instrument, every musician." You know it is difficult to do an audition when someone is fifty years old, or so. They only play in the orchestra. And they want a Concerto. So they say: "It's too late. I cannot play." It was not a good thought. And Barenboim said: "If I can choose, I prefer not to have French bassoon, not to have trumpet like that." And after... (Barenboim was removed from this position after the national election.Ed.)...the only thing that he said in the newspapers was: "I would have preferred to have German bassoon, naturally..."

Afterward it was a good thing for the orchestra because everybody in the orchestra was sure that it was possible for the conductor to listen to everyone and to choose whether you could stay or not. And some of my colleagues who were not so well known, who had not won an international competition, were saying: "If the first bassoon is not good enough for Mr. Barenboim, then I am next to go!" We had all the orchestra pushing for us. But they were not pushing for the French bassoon, but for the symbol that the conductor can listen to everyone in the orchestra and say: "You are good, you are not so good, you are too old, etc." They were pushing for the symbol that the conductor should not have this power.

RK: Even in America it used to be that way. The conductors had all the rights. But they don't anymore. If you have been in an orchestra and you have what they call "tenure", if the conductor decides he doesn't like your playing, then he may warn you and then you might later have to come play for him and a committee (from the orchestra). It's a long drawn-out process and usually doesn't happen very often. But to me the orchestra of the Opéra is the best representation of the French style.

GA: But even if it is a problem with one person or two persons, they can always be replaced, but to give Mr. Barenboim all that power is a bad affair.

RK: But then the politics changed. Mitterrand was elected and ...

GA: Yes. It's a democracy.

RK: At the IDRS Conference that year, we heard that this was happening and we passed around a paper for people to sign in support of the French bassoons in the Orchestra. Did you ever see it?

GA: Yes, it helped, because everybody said the French bassoon was not the 'little duck'-the "canard"- of the bassoon family!!

RK: Have you heard of two new works by Michael Daugherty? He is an American composer.

One work is called *Dead Elvis*, and the bassoon soloist must dress up like Elvis Presley in the performance. Now next week (See article elsewhere in this issue. —Ed.) there is going to be a premiere performance of a new work for 3 bassoons and contrabassoon, with the Philharmonia Orchestra of London—**Meyrick Alexander** and the bassoon section. This time they have to dress up like Hells Angel bikers!!

GA: I am going to the Convention in Manchester to perform with **Jacques Tys**. Do you know him?

RK: Yes, I do. I saw that you are going to perform at the BDRS.

GA: Last year they had Italian soloists **Sergio Azzolini** and **Stefano Canuti**. This year they wanted to invite **Jacques Tys** and me, and we will go and play a recital together and do the Poulenc *Trio*. And afterwards a masterclass.

RK: That will be wonderful. Interesting too. I think you will find that what is happening in England with the French bassoon is a kind of Renaissance.

GA: Yes, I think it is very good that they play a little French bassoon, but it is not so good because they play French bassoon like an 'ancient' (passé) instrument. They play it as an instrument of the 19th century. That is not good because it is a modern instrument with modern possibilities. That is dangerous for us, because if you want to play an 'inferior' instrument, then you play the French bassoon. Now we have made much progress, and it is not the same instrument. When I met the bassoonists of the Philharmonia Orchestra when they came to Paris, they wanted to do some performances with the French bassoon. And I thought that this instrument would be like yours from the 1920's ...

RK: Like that of **Cecil James**...

GA: Yes. You would have a sound like a Baroque bassoon, or like a German bassoon, but not as good.

RK: That's an interesting point. When we had the North American French Bassoon Quartet at the IDRS Conference in Edinburgh in 1980 (**Gerald Corey, Charles Holdeman, Kim Laskowski**, and myself. Ed.) after we performed we went to visit **Cecil James** in London and performed for him. He played a bit with us too. And afterwards we all had a try of his father's old Buffet and we all agreed that the instrument was too old. It had been "blown out", compared to our modern Buffets!

GA: For the French bassoon in England they use very different fingerings. But in the IDRS holdings I found a list and I tried them and I kept two or three ideas. The fingerings can help us to understand what their sound was like, their color. And so is the Belgian school and the Italian school. Giampieri, for instance—the fingerings are not French fingerings or English fingerings. They are Italian fingerings.

RK: Is the Belgian school different?

GA: Yes, a few fingerings are different.

RK: Is **Luc Loubry** still active?

GA: Naturally, he is still young! He has made some fine records. For me, I find that his is more the 'French style' than what we do in France!

RK: More 'old fashioned'?

GA: More like **Maurice Allard**.

RK: But it is true, styles change. I know that the style of vibrato changed a lot inside of a single generation in America. Nowadays, it doesn't sound so nervous.

GA: One day you are suddenly 'old fashioned'!

RK: That's true! But that's progress.

GA: If all your school is 'old fashioned' then that is a big problem. You must be more intellectual, but have a good political sense as well. Then I think that things will change, and you are not sure you can follow. But if you are sure inside, then it is not a problem. Especially if you are younger. You will be better to change rather than stay with the old. Towards the end of his professional life, **Maurice Allard**, played bassoon much softer than 20 years before. The last records with the Vivaldi (*Concerti*) he played very round, very good. Sometimes what is very good is the general 'sense' you give to your playing. In Europe now there is the new generation, **Gustavo Nunez** and others, and for me they play very intimate.

RK: I love Azzolini's playing, but a lot of people don't like all of the movements he makes. I don't mind them, however.

GA: Yes, but one of the problems is the students. They begin to do these gestures because it is simple to imitate and try to play like him. That is not so good. And when you are so well known and they try to imitate everything, including the gestures even if it is not what is most interesting, naturally!

RK: Here are a couple of technical questions. Do you double-tongue?

GA: I use both together.

RK: Can you circular breathe?

GA: Not at all: I don't want at all that this marginal technique begin to be a general way of playing. This is dangerous philosophy. It is one of the things you can learn when you are already a good player, if you want. But it is not at all necessary. It is difficult to learn and if you try to learn it so many times, you forget many other important things. I am not so interested in it. I don't want to organize the students to learn it.

RK: With my own students I tell them the best compliment they can receive is when someone says to them: "I never hear you breathe." And of course they have been breathing all along, but doing it so well with the phrase that the listener never 'hears' it! Breathing is a part of the music, but it can be cleverly done to make it not very noticeable.

Another point I'd like to discuss. What always impressed me about Allard and you, and the entire French school was the fact you always

seem to have-like an automobile-another 'gear' that enables them always to go faster than the music demands. You all have such incredible technique. When I studied with Allard, of course what I did for him were 'des gammes', the scales and the Milde Op. 24 *Studies*.

GA: Yes...

RK: And after I finished the scales we went back and I did the Milde again: FASTER! And so, although I studied with him for only a year, within that time I was pretty much as good technically on the Buffet as on the Heckel-even though I had studied the German bassoon for a much longer period. And that impressed me. I loved the 'discipline' of the French way. American players don't learn that way. Nor do most players of the German bassoon. They don't play as clean and clear as the French can.

GA: The instruments permits us to do that.

RK: It's true. The upper register just soars.

GA: In Genève when I was on the jury for the (International) Competition, two members of the jury playing German bassoon told me: "What I like of the French bassoon is that it is always "deutlich". That means it is clear and precise. That's a very good word in German-deutlich. I like it! I say that to my students. It is more easy to do on the French bassoon.

RK: The response. Maybe that's what is different-that the response on the French bassoon is quicker; whereas on the German, you have to wait a little bit.

GA: It is easier to do it. But even on the French bassoon if you 'push' too much you are very quickly "to hell"! It is difficult to control because the instrument follows your directions at the opposite end.

RK: Let me ask you some more general questions. Where did you get your musical talent? Were your father and mother musicians?

GA: No, just amateurs.

RK: Where were you born? In Paris?

GA: I was born near Provence, and all of my youth was in Nimes in southern France. It is a very famous Roman town with typical ruins better kept than in Rome. It is a beautiful town near Avignon with beautiful weather.

RK: Are your parents still there?

GA: My father is dead and my mother sometimes there and in the Alps sometimes.

RK: Have you lived in the Alps yourself?

GA: Yes, for vacations.

RK: Who was your first bassoon teacher?

GA: The father of my wife. He is **Jean Charpentier**. He was the solo bassoon of the orchestra of Jean-François Paillard years ago. He was very, very good-a very interesting man. And

now he is my father-in-law. He was (also) pianist and conductor in the Conservatoire.

RK: How old were you when you went to **Maurice Allard** for the first time?

GA: I was seventeen.

RK: Did you audition for the Conservatoire?

GA: Yes. I went directly into the Conservatoire. And after my first year at the Conservatoire there was the Geneva Competition. I got Second Prize, without First Prize being awarded. And I was (given it) with **Andrew Cordet**. Is he still playing?

RK: Yes. I think he might be in Toronto. I'm not sure.

GA: Then the year after I went to Munich where I won the Third Prize. It was a difficult year. I was in the Competition with **Tomas Sosnovski** from Poland who is now in Basel - he is a very good bassoonist with a very beautiful sound - **Jiri Seidl** (who is) right now teacher in the Conservatoire in Prague and soloist there, and **Rino Vernizzi**, who is a famous Italian bassoonist. And after this I joined the Orchestre de l'Opéra as second bassoon, and when **Maurice Allard** retired I was made the bassoon soloist.

RK: I remember the year that I was in Paris (1983-84), Allard did not play the Morceau du Concours for his students toward the end of the year because of his arthritis. You played the work for his class. It was the Pierre-Max Dubois *Sonatine-Tango*. It's such a difficult piece!

GA: And after (joining the Orchestre de l'Opéra) I took auditions. It was very important for me, because I was not (yet) very well known. Then I won the First Prize with unanimité in Geneva in 1980. And after in Toulon: First Prize with unanimité. And after I was finished with the Competitions because it was not a life! It's too difficult. There is too much pressure and not musical pressure!

RK: Do you know what Alan Fox the maker of Fox Bassoons has done? He has given the IDRS a large amount of money for our Competition.

GA: For the next year?

RK: Yes. We will now have an endowment-the money will stay in the bank and we will get the interest, and we will use that to pay the prize money for the Competition, which now will be called the Hugo Fox-Fernand Gillet Competition. So hopefully we can make it better and better in the future.

GA: Next year I hope to go to Buenos Aires, it is a very beautiful town. And if I can I hope to organize a concert with my students. Because for me it is important. If someday I have a successor I think it is important to have someone who thinks like me, attitude-wise and personality-wise.

Someone who also says that it is very good to play with the German bassoon and to have in the orchestra. We must always prove ourselves. And it is very easy because we are able to do it and to work together. It is very ...TOGETHER! And intonation, color (problems)-I enjoy to do that. It is so important for me to play, for instance, with Laurent.

RK: I think you have the right idea-the important thing is to be of service to the bassoon world!

GA: And to continue to exist as a big family. It is so difficult when someone says to me: "It is so different that I cannot speak with you about what you are doing. You are "foreign" to me!" That is not nice. And sometimes in France we have this confrontation.

RK: That's very true. There was this one American bassoonist who started playing on plastic reeds. And he found ways of being able to adjust them. He played on them for his whole career. And many times other bassoonists would shun him because he played on plastic reeds! But if you heard him you couldn't tell it was a plastic reed. Not the way he played it. It was beautiful! But some people were so against him. Apparently they did a test with a Loreé oboe with plastic parts. Some people said: "Oh, I can tell the difference." But they couldn't! It's just an automatic prejudice against anything 'different'. And there are still some mostly older bassoonists in America who will simply not accept the French bassoon. Just a small group, though.

GA: It's crazy because when we are present in a Competition, each time people come up and say: "What is this beautiful instrument?!"

RK: I know! The young bassoonists (in America) come up and say: "This is a beautiful instrument! How come I have never heard it before?!"

GA: And I think that we (teachers) are just not doing our job! If I give to my students five recordings of French bassoon and I say that this is the "only" bassoon, they would believe me!

RK: You're right: the teachers aren't doing their job. But the teachers are often ignorant too.

GA: Or not curious enough. I think this is a very bad thing.

RK: There is another thing I would like to discuss with you. My feeling is that in America we train good symphony and chamber musicians, but we don't train very good soloists. It's the way they train the students. But I think that sometimes in the European schools they train the soloists wonderfully, but often the students are not so good at chamber music.

GA: But I think it is changing. We are playing more chamber music and I try to help them understand about chamber music better. I play with them. In the Bergt (*Trio for Bassoons*) I have played third bassoon, and I tried to show them how to organize, to lead and to follow, and to do all that. The new generation is very interested in orchestra and chamber music. They take pleasure in it.

RK: The change is happening in America also, I might add. Now you have some new, young players in orchestras who are also wonderful soloists. They are doing concertos and solo recitals and so on. This was not the case with the older generation. I remember hearing some very famous symphony players come to the IDRS Conference and play. And sometimes they sounded "very afraid"!

GA: They only know orchestral solos. They can play all the solos at any speed you want. They know Mozart, Weber, and maybe Vivaldi (*Concerti*) and they think that is the best way for a professional. I think that is a good thing to have the sound for the orchestra, but it is a bad thing not to open your mind and to be able to be better.

RK: I call these people "musical mechanics"—they are like the mechanic who works on your car—very good, but they cannot do anything but work on your car! Are you also editing any new music?

GA: Yes. For Billaudot, we are doing a new edition of the *Études sur les gammes et sur les arpèges* by Piard, and a new edition of some very, very important *Études sur des modes de Messiaen* by Lacour. They are very interesting. You can use them for students who have studied for five years or more. They are difficult to read but not too difficult technically, because they follow the modes. They are very, very melodic. My students enjoy them very much—much more than Milde or Jancourt. If the American bassoonists knew these they would really like them. And the Piard—well every country has such scales and arpeggio studies. And then we have also done the *Concerto in si bémol (B flat major-F VIII, No. 36)* by Vivaldi. We are using that in the Toulon Competition. And that's it. Are you staying in Paris?

RK: I would like to if my eyes get better. (I didn't—because of the eye infection and a sprained ankle from skiing in the Alps.—Ed.) I would like to go around to the publishers, Max Eschig and La Flûte de Pan and so on and see what they have. They are by the old Conservatoire. What do they use the old Conservatoire building for?

GA: It is now the Conservatoire Supérieur of the town of Paris—something different—a little under the CNSM, as a preparatory to the Conservatoire or for people who cannot go (to the CNSM) who are too old.

RK: In the new Conservatoire do they have a good place for the historical instrument exhibits?

GA: Yes, yes—a Museum.

RK: You know once I went to the Museum at the old Conservatoire. I was doing research on the Adolph Sax metal bassoon. And they couldn't find the instrument. I went with the Director, Madame Bran-Rici, to the bins and the stalls where many of the historical instruments of the collection were stored. We went through looking for the Sax instrument. And I saw Eugène Jancourt's bassoon!

GA: When I was young I went to the Museum at the old Conservatoire, but now at the new Conservatoire I don't have time enough!

(At this point my tape ran out, bring my interesting conversation with Gilbert to an end. It was also time to rest and sleep. It was 2:00 AM and there were still many miles to travel in the bus before reaching Paris....) ❖

Footnotes ...

¹ As bassoon editor of the IDRS and as a person who was fortunate to study the French-system instrument with both Maurice Allard and Gilbert Audin, I feel very strongly that it is of primary importance for the IDRS to support and, indeed, to applaud the diversity of style and artistry that such instruments as the French-system bassoon represent in the world of the double reed artist!

² Nor does the report of exciting new developments in the bassoon world in France end with the description of this landmark Colmar meeting! At the recent IDRS Conference in France, I learned from Buffet representative **François Kloc**, himself a bassoonist and former student at the CNSM, that the Buffet company is putting the finishing touches on a *completely revised and remodeled* French-style bassoon, which will soon be available to the general public. This revised instrument is the loving work of Buffet's chief engineer, who has also been responsible for the revision of the entire line of Buffet instruments: clarinets, oboes, etc. This is his last project before his projected retirement from the firm. ❖