

secretary and treasurer of the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals from 1924 until 1967. He is a vice President of the "Welt Federation fur Tierschutz" based in Zurich, having served as President for two years. For these services to animal welfare he received the Order of the British Empire (OBE - englischer Ehrentitel). In 1964 Edinburgh University conferred on him an honorary Master of Arts Degree for his achievements in musical research.

Although he officially retired from his professional practice in 1967, he has still kept on a few private clients. His private life has not been without sadness: his only son was killed in active service during the war. After being married for 53 years he lost his first wife; he remarried in 1977 but sadly his second wife died only eighteen months afterwards. However at an age when most would be expected to quietly vegetate, Lyndesay Langwill still remains active. In 1978 he visited the USA for the first time to read a paper to the American Musical Instrument Society at Yale. He still plays bassoon and contra for local amateur groups. Most important of all, he is currently preparing yet another edition of the Index, having sold out all the copies of the last edition. This 6th edition, enlarged to 340 pages, for which Dr. Dieter Krickeberg of the Berlin Museum has written an enthusiastic foreword, will incorporate the many additions and corrections which he continues to receive from all over the world. The deadline (Redaktionsschluss) for this new edition is Easter 1980 and a prospectus soliciting orders is about to be sent out. The varied tasks concerned with seeing this volume through the press and getting the copies to his subscribers will certainly keep him happily occupied for what his many friends will hope to be many years to come!

When **Lyndesay Langwill** died in 1983, his obituary and memorial to him was published in the Fall, 1984, (Vol 7, No. 2, pp. 48-49) issue of *The Double Reed*. The readers is referred to this article.

The Los Angeles Conference also marked the first time that an Honorary Member attended a Conference. Honorary Member #4, **Benjamin Kohon**, was able to attend.

The world-renowned oboist **Léon Goossens, CBE**, became the seventh Honorary Member at the Eighth IDRS Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, in August, 1980. In his report of the Conference in the October, 1980, issue of *The Double Reed*, IDRS President Lowry Riggins wrote:

"...to feel the power of a room full of double reed artists standing in honor of the memory of Fernand Gillet (then recently deceased, ed.); to hear the assembly vote unanimously for **Léon Goossens** as our 1980 Honorary Member... I was proud to be present."

In the Winter, 1982, issue of *The Double Reed*, (Vol. 5, No. 3, pp. 39-46), Nora Post authored a wonderful interview with **Léon Goossens**. It is reprinted below.

Léon Goossens

Interview with Léon Goossens and Edwin Roxburgh

August 1, 1982

Nora Post

The opportunity to interview Mr. Léon Goossens shortly after his eighty-fifth birthday was nothing less than an historic event in my life. Reflecting back on the interview, I concluded there is no way adequately to describe the great personal charm and musicianship of Mr. Goossens; he speaks so eloquently on his own behalf that little or nothing could be added.



*Mrs. and Mrs.
Léon Goossens*

The occasion of Goossens' birthday prompted many tributes—hundreds of cards, telegrams, and letters. By way of an introduction to this interview, I would like to single out two telegrams, each of which begins to capture the marvelous spirit of Mr. Goossens:

Congratulations on becoming eighty-five years young. Your energy and musicianship are still an inspiration to all the oboists of the world.

*Ralph Gomberg,
Boston Symphony Orchestra*

Every member of our illustrious society joins me in saluting you on your birthday. Your contributions to the art of oboe playing will stand forever as a hallmark of excellence. May each succeeding year be blessed with good health and contentment. We take courage and inspiration from your example.

Sol Schoenbach, President, IDRS

NP: Congratulations on the occasion of your birthday. May I ask—what did you do for your birthday?

LG: I gave a recital at Stoner Park for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. That was

just a few weeks ago, on the twelfth of June, my birthday.

ER: I should mention that Léon spends a great deal of his time doing recitals for causes and needy people. During the last ten years or so he's been spending a great deal of his time with these projects.

LG: Yes. Well, I've realized the importance of it, and that people rather tend to brush it aside. There are so many ways you can do things for people without hurting yourself or your purse. And I love doing it because you meet such lovely people, too.

NP: Yes. If I could, I would like to backtrack to when you were rather a young man, and to ask about Reynolds' [1] influence on you. What did he sound like and how do you remember him?

LG: Reynolds was a very dear man, very portly, and he always sat twiddling his thumbs like this, you see, and chewing charcoal biscuits, because he had tummy trouble which worried him quite a bit. He had good technique—though rather a heavy tone.

NP: Where was he trained? Who was his teacher?

LG: I couldn't tell you!

NP: English?

LG: Oh, yes, English. And it was he who instructed my father in the choice of an oboe for me, but not the idea of playing the oboe, because I knew I was going to do that. . .

NP: How did you know that?

LG: Well, because my father was a musician, you see. He was a conductor, conducted the opera, Carl Rosa Opera Company. Whenever they came to Liverpool (where we lived and where I was born), we sat in a box, being rather "highups." My father had an assistant of his stand behind me, and whenever the oboe came in, I got a jab in the back. I've still got some marks there now, I think! And in the end the assistant said, "Well, how did you like what you heard?" I said, "Lovely," because they always had Belgian oboe players, who were accepted as the doyen [2] type. (That's where my favorite oboe player, De Buescher, came from.) And the assistant said, "How would you like to learn that?" I said I'd love it. So he said, "Right. Then we'll start you on it." I was ten years old. I had my instrument made for me in Paris then, a Lorée.

NP: And that was because of your father?

LG: Well, my father was scavenging after the best thing he could get. Of course oboes were very much cheaper in those days, but they were made so well that I'm still using that same instrument, which I've had for seventy-five years now. I've never used another one professionally, with the exception of one I had made about 1940, a beautiful instrument made by an English firm. That was the Louis firm. You see, my Lorée had been stolen.

NP: Yes. How did you like the Louis oboe?

LG: Well, it's like everything else: one gets accustomed to a certain thing.

When I first got it, it seemed a bit strange. But in the end, when eventually I located the old instrument, I couldn't think what was different, they were so alike. It's what I produced through them, you see. I didn't realize it at the time. I wanted to get a sound like that, so I got it!

NP: Now, tell me something: what kind of oboe d'amore do you play?

LG: A Louis. Though I've got another one, a Lorée. When I was quite young, in about 1927, a man came to the door, and said, "I've got a couple of instruments I think you'd like to see." I said, "Come in, bring them in."

They were oboes d'amore, both of them, and they were sort of twin instruments; I believe they had been made for the Royal Philharmonic Society. They were very much alike. And I said I didn't know, I didn't really have an idea of buying a new instrument—I hadn't had an oboe d'amore until then. I said, "What are you asking for them?" "Well," he answered, "this one is eight pounds. That one, which isn't quite so good, is seven pounds." Well, I thought, I don't want to part up with too much money—I was newly married—so I said, "I'll take this one, take a chance."

NP: The one for seven pounds, you mean?

LG: The one for seven pounds, oh, yes. Though I made the recordings of the Bach oboe d'amore concert on the Louis oboe. Then last year I brought out the Lorée d'amore—It had been nestling in a cupboard inside a broken box—and I met this young man from Howarth's, Nigel Clark. Nigel said, "Well, I'll have a look at this," and I said, "Do what you want with it, but get it right." And he took it away with him, and it came back like a new instrument, absolutely beautiful. I might say, every bit as good as the Louis, but about twice its age. Strangely enough, the Lorée originally had a low Bb on it, and it was frightfully out of tune—terribly. The low Bb made it all out of tune. So Horace Halsted, who was my second oboe for many years in the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and I took it out to his house and we had a go at it. We cut about an inch off the lower part of the middle joint, made it fit, and the extra key was gone. Gouged a little out from inside, too. And it's perfectly in tune now—sheer luck. So altogether I did very well with that—I mean seven pounds. You know what they charge now; it's getting on to two thousand. [at this point Mr. Goossens showed me his 1907 Lorée oboe]

These keys are nickel silver, not sterling. Sterling is too heavy, and I won't have gold!

NP: Like Howarth's? And the young English oboe

player, Malcolm Messiter? Ah, yes. Have you ever played any of the new Howarth oboes?

LG: Yes, as a matter of fact, a pupil of mine who's coming for a lesson tomorrow, by the way—they come from all over the place, you see, I never know where they're coming from — well, she's sixteen and she picks up everything you tell her. Alas, there are some people you can go on pushing all their life, you know, who still stick in the same groove.

NP: She's young enough. . .

LG: Well, that's what it is, I suppose. Her father has paid quite a sum for this new instrument, a Howarth oboe, and it's very good. A number of my students have had Howarth instruments and they're excellent.

NP: That's nice to hear. Though I'd like to change the subject to phrasing for a moment. You wrote about the oboe solo in Brahms' First, advising never to make small crescendos or decrescendos in it. Never treat nuances by the note. Always by the phrase, by the sentence.

ER: I think Léon's concept is very similar to that of Casals, thinking of the line, the phrase.

LG: Oh, yes. I remember so well the first tune I played, the Handel *Sonata No. 1*, and I found that very taxing from a breathing point of view. Of course, when I learned to phrase properly it helped a tremendous lot. And so now I've passed that on as far as I can to my pupils. Yes, well, I'm still learning, you see, and I think that one can do it for oneself. You can say, well, I heard so-and-so, and he phrased that beautifully. But you must have known something about phrasing to appreciate the finish with which he played the tune. And I think one of my earlier examples of phrasing was the slow movement of the Brahms Violin Concerto. I remember when Kreisler wrote about me in his book, which was rather nice. That did me a lot of good—I purred all over!

NP: Do you recall what year it might have been?

LG: I think it was in No. 1 Studio, Maida Vale, in the thirties some time—London Philharmonic Orchestra, I think.

NP: Now, let me ask you a little bit about your orchestral and your solo careers. You are one player who has managed to combine both, being a terribly important orchestral player as well as a soloist. For some people that's difficult, and I'm wondering, what's your philosophy of what makes a good orchestral player?

LG: Listening. Listening to all that's going on around you. You can play a thing quite differently from time to time, but the main features in phrasing are basic. I mean, I would no longer try to find a new way of phrasing the Brahms, because I'm quite happy with how I've done it in the past.

NP: Yes. Did you ever find that, of solo and orchestral work, one interested you more than the other? Were you always interested in the orchestra?

LG: Oh, I loved playing in the orchestra.

NP: What made you so happy in the orchestra?

LG: For one thing, I knew that I was on to something very definitely stable and, unless I misbehaved myself, it was mine for as long as I wanted it.

NP: The job, in other words?

LG: Yes. Henry Wood was such a fine conductor and such a help to a youngster; he gave me courage. In fact, when I went to play my audition, I played an extraordinary thing by a French composer, but it was enough to show him that I could play and that I had a decent tone. He said, "Now, Goossens, I've got a lot of work to do. I've only got two weeks in which to do the rehearsing for the entire Prom season" — all of which he conducted himself without any help. Now they have got four or five conductors through the season. But that was Henry Wood. He said, "Don't you worry, I won't let you down. I think in return you won't let me down."

NP: That's real trust.

LG: Yes, despite the fact that I did, once or twice, let him down. I was so nervous about the next tune that was coming on that I played it eight bars, or sixteen bars, whatever it was, before I was due to play. It was dreadful. But I thought, "No, if I stop now, everybody will know, but if I play it through, but not quite so eloquently, then when I come in, I'll almost stand up and play it, to make it sound so important!" [Laughter] Oh, I did, really! But I remember an occasion when a very well-known singer came on, and she was going to sing Ave Maria at a ballad concert, but I don't think she was quite accustomed to this particular arrangement, which gave a complete length of the tune, and then the voice entered. No, she heard the introduction and she came in. And Wood kept trying to shut her up, but she wouldn't have it. She wouldn't even look at him. And then when it came to her turn, audibly he said, "Now!"

NP: Oh, he sounds great!

LG: Yes, he was wonderful. But if he was really let down, he showed his fury. I remember a woman pianist, who was playing one of the well-known concertos and, poor darling, she completely forgot it, and she played goodness knows whatnot. Wood stopped the concert and said, "Madam, you don't know your music. Go and get your part." The poor thing was sent off the platform, and she had to come back with the orchestral attendant following her with the piano part; he turned pages for her. I played two-thirds of the Prom season without having seen the music before, thanks partly to Henry Wood, who

brought me in for every lead. And I didn't make many mistakes — I was a good reader.

ER: This was all during your first season?

LG: Oh, yes!

ER: How old were you then?

LG: Sixteen. That was the year before the first war started. I left the orchestra and joined the army when I was seventeen. So I didn't see the instrument—it was in the bank, in the strongroom of the bank right through the war — till 1918. When I was in the trenches, I used to sit and try to think of the fingering of a scale. But do you think I could? No, I couldn't concentrate enough — every time something whistled overhead and banged. And I thought, no, I've got to come back here. When I got home, I got the instrument out of the bank, put a reed on, and I just flew up a scale without thinking twice. It was all there.

ER: What a relief that must have been.

NP: I'd like to change the subject and discuss your solo career. What makes a great soloist is far more than the technique; it's the personality of the player. Would you agree?

LG: Yes. But on the other hand, I do regard myself as just a mirror of the composer. I'm playing what he wrote.

NP: But that never really exists.

LG: Why not?

NP: I would argue that that cannot happen unless you are the composer playing your own piece.

LG: What I'm trying to say is I'm not trying to show off my playing, I'm trying to do the best for the tune he has written.

NP: But it's inevitable that who you are and what you are as a player is part of that. I'm pursuing this point because as an orchestra player you had a tremendous influence on the players around you. That usually happens only with someone who has a fairly strong musical personality.

ER: I think it's easy to understand that you would want to be honest to the composer's wishes. But I think what Nora is trying to ask is, well, let me put it another way: do you feel that the individual player's personality—which is something that is inexplicable in itself — does, nevertheless, infringe on the performance? Otherwise, why does one person sound different than another?

LG: Yes, I think one's got a feeling of what one wants to produce — either in phrasing or in tonal effects—that you've got to introduce into the music.

NP: Incidentally, what was it like when you began to play professionally?

LG: Of course I had my leg pulled quite a lot in the first years of orchestral playing. I played for Beecham when I was thirteen. I played third oboe in Till Eulenspiegel in Liverpool, dressed in a

knickerbocker suit and a big white satin tie like a pussycat. Beecham looked up and said, "Who's the little boy playing the oboe there?" So Reynolds piped up, he said, "It's Master Goossens!" "Oh, really?" said Beecham, "and has he a license?"

NP: You didn't, did you?

LG: No, oh no. Of course, it was very difficult, because all my formative years I was at school. It was a fight, really, because I so often had to go away to play; it might have been just an amateur orchestra, but it took me away from my homework. Next morning I turned up without anything done. And they used to have about a twelve-inch long black leather strap which had a whalebone inside it, and they used to give me three across my hand. It was awfully difficult, because it put you off school, rather. I had a mass of curly hair, and - I used to wear a straw sailor hat, and it was always taken off my head and thrown up like this, and you could see it sailing over the houses!

ER: Was being a musician in school regarded as effeminate?

LG: Oh, it was terrible! Yes, of course it was — you were ashamed. But still, I learned what 1812 sounds like with five players. You can't find many musicians who do know that! The science master, who was an Irishman, played the fiddle — sort of resting on it. And then we had a boy who played the flute (well, I mean he would like to have played the flute; he did his best), we had a cello, plus myself, and my brother who played French horn. The 1812 with that combination is something to be heard!

NP: Yes, I'm sure. When did you finish with school?

LG: I stopped school when I was fourteen. Then I went to the Royal College of Music. We left Liverpool and went to live in London. That was about 1911.

So I had two years at the College under the oboist William Malsch. [3] Now he phrased beautifully, but what he brought out with that phrase was nobody's business! It was like a comb and tissue paper, with no vibrato.

ER: Is this the sort of sound that you rebelled against?

LG: Oh yes, yes. You held this sort of instrument out the window and it would play — he stripped his reed to nothing. You could play all the lower notes as softly as you liked. It was not like the oboe, but it played. Poor dear. I remember when I was playing Bantock's opera, *The Immortal Hour*, and I sent him once as a deputy. Afterwards I was told that if that man ever came in the stage door again, I was out! I shouldn't say things like this —but they're all part of my life. And I learnt a lot from him, really. We did a lot of exercises. They proved very useful to

me, but not from a tonal point of view. Mind you, I knew enough of what I wanted in the way of sound so that I could bypass him while I was playing and he was kind enough never to correct my sound.

NP: Rather remarkable. I'd like to ask you about the collaborations you have had with the composers who have written for you. Though I'm thinking particularly of Vaughan Williams, I'm also thinking of your work with Tovey on the oboe d'amore concerto, as well as the Strauss concerto — three very important works.

LG: Yes. Tovey was a great eccentric!

NP: So I understand. How did the idea come about? Was it your idea or his?

LG: Oh, no, it was not my idea. He lived up in Edinburgh — he was a professor there, and he had an awfully nice young man whom I got to know later because he came to me for some lessons. Tovey liked him as a friend, and possibly as a player — he was just, as I say, an amateur—and I think this boy wanted Tovey to do something for him, something to play when he went to his pal's house on a Sunday evening, and Tovey said, "Well, it would be a good idea to use the A major clavier concerto and transpose it for oboe d'amore." You know the record, don't you?

NP: Oh, yes, the English pressing.

LG: I must say, now, that when I did the Canadian tour, I went to a reception in my honor after a concert in Ottawa, I think it was. And when I arrived there, the Bach concerto was playing—they put it on for me. And I thought, "Oh, well, that didn't last long—they didn't think much of that!" because it stopped at the same place. And whoever did it—an American firm—had done it before they had remade half the last movement, and it was missing. Extraordinary thing, isn't it?

NP: Yes. Though there have been other stories like it, that's for sure. What was Strauss like? Did you know Strauss personally?

LG: Strauss? I never met Strauss and, unfortunately, there was a bit of a misunderstanding between myself and Beecham when Strauss was coming to London for the Strauss Festival some years ago. I had a Handel concerto which had been re-orchestrated by my brother-in-law then, to do without the piano or some sort of continuo—they put it all onto the strings, you see—and Beecham wanted to borrow this, so he got his representative to ring me up and ask me if I'd lend it to him. And I said, "Oh, yes, certainly." He asked, "Have you got the parts?" I said, "Yes." He said, "I'd very much like it." I asked what the date was, thinking I was going to play it, you see, because I'd been in his orchestra—helped him start the orchestra—and he said, "such and such a

date," and I said, "Oh, fine." "Oh," he said, "by the way, you're not playing it; somebody else is." I said, "Oh, I'm sorry—you can't have it." Though I'd done all his oboe playing, he promptly got somebody else to do the Strauss, which he first had arranged for me to do with Strauss conducting. I was looking forward to this tremendously but, wicked old man — the sort of thing he could do, you see. Very sad.

ER: It was certainly a great disappointment for you.

LG: Oh, terrible. Because Strauss had written about it, about my playing of it, already from Germany. So it was a great sadness to me.

ER: It was the last visit Strauss made to this country, wasn't it? 1948.

LG: Yes.

NP: How about Elgar? I know he was working on a piece for you.

LG: Oh, Elgar—a great friend of mine. A great friend of the family, really. Now there was a gentleman, a real gentleman, and one had to admire him from many angles. He always reminded me of a certain Earl in this country — who would it be? It wasn't Lord Derby, no; it was somebody who looked like him. It doesn't matter — but he had that look, straight-up collar, you know, no bend-over or anything, double collar, the stock, and a tie-pin, spats—all that it took in those days to make a gentleman!

NP: So you enjoyed him very much as a friend?

LG: Oh, yes, I liked him very much. And in 1931 he said, "I'd like to do something for you." So I said, "Well, I'd be terribly pleased if you would."

We were on a real basis of friendship. I tried to teach him to drive a car, but I found at the first lesson that he couldn't get his knees underneath the wheel, so he never drove a car.

NP: Good reason!

LG: But he said, "I'll do something—write you a nice little suite." Well, I didn't hear any more about this—he'd been very ill—and I've got a copy of a letter here in which he apologized for not having finished the piece.

NP: That's the letter which is reproduced in your book?

LG: Yes. When he died his daughter had all his material. She wrote to Willy Reed, who's the great leader of the orchestra, and asked his advice, whether to send it to me straight away. And he said, "Oh, of course, let him see it." And it was sent to me, and we got Gordon Jacob to make an accompaniment. I've got the original here.

NP: How many minutes of music is it? How long is it?

LG: Oh, it's only about three minutes. It's a slow movement, a fragment, really—a lovely piece.

ER: Have you recorded it?

LG: Oh, yes.

NP: How about Percy Grainger? Did you ever know him?

LG: Oh, yes.

NP: Did he ever write anything for you?

LG: No, not for me, but I loved his little works. We used to play them a lot at the Queen's Hall. There was one called *Over the Hills and Far Away*, and do you know, I have never met that more than once? We played the first performance of it in the Queen's Hall, with him listening, and I've never come across it since. And it was a lovely little work. It had the same sort of lilt that *Molly on the Shore* and *Polly on the Something-else*—that all these had, you see?

NP: What kind of a man was he?

LG: Oh, very nice sort of person. He was a great friend of Cyril Scott, and he attended the first performance that I gave of Cyril Scott's concerto, a very difficult work—and Grainger wrote a glowing account. Awfully nice.

NP: I'd like to move on to another important area, technique, and to ask you some specific questions about it. I'm interested in your views about vibrato. From what I can understand from your book, you just decided that this was how you were going to do it, and you did it! Is that right?

LG: Yes.

NP: Well, that's really rather remarkable! How did you come to that decision? What were the influences, what were you thinking then?

LG: I found that for solo playing, especially, you needed just a little more than oboe tone, like that. It's got to live. I don't use it all the time. I mean, I can play with chording, with other instruments, without being disturbed about "yoy-yoy-yoy," you know? In fact, I went so far as to teach Kell the same thing—the clarinet player. Kell rather used it most of the time.

NP: Writing about vibrato, you said, "The soul of the sound can justifiably be said to rest in this quality." So it seems to me that vibrato must be a very, very important part of your concept.

LG: It is. Oh, yes.

NP: And then, remember what you wrote about the *Rite of Spring*? You said this was not the place to use vibrato. That was interesting. You also mentioned different vibrato speeds. Now, for an American, that's fascinating; many of us are not taught to vary vibrato speed very much. You're saying that vibrato must be more artistic, more interpretive.

LG: Yes. It becomes interpretive when the music demands it. When you grow in sound, for instance, and the thing gets more vital, then it begins. But as you go away in sound, you hardly hear anything at all. That's how it should be!

NP: How does this fit in with your general concept of sound?

LG: I look upon the oboe as an extension of the vocal cords, that's how I treat it. I talk through it.

NP: Let me ask you a little about your reeds. You play a U-shaped scrape, patterned after Brearley. Did he make reeds for you?

LG: Not initially. Then I started to get busy, not only busy through work, but social things which took a lot of my time. I had a very nice little launch on the river — I used to like to get on that, so it cut into my time for reed making! But reeds aren't my strong point. When I was a student, Brearley used to give me a lesson when Reynolds couldn't be there; he was a pupil of Reynolds. I introduced Brearley's reeds to the London players when I was busy with the Proms, and couldn't keep up with the reeds. He lived in Liverpool, played in the theatre orchestra. Brearley was a religious follower of Reynolds.

NP: Was Reynolds much of a reed maker?

LG: Oh, yes! He lived in Manchester, and every time he came over to play a concert, he made his reed on the train, and then played it for the concert. And it was always a good reed. Then he'd break it off after the concert. Wouldn't even give it to me, and I was his favorite pupil!

NP: Amazing. You've also said that occasionally you'll play a concert or a recital on a reed that's been sitting around for fifteen or twenty years.

LG: Well, I just played a recital on a reed from my Australian tour of 1954.

NP: Well, how do you keep all these reeds in such great shape for all these years?

LG: It's simple—I don't use them!

[At this point Mr. Goossens showed me a number of old reeds. Several were marked DB, and had been made by DeBuescher some time before World War I.]

NP: Pre-World War I—all of this makes me feel as though I'm travelling in too fast a set! Incidentally, what do you think of the current standard of English oboe playing?

LG: It's wonderful. They are far better than the players were when I was growing up. There were only three of us at the Royal College when I was a student, and there were seventeen when I was teaching there. The state of oboe playing in this country has improved dramatically. You listen to any orchestra in this country and you hear beautiful oboe playing.

ER: It might be of interest to qualify what Léon is saying by adding that each year at the Royal College of Music—that's only one of the four London colleges — there are about seventy or eighty applications, and only four or five are accepted.

NP: Are there any English players you are particularly fond of?

LG: Neil Black is a very important player. I like this conception of the oboe. He listens carefully, and he's got the right sort of personality. But don't forget that I think of the oboe as an instrument of my time; I never had to go in for this sort of hieroglyphics of music. I realize you can't teach an old dog new tricks!

NP: But Mr. Goossens, sometimes you can't teach a young dog new tricks! At any rate, before we finish up, there are just a few more things I'd like to ask. I meant to ask earlier about your use of double and triple tonguing.

LG: Well, I use it as a sort of three-speed gear. Whenever I have to do very quick tonguing I use double tonguing. My motor smash ruined my fast single tonguing, so I must use double. You see, I have no feeling at all in my lower lip — all those nerves were cut. I lost all my lower teeth, too — they were whipped out by the horn ring on the steering column.

NP: How long did it take after the accident for you to feel comfortable again playing?

LG: Well, I've never felt quite so comfortable, but at least three years before I could really do something. My New York appearance in 1965 was about the first. . .

NP: You know, after what happened to you, most players probably would have hung the oboes up on the wall and decided that's it. So my question to you is why did you keep going? What is it that makes you want to keep playing?

LG: You try to put off the evil day! I don't want to die, and you die far quicker if you stop working. Music keeps me alive; you've got to keep your interests going. I do have other interests besides the oboe, but I have no time for them.

ER: Of course, Léon has been playing the oboe since his very earliest memories, and it's dominated his entire life.

LG: Yes, and the critics say the oboe is synonymous with the name Goossens. There's where I got the idea from — how right it is. When I go through customs, the chap will look at me and say, "Oh, you're Goossens." It's a nice feeling. Lovely.

NP: One more question: there are certain times in your musical career when you feel you've done something extraordinary, something you can be proud of. You feel this is why you keep playing. I wanted to ask if there have been any special times like this in your life, any special moments like that.

LG: Well, my American tour of 1965. I was sixty-nine, rising seventy, when I went over there. I felt that was a tremendous thing because I was building up from nothing. I had had my motor smash, and I was just sort of feeling my way.

NP: How difficult were those times for you?

LG: Well, I tried myself out first. I didn't know how

I'd feel once I got into the seat, and my colleagues said, "Try it." So I went out to the concert hall at Wembley and we did a session, and in the session they had very cleverly introduced a little theme for the oboe. I was stuck—I had to do it. I remember everyone was so pleased; all the orchestra gave me a cheer. I felt terribly moved and then I knew that it was possible, that it would be o.k. It was terribly important when I went off to America. Besides, I was always told that you can't get anywhere in England unless you've been to America first!

NP: Oh yes, one last thing I wanted to bring up. One of the most fascinating things you've said is that you feel the oboe is a lady.

LG: Yes.

NP: And I feel that it's definitely a man!

LG: Well, it depends upon your inclination, I suppose. You notice the oboe is used on t.v. and on the radio whenever it's something that is very romantic.

NP: Well, why does romanticism have to be something with women?

LG: Well, from a man's point of view, of course it is.

NP: So you think the oboe is a woman because you're a man, and I think it's a man because I'm a woman! [Laughter] That's the only answer.

ER: Do you think it can take on the characteristics of both?

NP: An androgynous oboe? I don't know!

Footnotes

[1] Charles Reynolds (b. 1843), professor of oboe at the Royal Manchester College of Music. was oboist for the Halle Orchestra from 1871 until his death in 1916.

[2] Doyen refers to a person or persons uniquely skilled by long experience in some field of endeavor. Also the senior member of a body, or Dean.

[3] William Malsch (1855-1924), professor of oboe at The Royal College of Music, London, was "A performer of supreme technical ability and great endurance. . . regarded by many as the best London player of his day, although there are some who did not altogether admire his tone." (Philip Bate, *The Oboe*, London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1975, p. 205.)

The reader is also referred to the article; "Léon Goossens-Master Oboist" by Jerold Sundet, (*The Double Reed*, Vol. 20, No. 1, pp. 17-18; "Léon Goossens, Oboist" by Marian Wilson (*The Double Reed*, Vol 9, No. 3, Winter, 1986, pp. 30-39), and to the obituary and tributes to Goossens which appeared in the Spring, 1988 (Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 10-25) issue of *The Double Reed*.