

When **Paul Henry Lang** died in 1991, the following obituary appeared in the Winter, 1991 (Vol. 14, No. 3, p. 66) issue of *The Double Reed*:

In Memory of Paul Henry Lang, 1901-1991

Paul Henry Lang, reknowned musicologist, music critic, bassoonist, and IDRS Honorary member, died at his home in Lakeville, Connecticut, on Sept. 22, 1991. He was 90 years old.

As a pioneer in the field of music, "...he helped determine the shape of musicological discourse in the United States through his writing, his teaching at Columbia University, and as Editor of *Musical Quarterly* from 1945 to 1973," according to Allan Kozin, whose obituary of Lang appeared in the New York Times.

His book, *Music in Western Civilization* has been the standard music history textbook since its first publishing in 1941. He was also music critic for the New York Herald Tribune from 1954 to 1965 and a regular contributor to *High Fidelity* and *Opus* magazines.

Born and educated in Budapest, Hungary, he began his career in 1922 as a bassoonist in Budapest orchestras, but soon switched to the study of music history and musicology. The IDRS joins the entire music world in mourning the loss of this most outstanding musician.

At the Tallahassee Conference the Executive Committee of the IDRS also adopted policy guidelines for Honorary Membership that further defined the status of this position. These were printed in the Spring, 1984, (Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 5) issue of *The Double Reed*, and are reprinted below:

"Nominees for Honorary Membership in the IDRS should be living persons who have contributed in a widely-recognized and significant manner to the advancement of the double reed specialty. Except upon the unanimous consensus of the Committee, a limit of two persons (one bassoonist and/or one oboist) per year may be approved by the Society.

The status of Honorary Membership is of such importance that the Society should not, and does not, consider it necessary to confer this distinction on a regular basis, rather only in cases of highest merit. It is hoped that selection of Honorary Members will reflect as many aspects of double reed activity as possible.

Proposals for the lifetime status of Honorary Membership man be made only by members of the IDRS and shall be only in the form of a written statement of support which shall be mailed to the Chair of the Honorary Membership Committee no

later than two months prior to the date of the annual meeting. This statement should be a resumé of the nominee and should include name, address, phone, birthdate, and as much supporting material as desired. The names of nominees shall not be announced. The Chair of the Committee will share this information ONLY with other members of the Committee. The Committee shall meet during the annual convention and be prepared with recommendations at the second business meeting. Proposals shall include the name of the nominator(s).

Honorary Membership shall not be required to pay dues, shall receive all publications and notices of the Society, and shall be listed in the publications of the Society. They shall receive a framed certificate of their election. Nominees may be elected to honorary status upon receiving two-thirds vote of the voting members at the annual business meeting."

The twelfth Honorary Membership of the IDRS went to the French bassoonist **Fernand Oubradous** (1903-1986) at the Conference in Graz, Austria, in August, 1984. Long known as one of the pre-eminent performers on the French-system bassoon, Oubradous was interviewed in 1980 by fellow French bassoonist, Jean-Pierre Sequin, and this interview first appeared in the now-defunct journal *Le Basson* (No. 6, March, 1980) in French. Following his death in January, 1986, Hawaiian bassoonist Philip Gottling translated it, and it was reprinted in the *Journal of the International Double Reed Society* No. 14, 1986 on pages 18-21. It is reproduced below.

**Fernand Oubradous:
A Half Century of Woodwind History**

*Jean-Pierre Sequin
(translated by Philip Göttling)*

(The following article is very timely because of the recent death of IDRS Honorary Member, Fernand Oubradous, in January 1986. The interview by French bassoonist, Jean-Pierre Sequin, first appeared in Le Basson (No. 6, March 1980) and reprinted here with the kind permission of the author and the publisher, Les Amis du Basson Français. ED)

The "Société de Musique de Chambre pour Instruments à Vent", later called the "Association Symphonique de Chambre de Paris," celebrated its centenary in 1979. This prestigious organization was founded in 1879 by the flutiest Paul Taffanel, principal flute of the Paris Opéra and of the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire [translator's note: the latter became the nucleus of the Orchestre de Paris]. Taffanel brought together the greatest French



Fernand Oubradous: a steady gaze surveying the music ...



... which filled up his whole life.

wind players of the period: the oboist Gillet, the clarinetist Mimart, and the bassoonist Léon Letellier, among others. This ensemble, then a novelty to the public, caused numerous composers to write for wind instruments. Gounod's *Petite Symphony* for wind instruments dates from this period and was first performed under Taffanel's baton April 30, 1885.

In 1893, Paul Taffanel, named professor of flute at the Paris Conservatory then later conductor of the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire and the Paris Opéra, stepped down from conducting the ensemble. The clarinetist Prosper Mimart took over, organizing the veteran members and adding some new ones: the oboist Bleuzet, the clarinetist Lefebvre, the bassoonist Eugene Bourdeau, the horn player Vuillermoz and the pianist Grovlez. He entrusted the musical direction to another famous flutist and conductor, Philippe Gaubert.

The ensemble met with success yet again; unfortunately the first world war stopped the ensemble in its tracks. After an unsuccessful attempt to start up the group again in 1922, the oboist Louis Bleuzet, who considered himself to be the keeper of the flame, tried again in 1940. He called Fernand Oubradous to his side.

Was it a premonition? Bleuzet died after the second concert. Oubradous took control of the destiny of the Association.

One hesitates to speak of Mr. Oubradous for fear of stating the obvious. The biographer is either presumptuous or blissfully unconscious when he proposes to retrace the career of an artist who naturally escaped the clichéd conventional route to success. He was a man of too much subtlety and too many diverse qualities

for that. Moreover, who among us would attempt to tell Mr. Oubradous's story without being afraid of omitting something important, of forgetting to explain this or that aspect of his multi-faceted talent?

Composer, teacher, conductor, the multi-talented Fernand Oubradous was all that. He remains as one who has brought the French school of wind playing into the present; he lives on as one who has trained some of the most prestigious musicians around. This is the personage we honor: a soloist, a fondly remembered instrumentalist who put his mark on generations of bassoonists.

We asked Mr. Oubradous for an interview, and it is the essence of an interview without constraint or false solemnity which follows.

JPS: *Maître*, I would first like to thank you for receiving us. This interview will permit our readers to know you better and to measure the importance of your contribution in the promotion of wind instruments and, in particular, the bassoon. First of all, could you please tell us why you decided on a career in music? Your father was of course a musician.

FO: That's true. But don't forget that my grandfather - my father's father - was fiddler. He played at dances all over the Languedoc. My father François was principal bassoon at the Paris Opéra and at the Société, so that music was all around me. And then I was lucky enough to be taken under the wings of the Toulouse clan.

JPS: The Toulouse clan?

FO: Yes, you know, at the time everything was run by the clans. Of course I was born in Paris, by my roots caused me to be adopted by the Toulouse

bunch which included people like Garrés - my piano teacher - people like Busser, Mazelier, and lots of others ...

JPS: You speak of your piano teacher; didn't you start on the bassoon?

FO: Oh, no! The piano was my first instrument. You know, I started at the same time as Mme. Darré. But the piano didn't really interest me except to work on the chord progressions I was learning in my classes. I worked with Noël Gallon, Jules Mazellier, and orchestration with André Bloch.

JPS: But, the bassoon?

FO: I'm getting to it ... One day my father asked me, "What do you want to do with your life?" I didn't really know. "Okay," he continued, "even if just for a military career, you could start studying a wind instrument. You won't have to spend a fortune: there are four or five bassoons here, all you have to do is take one. I'll make you a few reeds and we'll see." That's how it all started. I liked it a lot more than playing the piano. At the beginning, it didn't go so easily, but there was something inside, something difficult to explain - that's the case with George Thill, for example - all of a sudden, I had a "voice." I didn't have any technique, I knew how to move my fingers, but when I started to work professionally, I had to get serious.

JPS: You talk about the music business, but before that, weren't you at the Paris Conservatory?

FO: Yes, and that was met with mixed success: I got my prize in my first year, in 1923. I stayed with Bourdeau three months but I was one of the worst students in the class. I have a lot of respect for that man; he was a born musician, a pianist, an organist, and we got along very well. I met him often on Sunday afternoons at the opera when I subbed for Louis Letellier. It happened like that the first time I set foot in that venerable building, I played first on *Faust*; fortunately I was an okay musician!

Then on January 1, 1923, Letellier replaced Bourdeau at the Conservatory. He was a remarkable bassoonist with a sound that filled the opera house, but musically less refined than his predecessor. It was with him that I finished my studies.

JPS: So you started in the music business as a bassoonist?

FO: Not right away. A year after receiving my bassoon prize, I was offered a position as music director at the Théâtre de l'Atelier. That's where I met all my buddies: Ibert, Auric, Honegger. I was there to conduct their music, but when one of them didn't have time to finish a piece of music, I would do it.

JPS: What happened to the bassoon during all of this?

FO: Our orchestra worked consisted of playing the entrances, exits; stage music, basically. So, I

could practice my bassoon four hours a day and then with Paray I had my chance to join the orchestra in Vichy as third bassoon, before becoming principal. At the time, it must be said, one started out on third before moving up to first chair. Gaubert was third flute at the Paris Opéra and even Monteux was in the viola section of Concerts Colonne.

JPS: You then joined the Paris Opéra, but weren't you also at the Société?

FO: Indeed. I was principal under Straram at the Orchestre National, at the Paris Opéra, but, you know, my father was at the Société with Gaubert. One day Gaubert said to my father, "There is going to be a bassoon opening in the Société and since your son is in the Orchestre Lamoureux, he doesn't have to audition." That's how I joined the orchestra as third bassoon before playing second next to my father. I then succeeded him as principal.

JPS: Do you have any particular stories concerning this period?

FO: I have one which marks my debut as principal. Imagine this: one day I found myself the only bassoonist for a rehearsal of a Beethoven symphony, the second, I think. Well, in the Beethoven symphonies it's the second bassoon part which is more important. I played all the bass lines from memory; Gaubert noticed but didn't ask me to do it. That was the beginning of a collaboration with him. He asked me to play the Mozart *Concerto* at the Société, carrying me to a privileged level then reserved for Marcel Moysé alone.

JPS: That was the beginning of your recording career?

FO: Yes, I received the Grand Prix du Disque a half-dozen times. Before recording as a conductor, I recorded as soloist the two concerti of Mozart, the Boismortier, the Adagio from the Weber *Concerto*, the *Andante* and *Hungarian Rondo*, but also a lot of chamber music: the Beethoven duos, the *Sonata* for bassoon and violoncello and the *Quintet* of Mozart, and quite a few trios: Auric, Ferroud, Golestan, Hahn, Milhaud, Ibert, Rivier, etc.

JPS: Bassoonist, conductor, composer, you've put your mark on a number of musical institutions. Could you mention a few?

FO: There's the reed trio of 1927, the concerts of chamber music we did forty years ago already, and finally, during the fifties, the Académie d'Eté in Nice which last year welcomed 1919 students from 26 countries ...

JPS: And is the Société des Instruments à Vent still dear to your heart?

FO: It is one of my greatest sources of pride to

have succeeded Taffanel and Gaubert, continuing a tradition dating back to 1870.

JPS: And it's because of you that there is a wind ensemble class at the Paris Conservatory?

FO: It's true that it needed to be created. I made bassoonists and other wind players play quintets, trios, and solos before having them play in larger ensembles. The wind ensemble class became the logical consequence of this research.

JPS: You have numerous students, for the most part with brilliant careers, I think?

FO: I won't mention any names for fear of forgetting someone, but if you look at the list of international prizes, conservatory professors, principals in Paris or regional orchestras, you'll see that the majority of wind players have passed through my class.

JPS: A few words about reeds?

FO: I never had any bad blood with reeds. I say often, "Have a lot of respect for them, but treat them as often as possible with contempt."

JPS: This quality of contempt is reserved only for the greats, *mon cher Maître*. But we've taken up a lot of your time. What is your advice to young people?

FO: Well, I would say to them that the bassoon is one thing but that the individual is another. If a student has talent, let him develop and use it. But along with that he should acquire a deep general knowledge and a solid musical culture: I am thinking of music history, analysis and harmony, without which one cannot hope of being a complete musician.

JPS: Thank you, *Maître*, and it is our turn to invite you. When you celebrate your diamond anniversary in the music world, we'll be there to celebrate the day with a concert in your honor.

At the August, 1985, Conference of the IDRS at Boulder, Colorado, two well-known American double reed artists were elected to Honorary Memberships number thirteen and fourteen. They were oboist **Robert Bloom** (1908-1994), and bassoonist (and retiring IDRS President) **Sol Schoenbach** (b. 1915).

Robert Bloom was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on May 3, 1908. He studied at the Curtis Institute of Music as an oboe student of Marcel Tabuteau. Early in his career he held the positions of assistant first oboe and solo English horn with the Philadelphia Orchestra and principal oboe with the Rochester Philharmonic. He was also solo oboist of the NBC Symphony under Toscanini for six years and oboist with the

Bach Aria Group for 47 years. He taught at the Philadelphia College of Performing arts, the New College Music Festival and the Juilliard School. He is perhaps best remembered as double reed players for his many years of teaching at the Yale University School of Music, from which he finally retired.

On the occasion of the 80th birthday of **Robert Bloom**, "Tribute to Robert Bloom", compiled by his wife, oboist Sara Lambert Bloom appeared in the Winter, 1988 (Vol. 11, No. 3, pp. 11-21) issue of *The Double Reed*. At the end of this article a series of personal tributes to him was presented as "Excerpts from well wishers." These are reprinted below:

Excerpts from well-wishers ...

Julius Baker: It has been fifty four years since I came to the Curtis Institute and first heard you play English horn in the Philadelphia Orchestra. Such a long association is quite a record. I expect to get congratulations from you on my eightieth birthday.

Evelyn Barbirolli: We met many years ago after a Bach Aria concert (in Los Angeles I think) when you played *very* beautifully This card is apposite only because Bach so often had sheep involved in his cantatas. Many warm wishes and remembrances. I do wish I could be there to give them to you in person over a drink!

Samuel Baron: Now about Bob's playing. This is simply something unforgettable. In the arias of Bach he demonstrated his mastery of line and phrasing and he achieved a singing quality that had infinite shadings and gradations of nuance. It was singing that was far superior to most vocal efforts, even those of celebrated singers. What is his secret? All that I could observe was that he could make two seemingly contradictory things happen at once: an absolute security of pulse simultaneous with a free play of rubato and rhythmic inflection. And I have said nothing about his sound, which is another uniquely personal gift, a sound of great fullness and penetrating power that has none of the insistent monotony of most oboe playing. It is a great voice which is heard only infrequently. Bob was blessed with it, and he knew how to use it.

Leonard Bernstein: Sorry I can't be with you; I'll be abroad in May, but thinking of RB.

Peter Bowman: Thank you for being a wonderful influence on myself and oboists everywhere!

Roger Cole: Although I can't be physically present at this celebration to honour your distinguished career, my heart is with you today. Your gift to me of wonderful teaching and loving guidance will always be remembered.