

played in the Boston Symphony, and Earl Schuster, who played in the Chicago Symphony, my wife, Ezra Kotzin—

DS: Played in Buffalo.

RS: Yeah, and my first year students that I got as freshmen, were Earnest Harrison and, can't think of the boy's name that was from Little Rock and played in the Little Rock orchestra—

DS: Oh, Showalter.

RS: Showalter, Gene Showalter. So I mean, these were fine talented capable people and I even briefly had thoughts of, "Gee, if I make them better they're going to be better than I am." You know, if I do the best I can for them, they're going to exceed me. But I don't think that lasted more than a few minutes because when I actually started to teach I found that every time I was able to help them it helped me more than it helped them. And I think that's true. That as a teacher, if you have good enough perspective to see something that's true, then you've strengthened yourself whether it helped the other person or not and it's harder for somebody to receive advice than it is for you to give it. That if what you give has real merit, which you hope it does, it strengthens your own playing. So I've always thought that playing and teaching concurrently is an ideal situation because it's much easier to recite truisms than it is to demonstrate them.

And the thing that's markedly different now than it was fifty years ago when I started is that the recordings and video equipment is actually very recent. And I think that's enormously helpful. And when I was in school you could hear broadcasts but the quality of tonal reproduction was limited. More like what comes over the telephone and so you couldn't hear the real essence of a tone of a particular player as effectively. For instance, when I — we used to get live broadcasts, though, almost every week, of the Philadelphia Orchestra and the New York Philharmonic and the Boston Symphony and then later the NBC, so I was quite a bit influenced by hearing Tabuteau, Fernand Gillet, Labate, and then Bloom play, and that input was very helpful. But not nearly as good as you get on equipment now and so the individuals who grew up will say in the Philadelphia area, even if they didn't study with one of the players in the Philadelphia Orchestra, they got to hear those things and realize what was possible. Whereas some kid coming from a small town would have a lot less chance to hear that.

Now it's pretty well distributed all over the world. You can hear and little pieces of equipment like this, why, quality is really quite acceptable.

The seventeenth and eighteenth Honorary Memberships were bestowed on bassoonist

Leonard Sharrow (b. 1915) and oboist **Ralph Gomberg** (b. 1921) at the IDRS Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada, in August, 1987. Still functioning as Chair of the Honorary Membership Committee, Ed Lacy, once again filed the following report in the Fall, 1987 (Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 28-31) issue of *The Double Reed*:

New Honorary Members of the IDRS

by Dr. Ed Lacy, Evansville, Indiana

At the Sixteenth Annual Conference of the Society in Las Vegas, two distinguished double reed performers were awarded the highest honor which the organization confers. Our newest honorary members are oboist Ralph Gomberg and bassoonist Leonard Sharrow.



Leonard Sharrow

Leonard Sharrow was born in New York City on August 4, 1915. He attended the public schools of New York, graduating from DeWitt Clinton High School in 1933. He graduated from the Juilliard School of Music in 1935.

Sharrow's first professional appointment was as principal bassoonist of the National Symphony in Washington under Hans Kindler, a position which he held for two seasons, 1935-37. Then, he joined the NBC Symphony under Arturo Toscanini from 1937-41. From 1941-45 he served with the Armed Forces of the United States.

Returning to civilian life, he played for half a season in 1946 as principal bassoonist of the Buffalo Philharmonic under William Steinberg, and then for one season in a similar position with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Karl Krueger. He was invited by Toscanini to re-join the NBC Symphony as principal bassoonist, which position he held from 1947-51.

In 1951 he became principal bassoonist of the Chicago Symphony, a position he was to hold until 1964, serving under Rafael Kubelik, Fritz Reiner and Jean Martinon.

In 1964 he left the orchestral world to accept a full-time appointment as professor of bassoon at Indiana University, remaining at that capacity until 1977. In that year, he decided to return to the field of performance, joining the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra as principal bassoonist, serving under Andre Previn and Lorin Maazel, until his retirement from that position just this year (1987).

Sharrow has also taught at several other universities and conservatories, including the Juilliard School, Roosevelt University, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Carnegie-Mellon University, and the New England Conservatory of Music. He has also served as

teacher and performing artist at many music festivals, including the Casals Festival, the Aspen Music Festival, the New College Music Festival, and many others. He also serves as an editor of bassoon music for the International Music Company, with over 25 works having been issued under his editorship. He has appeared as soloist with many orchestras, including the NBC Symphony, the Chicago Symphony, the Aspen Festival Orchestra, the Pittsburgh Symphony and others in the United States and Europe. He appears as soloist on six commercial recordings, including his renowned performance of the Mozart *Concerto* with the NBC Symphony under Toscanini, issued by RCA.

It would be almost impossible to list all the honors which have been bestowed on this remarkable musician, but perhaps one of the significant was conferred in 1985, when he was the recipient of the first annual award of the Toscanini Collection Association in recognition of his excellence and dedication in perpetuating Toscanini's memory and high ideals.

The BSO's Ralph Gomberg: an Oboist and a Gentleman

Caroline Smedvig

[EDITOR'S NOTE: This article first appeared in BSO, the quarterly newsletter of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. It is reprinted here with the permission of the author. The editor is grateful to Leslie Ploof of the Boston Symphony's public relations office for the photographs and for all her assistance.]

Throughout the musical world, the talents of the Gomberg family are widely heralded. And, closer to home, anyone who has attended a Boston Symphony concert within the last thirty-seven years has known the warmth and singing tone, "the darkling brilliance" as the same *Time* magazine article put it, of the BSO's principal oboist Ralph Gomberg.

After nearly four decades of that daunting position, Gomberg has elected to trade in his life of whittling reeds for perfecting his forehand, his fairway drive, and his lamb curry — just some of the many extra-musical interests he has never had time to pursue fully. He will play throughout this Tanglewood season, retiring in September, 1987.

"Of course retirement will be a tremendous change," he says. "I can't tell you how I'll miss my colleagues and my association with this great institution."

Gomberg and his wife, Sydelle, currently Director of the Boston Ballet School (the official school of Boston Ballet Company), and as integral and beloved a member of the BSO scene as her husband, are talking and reminiscing about their years with the BSO in Sydelle's Boston Ballet office overlooking Clarendon and Warren streets. Sydelle, her hair

swept up in a dancer's chignon, reflects between phone calls and consultations against a backdrop of leotards and legwarmers. "It truly has been like a close extended family all these years," she comments. "Our kids to this day refer to Uncle Sherman [Walt], Uncle Joey [Silverstein]. When you go through so many births, deaths, illnesses, weddings, bar mitzvahs — there's an unbelievable bond that's created within the orchestra over the years."

Gomberg was born in Boston's West End, the youngest of seven children, five of whom went on to graduate from the Curtis Institute of Music. His older brother, Robert, was a violinist in the Philadelphia Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski; brother Harold was, of course, principal oboist for thirty-four years with the New York Philharmonic; a third brother, Leo, was principal trumpet in the Radio City Music Hall Orchestra and the New York City Center Symphony under Bernstein. One of his sisters, Celia, was a violin soloist under contract at NBC while another sister, Edyth, was a cellist who married George Zazofsky, a longtime member of the BSO violin section, and whose son is Peter Zazofsky, the concert violinist. "It was a question of who would get what room to practice in," explains Gomberg. "Being the youngest, I got the bathroom. It gradually dawned on my mother that some of us were pretty talented," he continues. "She was told about this fabulous school in Philadelphia where all students were admitted on merit and went tuition-free. She packed up the whole family and we took a bus to Philadelphia — what a schlep that was — and five of us ended up at Curtis."

At fourteen, Gomberg became the youngest student ever accepted by the renowned oboe teacher Marcel Tabuteau. "He opened my eyes to what music was about," says Gomberg. "He understood the spirit of it, the beauty of music. He was like a surrogate father to me." At eighteen Gomberg became the first oboist in what was called the All-American Youth Orchestra. Its music director was Leopold Stokowski. "God, did I have nerves," sighs Gomberg, recalling the audition. Shortly after winning the position, he embarked on the S.S. *Brasilia* for a two-month tour of South America with Stokowski conducting every concert.

Gomberg then recounts getting a call from Eugene Ormandy in 1941. Ormandy had been asked by "some rear admiral" to assemble what became the Philadelphia Navy Yard Band, to play at parades, and the commissioning of aircraft carriers and ships. "Ormandy said to me years later, 'Boy did I fix you up.'" laughs Gomberg.

After a year playing principal oboe in Baltimore, Gomberg then left for Los Angeles to care for his