MARCELTABUTEAU:
PEDAGOGICAL CONCEPTS AND PRACTICES
FOR
TEACHING MUSICAL EXPRESSIVENESS:
AN ORAL HISTORY

DOCUMENT

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Musical Arts in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
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*****
The Ohio State University
1999

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ABSTRACT

Marcel Tabuteau is considered one of America's foremost oboists and teachers of the twentieth century. His students, and subsequent generations thereof, continue to occupy many major chairs in the symphony orchestras of the United States. Tabuteau's students agree that he not only revolutionized American oboe playing, but he also had a significant influence on other wind, string and brass players. Marcel Tabuteau's ideas endure mostly through those he taught. Many of these students are now in their seventies and eighties, thus justifying the importance of recording Tabuteau's concepts and teaching practices through oral history.

A broad range of Marcel Tabuteau's students were contacted to see if they had an interest in being interviewed for an oral history about Marcel Tabuteau's pedagogical concepts and practices. Live interviews were conducted with John de Lancie and John Mack, oboists; Felix Kraus, John Minsker, and Louis Rosenblatt, English hornists; John Krell, flutist; Mason Jones, horn player; Hershel Gordon, cellist; and Abba Bogin, pianist.

Questions were asked regarding specific musical concepts such as the "number system," as well as how Tabuteau was able to express his ideas so well to so many people. The interviews that follow are rich in explanation of Tabuteau's musical concepts including phrasing, "the number system," inflections, and playing on the wind. Also discussed are his pedagogical practices that gave rise to a whole generation of exceptionally outstanding musicians. Tabuteau's students referred to him as a fabulous communicator, and a colorful personality whose presence was revered and feared at the same time.
Tabuteau was exceptional in that his pedagogical concepts had a lasting effect on the musicians who studied with him. His teaching was organized in the sense that he had definite and concrete concepts which were taught to all of his students and which all of the interviewees talked about. He did not "spoon feed" these concepts to his students, but rather he expected them to learn by listening and example. Marcel Tabuteau gave the students the tools necessary to play any piece of music with conviction.
Dedicated to Mark Stevens

and

John de Lancie
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank the members of my committee for their support of this document and their guidance throughout my education at The Ohio State University: to my advisor, Professor Robert Sorton, for his support and tutelage throughout my education at Ohio State; Professor Katherine Borst Jones, for planting the seed for this project and encouraging me through the whole process; Professor Christopher Weait, for his instruction and encouragement; and to Dr. Judith Delzell, for always giving of her time and guidance. I would also like to thank the members of my committee for their roles in my attaining the Graduate School Alumni Research Award, which enabled me to conduct the live oral histories.

A special thanks goes to all of the interviewees who made this document possible: John Minsky, John de Lancie, Mason Jones, John Krell, Abba Bogin, Hershel Gordon, John Mack, Felix Kraus, and Louis Rosenblatt. Each interview was a special experience which I will treasure throughout my life. I would like to express my appreciation to them for giving of their time so graciously. I wish to especially acknowledge John Krell, who has passed on since the interview. I consider myself fortunate to have had the opportunity to speak with and have lunch with him.

I want to thank David Oyen for translating Hugo Riemann’s Vademecum der Phrasierung. I also want to thank Amy Likar for her help with formatting the document and her support throughout this project. I wish to also thank Anne O’Donnell of the Curtis Institute of Music for sending me a list of Tabuteau’s students.
I wish to express my gratitude to my parents, Norman and Barbara Laperche, for giving me the courage to pursue my goals and always encouraging me to attain them. I also want to thank Sharon and Roger Stevens for their continued support throughout this project.

The knowledge to pursue this project would not have been possible if it were not for my instruction under John de Lancie. I wish to thank him for teaching me these concepts and changing the course of my musical career.

Finally, I wish to thank my husband, Mark Stevens, for always being in support of my every endeavor and a constant source of inspiration. I also want to thank him for running the recording equipment at the interviews and his patience with my doing this project.
VITA

June 27, 1969 .................................................  Born- Providence, Rhode Island

1987 ..........................................................  Governor’s Scholarship Recipient

1988-90, 92 ......................................................  Interlochen, National Music Camp

1992 ..........................................................  Aspen Music Festival, student of

1992-1996 ......................................................  John de Lancie

1994 ..........................................................  B.M., New World School of the

1994-present ....................................................  Arts, student of John de Lancie

1994-present ....................................................  Graduate Teaching Associate

1995-present ....................................................  The Ohio State University

1997 ..........................................................  M.M., The Ohio State University

1997 ..........................................................  Second Oboe/English horn

1998-present ....................................................  ProMusica Chamber Orchestra of

1998-present ....................................................  Columbus

1995-present ....................................................  Substitute, second oboe

1995-present ....................................................  Columbus Symphony Orchestra

1997 ..........................................................  Graduate School Alumni

1997 ..........................................................  Research Award Recipient

1998-present ....................................................  Second oboe/English horn

1998-present ....................................................  Wheeling Symphony Orchestra

RECORDINGS

1. ProMusica Chamber Orchestra of Columbus, Timothy Russell, conductor. Alton
   Howe Clingan, composer, Circle of Faith-The Words of Chief Seattle and Jerod Sheffer
   Tate, composer, Iyaaknasha for Double Bass and Orchestra. Released 1998 by d’Ncte
   classics.

2. ProMusica Chamber Orchestra of Columbus, Timothy Russell, conductor. Milton
   Ruffin Gospel Chorale and Faye Robinson, soloist. Released Fall 1997 on the Summit
   Label.

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FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Music

Studies in:
  Oboe: Robert Sorton
  Woodwind Literature: Robert Sorton
  Woodwind Pedagogy: Christopher Weait
  Music Education: Judith Delzell
  Musicology: Charles Atkinson
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Marcel Tabuteau was an oboist and teacher of extraordinary talent whose musical pedagogy influenced wind, string, and brass players, as well as pianists. For at least the past forty years, Tabuteau’s students have been teaching in some of America’s finest music schools. Tabuteau’s ideas have survived because they have been “passed on” by his students through private instruction.

Applied music teachers are part of an important oral tradition in which personal experience and historical anecdote form the basis of contemporary common practice. Performance expertise is passed from one generation of performers to the next through the lineage of personal experience and applied lesson.¹

It is my hope, and the desire of the interviewees, that Tabuteau’s ideas and influence will remain with musicians in the generations to come.

To this date, the only known oral source available, which consists of Tabuteau’s commentary and illustrations, is the 33 & 1/3 rpm recording, The Art of the Oboe (Stereo # 1717), and the compact disk made from the same original tape recordings of Tabuteau called Marcel Tabuteau Lessons (1996). While the compact disk is clearer than the record, some people still find it difficult to understand exactly what Tabuteau is saying through his heavy accent and the original recording quality. According to Wayne Rapier, who was responsible for bringing the tape recorder and microphone to Tabuteau’s Nice

apartment, "These recorded tapes were made by Mr. Tabuteau without professional assistance. There were no immediate outlines or plans on his approximate five hours of tapes." We are fortunate that these recordings of Tabuteau do exist. It is my hope that this oral history project will serve to supplement Tabuteau’s own words so that his ideas will be well represented for future generations.

Marcel Tabuteau was born in Compiègne, France, on July 2, 1887. He began his musical studies as a violinist studying with his brother-in-law, Emile Letoffe, who had all family members play an instrument and study solfege. The violin was to be replaced by the oboe after a few short years when the town band was in need of wind players. In 1902, at the age of fifteen, Tabuteau became a student of Georges Gillet at the Paris Conservatory. Tabuteau “played as an entrance examination the Solo by Paladilhe, a piece which only four years earlier in 1898 was the required Solo de Concours for graduation.” In 1904, Gillet gave Tabuteau the highest praise he could when he wrote of Tabuteau, “Student with a future—has an artistic temperament.”

In 1905, Walter Damrosch, conductor of the New York Symphony, sailed to France to obtain some new players for the orchestra. Mr. Damrosch was “convinced that his New York Symphony needed an infusion of French woodwind players, whose style he had long preferred and that he particularly envied in the Boston Symphony.” Among the new players Mr. Damrosch brought back to New York was Marcel Tabuteau,

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4 Storch, liner notes.

5 Storch, liner notes.

the youngest of the five, who had not quite reached his eighteenth birthday. Mr. Damrosch “reported to his board that his ‘Estimate of Frenchmen’s Pay’ was: Barrere, $2,000; Dubois, $1,400; Tabuteau, $1,200; Leroy, $1,400; Mesnard, $1,400.” Upon their arrival in New York, the union would only let the French musicians appear as soloists. Mr. Damrosch appealed to the national union and was fined $1,000, but won his case for letting the musicians join the union and play in the orchestra. Tabuteau played English horn in the New York Symphony for three seasons.

In 1908 Tabuteau began playing with the Metropolitan Opera under Arturo Toscanini. It was during a performance of Tristan und Isolde (Wagner) that Stokowski took notice of Tabuteau and invited him to join the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1915. Tabuteau remained in the orchestra until his retirement in 1954. In addition to playing principal oboe, Tabuteau also appeared as soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra.

On a number of occasions he performed the Handel Concerto in g minor, the Mozart F Major Quartet, K. 370 in an arrangement with small orchestra, and he was frequently one of the four soloists in the Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 in F Major. Tabuteau’s 1940 performance of the Mozart Sinfonia Concertante in E flat Major, K.297b, with his colleagues Bernard Portnoy, clarinet, Sol Schoenbach, bassoon, and Mason Jones, horn conducted by Stokowski, was recorded on 78 rpm discs for RCA Victor and remains a rare example of his solo work at the time.1

The most recent example of Tabuteau’s oboe playing can be heard on the 1998 release by Boston Records called “Marcel Tabuteau Excerpts with Leopold Stokowski.” The first

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7 Storch, liner notes.

8 Toff.

9 Toff


11 Storch, liner notes.
excerpts, recorded in 1924 (Acoustic Recording), is Stravinsky’s Firebird, and the last excerpt is the 1940 recording of the Mozart Sinfonia Concertante K. 297b, excerpts which span sixteen years of Tabuteau’s career.

Upon the opening of the Curtis Institute of Music in 1924, Marcel Tabuteau was invited to teach oboe, woodwind classes and an orchestral class. Following World War II, Tabuteau also taught a string class. Abba Bogin stated:

Eventually after the Second World War ended and there was nobody to teach conducting, he (Tabuteau) took over the string classes as well. Since the woodwind classes were so successful, Zimbalist asked him to do the string classes as well. [Efrem Zimbalist was a violin soloist who became the Director of Curtis in 1941.] Zimbalist was the Director of the school for many years. I don’t know whether he approached Tabuteau about the class or Tabuteau approached him.\textsuperscript{12}

Tabuteau’s teaching legacy began at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia when his teachings touched the lives of many wind, brass, string players and pianists. This is documented by the fact that a large number of his students acquired major orchestral careers. Several of Tabuteau’s successful oboe students include:

Robert Bloom, Harold Gomberg, Rhadames Angelucci, John Minski, Arno Mariotti, Harry Shulman, Perry Bauman, John de Lancie, Ralph Gomberg, Laila Storch, Martha Schere, William Criss, Marc Lifschey, Laurence Thorstenberg, John Mack, Louis Rosenblatt, Alfred Genovese, and Felix Kraus, oboists.\textsuperscript{13} (For complete listing of students see Appendix D)

Some notable non-obois that studied with Tabuteau include: John Krell, piccolo; Mason Jones, horn; Arnold Jacobs, tuba; Abba Bogin, piano; Hershel Gordon, cello; Michael Tree, violin, Norman Carol, violin; and Anthony Gigliotti, clarinet, to name a few.

\textsuperscript{12} Abba Bogin, Interview with author, 7 Aug. 1998.

\textsuperscript{13} Storch, liner notes.
Mr. Tabuteau received several awards and honors throughout the years. In 1937 he was made Chevalier of the French Legion of Honor. In 1947, Tabuteau and William Kincaid, first flutist of the Philadelphia Orchestra, were co-winners of the Philadelphia Art Alliance’s medal of achievement. Mr. Tabuteau also received an honorary doctorate of music from the Curtis Institute of Music.\textsuperscript{14}

Tabuteau’s legacy still survives to this day. Many of the oboists who now hold major orchestral positions are second generation Tabuteau students including: Richard Woodhams, Elaine Douvas, John Ferrillo, and Kathryn Greenbank, to name a few. Other instrumentalists as well are being taught the “Tabuteau influence” because their teachers took a string, woodwind, or orchestral class with Tabuteau.

The selection of interviewees for this oral history project began with a discussion with oboist, John de Lancie, who guided me towards several other oboists. Other musicians selected were through suggestions from interviewees and availability of the musicians and myself to do the interview. Of the thirteen musicians contacted, all but one responded. There were many other musicians I wished could have been contacted or interviewed for this project. I reached as many musicians as resources and time schedules would allow.

\textsuperscript{14} Donald Hefner, \textit{The Tradition of the Paris Conservatory School of Music with Special Attention to the Influence of Marcel Tabuteau}, thesis, The Catholic University of America, 1984: 156.
CHAPTER 2

SURVEY OF LITERATURE

The current amount of literature which delves into Tabuteau’s musical concepts and teaching practices does not exist in great abundance. This “Survey of Literature” serves to give the reader an introduction to the literature available for further study of Marcel Tabuteau’s concepts and teaching practices, as well as a preface for the oral histories that follow.

In addition to the oral histories, the only other oral source documenting Tabuteau’s musical ideas is the “master class” with Tabuteau’s own commentary called The Art of the Oboe (1965) and the compact disc made from the same taped recordings, released by Boston Records, titled Marcel Tabuteau’s Lessons (1996). These recordings, which consist of Tabuteau speaking and demonstrating with the oboe, are directed toward oboe players. This is not to say that meaningful information cannot be excerpted for non-oboists, but perhaps more detail of each lesson is necessary in order to fully grasp these concepts. Seeing Tabuteau’s ideas on paper might have been beneficial as well. Dominique-Rene de Lerma’s article (1974), “Toward a Concept of Tabuteau’s Phrasing,” states, “Despite his efforts to register his performance ideas on a tape recording after his retirement, the full message of his philosophy has never been properly stated in print.”

While Tabuteau’s musical ideas are stated, the true sense of how Tabuteau delivered these ideas to his students over the course of thirty years of teaching is not truly captured on these recordings. John Mack stated, “When I hear him on the recording saying, ‘As good advice to my young friends-wind players...,’ I think—he never talked to us like that.
He sounds so genial and kind-not at all.” Although the recording may not capture Tabuteau’s style of teaching, it does give the listener a wonderful insight into his musical concepts.

The 1996 recording is basically divided into twelve short lessons: wind control, breath taking, number system introduction, dancing numbers, singing intervals, St. Peter audition, glissandos, inflections and distribution, interrogative mode, practice routines, slurred-detached articulation, and up-down key.

Tabuteau’s number system is discussed in Kincaidian by John Krell (1997) and Kathleen Goll-Wilson’s article (1996), “First Flute for 39 Years, an Interview with Donald Peck.” Krell defines Tabuteau’s number system as “a degree of intensity and dynamic.” According to Krell, “Each note was assigned a number indicating the degree of intensity and dynamic with which it was to be played.”

Krell gives several examples as to how Tabuteau might have numbered a phrase. Krell also makes the point that Tabuteau’s number system and Kincaid’s idea of phrase grouping are similar concepts. Since Tabuteau and Kincaid were such close colleagues and shared many similar musical viewpoints, it seems appropriate to encourage the reader to study Kincaid’s ideas as well. A wonderful introduction to William Kincaid can be found in a Flute Talk article by John Krell (1983).

Kathleen Goll-Wilson, in her article about Donald Peck, gives a very brief mention to Tabuteau’s number system stating, “1 represented the lowest dynamic intensity, 2 was a little higher, 3 was in the middle, and five was the loudest.”

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1 John C. Krell, Kincaidian (California: The National Flute Association, 1997) 35.

2 Krell, p. 36.


4 Goll- Wilson, p.17.
Numbers are explained in conjunction with “drives” in Donald Hefner’s thesis, “The Tradition of the Paris Conservatory School of Oboe Playing with Special Attention to the Influence of Marcel Tabuteau,” (1984) through quotation of other sources. Tabuteau taught “drives,” or “long tones” as they could be called, an exercise to learn how to control motion in music. According to de Lerma (1974), “control of these three elements (dynamics, articulation, and tone color) could be developed by using what Tabuteau called the ‘drive’.”

Drives were an essential part of Tabuteau’s teaching because they helped a student learn how to attain motion in music. One very important source which goes into great detail on motion in music and note groupings, is James Morgan Thurmond’s Note Grouping (1982). Thurmond, a horn player, was a student of Anton Horner and Marcel Tabuteau. Thurmond’s preface speaks of the important role that Marcel Tabuteau played in Thurmond’s introduction to the concept of note grouping. Thurmond discusses the importance of motion in music to show musical expressiveness. Note groupings are mentioned in conjunction with phrasing and punctuation. Thurmond states, “Phrasing, or ‘punctuation’ in music, in the opinion of the author, is almost synonymous with expression.”

Tabuteau also taught that in order to achieve motion, or musical expressiveness, one must phrase and punctuate.

Robert Sabin (1944), in an interview with Tabuteau called, “Marcel Tabuteau of Philadelphia Orchestra Summarizes Training,” had Tabuteau summarize what he thought an oboist needed to do in order to become a successful musician. Sub-headings include: Preliminary training needed, Each student is an individual problem, Player should know the whole score, and Musical intelligence vital.

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5 James Morgan Thurmond, Note Grouping (Ft. Lauderdale: Meredith publications, 1982) 49.
Donald Hefner (1984) covers an extremely broad range of ideas and facts about Tabuteau and the French school of oboe playing. As pertaining to Tabuteau, ideas are discussed such as his successful students; his death notices; playing fundamentals including breathing, posture, embouchure, and articulation; ensemble classes; phrasing and interpretation; prose; and upbeats.

Stevens Hewitt (1966) in the Method for Oboe discusses several concepts, including attacks and dynamics, which were taught by Tabuteau. Both Tabuteau and Hewitt spoke of achieving successful attacks by counting off 3, 2, 1 before making a soft attack on 1. Also, Tabuteau’s simile, “End the phrase like cigarette smoke rising,” is used by Hewitt to show the student not to discontinue air support at the end of a phrase.

Several sources on the topic of musical expressiveness were investigated to discern their relevance to Marcel Tabuteau’s concepts. David Blum’s Casals and the Art of Interpretation (1977), Philip Farkas’s Art of Musicianship (1976) and Hermann Keller’s Phrasing and Articulation (1965) contain chapters on the topic of phrasing, but they do not make reference to Tabuteau. Blum (1977) deals with Pablo Casals’ interpretation of music. Casals, like Tabuteau, had certain defined concepts that he taught to achieve musical expression. “Casals stressed certain fundamental concepts which he sometimes called ‘laws of music’ or ‘laws of nature’-concepts which he considered to be essential elements of meaningful interpretation and applicable to all forms of musical expression.”

Casals spoke of phrasing in terms of rainbows, arcs that go up and down, while Tabuteau spoke of numbers, groupings, and intensity. Both Farkas (1976) and Keller (1965) compare phrasing to the human language. Farkas (1976) shows how it is important to

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6 Pablo Casals was a famous cellist and pedagogue who lived from 1876-1973.

7 David Blum, Casals and the Art of Interpretation (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977) x.
know where the “pivot-points” or emphasis of the phrase is. Tabuteau might have referred to this as the “peak of the phrase.” Farkas demonstrates this by showing the same sentence with an emphasis on a different word each time.

In addition to his musical concepts, Tabuteau’s teaching practices are referred to in several sources. Tabuteau’s colorful personality is depicted by Laila Storch in the article, “Marcel Tabuteau” (1974) through several examples of analogies he used in ensemble classes. Albert Kaufman (1953) gives a description of Tabuteau’s personality in ensemble class by telling a few stories that occurred and discussing Tabuteau’s use of similes in the article, “Woodwind Profile: Marcel Tabuteau.” A vivid example of Tabuteau’s use of analogies comes from Sabin (1944) and Krell (1997). The Sabin article presents an analogy in which Tabuteau speaks of oboe vibrato and how it is produced by the intensity of the speed of the player’s wind, but as the speed of wind is increased, the embouchure should be released. Tabuteau states:

> Perhaps I can make this clear by comparing the process to the starting of a train. In the station, the locomotive grips the rails tightly as it slowly begins to move, but as it gains momentum it moves along more lightly and the grip slackens. This does not mean a loss of control, but simply that control is more lightly exercised at high speed.⁸

Kathleen Goll-Wilson (1996) quotes Donald Peck who spoke of perhaps the other side of Tabuteau’s “colorful” personality, “His [Tabuteau] sort of personality would not be popular today because he was a bit bizarre and unpleasant. He said what he thought and made nasty remarks.”⁹

Several sources discuss the tremendous impact Tabuteau had on their musicianship. Brian Frederiksen in *Arnold Jacobs: Song and Wind* (1996) states, “Many of Jacobs’

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[Arnold Jacobs] theories have roots with Tabuteau."\textsuperscript{10} Frederiksen also takes the reader through a brief history of Tabuteau's career and his number system. de Lerma (1974) makes the statement: "More than the most respected oboist of his time, Tabuteau was the philosopher of the twentieth century orchestral performance practice."\textsuperscript{11} Tabuteau's long-standing influence on musicians is especially evident in the article by Samuel Singer, "Oboists Pay Homage to Tabuteau" (1980) which discusses the commemorative program that was held for Tabuteau at The Curtis Institute of Music, in March, 1979. According to Singer, two concerts were given in which seven oboists from major United States symphonies played. In addition, films were shown and a Tabuteau recording of Handel's Oboe Concerto in G minor was played as part of the event. There were musicians in attendance from all over the United States.

Analysis of further sources which might have been the inspiration for some of Tabuteau's concepts are included in the appendices of this document. Lucien Capet, in Die Höhere Bogentechnik (1927), discusses bow distribution (Appendix A). Tabuteau's ideas for phrasing, or the number system, were a result of thinking about the distribution of the bow.\textsuperscript{12} Hugo Riemann, in Vademecum der Phrasierung (1912), states that as far back as 1793, Chr. Heinrich Koch used numbers to explain musical form (Appendix B). Tabuteau, therefore, was not the first to use numbers in reference to teaching music. Mathis Lussy, in his book titled Musical Expression (1906), maintains that even the poorest musician can be taught how to play musically (Appendix C). Similarly, many of


\textsuperscript{11} Dominique-Rene de Lerma, "Toward a Concept of Tabuteau's Phrasing," The Instrumentalist, March 1974: 44.

\textsuperscript{12} Marcel Tabuteau, Art of the Oboe, LP, Coronet Recording Co., 1965.
the interviewees spoke of how Tabuteau could make any musician play well, if only for the period of time he was working with them.

The oral history interviews that follow have been arranged in chronological order from the first interviewee to have studied with Marcel Tabuteau (1931) to the last interviewee to have studied with him (1951). This is not necessarily the order in which the interviews were conducted. Interviews for the oral histories averaged approximately one hour in length. Following the interviews, all oral histories were transcribed by the author from the tape recorded interviews. Transcriptions were then sent to the interviewees who made corrections. In general, these corrections were mostly grammatical changes, not content changes. Due to his death, John Krell was the only interviewee who did not have the opportunity to make any changes. Interviews were returned to the author who edited these changes.
CHAPTER 3
INTERVIEW WITH JOHN MINSKER

MS: What years did you study with Tabuteau?

JM: I studied with Tabuteau privately in December 1930 and then started at Curtis in the Fall of 1931, expecting to stay for four years as most students did. At the beginning of 1934, which would have been my last year, a job opened up in Detroit. Tabuteau told me about it and said, “If you want to try out for it, go ahead.” I did and got the job there.

I hadn’t planned a musical career at all, but by chance I was offered a scholarship in Ithaca, NY, at the Ithaca College of Music. A friend who lived in Philadelphia invited me to spend the Christmas holidays with him at his home. While visiting in Philadelphia, I had planned to take a couple of lessons with Tabuteau. The director of Ithaca, Ernest Williams, the former first trumpet player in the Philadelphia Orchestra, gave me a letter of introduction to Tabuteau. After one lesson, it was obvious that if I really wanted to follow a musical career, Philadelphia was the only place to be.

MS: Was the job in Detroit for oboe or English horn?

JM: It was English horn.

MS: Did you study English horn with Tabuteau?

JM: Not really, no. It is different from the oboe but not so different as to require separate lessons. I played English horn in the Curtis orchestra for a couple of years. He would not let anyone play in the orchestra for at least the first year. He was very, very fussy about that. He wanted to be sure you were well prepared. He did not want you to
make a fool of yourself or reflect unfavorably on his teaching when you had to play for Fritz Reiner who conducted the Curtis orchestra at that time.

**MS:** Did you take classes with Tabuteau also?

**JM:** We had orchestra class and woodwind class.

**MS:** Can you describe a typical private lesson with Tabuteau?

**JM:** Well, I would say there's no such thing as a typical lesson with him. Things could go smoothly occasionally, and he could blow up on occasion. He would always start you out with a long tone. That was the basis of your playing, as you probably learned from Mr. de Lancie. Then you would play scales in a few different keys, maybe scales in thirds in different keys. Then you played your lesson from Barret or Ferling and transposed it into a nearby key. If you got through alive you left. (he chuckles)

In spite of his almost tyrannical methods, I loved him. He was very good to me from the beginning. He could be hard, yes. He was as hard on me as anyone else, but I didn't seem to take it too personally. Some students did. Perhaps I did not because he was so friendly aside from when I was taking a lesson.

**MS:** So, he was different out of school, so to speak?

**JM:** Yes, entirely different. You could have a class with him, and he could crucify you. Then after the class you could go to lunch with him and have a nice discussion. It was always interesting to be with him. I think, when he was teaching, he was so intense and concentrated on the music and the things that hurt him when you played badly, which of course was most of the time, that it was more than he could take and he frequently blew a fuse.

**MS:** So, prior to studying with him had you not played any musical instrument?

**JM:** I started violin when I was about 8 and played some professionally in Charleston, WV, my hometown. I didn’t begin oboe until I was 16 or 17. I wanted to be able to play in a band so I bought an oboe and took lessons. My teacher was George Crumb, father of
the composer. He was a very fine clarinetist, arranger and was the conductor of the Shrine Band in Charleston. It is through this connection that he knew Ernest Williams, and that is how I got the scholarship in Ithaca.

**MS:** What band did you play in?

**JM:** I didn't play in a band, except at Ithaca. I was just beginning to play violin in the Charleston Symphony. I also played in a small radio orchestra which George Crumb conducted. We played a radio program once a week. That was in 1928-29 when radio was in its infancy, and we were on a local station. We played popular classical music, Victor Herbert and that sort of thing.

**MS:** Did Tabuteau ever demonstrate by playing at your lessons?

**JM:** Not very much. When I studied privately, it was at his studio. He spent his lifetime at the studio making reeds so he was playing constantly. He might have done some demonstrating there. As I recall, at Curtis he did not demonstrate, except when we had reed classes. We had a reed class once a week.

**MS:** Would he help you with reeds?

**JM:** To a certain extent. He would usually try your reed. I think it was just a case of his wanting to pick up a little extra compensation that he had the reed classes. He really didn't teach very much about reeds there, but he would look at them and criticize them.

**MS:** Did he ever discuss breathing with you?

**JM:** Yes, every facet of your playing was discussed. He used to say that he would blow against a candle to just barely keep it from extinguishing. He did stress the use of the candle, although I have to confess I never did it.

He did mention the fact that you always had too much wind and should try to get rid of it through your nose while playing.

**MS:** Did his classroom instruction differ from private lessons?
JM: No, they were about the same. He was about the same with all the different instruments. He tried to explain the basic principles of preparing an attack, sustaining a note, articulating on a note, and playing scales. He would have different people play at different times.

MS: Did you ever have group lessons?

JM: No I did not, but he did have group lessons just shortly after I started in the orchestra in 1936.

MS: How large was your oboe class?

JM: There were five or six. He had two very young students, Rhadames Angelucci and Harold Gomberg who didn’t play in the orchestra yet. I’m not sure if they even played in the classes. He was very particular about the embouchure and everything being set before he let anyone play in the orchestra or in any other group. He wanted you to develop your embouchure, your wind, and of course your technique a little bit. He started off with long tones and he would tell you to whistle (he demonstrates) to form your embouchure. The idea was to avoid the stretching so that the corners of your mouth were closer together. This naturally gave you more cushion in the center. If you want to play pp, you play on the tip of the reed and gradually as you expand that tone you can take more reed.

MS: How would you describe Tabuteau’s teaching style in terms of his personality, and was he a good communicator?

JM: Yes, he was a good communicator but a sort of tyrant. You were always a little bit afraid of him. I would say he explained things very well. I knew right from the first lesson I had with him that he was something very special. There are so many things that go into making a good player. You have the purely oboe technique, your embouchure, your wind, your fingers, the tongue. He explained all of these. Then he spoke of how all of this connects to the music. Everything begins with, I think and I think he did too, the tone. After all, music is tone. To develop your tone, he had you sustain long notes from
one to five and then you would enlarge that from one to nine, 13, 17 and so on. (This is in a 4/4 meter.) Then he explained that everything you play has a certain line like the long tone. Most phrases begin with the 1 and end with the 1, not all phrases of course, but many of them. This is the basis of your playing. He always stressed a dark sound, and he had the most beautiful dark sound of anything you can imagine. It was such a dark quality but a light weight. Many students misunderstood that, and as a result, they got a dark sound which was thick and heavy. It wasn’t light like Tabuteau’s sound.

**MS:** Did you ever play on his reeds?

**JM:** Yes I did, and they were marvelous. You didn’t have to pinch at all. It was so easy to make an attack and expand the sound. You could blow as much as you wanted and it never became harsh. His reeds were simply wonderful. Of course, they never suited him, and he spent his life in the studio making reeds.

**MS:** How was it that you got to play on his reeds?

**JM:** He took me as an “assistant” in his studio. I had the key to his studio and would prepare the cane for him. In the mornings he’d go to rehearsal, and I’d go to the studio and do my practicing. After rehearsal, he would return to the studio and spend the entire day there making reeds, whether he had a concert or not. Of course, I’d hear him playing. He would try the program for the week. There’s no doubt I heard him more than anyone else ever did. I feel very fortunate there, and I’d give anything to hear that sound again. It was very dark and he could get so much color.

**MS:** How did he work on getting this dark sound? Did he spend most of his time with the reed?

**JM:** Yes, but just with the reed. I never heard him really practice, aside for practicing what he was playing that week, and that was more a case of his finding a suitable reed for that program. He did not need to practice, but he did need a decent reed.
**MS:** Do you think he developed that dark sound just by constantly working with his reeds?

**JM:** Yes definitely. He had to have his own type of reed to get that sound, but how he conceived it, probably no one will ever know. I think it was Sol Schoenbach who told me he got some of that idea from Henkelman, who played English horn in the orchestra with Tabuteau. His sound was thick and on the heavy side, but it was a dark sound. You have to know that Stokowski had that same idea.

**MS:** Of the sound?

**JM:** Yes. He didn’t speak in those terms that I can recall, but the sound of the orchestra was a dark sound which he would expand. In physics black (dark sound) is the absence of all color and white is the presence of all color. If you begin with black you can add to it every imaginable color of the rainbow and every different shade, hue and tint. If you begin with white as so many people want to do today, there’s no place to go from there. People speak of what a brilliant tone some of the sopranos and violinists have. It’s a brilliant tone but nothing happens. It’s “blah” and you get sick of hearing it. Fritz Kreisler was another who had that dark sound. Fritz Kreisler was marvelous and a true artist in every sense of the word. Maria Callas also had that dark sound and she could expand it.

When you start with a dark sound you can add all the different colors and all the different intensities to it. You can have less intensity or more intensity, and that was the basis of Tabuteau’s playing and I think his teaching, although I don’t think he said so in so many words. It just gradually developed. It began with the tone. Then of course he added the phrasing. I think he got the germ of that from Gillet. Tabuteau once told me that Joachim, one of the greatest violinists of all time, would tell his pupils when he was done with them “I’ve taught you all that I know. There’s a man in Paris, an oboe player. Go to him for musical studies.” That man was Gillet. Tabuteau might have got the germ of his
number system from Gillet, but I doubt it. I think it was all Tabuteau’s and it began shortly
before I began studying with him. The only pupils who turned out previous to the time I
was in Curtis were Robert Bloom and Philip Kirshner in Cleveland.

Kirshner was playing first oboe in Cleveland when I was a very young man. He was
considerably older than Bloom and I were. As far as I know, those were the only two
students prior to me who played professionally. Kirshner didn’t have the tone at all that
Tabuteau had. It was a much thinner, more nasal sound. Bloom of course did develop
more or less a Tabuteau sound, that is a dark sound. I think it was just around the time that
the Curtis Institute opened that Tabuteau began to develop these ideas. He probably didn’t
do much teaching prior to that. There weren’t too many aspiring oboe players around at
that time. There weren’t that many full time orchestras either, maybe a half dozen and that
was it.

**MS:** Did you get the opportunity to hear oboe players in other symphonies?

**JM:** I got to hear a few oboe players such as Labate in New York, Gillet in Boston,
Van Emerick in Detroit and Kirshner in Cleveland. Tabuteau had the most beautiful sound
and widest range of anyone I’ve ever heard.

**MS:** Did you ever hear of a book by Capet, a string technique book? Mr. de Lancie
said that he got the book from Tabuteau and he could have got some of his ideas for the
numbering system from the book.

**JM:** I know he spoke once about violin studies that I was unfamiliar with.

**MS:** Was Tabuteau’s teaching very structured? Did he teach all of his students in a
similar manner?

**JM:** I think he started everyone out the same way. Different students made different
mistakes and developed in different ways, so naturally his criticism would be different with
each student.
MS: Tabuteau was said to have used many analogies as a teaching method. Would you consider this part of his teaching style?

JM: Yes, it was part of his method. He would say for example, on making a diminuendo, "Make it disappear like smoke going up."

MS: Would you say that Tabuteau revolutionized American wind playing?

JM: I don't think there is any doubt about that. I've spoken to many of his students, and they all revered him, whether they were horn players, or bassoonists or clarinetists. They all had the utmost respect for him. Before his time, most wind players were imported from Europe. Now, many European Orchestras have American wind players. I would say he revolutionized not only American wind playing, but wind playing internationally.

MS: Do you think people are soft now-a-days with teaching and playing?

JM: I don't know. John de Lancie upheld those standards while he was at Curtis. I don't know what has happened since then. I recently heard on the radio a woodwind ensemble from Curtis, and I wasn't pleased with it at all. The technique of playing notes has improved tremendously since my time, but playing music is something else. When I taught at Curtis, where students were the best from all over the world, the woodwind students would come in with worlds of technique. Musically, you couldn't believe how terrible it was. You had to start them as though they were beginning students.

Everything has its beginning, reaches a certain peak and then there seems to be a fall off from there. I think we're going through a phase of degeneracy and who knows where it will end. It's really a question of whether symphony orchestras are going to be a thing of the past. There will always be some orchestras to play the Masterworks, but I question people's interest. The emphasis now is on technique. Tabuteau and Stokowski were so marvelous because the emphasis was on making music, technique being only a means to that end. This dichotomy is clearly evident if you listen to recordings of Heifitz and Perlman and compare those with recordings of Kreisler. With the former, everything is
exact. Every note is in place exactly as written, as a computer might play. Kreisler was a little bit erratic at times, a note out of tune occasionally, or one missed, but the music he made just tore your heart out. This was without the benefit of modern technology.

Tabuteau’s playing can not be appraised by what you hear on records. The technology of his time was unable to record the sound of the oboe and the subtle nuances of his playing. By the time the technology had improved a little, his best playing days were over. I think John de Lancie’s records and CD’s are the most representative of Tabuteau’s greatness. Also, Alfred Genovese recently played in two CD’s which are superb examples of Tabuteau’s legacy.

**MS:** How many years did you play in Philadelphia?

**JM:** I played 23 years in Philadelphia and 2 years in Detroit prior to that.

**MS:** Did Tabuteau have many students?

**JM:** Yes, he would take one or two new students each year. During the time de Lancie was there, Tabuteau had a big class, maybe a dozen. Not all of them made it. He broke some of them; they couldn’t take it. Many of them might have had real talent and could have been good oboe players, good oboe players, but not great oboe players like de Lancie turned out to be. He used the same methods with all of them. First, they were taught tone. Next was the number system, which is simply relating each note to each other note, and each little group to the next group, and the next phrase to the big phrase, and it goes on and on like that.

**MS:** Did he spend a lot of time describing it to you?

**JM:** Not exactly in that way. You picked up a little at a time through constant repetition. If you were smart enough to pick it up then you did, and if you weren’t, then you just didn’t make it. A lot of his students didn’t make it.

I think the number system began around Bloom’s time, when it was fairly simple and gradually developed into the complex system he describes in the record and CD that Wayne
Rapier made, where almost every note has a number. He didn’t go that far when I was there. He did give you the general idea: 1,2,3 3,4,5. A note repeated begins a different group. In other words, they’re not together. His numbers were never intended to be just loud and soft. They were intended as intensity and an increase in color. The crowning glory of his teaching was his ability to make you think about every note you played. He gave you the tools to analyze music and the ability to pass this on to other students.

**MS:** So he didn’t spell it out?

**JM:** No, not when I was a student. He would point off the groupings and bracket them. Here’s a group, here’s a group, a group ends here.

**MS:** Did he demonstrate this by playing?

**JM:** Not very much. I don’t recall his playing much at lessons. He played a little at reed class, and naturally you heard him in the orchestra every week.

**MS:** What was Tabuteau’s relationship like with Stokowski?

**JM:** He worshipped Stokowski during the time when I was a student, but later they had a falling out. By the time Stokowski left the orchestra, Tabuteau’s opinion changed. I don’t know what happened there. There was a lot of maneuvering. He did a lot of denigrating of conducting.

**MS:** Of Stokowski?

**JM:** Not directly of him, but of conductors in general and that of course included Stokowski. You heard what he said at the end of that record, “Let them think that they did it with their hands and so on.” Well, that’s a direct reference to Stokowski. Stokowski must have heard some reports and wanted to fire him, but Tabuteau was too big at that time and Stokowski couldn’t do it. Tabuteau knew in his heart that Stokowski had what it really took to make music.

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While Stokowski exaggerated at times and may not have had the classical background that Toscanini had, still when he made music it was exciting, the same as it was when you heard Kreisler play or Tabuteau play. No matter how many times you played the same composition, it was different each time and you were proud of the way you played it each time. When you came out of a concert, you felt like you were part of something important in the world. I never felt that with any other conductor. Don’t misunderstand me. There were other conductors that were very fine, but there was something about Stokowski that was unique, and Tabuteau of course knew that. He couldn’t praise him enough when I was a student.

**MS:** Did Tabuteau give opinions of other players during rehearsals?

**JM:** No, but if someone gave him trouble by playing sharp, he would hear about it. Not in front of the whole orchestra, but he would go to him and say, “You are playing sharp and I can’t play.” His playing depended on a low pitch. If he had to play sharp he lost that dark sound and he lost the ability to maneuver his embouchure. There was no flexibility at all because he was pinching to get up to the pitch. French horns are notoriously known for playing sharp. If there was a background of French horn which was sharp when he had a solo and he had to try and come up to that, he let them know about it. Of course, he made many enemies that way. He had a pitch problem with Kincaid, our first flutist. Kincaid had a tendency to play sharp, especially after Stokowski left.

Ormandy had no respect for a low pitch. Ormandy had no understanding of the importance of the low pitch and dark sound. Stokowski did and tuned to 438. Whenever there was an intonation problem in the orchestra with Stokowski, I never once heard him say go up in pitch. It was always down. He’d pump the box, a little box with the bellows in it that you could put on the floor and pump with your foot. It was in front of Louie DeFulvio, the second oboe, and he would pump it.
Everyone wants to play brilliant. The violins want to tune sharp. What do they gain by that? Tabuteau's sound was dark, but live. It could become brilliant, but it was light. It was never heavy and thick. He always spoke about the dark sound, but not every student understood it. Many of them did have a thickness and heaviness to the sound. Tabuteau had it all. His sound was so big, and he had a great range. He could play so pianissimo. With Stokowski you had to have that. He wanted the minimum and the maximum. He demanded more of his players than any other conductor I ever knew. In fact, I never played with any conductor that ever said anything to most of us so far as developing a tone, but Stokowski did.

**MS:** So, Stokowski worked on developing the kind of sound he wanted for the orchestra?

**JM:** During my first year in the orchestra he had me play several times for him at his home, and he probably did that with other first desk players. I think he selected his players on the basis of their tones and phrasing, rather than their techniques. For instance, he took out the *Tristan Prelude*. He wanted me to play that low A flat so pp that you could hardly hear it, then expand it and finish it down to nothing. He was by far more demanding than any other conductor I played with. Tabuteau, when making his reeds, often remarked to me that Stokowski wanted such a big tone. He also wanted the tiniest pianissimo and the widest possible range.

I don't know how he got the string sound. It was there long before I ever heard the orchestra, but I do recall that the contract between the players and the orchestra association gave the conductor the right to insist that a player use a particular instrument. I am not aware that it was ever enforced during my tenure, but he must have enforced it before my time. Nobody's ever really explained how he got such a wide range of color. It could be deep, dark, and mysterious or it could be lush, and it could be of the utmost brilliance. He could create an atmosphere that was breathtaking. It was just a matter of his personality,
his intensity, his eyes, his facial expressions, his sensuous mouth, his expressive hands and a certain magnetism he had, bordering on hypnotism. He imposed a discipline on the orchestra such as I have never experienced with any other conductor. If he wanted to be nasty, he could be, but he never lost his temper. He was always in control. He would criticize in a very smooth way and it could hurt more than someone like Toscanini, who would break a watch and his batons and walk out. When Stokowski brought those hands down, everybody stopped. Not one player played two notes afterwards. He would start the same way. He’d say “five after C” and his hands would come down and you played. He did it to have the orchestra disciplined. The concerts were never the same as the rehearsals, so you were constantly on your toes. You seldom took your eyes off of him. You learned to take a quick look at the music and then look at him most of the time. I see orchestras on TV occasionally and notice that most players keep their eyes buried in the music, seldom looking at the conductor. I don’t think they would be able to get away with that with Stokowski conducting.

**MS:** Did Tabuteau teach a string class?

**JM:** He had a string class for several years.

**MS:** Is that something he wanted to do?

**JM:** I don’t know whether it was his idea or the director’s.

**MS:** How much do you think Tabuteau attributed to Gillet, his teacher?

**JM:** A great deal. He always spoke of him with the greatest respect. He couldn’t say enough good about Gillet.

**MS:** Did Tabuteau use the number system to teach inflections also?

**JM:** Inflections were an important part of his teaching, but I don’t recall they had much to do with his number system. He used to speak a great deal about up inflections and down inflections.
MS: Why is it that Tabuteau stood out amongst all those people?

JM: He was by far the outstanding player in the orchestra. I don’t think there has been any orchestral player as outstanding as he was. Everyone looked up to him and everyone tried to imitate his playing. You can hear the string phrasing in the Philadelphia orchestra different from all others at that time if you really listen. I’m sure they got it from him.

A conductor has a big job. He has 100 men to control, balance the various parts, establish the tempi, and make all the nuances. Stokowski did all of this and much more. There is so much to do that conductors have to depend on their players for fundamentals. This is the area in which Tabuteau’s example was so important. He demonstrated daily the fundamentals that made the Philadelphia Orchestra unique in its time. Joe Mariano spoke of an occasion when the orchestra did Wozzeck, and there was a certain point in the middle of it where the audience started to lose interest. He said, then there was a big oboe solo and right away people started to take notice again. Tabuteau was really an outstanding player. Stokowski controlled everything, but Tabuteau really set the standard of playing, phrasing and the idea of intensity and color. He set those standards that everyone followed, not just the wind players. You can even hear it in the string section. It was as though there was an electricity going on, and it is wired to you. You’re shocked by it.

MS: I’ve heard some remakes of old 78’s on CD from the Stokowski Society and you do hear some of what you’re talking about through the recording quality.

JM: In some respects the remakes of the old 78’s on CD’s reflect even less of his playing than the originals when played on the old phonographs of that era. I’m not familiar with the techniques involved, but my guess is that in eliminating most of the surface noise, they had to suppress certain overtones which are essential for recording the oboe’s sound. I know that Tabuteau was appalled that his playing recorded so poorly. I can tell you that what he heard was superior in many respects to the CD’s. What I hear on the CD’s is a
small tone which makes it almost impossible to hear even the few nuances which could be heard on the 78’s. The color and intensity of his tone simply did not record. For example, he would often make a diminuendo, but at the same time increase the intensity and brighten the color. All that is heard on the recording is the diminuendo. The beautiful line that he had was destroyed. You simply can not get any idea of what his playing was like from either the 78’s or the re-mastered CD’s.

**MS:** Mr. de Lancie said a similar thing. We listened to one of those CD’s in Aspen and he said that hearing him in person was not the same as listening to the CD, but by listening he could remember how Tabuteau sounded.

**JM:** Yes, it does comes back to you. You can hear any orchestra on the radio today and it sounds better than those old recordings, yet there’s something about those recordings that you hear and say, “Oh my God, here it is.” It comes back to you. I don’t know if it’s perceived by someone who has never heard it, but it does come back to me. I hear that tone expand and I remember how it took on intensity and color.

**MS:** I can hear the expansion, but I don’t hear that dark sound or color.

**JM:** You just have to take our word for it that he was incomparable. As I stated earlier, CD’s of de Lancie and Genovese are to my knowledge the best examples of what his playing was all about.

**MS:** I heard that Tabuteau had a name for all of his students, “Stupid.”

**JM:** Yes, I think he called just about all of us “Stupid” at one time or another. Were he teaching now, some bureaucrat or judge would likely order him to take sensitivity training, and then there would be no Tabuteau legacy to talk about. Poor playing made him cringe. He exploded at whoever did the poor playing and, of course, the poor fellow was deflated and hurt, embarrassed and humiliated. We all got it. Tabuteau was a drill master, no question about that, and he did destroy many students. There were no favorites.
Certainly most of us realized that here was something unique that we never had before and we won’t see again. We were very fortunate to have had a part in it.

**MS:** Did Tabuteau ever conduct a student orchestra?

**JM:** Not to my knowledge. In woodwind classes we played trios and quintets. In orchestra preparatory class we would play orchestral music that the Philadelphia Orchestra was playing that week.

**MS:** It seems like you and Tabuteau had a special relationship even from the start? Do you have any idea why that was?

**JM:** I don’t know. I seem to have been fairly adept mechanically and he must have liked the way I made my reeds. There was an oboist by the name of Ernest Serpentini who prepared his cane and kept him company in the studio. I think the most important thing to him was to keep him company so he wasn’t alone up there. Serpentini then got a job in Cleveland. After he left, Tabuteau took me as his man Friday. I had the key to his studio and kept him company and helped him with preparing the cane and turning the wheel when he wanted to grind his knife and that sort of thing. So I did spend hours and hours with him every week.

**MS:** Did he get upset with himself making reeds?

**JM:** Yes, of course, but he never gave up. The gouge, in particular, was an obsession with him. The gouges at that time were very crude compared to what you have today. He had a grinder clamped to a table in such a way that the flat side of the stone was up. He would hold his gouging knife against that and shape it that way. You thought of him as a very poor mechanic and yet he had a knack for grinding that gouging knife. It was a very difficult thing to do. He’d grind the knife and also file the guide. By the time he got done the gouging machine was a mess. You wondered how he ever managed to make a reed, but he did. He got in touch with a mechanic here in Philadelphia by the name of Graf. You may know that name. He got the idea of raising and lowering the block, and
pushing it back and forth and putting the blade on an eccentric bearing. These ideas were developed by Graf and Tabuteau. I often went with him when he went to Graf’s shop.

**MS:** Was Tabuteau also instrumental in improvements being made on the oboe?

**JM:** Yes. He’d go to Lorée every summer and always come back with 3-5 oboes and out of that he’d pick one or two for himself, take them to Moennig and have them fixed up. Lorée did a poor job with the pads.

**MS:** How were those oboes back then?

**JM:** They weren’t like today’s oboes. The low notes were very low in pitch and the high notes were quite wild, especially the high A. We used to use the harmonic A very frequently. The oboes were not great, but he was more interested in getting a sound than anything else, so he tolerated the low notes and occasionally would crack on a low note. He experimented with the thickness of the wood and the bore and with bells.

**MS:** Was he into the repair of oboes?

**JM:** No, we were fortunate in Philadelphia to have Hans Moennig. He was a superb repairman. His father had a woodwind factory in Germany where he learned the trade before coming to the U.S. He was a cousin of Walter Guetter, who was the first bassoon player in the orchestra. It might have been through Guetter that Tabuteau sent his oboe to Moennig. Once Moennig fixed an instrument, you would not allow anyone else to touch your instrument. He was outstanding and recognized as such. There were articles written about him in magazines and papers. Players from all parts of the country, including Mitch Miller and Benny Goodman, brought or sent their instruments to him for repairs. Stokowski once paid him a visit in his shop and had him make a whistle from a piece of cane which was used by our piccolo player to play a long sustained high note for the piccolo. I believe it was for one of the Shostakovich Symphonies.

**MS:** How did you get the playing job in Philadelphia? Did Tabuteau offer it to you?
JM: No. It wasn’t offered. I auditioned for it along with other qualified players.
CHAPTER 4
INTERVIEW WITH JOHN DE LANCIE

**MS:** What years did you study with Marcel Tabuteau?

**JD:** 1936-1940, four years.

**MS:** What classes did you take with him?

**JD:** We had oboe lessons, woodwind chamber music, and what we called an orchestra class. It was made up of all the winds, brass and percussion of the orchestra, and a pianist who would play the string parts. We would go through, generally speaking, one piece that would be on the program of the Philadelphia Orchestra that week. If there was something we were playing in the orchestra with Reiner, that Reiner wanted rehearsed, we would work on that as well.

**MS:** Can you describe a typical private lesson with Tabuteau?

**JD:** We always started with long tones, scales and broken thirds. Then we had to play our lessons, which generally consisted of four exercises. Two would be new pieces in the original key. The other two would be pieces we played the previous week in the original key, now transposed to a different key.

**MS:** Did he ever demonstrate by playing?

**JD:** Oh, yes. He had a little studio in a building in downtown Philadelphia. Our lessons would either be at the Institute or at the studio, quite often at the studio. When we would go to the studio, he would be making reeds. He didn’t play the lessons very much, but he played for us. He wasn’t necessarily playing for us, but he played a lot.
**MS:** What kind of things would he play?

**JD:** Well, he was generally fixing reeds, or making reeds.

**MS:** So he would test the reeds?

**JD:** Yes, and when he made reeds, he could make a reed almost to the point of being done before he ever played on it, even for the first time.

**MS:** Did you ever learn anything from that? Did he ever tell you about the reed?

**JD:** No. During my period, none of us played on any of his reeds. He always played on our reeds. Occasionally he made comments (well, he almost always made comments), but occasionally he would make some kind of comment that would help. I learned, as time went on, that just watching him making reeds was really not very helpful, or at least not for me. I was pretty dumb about making reeds.

**MS:** Hard to believe...

**JD:** Well O.K., but I was. I never made a reed in my life before I came to Curtis. My teachers had always given me reeds. Suddenly, I had to make a reed. I'd never thought about it. I had never done anything about it. It was all a great mystery to me and remained so for a long time.

**MS:** So, he wasn't very helpful?

**JD:** No, not in the reed situation, no.

**MS:** How long were your lessons in length, usually?

**JD:** They were generally an hour long. At the Curtis Institute, they would be the specified length. At the studio, if you played everything you had and you finished early, that was the end of the lesson. If you were late you went on until you finished. He was not looking at his watch all the time. At the school he was because kids were waiting, but at the studio there was no regimentation.

**MS:** How come he occasionally taught at the studio?
JD: He wanted to make reeds. The first year I was at Curtis there were 13 oboe students. Six of us had a two hour lesson together. We each had 20 minutes.

MS: So you all watched each other?

JD: Yes. We all sat there while one student played. Actually it was an extremely educational process, because we learned from other people's mistakes. We learned a lot of things that may not have come to us if we had private lessons. The second year there was a big fall out. After the first year many left. It began to dribble down so that in my fourth year there were, I think, four of us.

MS: Did he do that because there were so many oboists, or do you think he consciously thought it was educationally good thing to do?

JD: No, it was kind of ridiculous. We had 13 oboists and there were not many more violins in the Curtis in those days; therefore, 6 students were together for 2 hours. The other students had 40 minute lessons. He was probably just told he had so many hours to get us all in and that's the way it worked. As I said, a number of them left after the first year and from then on it was private lessons.

MS: What etudes did you go through? Barret, Ferling?

JD: Barret, Ferling. Brod and then at the very end, I did some Gillet.

MS: Did he ever discuss breathing in lessons?

JD: Do you mean where to take a breath or how to breath?

MS: How to breath.

JD: No. How else can you breath? You take a breath and you blow.

MS: Well, nowadays it seems that some people are obsessed with breathing.

JD: I know, they have all these theories, but I think most of it is a lot of baloney. How do you breathe?

MS: Take in a breath.
**JD**: Take in a big breath and blow. Obviously there are some kids who take in a little tiny bit, but they soon realize they have to take in a deep breath and do something...sweat a little.

**MS**: Did classroom instruction differ from private lesson instruction? Did he treat you any differently?

**JD**: No. If anything, he was worse in classroom than he was in private. He had a sadistic streak in him and he loved to humiliate kids, humiliate one in front of another. The lessons, when six of us were together for the whole year, was what they call “a baptism of fire.”

**MS**: Was that his teaching style, or was that just his personality over all?

**JD**: Both. He was a very domineering man. I understand that his teacher was that way, so he was imitating his teacher. I like to think, of course you might disagree with me, that I was tough and demanding, but I don’t think I ever went out of my way to humiliate anybody.

**MS**: No.

**JD**: Well, he did, and we all had the same first name, “Stupid.” You Stupid. He was brutal, but the wonderful thing about it was that after you finished four years of that, there wasn’t a conductor in the world that scared you.

**MS**: Did he communicate well though?

**JD**: Yes, Yes. That was his great thing. He was the only man I ever heard who explained music to us.

**MS**: In terms of phrases?

**JD**: Everything about music. He just seemed to have an understanding about the structure of music, how music was supposed to sound and how it was played. In other words, he could take a “dumbbell” or a “turkey” or whatever you want to call it, and make them play well. Of course, in our youth and naïve approach, we thought he could make
them play well forever. He could, however, make them play well as long as he was there telling them what to do, but when they would go out and try to do something by themselves, they would be back to square one. He could work with some kid who was not good and show him how to play a phrase that was very beautiful, and it would be startling. Then, if the kid had to do something by himself, if it was somebody that was not talented, he didn’t seem to know what to do.

**MS:** How did he get his ideas across so well?

**JD:** He got them across so well because there was never any structure in any of his lessons or his classes. You had four pieces and you did not necessarily go through all four pieces. You could spend the whole lesson doing 8 measures, and you would never get beyond that if things were not happening. In the orchestra classes or woodwind classes, it was the same thing. He wanted to make sure you understood and you were going to stay on that until the two hours were up. To give you an example, we had woodwind classes with him. We played one concert a year. We started at the end of September and in April we played a concert. You could have, during the concert, dumped a bucket of ice water over each one of us playing, and we would have kept right on playing and playing well.

**MS:** Are there many teachers now, from what you see, that work with their students the same way?

**JD:** No, no. The whole thing has changed so dramatically. Now you see, particularly with our experience with that stupid academic world. You start out at the beginning of the semester and they tell you you’ve got to play a recital, and you’re not going to get your grade if you haven’t played a certain number of compositions. I didn’t have anything like that. I never played an orchestra excerpt or a solo for my teacher. Because, his point was, and I think it was pretty well demonstrated in all his pupils, you learn how to play music and then you just apply that to anything you have to play. I was talking to some students in Aspen trying to make them realize this. For instance I’d say,
"We’re going to do the Brahms Violin Concerto." Open up the beginning of the Barret book and compare it to the oboe part of the Brahms Violin Concerto. The Brahms isn’t as complicated as 80% of those little melodies. If you learn how to play those melodies, the Brahms Violin Concerto isn’t going to be any harder or as hard. That was his point. He never said this, but it became obvious. If a teacher has the patience, he or she could take a student and teach him how to be a top flight oboe player and never do anything except play long tones, arpeggios, scales, broken thirds, intervals. You can turn those all around to teach all sorts of things. Everybody thinks you just learn the scale so they honk up and down the scale and they learn the scale. Well, you can learn the scale and you can also practice how to get a beautiful attack on a low B natural, and how to make a beautiful line going up and down, and while playing broken thirds how to play in between the notes, and to learn about when to take a breath, and to practice scales with inflections—down, up, down. You can learn all those things, and how to make a line by playing long tones and ninths. That was his approach. It took anybody that was with him a while to catch on. In some instances, in my case, it was very frustrating, because I never had more technique in my whole life than I did the first day I came to the Curtis, before I even had a lesson with him. I had all kinds of technique, but I didn’t know anything about music. So the first two years I spent just doing these things which I thought, “Oh God.” I could do a Gillet study and there I was doing do, re, mi (slow, with inflections he demonstrates), and learning how to make reeds. Well, as time went on, I began to understand what it was all about, but the first year in particular, it was just excruciating. I just thought “I will never be able to play oboe, and if this is what it is, I don’t want to do it.” As time went on, I began to understand his methods. He explained everything about music, but he never explained anything about what he was doing or what he asked you to do. It was “Do it.”

**MS:** So, he never told you the purpose?
JD: No, there was never any explanation such as, “You will understand as time goes on.” It was just “do it.”

MS: Tabuteau was said to have used many analogies in his teaching career. Would you consider this part of his teaching style?

JD: Yes, yes, most definitely.

MS: Do you have any examples?

JD: Well just the sort of things you heard me say for years. He talked about inflections, impulses and lines. I think I probably use a lot more even than he did, because I find that a very effective way of getting ideas across. He certainly was the man that made me think about that to start with.

MS: Would you say Tabuteau revolutionized American wind playing?

JD: Oh, definitely.

MS: Why?

JD: First of all, with his ability to explain to people how to play and what to do. The proof of the pudding. The charter of the Curtis Institute was a school to develop solo performers, which meant piano, violin, voice and some cello. The orchestra was not considered the focus of the school. The school started in 1924, and it took a few years for things to gel. By the time the school began to function in all ways, it was the beginning of the Depression. I’m sure you kids have seen all the TV things about the Depression. They were pretty scary days for everybody. You could not find a job anywhere. The word began to get around that when there were openings for wind players in American Orchestras, the conductors all came to the Curtis. Here were kids like me. I was 19 years old when there was an opening for first oboe in Pittsburgh and first oboe in the Philadelphia summer season. Now you can imagine that there were plenty of older men with a lot of experience around that were playing. I say there were plenty- there were some that would have liked very much to have those jobs. First oboe in Minneapolis, Angelucci;
first flute was Opava from Curtis; and Sanucci, bassoon, from Curtis-Washington D.C., small orchestras Indianapolis, and Detroit. These young kids get hired everywhere. They didn’t get hired for any sentimental reasons. They got hired very simply because we played better than the other people around, and that was certainly all Tabuteau’s doing. Sam Barber said to me on a number of occasions, “Everything I learned from Curtis I learned from Tabuteau and Vengerova, my piano teacher.” Jorge Bolet said the same thing to me, “I learned all my music from Tabuteau.” During the days when I was the director of the Institute, I had a series called The Faculty Commemorative Series and I had a “Tabuteau day” which lasted for the weekend. People came from all over the country, not just oboe players. All kinds of people on all instruments saying, “This is the man who taught me more music than anybody else.”

**MS:** I read that some musicians were brought over from Europe to play in the Boston Symphony, for example. So why was Tabuteau the teacher that stood out?

**JD:** First of all, he stood out as a player and then he had this gift of teaching. When you consider at the Curtis he taught oboe, woodwind ensemble, orchestra class, and then for the last 12 or 14 years that he was at Curtis, he also taught the strings. He had a string class.

**MS:** Is that something he wanted to do?

**JD:** That started during the War when I was away, so I don’t know. But, he started the string class. You hear the men in the Guarneri quartet talk about how the string class was the greatest experience at the Curtis. There are a lot of them around in this country who were in that class. As I said, I don’t know how that came about. In those days, Zimbalist, who was a great violinist, was the Director of the school.

**MS:** So Tabuteau was apparently a better teacher than their teachers?

**JD:** Well, I don’t know -his thing was that he taught music-I don’t know if he could have told them what to do with the right arm. I don’t know if he was able to do that. He
started out life as a violinist as a little kid. He played violin for a while. Obviously, not very long, but he had some idea about violin. It was the way he explained music to the kids that transcended whether you played the clarinet or violin or any other instrument. He even had an orchestra for a couple of years during the war that did broadcasts.

**MS:** How did Tabuteau go about teaching you phrasing?

**JD:** Well essentially- you want me to repeat all this stuff?

**MS:** You don’t have to go in depth.

**JD:** He started with the Barret, with the very simplest structures, and he explained how the music went from this point to this point, and then instead of playing the notes, you play the line...and you put your notes on that line.

**MS:** How much do you think he inherited from Gillet?

**JD:** That’s a good question. It’s a question that I don’t know if anybody alive today will be able to answer. Did you get to visit Minsker yet?

**MS:** No, that will be in two weeks. I did read that Laila Storch wrote he did attribute some of his ideas to Gillet.

**JD:** Well, I never heard about that until the end of his life. He never mentioned Gillet during my student days. Minsker is one of your prime sources, and he is certainly the last living one who goes way back. He connected with Tabuteau 7 or 8 years before I did. He left the Curtis in 33, or something like that. He knows as much about that as anybody. We’ve often talked about that, but there is no way of really knowing except to say look at Gillet’s pupils. Among the pupils who came to America was Longy in Boston. They are beginning to release some of the very old Boston recordings made before 1917, and I’m looking forward to this, as a matter of fact I think some of them have already come out. I knew Longy’s daughter very, very well. She was a teacher at the Curtis Institute when I was a student there. She said, “My father never made any records.” I could hardly believe that, but she was very adamant about it. I’ve discovered recently that it was not exactly
true. There were some records made, now maybe she didn’t know about it, it’s very possible. She was a little girl. There are some records, and someone has told me that there are some things that have recently come out. I’ve heard one of them where there’s just a few notes of the oboe, but it sounds like it could be the “real stuff,” as the kids at the Curtis used to say. Then there was Gillet, who played with the Boston Symphony for many years, who was Gillet’s nephew. We always thought him to be a very ordinary oboe player. He had phenomenal technique, but a sound that was just—I don’t know—it was hard to believe the two were pupils of the same man. There was a man in Chicago that I heard a couple of times whose name was Bartell. He was also nothing particular. Tabuteau seemed to be something very special. There were a couple in France I heard who were quite good, one by the name of Bleuzet, and one by the name of Morrell, who really played. They didn’t quite have the sound, but they played, and there was something very beautiful about the style.

**MS:** So, he never talked to you about his development?

**JD:** No, no. Except at the end of his life. He was a very vain man, and he began thinking, “I want to make sure I get credit.” So, he used to blow up every once in a while and say, “If I hear any words when I’m in my grave I’m going to come back and haunt you kids,” and he’d say, “I owe everything to my teacher—everything to my teacher,” as if to say, “You owe everything to your teacher.” I never heard any of that until toward the end of his life. When I was a student, there was never any mention of his teacher’s name.

**MS:** Or when you played with him?

**JD:** Well, yes, but that was very different. When you’re playing in an orchestra with someone, you’re almost living together. There was a lot of conversations, things we talked about or heard about, that I never would have if I had just been one of the students, no matter what my career had been. John Miniker was the one who had the longest period
with him. John Minsker was with him almost 20 years. He left in January, 1954, and Mr. Minsker joined the orchestra in 1936, so that was 18 years.

**MS:** Did Tabuteau talk about the number system with you?

**JD:** He never talked about it, he just did it. Well you have the *Art of the Oboe* recording.

**MS:** I have the new one.

**JD:** Do you have the old one too?

**MS:** I don’t own it, but I’ve heard it.

**JD:** Some of it’s the same and some is different, but it’s all from the same source. It’s about dynamic progression, but it can also be about intensity without necessarily being dynamic. In other words, you can be going towards a peak, but it’s quiet. It’s an intensity, a coloring you might say. It, in itself, was kind of a paradox in that it was very limited, but, at the same time, it opened up worlds of ideas. It was very limited in that you go from 1 to 9 or 10. As he used to point out, in English you can’t do that without having the number seven with two syllables, because you see in French (he counts in French) you have to go to 14 before you get to two syllables. So you could say those things quickly in his language. He used to get upset because he had to go 1,2,3,4,5,6, seven...

**MS:** You think he developed it in his mind in French then?

**JD:** I don’t know. Did you get the Capet book?

**MS:** Yes.

**JD:** Well, he talks about distribution of the bow. Did you get it in the English translation?

**MS:** I got it in German and translated parts.

**JD:** Well, I can’t even remember, it’s been so many years, but I should get it out and look at whether the distributions were ever equated with the musical sense. I mean the distribution as to where you should be on the bow according to the technical execution of
the passage. But, did that ever equate with the musical execution? In other words, did he ever equate certain numbers on the distribution on the bow with inflections that equated with the musical structure? I’ve forgotten to be honest with you.

**MS:** I seem to remember it being some kind of equation with color depending on which part of the bow you were using.

**JD:** O.K. You could say he got this idea there, or he *could* have gotten the idea there.

**MS:** So he spoke to you about this book then?

**JD:** He spoke to me about this book more towards the end of his career in Philadelphia.

**MS:** Did he say then that this is a book you should get and read? (See Appendix A)

**JD:** Yes, he gave me his copy.

**MS:** Did Tabuteau use this numbering system to teach inflections also?

**JD:** Yes, with everybody.

**MS:** Can you think of any specific exercises he gave you outside of etudes?

**JD:** Scales. You mean for inflections or numbers?

**MS:** Numbers.

**JD:** With scales it was very simple. Down, up, down, up, slowly. Try to make it sound like you were playing a down-bow or an up-bow. Yes, that went on forever.

**MS:** What have you carried on into your own teaching that you learned from Tabuteau?

**JD:** Well everything, everything. I owe everything to my teacher. However, there are a lot of things I’ve talked to you guys about that are my own ideas. He got his ideas from his teacher, and his teacher got his ideas from his teacher. Even if it’s not the ideas themselves, but something gives you an idea of what to do. I don’t think anybody just springs whole out of nothing.
MS: Do you think that Tabuteau's ideas had a positive effect on everyone because he was a good communicator?

JD: Yes, he was a powerful communicator. Very convincing—great storyteller. He had the flare for acting. He put on a good show. He was a fantastic storyteller. He could be in the presence of anybody, Toscanini, or Stokowski, or anybody. If there was a group and he was there, before ten minutes went by, he would be the center of attraction telling stories.

MS: What would you say was the single most important musical concept that you took from Tabuteau?

JD: I couldn't answer that. There were so many things. I couldn't answer the single thing. If you start thinking about the different things and you started to separate them, it's like saying you've got to come down to one that can't be eliminated. They all evolved into a total, into an entity which is pretty hard to chop up. I can chop it up when I'm teaching, but I believe I made it obvious, that even though we're discussing one particular thing, it's related to the other things we do. It's all a related situation.

MS: When you were in school and talked to other students, did he teach everyone the same way?

JD: As far as I know, yes.

MS: Everyone has different problems though, would he take them aside and work on that specific problem?

JD: Well, to a certain degree. You have to understand one thing. In the early days there were so few oboe players anywhere. This is a bit of an exaggeration, but it was almost like taking in warm bodies. If a kid came and wanted to study the oboe, he just accepted him. I don't know if he was being honest with us when he said it, but I think he believed he could take anybody and make them play. As I told you, I realized later that only to a degree this was true. He could make them play in the room. But as far as them
absorbing this and being able to go out and do well on their own, it didn’t work. Some had it, and some did not have it.
CHAPTER 5
INTERVIEW WITH MASON JONES

MJ: I came to Curtis in Philadelphia in 1936. This was right after high school. In the middle of my second year I joined the Philadelphia orchestra. I never even graduated from Curtis.

MS: How old were you then?

MJ: Seventeen or eighteen. My orchestra conductor was Fritz Reiner. Tabuteau taught woodwinds, and he also had an orchestra class. Anton Horner was my horn teacher.

MS: Where are you originally from?

MJ: Hamilton, New York, which is in upstate New York. I got a post card from the personnel manager of Philadelphia Orchestra asking if I was interested in auditioning. I went to my teacher first. He said, "Yes, I recommended that you do." That's the way it all started.

MS: How many years did you play in Philadelphia?

MJ: Counting War years I played 47 years. I had four years from 1942-1946 in the United States Marine Band in Washington during the war. That was my War duty.

MS: How did you like that?

MJ: I made a lot of friends. Musically it was nothing. It is a service band, so you do a lot of public service like funerals and parades. My colleagues were wonderful. I was able to live off the base and raise a family. It was hard to come back to the orchestra after playing band music because you are playing three times too loud in the band.
As a student, I hardly missed a Philadelphia Orchestra concert. You could get rush seats for the upper gallery. I used to reserve seats a week ahead of time so I never missed a concert. I met John de Lancie at Curtis and talked with him a lot and still do about his teacher, Tabuteau. He was just a God to everybody at school.

**MS:** Did you actually take a class with Tabuteau?

**MJ:** I had woodwind class with him where we did things like quintets and Mozart and Beethoven piano quintets. He also had what I call an orchestra class, which had everything but strings, and he conducted. He would play standard repertoire, the big pieces. He had a pianist that would play along with the score and play the string parts so there was not too much of a gap in-between. He conducted all the woodwinds and brasses. Later on, after I left, he conducted a string class. A lot of string players were very fascinated. Tabuteau had a system of numbers which is like phrasing. Of course string players are always concerned with bow technique, but he would dwell on phrasing. It was something new to them so it was a very popular class. He also had a great sense of humor to go along with it.

In our woodwind class he had three-hour sessions. That is a lot of time to keep students going, even with a break in the middle.

**MS:** Can you describe a typical class?

**MJ:** He would start off, especially with the freshman, with soft attacks and drives and playing on a line. There was hardly any technique, just wind production. Then he did the exercise of blowing on a light piece of paper and keeping it suspended at a certain angle to work on exact breath control. He had everybody play this soft attack as if coming in from nothing, which is very hard to do as you know. He would always say, “3, 2, 1.” On 1 you came in and it had to be very smooth. Some people can do it and some people can not. I was a little on the timid side, but I was always very conscientious and serious. I recall once we were playing some French quintet, and it wasn’t much of a horn part. I had a lot
of rests to count and then I had to come in with a little fanfare. I did it and it was fine.
Tabuteau stopped and said, "You were very good to wait patiently for your entrance and
then come in and do it so well." I was a light player in those days. I liked playing with the
woodwinds, because you never had to force, so he and I got along beautifully. He was
very hard on untalented students. If somebody had a weak point he would zero in on it.
He was strict about it.

**MS:** Was he harder on oboe players than on other instruments?

**MJ:** Not necessarily. He was hard on bassoon players because they had reeds. He
did not have much patience with bombastic or "show-off" playing. He used to describe
some of the horn players he played with that would play arpeggios and push out the low
notes rather vulgarly. He did not approve of that at all. He said they should be practicing
their soft entrances and drives. His idea of musicianship was being able to control your
instrument. There was a recital at the end of the year. We spent a lot of time on the
Beethoven *Piano Quintet*, even the introduction to it. You have 64th notes and 32nd notes,
and you had to make the difference between these rhythms. He just went over and over
and over it. He was very particular about that. As I said, he had three-hour classes, so
whenever he stopped, he would analyze something right down to the core. It wasn't a
question of going over the music and then good-bye. He got involved in it.

**MS:** How many pieces did you get through a year?

**MJ:** Not very many. He would bring contemporary pieces in sometimes and we
would read through them, but he was preparing for the recital mostly. We did no more
than 10 pieces a year.

I had a woodwind class at Curtis and I used the Andraud quintet books. There are
standard pieces in there. The first couple of weeks we did one or two pieces from the
book. Then we did a couple more pieces from the book and one of the players asked,
"Are we just going to read from this book and not prepare for a recital?" I said, "Yes, we
are going to read through these.” Now the students will play Ligeti and Jean Francaix, anything. Of course now the students have all the recordings, all the information, and all the books.

**MS:** Do you think you should have read more music when you studied with Tabuteau?

**MJ:** No. I think what he did was absolutely perfect, because he made a musician out of you.

He had a blackboard and once in a while he asked someone to come to the blackboard and write a composition. He had the staves there and you would have an eighth-note theme, for example. He would bring his numbers into this for the phrasing, and he would digress into all sorts of things like playing on a line and the numbers. It was all fundamental. The guy at the blackboard would finally make a whole phrase. He and Tabuteau would work it out together and make a little composition. He loved to solfège. He slogget everything, trained in the French school of course.

He did not want to have the typical loose, wide oboe sound. I say typical because in those days, there was a lot of that around. There is not so much of that loose sound anymore; although I think a guy like Holliger, who is a terrific musician, plays with a very loose reed. Tabuteau always strove for a more well-centered sound. On the horn I had a nice-centered sound because I never overblew or spread. He liked that tiny sound. I learned to expand when I got to the Philadelphia Orchestra.

In his orchestra classes and string classes he would do a Brahms Symphony. He was great at taking the theme and demonstrating with the up and down, and down and up impulses physically, visually, as well as orally. In these drives he would talk about “the loop” and I don’t know what the loop meant and nobody I talked to knew what he meant by the loop. It’s when you get to the top of the phrase and you are going to come back down again and there’s some kind of loop that occurs. Have you ever heard of that term?
MS: Yes, Mr. de Laacie referred to it as the “loop the loop.” The way I understand it is, as you go toward the top of the long tone, you are increasing your intensity. Once you get to the peak of that intensity you suspend your air (like a diver jumping off a diving board at the second before they start falling). The loop occurs at the moment your intensity has reached its peak and you shimmer on that note and then begin to relax in intensity back down the long tone.

MJ: Tabuteau had the ability as he was going to the low register to keep the intensity up. He was always a little afraid of the low register because of the intonation. Now oboe players don’t seem to have that fear anymore.

MS: Would you say that Tabuteau was a good communicator?

MJ: Yes. He always spoke with a French accent which was kind of guttural. He was hard to understand sometimes. He would get quite emotional. He would say, “Do you understand my boy?” and he would come right at you. You would have to say yes. If you said no then he would have to go through the whole routine again. He was a little impatient, but he had a terrific sense of humor and used to laugh uproariously. He loved to smoke also, and he smoked at the break. Even during conducting a class, he would have a cigarette in the reed cane. He used a tube of cane for a cigarette holder. We would notice that the cigarette would start to burn the end of it and get warm to him. He would fuss with it, and the cigarette would fly all over the place.

MS: This was during class?

MJ: Yes. Then at the break with the kids he would talk politics. He would talk about what was going on with the war coming and French attitudes and what was in Life Magazine. He was very sociable that way.

The orchestra class, the one eliminating strings, was very nice. We had a pianist, Jorge Bolet. He was a very fine pianist who died maybe five years ago. He was a student
at Curtis who was a very fine technician and a very good reader. He would read string parts for three hours and do a fine job.

As I say, I came into the orchestra very young. I had to learn the notes. Of course, I knew a lot of the pieces, but I had to really pay attention to the notes. I played third horn for one season and then moved to sharing the first horn job for half a season and then was moved over to first. When I was third horn, the fourth horn was Anton Horner, my teacher. Here was Tabuteau and Kincaid in front of me and guest conductors coming in, but I was concerned mostly with looking at the music and getting the right notes and the right transposition, and occasionally looking at the conductor. Actually, I looked at the conductor a lot. I really wasn't aware of people around me. I knew the orchestra was great and I was sitting right in the middle of it, but I was literally counting bars and rests.

**MS:** You did not have the experience of having played all the pieces then.

**MJ:** Yes. Speaking of looking at the conductor. With Reiner, I kept my eyes glued to him. He was a guy with a very small beat. I looked at him so much that once he stopped and pointed right at me and said, "Don't look at me so much." Once with Muti in New York, we were doing something with chorus and harpsichord. Our assistant conductor was playing harpsichord. I knew Muti was going to want to go into the hall and listen to the balance. I did not have a part to play and was sitting there when I got a funny feeling that he might ask me to start the orchestra so he could go out in the hall and listen. This piece had an upbeat to it, and I kept wondering how he would start it, with one prep or none. He was going to go through it first and then go listen. I kept my eyes glued to see how he was going to start it. He did not start it. Finally he said, "Why are you looking at me?" I did not say why. I said, "Fritz Reiner said the same thing." He laughed about it.

Looking at the conductor is great, but when you have bars rest and have an entrance, at the last moment most players look at the music. Ormandy did not like that. He liked to have your eyes when you had an entrance to play. I see classical music on television, and
very few of the players are looking at the conductor. They are immersed in the printed notes. Stokowski used to like a combination of looking at the music and then looking at the conductor, sort of a quick motion back and forth, so that you were in contact all the time. Then you have a conductor like Karajan who never looked at anybody anyway. His eyes were closed most of the time.

You used the words Tabuteau and Kincaid synonymously because they are great musicians and they are together. I was never aware that there was any style of Tabuteau’s that permeated the whole group, except I know that by people listening to him and playing with him, you sense the kind of sound that is required. He had a perfect sense of rhythm. A dotted figure has got to be a dotted figure and a triplet a triplet. He had a very sound rhythmic sense. On certain pieces he would be a real gypsy. If something suited him, he would be very free about it. Stokowski never interfered with that at all, because he liked the individuals to have all their individual traits. Along with all this, Tabuteau had a terrific color. He developed a sound which was not nasal or spread, but very concentrated. Tabuteau used to play down a lot, like a clarinet player. He used to hunch his shoulder up on certain high notes.

A remarkable thing about his career is that he did not use an assistant. He played all the notes; whereas, in the horns, my teacher insisted on having an assistant to play the tuttis. It takes such a toll on your lip to smash it on the fortissimos and then suddenly play something very beautiful and sweet. Your endurance gives out too.

**MS:** Tabuteau was said to have used many analogies when he taught. Do you recall him using them?

**MJ:** If you played something and it did not have direction or line or meaning, he would say, “That’s dead. You’ve got to do something. It’s just like the leg of a piano which can’t make any music. You’ve got to do something with the phrase to make it interesting to people.” He would talk about being sick and using the number system to
play while you’re sick, which gave intensity to the phrase. He said when you are feeling well and happy, you’re happy to play and it shows in your playing. If you’re not feeling well, to avoid letting down, use this number system. The number system was kind of a game to him. I think he devised it not only to help with the phrasing of the music, but I thought it was a game to him, a method of teaching. He used to say he had a lot of fun with it.

**MS:** Did he ever say where he got the idea of the number system from?

**MJ:** I think it was his own.

He had a great difficulty with intonation, because he thought everybody in the orchestra was against him, because they play high. He would give a low A until we finally had to get a machine. Ormandy always tuned low. Stokowski always wanted a low A. We had this electronic machine which came on from nothing. It would permeate the whole backstage, and it was disturbing because it would permeate your head. People did not like it at all. Tabuteau was always uncomfortable with the tuning. He used to complain about trumpets pitch with their mutes. He was always interested with balance, and if he felt he was being inundated, he would go and tell you. I remember once we were doing the *Die Fledermaus Overture*. I come in with a D above middle C, and I was playing with a nice tone. He did not want it that loud because it covered the start of his phrase so he came and told me personally. He never interfered with other people’s playing unless the pitch bothered him, but he was critical about the interpretation of various conductors. He was quite outspoken at intermission about that.

**MS:** To the conductor?

**MJ:** Yes, about his choice of tempo or something like that.

The origin of the Mozart *Concertante* was interesting. It was on our trip in 1940 to and from South America on a boat. Coming back from South America Sol Schoenbach and I were at the same table (I think for lunch) with Stokowski and the recording engineer.
Stokowski was always one to delve out information from you. He liked you to say things he might learn from. He said to me, "What are the horn concerti that you play?" I mentioned the four Mozart, the two Strauss, Weber and a couple of other things. I said, "There is a piece by Mozart which has one of each of the woodwinds, without flute, which is a nice solo vehicle." He did not say anything. He might have known about it, but that Fall it was on our desk. That is the one that musicologists now say is not authentic. It's kind of disillusioning. They say that they have the parts for the other one which is quite a bit different. You notice that the slow movement is the same key as the other movements? That is not like Mozart. It is Mozartian in feeling. We had Tabuteau, Schoenbach, Jones, and Portnoy. Stokowski programmed it, and we did not fuss a lot about the interpretation. There was some discussion about tempo and whether the variations are more important that the theme. There is a place near the end where Tabuteau played two sixteenths, and I played a quick grace note, and only I'm aware of it. We never did discuss it, and you don't notice it unless you really listen to that passage.

**MS:** How much did you rehearse that Mozart?

**MJ:** I'd say only once. He never fussed and had to do things over and over like he did in class. In the class he would analyze every little passage.

**MS:** Why do you think Tabuteau stood out above other teachers of that generation.

**MJ:** I'm not very familiar with the other players and teachers of that generation. He seemed to have the biggest reputation. I think it's because at Curtis it's all scholarship and all by audition, and the best players gravitate towards it. They are the ones that get the jobs.

**MS:** How else, besides using the number system, did Tabuteau teach playing musically?

**MJ:** If you made a rhythmic mistake he would tell you immediately. If you got overboard with a high note, he would say, "You are not an opera singer, and you should
not exaggerate like that.” His phrasing was a way of having control of the entrance, mentally going to the high point, and keeping the line always.

**MS:** Did he explain it to you in that way?

**MJ:** He wouldn’t explain it note by note or measure by measure, except this number system which he enjoyed. I don’t know if it meant so much to any of us. I think it was something he just enjoyed doing.

**MS:** Tabuteau was said to have compared wind control to string playing? Did he ever talk about that with you?

**MJ:** Yes. A string player has to have a very light arm and control all parts of the bow. The same is for wind playing. You have to have control of the wind at all times.

His big moments were in pieces like the Brahms, Violin Concerto. Especially in the high register. He would get very sweet and intense. Of course he did the Ibert, Escales, very well.

**MS:** Did he have you play scales thinking inflections?

**MJ:** No.

If there was any rushing, he would stop and analyze the phrase to find the resting points if it was not all connected. If you had a pickup (16th, 16th to a quarter), he would use numbers 1,1,2. (Same numbers are not connected) This would give it a send off that bounced a certain way and mentally slows you down. 1 is the beginning and the next 1,2 are connected. The 1’s were not equal. There is a certain bounce to the second 1 going to the 2.

**MS:** When you walked into your first class of this, did you just have to sit in and catch on, or did he spell it out for the new people who came in?

**MJ:** You had to learn, but he would take everyone through this very soft attack saying, “3, 2, 1,” coming in on nothing. We used to laugh because some people tried to
come in with no tongue attack. You need a little bit of a puff with your tongue. The students would talk about oboe players who “come in on nothing.”

Tabuteau had a round, penetrating, compact sound. I think it spread to the bassoon and clarinet players. Perhaps not so much with the flute. Kincaid and Tabuteau used to have a lot of fun phrasing things together in a certain way. There is a little passage in the slow movement of [Dvorak’s] New World Symphony where they would fool around with putting the impulse in a different place.

When the concert was over on any tour, he was always the first to play poker. We mostly traveled by train. DeFulvio, the second oboe player usually played. He was always impatient about the dealing. I guess he had to win, but he was pretty good. He never talked shop. The musicians never talked shop when you are traveling, unless it was some big catastrophe or some big glorious moment. The always wanted to play cards, either hearts, bridge or poker.

**MS:** Would you say Tabuteau revolutionized American Wind playing?

**MJ:** That is a big statement. He did oboe playing with the sound, reeds, and students. The basics are the same with every school of playing.

**MS:** In your woodwind classes, did you play mostly quintets or did you play octets and such?

**MJ:** We did a combination of octets and quintets. He mostly stuck to the classics, and occasionally a composer would write something and we would go through it. There was nothing like the Schoenberg Wind Quintet or anything like that. Nothing that far out.
CHAPTER 6

INTERVIEW WITH JOHN KRELL

**MS:** What years did you study with Tabuteau?

**JK:** 1938-1941.

**MS:** What classes did you take with him?

**JK:** He had two wind ensembles. I was in the beginning ensemble to start, and then I got in the advanced ensemble. He had an orchestra class once a week. George Bolet was there playing the score. He [Tabuteau] would do the programs that were going to be done the following Saturday. We would practice the music and then go hear the concert which was terrific.

**MS:** Were the wind ensemble classes large ensembles?

**JK:** They were various small ensembles. Occasionally he would do the Strauss *Serenade* or a piece like that.

**MS:** Can you describe a typical woodwind class?

**JK:** First of all, we had a lot of respect and fear for Tabuteau. He was a presence there. He commanded an awful lot of attention and concentration, and he saw that he got it.

**MS:** How were the classes run? Would he speak about his musical concepts as you worked on pieces?

**JK:** With his oboe students he used to do an intensity drive.

**MS:** A long tone?
JK: Yes. Every time the kids came in they had to do an intensity drive from 1 to 10. He was not just talking about making a crescendo, this was intensifying the quality of sound. Having assigned these numbers, they scaled the whole crescendo. I remember John de Lancie playing, and the tone would come out of the orchestra’s fabric and then once he reached the top he would put a little vibrato on the note. It was like a flower blooming. Tabuteau used the number technique, and he insisted we memorize 1 1,2,3,4 2,3,4,5 3,4,5,6. He would describe a phrase in terms of numbers in order to meticulously scale what he wanted you to do. Sometimes we had people who were not very musical, and he would give them the numbers, and they would sound pretty good.

We would play different repertoire and he frequently rehearsed just the accompaniment.

MS: When you did the drives...

JK: He did not have us do the drives, he had the oboe students do the drives. He had us understand what the drives were, not in terms of crescendo or diminuendo, but in terms of quality change. He would put together a line of sound by means of numbers. He would tap out the intensity, sometimes on your shoulder 1 1,2,3,4. He would do that to demonstrate before you played and you were to do it when you played. It was a different concept of music, adding something horizontal to add motion to the music.

MS: How would you describe Tabuteau’s teaching style?

JK: Fear. Everybody was scared to death.

MS: Would you say he was a good communicator?

JK: Excellent. He was a real mime. He was full of appropriate similes. If someone played and they did not do what he wanted them to do, he would give a demonstration of someone walking along the street doffing his hat, but not getting anyplace. He would walk in place. He did a lot of physical things like that. Once he wanted us to play something very effervescent. After we were done he said, “I asked for champagne and you gave me
pluto water.” Pluto water was a laxative that is long since gone. There was fun, but you had to know when to laugh and when not to laugh. He used to threaten us. He would make fists and so forth. If you could play for him, you could play for anybody.

MS: In your opinion, are there many teachers now who still work with their students the same way that Tabuteau did?

JK: No. No too many people now quite understands what he did. I do know John de Lancie does. Tabuteau said, “Music is the friction between time and space.” He insisted as you played this 1 1,2,3,4. These notes are not all alike. They have different intensities, some notes are longer and there is a little rubato perhaps within the beat so that there is always motion.

MS: Tabuteau was said to have used analogies quite often. Would you consider this part of his teaching method?

JK: Yes, very much.

MS: Would you say that Tabuteau revolutionized American Wind playing?

JK: Yes, to quite a degree. He and Kincaid were very similar in there teaching. They had similar concepts. Tabuteau used down and up impulses. Kincaid would call the down a finishing note. Kincaid had some groupings, similar to using the numbers 1 1,2,3,4. 1 would be the finishing note and the second 1 would change the impulse and you would have an upbeat.

MS: Did Tabuteau ever explain to you how the down and up impulses related to wind playing and did you ever practice playing them?

JK: He related everything so much to the fiddle, to string playing, except he’d find string players always used the wrong bowing. He had all the impulses of bowing. He insisted there was a difference between a down bow and an up bow. He insisted we think about them. In the thinking you realized it was a lifting and a resolution. Downbeat, a lift to the next beat and then a resolution. That is the way it generally happened harmonically
also. There is a resolution on the beat notes. He scolded us for phrasing on the beat notes. 1. up, up, up, down. The impulses added something to the length of notes too. It’s in the mind, but it makes a difference in the playing.

**MS:** Tabuteau taught a string class at Curtis. Do you know why?

**JK:** No, but the string players were all very happy about it.

**MS:** Did Tabuteau use anything besides the number system to teach you phrasing?

**JK:** Impulses, up and down. He used a lot of similes.

**MS:** Would he work on one certain phrase for a long period of time?

**JK:** Yes. He would work on the melodic line and the accompaniment.

**MS:** How long would you spend on one piece?

**JK:** A long time. Frequently he would belabor a phrase to prove a point.

**MS:** How many of Tabuteau’s ideas do you think he got from his teacher, Gillet?

**JK:** I don’t know.

**MS:** Did he ever speak of Gillet in wind class?

**JK:** No.

There was a German treatise, they call it the “upbeat theory” by Hugo Riemann. There was something…it was always a mystery. Stokowski had something to do with that. It was hard to know whether Stokowski influenced Tabuteau or Tabuteau influenced Stokowski more. Stokowski had a horizontal idea of playing music.

**MS:** You said there is a treatise?

**JK:** Yes, I got ambitious and tried to find a copy of it, but did not (See Appendix D).

**MS:** Have you ever heard of a string technique book by Capet?

**JK:** No.

**MS:** I’m trying to find out if he spoke about any books that he got his ideas from?

**JK:** No, there was no reference.
**MS:** What can you say you carried over into your own teaching that you got from Tabuteau?

**JK:** Practically everything. I would have my students play a simple phrase all on one note and then add the notes. I played piccolo with Tabuteau in the orchestra and there was a unison between oboe and piccolo that had to be tuned. I knew I had to go to him and it was with great trepidation and fear. He was very receptive, but he gave me a long sermon on how to play an interval. You don’t finger the B until you brought the intensity up on the Fa (F) so you fill up all that space. Kincaid used to call it “relative intensity.” The wider the interval, the more you have to increase the leverage or “jumping board” on the lower note, and conversely coming down you subtract intensity. Mine was sort of a mix of different influences. Reiner was there too.

**MS:** When Tabuteau used his numbers did he generally do them in English or French?

**JK:** He spoke in accented English, sometimes French.

**MS:** Is there anything else you can remember about Tabuteau as a teacher?

**JK:** He was a great mind. He was great at demonstrations.

**MS:** Why do you think Tabuteau stood out as a great teacher above so many other teachers of that time?

**JK:** Because he was talking about quality. String players can change quality by moving to and from the bridge. With winds you superimpose a line. The notes don’t tell you what to do. Determine what the line is. It doesn’t have to be the right line, but it has to be a line, and you put the notes on the line by preparing the intervals. It is like a liaison in language. I copied something out of the *Wall Street Journal* a long time ago, instructing people how to give a speech.¹ They said the end of one word should be the beginning of the next. Tabuteau always used to say, “Play between the notes.” This is the same thing.

The end of one note becomes the beginning of the next note, which adds a continuity to the whole thing. Otherwise, you are just playing notes. A lot of it is getting somebody involved in what you’re doing. If others think there is a physical effort involved they are much more likely to respond. It is like listening to a fine vocalist singing a high note, there is an exertion there and people know that. I find it very difficult in listening to music to not get involved kinesthetically. Ormandy liked people to move. He sensed they were getting involved. Ormandy once said that the secret of conducting is not how you beat something, but what you do between the beats. Somehow very few people understand that. The secret is wind.

The facility of some of the young players now is awesome. There is a 16-year-old flutist now at Curtis who is an accomplished player. They learn early and from the right teachers. They have the technique all behind them like money in the bank. I worry that there is no one like Tabuteau around to spread the “Gospel,” so to speak. Many teachers don’t bother with it at all.

**MS:** Let’s hope that the students of people like you will pass it on to their students.

**JK:** Not enough is done on the basic things.

**MS:** Did he treat his oboe and non-ooboé students differently?

**JK:** No, I don’t think so. He told one of his oboe players who was sort of a straight guy, “Why don’t you grow a mustache, then you could be a little bit crooked.”

**JK:** There’s one chapter in my book, *Kincadiana*, which includes much of what I’m saying, but it’s rather hard to describe. I always promised myself that if I couldn’t play then I’d stop teaching, which I did. You can demonstrate something, but to put it down in words, it is frequently misunderstood. Moyse took some simple operatic arias and had students determine the line they were going to play. There is not necessarily one definitive interpretation.
MS: Tabuteau and Stokowski had similar ideas of phrasing?

JK: Yes, it's hard to say who influenced whom. I think Tabuteau and Stokowski were very strong. Tabuteau was more of a disciplined musician; whereas Stokowski was inclined to be more choral and sentimental in his approach. It was a completely new approach. That is what people do not realize. He established it with the Philadelphia Orchestra and with men like Tabuteau and Kincaid.

MS: How long were you in Philadelphia Orchestra?

JK: 30 years. I'm from Michigan. My father played flute, and I had no teacher until I entered Curtis. I went to the University and was the only one who played flute so they had me teach flute, and I did not know what I was doing. Kincaid came to the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1936 and was auditioning. Someone told me to audition for Curtis and play for Kincaid. I did not know what Curtis was. It was just dumb luck with me. In the meantime, I had to work very hard, because I did not have that early instruction. I was very lucky.

MS: Did Kincaid teach the same way as Tabuteau?

JK: Very close. He used what he called groupings. If you had running 16ths he would put a little bracket after the first note, extending to the first note of the next quarter. There are little subtle movements within the beats that you can not write down. I would frequently play the groupings with my students. They would play one grouping, and I would play the next.

MS: Most people have talked about the number system and inflections, but I wish I could have been a fly on the wall to see how he specifically taught.

JK: He would make up the numbers for a phrase. He would take a phrase out of what you were playing and put numbers to it. He would expect us to apply those numbers.

MS: Would you practice as a group doing that?
JK: Yes. He would divide it up and have you play personally. He would also do something else which is very useful for someone teaching ensemble.

When you are in a room with an ensemble it is rather hard to hear the balance. He would get us started playing something and then he would go outside and shut the door. You can hear the projection much better that way. Up close everything sounds loud.

Stokowski came to hear the orchestra while Ormandy was conducting. He said, “I went to the family circle up high and it’s the best place in the hall to listen. People forget that the stage is a reflector. Everything is reflected up. Besides you meet a much better class of people up there.”

MS: So when you walked in to the first class your first year, how would he go about teaching the new students what he meant by the number system?

JK: Much of it was you understanding what he was saying. He did not go through a big explanation of what he was doing. You had to catch on. He kept talking about the speed of wind, which amounted to pressure of wind, and intensity I suppose, amounted to adding overtones to your sound.

MS: So you just had to catch on?

JK: It was largely a matter of catching on and some people never did. You had to know when to laugh or he would scowl at you.

MS: No one asked him many questions then?

JK: No. Once I had my foot just slightly up. He said “I wish I had your nose between my knees when I was playing in the orchestra.” I looked too casual for him. There was a lot of concentration, and we were exhausted by the time it was over.

MS: He never talked all that much then?

JK: No. This was not an academic approach at all. This was playing, and we had seen him performing in the orchestra. We had great respect for the man. We also were very nervous to play for him and a fear of saying something wrong or doing something
wrong so we just listened. He decided what we would play, and we would rehearse it very thoroughly. Sometimes we never got farther than a few measures, because in the course of that he would explain what you had to do and would go into some of the intensity complications of his number system.
CHAPTER 7
INTERVIEW WITH ABBA BOGIN

AB: I came to Curtis in 1941. I had been a Curtis Institute extension student; in other words, they paid for my lessons with Mme. Isabella Vengerova in New York from age four to fourteen. When I was about fourteen, Vengerova said it was time for me to go to Philadelphia and take classes and chamber music as one is supposed to do. By then I was absolutely certain that I was going to conduct orchestras. It was very important to me that I become a conductor, as well as a pianist. Fritz Reiner was teaching conducting and he had an illustrious class of people: Leonard Bernstein, Lukas Foss, etc. When I came to school I asked the “powers that be” if I could audition for Reiner. They said that he was not seeing anybody, because they were cutting back the orchestra department. The boys were going to war, and there wouldn’t be enough woodwind and brass players left for an orchestra. All that would remain in the school were girls and boys who were under 18. There was to be no orchestra and no conducting department. I learned later on that Reiner also had some major differences with the administration and school. He never came back to Curtis again.

I was terribly disappointed at the time. The one thing that was of any interest to me in this area was Marcel Tabuteau’s woodwind class that met once a week. He had all the woodwind players. It was mandatory that they attend and they did all sorts of repertoire: Mozart pieces for winds, the Gounod Petite Suite, and so on. I started to attend the class every week.
MS: Just to sit in?

AB: Yes, just to sit in on the class. There was a balcony along the side where auditors could sit and listen. I had a very light schedule at school because I had gone through harmony, theory, and solfege, by taking exams when I came to school. I had had training in these subjects in New York when I was eleven, twelve, and thirteen. I had the time and I had the nerve, the chutzpah, to have a piano lesson on Wednesday and then to not practice for a couple of days. Tabuteau’s classes were on Thursday, which meant I did not really start practicing piano until the weekend to get ready for the next lesson. As a fourteen-year-old, you do as little as you have to do. When you get older, you realize that practicing should be done seven days a week if you are serious about it, but when you are a kid you see what you can get away with.

I started hanging around the Tabuteau classes and he seemed to like me, for whatever reason. He let me be a sort-of assistant.

MS: Did you ask him to be his assistant?

AB: I do not remember. It just sort of happened. He always liked an assistant. There were good reasons. First of all, the teacher got a little black box delivered to him which had index cards that were for each student, and he was supposed to mark attendance. Tabuteau had no eyes for that. He was too lazy to do that. Even in his oboe lessons he would take his oldest oboe student and make him the master of classes and let him mark attendance. In the woodwind classes there were twenty or twenty-five people involved, and he liked when somebody took over this terrible piece of nonsense for him. There were other things too, like him needing a pitcher of water. Very often the water was very clear and looked exactly like water, but it was pure unadulterated gin. If there was no gin, vodka would do.

One day the students decided they were going to give him a pitcher full of gin rather than water. I was in complicity. I was the guy who brought it out to Tabuteau. The
pitcher had been filled with gin. It was a nice brown jug, like a thermos, with the mirror inside. It looked silver inside. I put the pitcher and glass in front of him on the big music stand that he had. He worked for five minutes, stopped and poured his drink. We all knew what he was drinking. He picked it up, drank a little and continued working without saying a word. His eyebrows did not even flicker. He went through the whole pitcher and did not even start to get drunk. It had to be at least a pint of booze. When the class was over he said, “The time is up. I’ll see you next week, and Abba, that was a very good pitcher of water.” He walked out.

**MS:** I heard he also smoked quite a bit.

**AB:** Yes, he smoked in classes. In those days smoking was not considered something you don’t do. People smoked; it was very smart. He had this long cigarette holder.

Tabaneau had a standard series of jokes he always used. Once a year you could expect each of them. He would be conducting a piece in which the oboe player had a solo and if the oboist did not play it well, he would stop and say, “That is terrible, absolutely terrible! Who is your oboe teacher?” We heard that one annually. He was really very charming, and he was funny. He kept the students not just interested, but entertained.

Students enjoyed going to his classes because his logic and his way of explaining things was very interesting. One of the big things he used to talk about all the time is that you have to say something when you play a phrase. You cannot just play the notes. His idea was that if you have to repeat the same note five times there has to be a difference. He would explain that by saying 1, 1, 2, 2, 3 or something like that. The larger the number the more pressure, the more volume, or emphasis the note had. He would illustrate things in ways by saying, “You are not saying anything. I don’t care how you say it. There are people who speak languages much better than I do. I speak English terribly. They speak English beautifully, but they have nothing to say.” His illustration was that it is more
important, even if you have an accent, to say something worth hearing, than to worry about how clean and clear you can speak but not have anything to say. If someone would play a phrase improperly and not resolve it then he would stand up and say, “You are walking like this.” (He demonstrates one leg up and one down.) In other words, what he was trying to say is, “Drop the other shoe, and let the phrase resolve.” He would do all of these demonstrations compulsively. He would jump up and do something, everyone would laugh, and he would love it. Like a good comic, he liked to get a laugh.

I found it fascinating and I think most of the students also did. I started to hang around his classes. He talked to me and I told him I wanted to conduct, and I had come to Curtis with the intention of studying with Maestro Reiner. He said, “Next week the orchestra is on tour and I won’t be here. I want the class to happen and you have to conduct.” So, all of a sudden at fifteen, he made me a conductor. Eventually, after the Second World War ended and there was nobody to teach conducting, he took over the string classes as well.

**MS:** That is why he taught the string class?

**AB:** After the War [World War II] there was no one else around, and since the woodwind classes were so successful, Efrem Zimbalist asked him to do the string classes as well. Zimbalist was the Director of the school for many years. I don’t know whether he approached Tabuteau about the class, or Tabuteau approached him.

When I came back from the army, I immediately ran to Tabuteau’s classes and started doing what I was doing before, but at a much greater level. Instead of being eighteen, I was twenty-one. (I became Vengerova’s assistant also.) They made the classes mandatory when Tabuteau was on the road and I conducted most of those classes.

I think most of the people at school found it to be the focal point of the school, what Curtis was all about (and what the Philadelphia Orchestra was all about.) I think that
Tabuteau, in my opinion, was the pivot at both places. He was the center of the world. Everything revolved around him in terms of phrasing.

**MS:** Do you think that had to do with his personality?

**AB:** Yes, because of his personality, and his unbelievable musicianship. You can take somebody and teach him to practice this or the other. If he or she is bright and diligent then he or she will learn and get better. You can not teach basic intrinsic talent. The basic musical talent comes from God, if you believe in God, or from nature if you are an atheist. Call it what you want. One doesn’t know why a kid at four years old can hear a record and sing it back in the original key weeks later. My son and I have absolute pitch. One day when he was about six years old, we were driving in the car and I started singing, “Doe a deer, a female deer.” (Not starting on the pitch C). He said “Dad that is not right. It is, Doe a deer, a female deer.” (Starting on the pitch C natural) Every arrangement of this song you ever hear, from the original show on, is in C major. Where this talent comes from has no explanation- nor can we explain “perfect pitch.”

I think Tabuteau had to be, from when he was a little boy, a musical genius. The talent was just there. With it came a personality, training and a background. Everyone that played or sat down next to him was influenced by him. I know William Kincaid, principal flute of the Philadelphia Orchestra, told me, “My friend, Marcel, I learned more from him than anyone else.” I never heard a better flute player than Kincaid. He credited Tabuteau for an awful lot of his musical ideas. When a similar passage came up that Tabuteau had just played, one was influenced to play it that way. Even when he was sitting in the middle of the stage and not conducting, there were ways he influenced the rest of the orchestra across weeks, months and years.

There were some wonderful teachers in the school. William Primrose taught chamber music, and his classes were unbelievable. I studied with a marvelous piano teacher, Isabella Vengerova, but I would say that my primary influence in how I make and
play music probably comes more from Tabuteau than from any other instructor at the school. There are an awful lot of others that feel the same way. John Pintavalle, who is the concertmaster of City Opera Orchestra in New York, feels the same way. He is now probably in his middle sixties. He attended Tabuteau’s string classes. He will still tell you the same thing.

The way Tabuteau did it constituted a whole basis of teaching. There was a way of explaining things with his number system. If you were my piano student and I had no other way of explaining why a phrase should be played a certain way, using his kind of logic and methods, I think I could reach you better than with any other system that has been used. I’m not talking whether you use the third finger or the forth finger, or the wrist up or down. I’m talking about what you want to make of the music.

**MS:** What would a typical class be like? How would he get these ideas across?

**AB:** In a string class they would tune and then he might make one or two jokes. They would then start to play *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, for example. They would start, and he would stop them in the second or third bar. He would say, “What are you playing? What kind of music are you making?” Of course the kids would not answer. He would say it is not (Tabuteau sings it very square), but it is 1 1,2 1,2,2,3,4,5- 3 3,4 4,5,4,3,3,2. He would solfege with the numbers at speed. I cannot do it at his speed. He would say you have to go across the bar-line with the phrase, it’s the business I mentioned about the “dropping of the other shoe.” If the phrase starts with 1 1, 2, the first note is a statement, but all by itself. 1, 2 goes together. Then 1, 2, 2, 3, 4, 5 (*Eine Kleine* opening) goes together.
Figure 7.1: Opening section of Mozart’s, *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* marked with Mr. Bogin’s above explanation

Every phrase had a focal point that led over the bar. Sometimes he was not able to explain it in English easily, because English was not his primary language. He always managed to explain it in numbers and singing. He never, to my knowledge, ever had an oboe in his hand at classes. If somebody played it well he would say, “Play it again so they will hear it. That is what I want.”

**MS:** When you attended the first class and he was using the numbers...

**AB:** I was startled by it. In the beginning I did not know what in the hell he was talking about.

**MS:** So it was a matter of sitting there and you finally caught on?

**AB:** It did not take that long to catch on. If you went to a two-hour class, by the end of the first half-hour, you had a pretty good idea of what he was trying to get across.

Arturo Toscanini came to Philadelphia to conduct the Orchestra, and they did some recording as well. The school had made arrangements, whereby all the members of the Curtis Orchestra were invited to attend a Toscanini rehearsal in the Academy of Music. I asked if I could go because I revered Toscanini. I guess I did not have the good sense to believe in protocol. Since I knew the orchestra was going to be there around 9:30, I appeared at the stage door, even though I had not been invited. The librarian of the
orchestra was there with a check off list, and he was not about to let me in. Tabuteau arrived at about twenty minutes to ten. He said, "What are you doing here?" I said I wanted to get into the rehearsal but they wouldn't let me in. He said, "You come as my guest," and he walked me in. I was the only one who was not in the Curtis Orchestra who was at that rehearsal. When I came back to school there was, if you'll forgive my expression, "shit to pay." I was lectured for being where I don't belong and that it was not the proper thing to do. Seymour Lipkin, who was furious at me, later said, "I should have had as much nerve as you had and just did it." He was so jealous that I had gotten in. Afterwards, I thanked Tabuteau for getting me in. I said maybe I should not have done it. He said that what I did was right for me. It is more important that I went to the rehearsal than to worry about whether they think I did the right thing. I personally got along very well with Tabuteau, and I liked him. I had an unbelievable admiration for his ideas.

**MS:** Do you think some of his other students were scared of him?

**AB:** I think some of his oboe students were. I also think he treated the really first-class oboe students quite differently. They would be scared, but he would compliment them when they deserved to be complimented. There is a story about John Minsker, who eventually held the English horn chair in the Philadelphia Orchestra, getting mad at Tabuteau one day for being insulting, that he broke his oboe across his knee and walked out of the studio. Tabuteau bought him a new oboe.

Tabuteau had all different ways of shaping a phrase and not necessarily always the same way.

**MS:** Did Tabuteau teach anything different in the wind classes than in the string classes?

**AB:** No, once in a while he would give an articulation to the woodwinds. One of the things that he always talked about is this: If you have two eighths slurred and two staccatos, he always reminded the woodwind players that the articulation was "tee long."
"ah, ah." The second note will slide into the third note. He used to explain it to the woodwind players that way, and it rubbed off on brass players too. With string players, he did not always know. Sometimes one of the older students would stand up and demonstrate a bowing that would give him what he wanted, and he would say, "Yes, that is the way I want it."

**MS:** Did Tabuteau ever mention where he got the idea of the number system from?

**AB:** No, but I think maybe he invented it. It is possible there were other French musicians that knew about it.

**MS:** Did he ever speak of his teacher, Georges Gillet?

**AB:** Not to me directly, but he did mention him occasionally in class. He was very careful about speaking about the "older" Georges Gillet. He had no interest in the son of Gillet who was in Boston.

I remember when I started playing professionally, every major orchestra had a first oboist who was Tabuteau's student. There were both Harold and Ralph Gomberg, John Mack, William Criss Laila Storch, and Mark Lifschev. Wherever you went there were Tabuteau students. He certainly left a substantial influence on oboe playing.

**MS:** Did you ever recall him making references to bowings in woodwind class?

**AB:** I do not remember, but he very well may have a few times.

**MS:** Did Tabuteau use many analogies?

**AB:** Yes, in the string class especially. The average age in the string class was lower than that of the wind class. Francis Steiner was around eight carrying around her half-size cello. With the woodwind class I don't think there was any student younger than fifteen or sixteen.

**MS:** Did Tabuteau ever talk about any books that he used?

**AB:** No, just for his oboe students for lessons.
MS: Were there other students who sat in and watched Tabuteau's classes?

AB: Just a few. There were one or two others who were interested, like John Pintavalle. The problem with music students, as you know, is that young kids are encouraged only to practice. At early ages, they are told that the most important thing they can do, if they have two hours off, is to practice their own instrument. I was an early bloomer. I don't know that I was as vociferous as I am now, but I know that rounding out a young person is at least as important as the amount of time they practice. I knew it at fifteen or sixteen. I knew it was interesting and important that I observe. When I went to chamber music classes I would watch pianists sit in the corner and surreptitiously read a book while a string quartet was being coached. They weren't really interested. I always was interested in seeing how string players approached problems and in learning the repertoire. I think my basic natural curiosity got to me on that level. I was much more interested in rounding off myself as a person, with personal relationships.

MS: Did you play piano in the classes?

AB: Very occasionally. Most of the pieces did not call for piano.

The first two years after the war there was a student council of which Lipkin and I were members. We went to Zimbalist and said the students needed an orchestra. Zimbalist was one of these elite teachers from the St. Petersburg Conservatory. His idea of the violin student was not that he play in orchestra, but learn Beethoven and Brahms concertos. So we said, "If only for the woodwind and brass players, but the string players, we remind you, will mostly end up in orchestras." He said we could have orchestra every Tuesday night, and one of the students could conduct it. It was wonderful for me and Lipkin, but it was also not mandatory. The winds and brass all showed up, but the strings players did not. You never knew what you would have. We were furious and went to Zimbalist. He finally hired Alexander Hilsberg. He was a most difficult person, but at least orchestra became mandatory for all. When the Philadelphia Orchestra went on tour, I was able to
substitute for Hilsberg and conduct a full orchestra. I don't recall Tabuteau ever having anything to do with the orchestra as a whole, but he certainly shaped it by his string and woodwind classes.
CHAPTER 8
INTERVIEW WITH HERSHEL GORDON

**MS:** What years did you study with Tabuteau?

**HG:** I was in Curtis from 1942-44, then I went into the Army. I went back to school in 1947. The Army was not very considerate of the fact I was a cellist, and I drove a tank. After the war was over in Europe, I had a chance to go into special services, and I spent about six months with the Glen Miller Band. The band had a full string section, 2 cellos, 2 violas and 4 violins. The concert master was Stuart Cannon. I met some interesting people.

**MS:** Tabuteau taught a string class?

**HG:** Yes, Tabuteau taught a string class. The class was basically for phrasing. When it came to phrasing, there was no one who knew how to phrase like he did.

**MS:** Can you describe a typical class?

**HG:** A typical class was a group of us sitting in Curtis Hall, Tabuteau sitting on the podium with his glasses at the end of his nose, conducting and talking with us about the music. He would talk about the phrasing of one measure to another and one note to another, the relationship of the measures and the notes to each other. I think what we got out of that class was not only a sense, but the knowledge of how you look at a piece of music. All of us would have looked at a piece of music differently had it not been for his class and the exposure to him. We had the exposure with him in the orchestra as well, because he certainly practiced what he preached. He was a very fine musician. I have not heard an oboe player like him since. I don’t think records or tapes can give you the sense.
You had to be on the stage or in the audience, and you had to hear the instrument in its natural form. He was a magnificent oboe player. When he played the oboe he sang. That was one of the words that was important, “singing.” How do you play an instrument? You play it like you would sing. What’s your phrasing like? It’s like you would sing. Where you take breaths, how and where they are placed, was a very important aspect to this. We had the class once a week, sometimes not even once a week because the orchestra would be away.

**MS:** Do you know if this is a class he wanted to teach?

**HG:** Yes, at that time he was hired to do that. He would not have done it out of the goodness of his heart, I’m sure. It was something Curtis asked him to do. At that time Zimbalist was the head of Curtis. The Curtis Orchestra had been removed by Zimbalist completely. A group of us formed a committee and went to Zimbalist because we realized that we were not all going to walk on the street and become Patagorski’s, Rubinstein’s and Heifetz’s. We were going to play in an orchestra for our livelihoods. We finally did get the orchestra back with Hilsberg. It was at that time that Tabuteau came on the scene with the string class. It was an interesting class. He had a pretty good sense of humor in his own way. He always looked like he was angry at the world, but occasionally he would get this smile. He was a colorful person in that sense.

I studied with his wife too. Madame Tabuteau taught French at Curtis. She was trying to teach a bunch of idiots, I being one of them, who had absolutely no feel for languages at all. We were a terrible group. It was Norman Carol, a pianist; Teddy Ledvin; Norman Castoff, a bassoon player; Aaron Rosan, violinist; Joey Silverstein, and myself. I can give you a lot of names. We had quite a class with Madame Tabuteau. We drove her crazy, absolutely nuts. As I recall she was a pretty nice lady, trying to teach us something we really did not care about. I very rarely ever saw her other than classes.
**MS:** How would you describe Tabuteau’s teaching style? Was he a good communicator?

**HG:** Yes, he was very good. It was a nice accent to listen to also.

**MS:** Was his teaching very structured?

**HG:** It did not come out of a book. It came out of him. It was not a lesson plan. It was sitting down and playing and really discussing the music, the phrasing and that sort of thing.

**MS:** I heard he had a nickname for his oboe students, “Stupid.”

**HG:** “Young man, you are stupid.” He called everyone “Stupid.” I don’t think he treated us any different than he treated his oboe students. I don’t think it made any difference whether you were a violinist, oboe player, or cellist. You were a musician and that is how he approached us all. He was not a man to give compliments easily. When you got a compliment from him it was something. You took it with you, and it probably got you through the rest of the year. He was strict about his music. Music to him was everything. I did not like him, but I can only praise him for the musician he was. I have never met, in my life, a musician like him. He was one of these people who come along once in a lifetime.

He also had a compatriot in the orchestra who was much like him, and that was Kincaid. You have to remember they sat right next to each other. William Kincaid would have been to the flute what Tabuteau was to the oboe. We disliked Kincaid even more than Tabuteau.

**MS:** What did you dislike?

**HG:** The dislike was mostly based on biases they had toward certain people. They made it very clear and it was not appreciated, but so be it. They were still these two great, great musicians.
That was my whole connection with Curtis. Now the orchestra was something else. I learned a lot when I got into the orchestra. Tabuteau was very expressive as far as his musical wishes. Tabuteau did not like Ormandy. I feel he did not have any respect for Ormandy.

Here is an example of the fear of Tabuteau. We were at rehearsal one day and there was a second oboe player, Louie DeFulvio. Ormandy stopped to point out a mistake that probably was not there to begin with, and he pointed to Louie. I remember distinctly how Tabuteau leaned forward in his chair, with his little glasses at the end of his nose, and he pointed his finger and said, “Young man, that was me.” Ormandy just cringed. He went back on the podium and started conducting the rehearsal again. He did not say a word. Tabuteau was not going to let Ormandy pick on his colleague.

Being in the orchestra with Tabuteau was a thrill. He was an avid card player as I remember. He smoked many cigarettes. I always remember him on the train playing cards with a cigarette.

**MS**: Did he use a lot of analogies?

**HG**: He used some with the string players. As I recall we did more playing than anything else. We talked about the phrasing.

**MS**: Did he use the number system?

**HG**: I don’t remember. I remember him talking about the measures and the relationship of this note to that note. It was a discussion of the music. What is a phrase? The relationship of the barline. Where does a phrase end?

**MS**: Tabuteau began life as a string player.

**HG**: I did not know that.

**MS**: So he never talked about that?

**HG**: No.
MS: He never talked about bowings?

HG: Not that I remember.

MS: Did you know of any books Tabuteau used?

HG: In those days you studied music with an individual. I studied cello with Piatigorski. My lessons consisted of listening, playing, discussing. I never remember in my schooling anyone saying buy this or that book.

MS: Did he make as great an impact on you as a teacher as he did a player?

HG: Probably, yes, because I do remember the thrill of taking the class with him. To listen to him you heard all of these things he taught. You heard the phrasing and the breath at the proper place. I think the impact he had on all of us as musicians is that we carried that message with us through our entire musical life. To this day, I still talk about phrasing, and I'm talking about what Tabuteau gave us. It was Tabuteau's influence that gave us the feel for how we handle music in general. None of these other people were going to argue with it, because it was right.

MS: What kind of music did he use to teach you phrasing?

HG: It was standard orchestral literature.

MS: Did you ever prepare concerts with him?

HG: No. The concerts we did were with the orchestra with Alexander Hilsberg. We were there to study with him.

MS: Would you say Tabuteau revolutionized American wind playing.

HG: I don't know about revolutionizing it, but at that time period I would have to say he was the "God" when it came to classical music wind playing. I don't know that there was a woodwind player anywhere that did not look up and revere Tabuteau in one way or another.
He always made himself known. He let you know what he liked and did not like. He was not a bashful person. He had a temper. You could see the difference in his respect for certain conductors.

The orchestra reacted to the conductors they liked, and the orchestra could be unbelievable. In those days, I cannot think of another orchestra that could have touched Philadelphia. Today yes, but not in the 1930’s, 1940’s, or early 1950’s. Boston and Philadelphia were the two orchestras back then.

**MS:** Did he use his “number system” in classes?

**HG:** Yes, a little, but not as a system.

**MS:** Did he ever explain it?

**HG:** No. I recall when he talked about that, we looked at the notes. I think most of us looked at the notes, but we never marked anything down on our music. We used to sing those phrases in our heads. Where did a phrase peak, where did it end. The numbers never made much of an impression.

**MS:** Did he ever talk about inflections in terms of bowing?

**HG:** The bowings were already in our music. I think he had an effect on us on how we bowed the music when we did bow it. We looked at the bow as being part and parcel of the phrase, what notes we played on a bow before we made a change. He talked about where we took a breath. We have to take a breath like a wind player.

**MS:** Your private teacher did not talk about breathing in the music and such?

**HG:** No, because at that point in our lives we were all pretty accomplished players. When you came into Curtis you were an accomplished player. The audition for a string player was a total recital from memory. When I took chamber music with Primrose, we talked about phrasing and everybody mentioned Tabuteau. There was never a time when you talked about phrasing and one of them did not mention Tabuteau.
**MS:** Did you feel this was something that came naturally to Tabuteau, or do you think he spent a lot of time with it?

**HG:** I do not know, but I would have to say that it certainly felt like it was something almost inborn with him. I think this is almost like having perfect pitch. You either have it, or you do not have it. You have a feeling for this sort of thing or you do not.
CHAPTER 9
INTERVIEW WITH JOHN MACK

MS: When did you study with Tabuteau?

JM: I studied with Tabuteau when I was in twelfth grade, which was the year 1944-1945. I lived in New Jersey and my father tricked him into teaching me. Tabuteau said, “Tell the boy not to play the oboe.” My father said, “I’m sorry, maestro, you will have to tell him that yourself because he wouldn’t take that from me.” Tabuteau was intrigued so he took me as a student, and I went to Philadelphia every other Saturday. My lesson was in his studio on 16th St. from 1:00-2:00. The cost in those days was ten dollars. It was very exciting and romantic. My friend, Mark Lifschey, told me to try to remember everything. When the year was over I did not remember anything. I was so in awe of Tabuteau. Tabuteau would sometimes take pity on me and let me stay in his studio the whole afternoon because my train did not go back until 6:30. Guys in uniforms would come in for lessons, and they hated that some little punk was sitting in the corner. I was just beginning to learn stuff. I knew I had something in me, but I was not accessing it too well at that age. Tabuteau could make you very uncomfortable, and I think in a way he enjoyed doing that. He could really lean on you. I have been told by a friend of mine who has retired from his position that he would never be able to forgive Tabuteau for what he did to him at Curtis. He also said, “I would not have accomplished what I had while I was in school had it not been for my over-riding fear of that man.” I think I’m quoting him verbatim. I thought, “I have long ago forgiven him for any lumps I ever got, because I got so much from him.” He hardened you.
After that year I went to Juilliard for three years. The first of those years I went for lessons with John Minsker, English horn player of the Philadelphia Orchestra, at the instruction of Tabuteau. I don't think Minsker liked that idea. Every few lessons I would take with Minsker at Tabuteau's studio. If I did some stupid thing, which I did all the time, Tabuteau would scold Minsker.

**MS:** Was Tabuteau verbally abusive when you were in High School?

**JM:** He would call you Stupid all the time. I richly deserved being called Stupid.

Does the name Piaget mean anything to you? He was a Swiss educator. He studied the development of children's minds with his own kids. At three years old they did not understand something and then ten days later they did. I was coming back from California some years ago, and I was reading a magazine that told about these two ladies. They were both P.H.D.'s who studied Piaget. They had written a book together in which they divided the learning process in humans into seven stages. The seventh and final stage usually arrives around the age of 28. I've known so many famous players years ago who said to me that they really did not understand something until after they were out of school for five years. I thought, at the time, that it sounded like hooey. Well, it is not hooey, not at all. That is exactly the way it works. You don't understand something for a while and then suddenly you do. You cannot understand why you did not understand it before. I see it with my own students all the time. I see it in myself—certain periods of illumination.

I went to Juilliard at 18 and expected to get drafted, but did not because my older brother, David, died in the Navy. I had gone to summer school there several times, and I have absolute pitch and could walk through dictation. That allowed me to skip a lot of stuff already in the beginning. I was going only part time because I thought I was going to get drafted. As soon as I found out I was not going to be drafted, I marched up to the Orchestra Director, Edgar Schenkman, and I said, "I understand that you are not happy with the oboe situation." He said, "You understand correctly. Why young man, do you
play the oboe?” “Yes sir,” I replied. “Would you like to play for me?” “Yes sir.” “Would you like to play for me now?” “Yes sir!” I played for him, and as soon as the current concert was over, I was playing principal oboe in the Juilliard orchestra at the age of eighteen. Next thing you know, I was invited to become a founding member of the New York Woodwind Quintet, which was a bunch of boys from Juilliard.

I was in Juilliard for two more years, and I had a standing invitation from Tabuteau to play for him. My last year in Juilliard, Harold Gomberg was in his first year of teaching there. There were 31 oboists in school because of the GI Bill. Twelve people auditioned to study with him and he took four students, and I was one of them.

**MS:** Did you spend four years in Curtis?

**JM:** No, I was there for three. I got in accidentally. My mother said, after looking at the *Herald Tribune,* “The Philadelphia Orchestra is going on a transcontinental tour.” I thought that if I was going to play for Tabuteau again I had better do it quickly, because the moment he gets back from there, he and Mme. Tabuteau are going to be on the Queen Mary or Queen Elizabeth on their way to France. There was also an article stating that they had held auditions for Curtis and the following people had been accepted, including oboist, Louis Rosenblatt. I called and made an appointment to play for Tabuteau. It was at night, and I sat around in the lobby of the Drake Hotel waiting for the masseuse or whatever to get done with him. He called for me to play the solo from the Brahms Violin Concerto. He then said, “Now play it on my oboe. Now play it on your oboe then my oboe from the bedroom. Now go back and play it again.” He asked me what my plans were. I said that Mr. Gomberg wanted me to go out, but I didn’t really think I was ready. Tabuteau said something telling like, “You’re telling me,” or something like that. I said to him that I had always wanted to go to Curtis, but I understood that he had had auditions and accepted someone. He said, “You silly boy. You still want to go to the Curtis after all this time?” I said, “Well, of course.” He responded, “I will tell Mme. Tabuteau to go to the school

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tomorrow and tell them I have accepted you. They will send you an application. You must fill it in and send it right back. You must tell Mr. Gomberg about this, and if he gets upset with me over this, I will have nothing to do with you.”

I was Harold Gomberg’s fair-haired boy. I always had the last lesson with the extra half-hour tacked on to it. I was it. I was only allowed to play first oboe in wind class which was 6-10 p.m. on Wednesday. I told him. He said, “You planned this. This is an underhanded stunt.” I got booted out of lessons and classes with Mr. Gomberg for the last six weeks of school, and he asked at least one judge to flunk me when I played my final exam as a personal favor to him. The teacher said he was sorry and could not do that. It came back to me in no time what had happened. It took me many years of reflecting to think perhaps he exposed me so that I could go to Curtis, and he could still be on good terms with Tabuteau. He did not speak to me for 31 years until we had the Tabuteau concerts in the glorious fourth of March in 1979. I played the dessert course at the Tabuteau concerts. I did the four so-called French contemporary recital pieces that are on my recording, plus the Paladilhe. After playing on the afternoon concert I walked out and there was Harold Gomberg. He stuck his hand out and said, “John that was absolutely magnificent. I am so proud of you.” He shook my hand and threw his arms around me.

**MS:** When you were at Curtis, what class or classes did you take with Tabuteau?

**JM:** He conducted the wind and string classes since the beginning of Curtis, with the exception of one year off. I was in the wind class for three years. There was a starting wind class and a senior wind class. Because I was older than the others and had just graduated from Juilliard, I was playing in both of those the first year.

**MS:** Did they meet at separate times then?

**JM:** Yes, one then the other. It was very exciting. He would make fun of you, or do anything whatsoever to rile you up.
**MS:** Can you describe what the class was like in terms of what you played and so forth?

**JM:** We played quintets usually. I will give you an example of something that happened. We were doing the Hindemith Quintet. I had played it many times by this time. Tabuteau was a little up-beat happy. In the third movement 3/4 section he said, “Mais non, it is an upbeat.” (He sings with the si being an upbeat to sol in the third to fourth measure of the solo.) The next week Larry Thorstenberg was playing it. He remembered what Tabuteau had said, so he did it that way. Tabuteau said, “Mais non, Stupid, you have to be able to tell where the exception is. This is re-mi-do-re-si sol (He sings with a separation between the si and sol.)

![Musical notation]

Figure 9.1: Excerpt from Hindemith Quintet, Kieine Kammermusik fur Fünf Bläser, as described above

Tabuteau thought about it and came to the right conclusion and did something about it. If you were maltreated in the process, too bad.

There were many people who just went to the classes and took notes. There was a lot of humor. He always made a point though, and sometimes people would remember the humor and not the germ of truth. I remember once a bassoon player did something stupid, and Tabuteau roared with laughter. Then he stopped and said, “No, don’t laugh. Don’t
judge your colleagues while you are a student. The person you’re laughing at may walk past you someday.”

**MS:** Did he use his number system in class?

**JM:** Yes, and also very much in lessons. I think it is much misunderstood. I wrote a whole treatise for that recording that was going to be published after Tabuteau died, that has since been put on a CD by Wayne Rapier. What happened was that Wayne Rapier was studying with Tabuteau and Tabuteau was very unhappy about recording, because he did not hear back what he was sure he was doing. Wayne went and bought him a Sony stereo tape-recorder, and he was like a kid with a new toy. When I hear him on the recording saying, “Today my dear young friends I am going to discuss articulation,” I think - he never talked to us like that. He sounds so genial and kind - not at all.

The purpose of the numbers system, as far as I am concerned, were some overt and some covert. Overt was to help you learn to control what you were doing, to be able to scale something over an amount of time and always keep your line. Therefore, in his numbers, he would never skip a number. Everything was always adjacent somehow or other, and he wanted things to sound adjacent. Did you ever see the Loyon book?

**MS:** No.

**JM:** Get yourself a Loyon book.¹ Anytime you are a naughty boy or girl you can make everything fine by practicing Loyon. Then you will have been properly punished and done your penance and everything is O.K. There is one exercise in there that I love to play for the purpose of demonstrating to kids about being able to play large leaps and make it sound adjacent. I believe it is number 14. You must keep your lines.

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I worked for Tabuteau in his studio. I was his studio slave. I ended up making the reeds he played on a lot of the time. His brains, my brawn, so to speak. I was in the room with him and he played all the time and he talked a lot.

I remember when I was in high school, he was playing away. He had a hot reed and he was enjoying himself. He looked over to see me watching with X’s for eyes, like in the cartoons. He did something, took the oboe out of his mouth and he said, “There you see young man. I am human and you are human. If I can do it, you can do it too.” Then he laughed. It took me fifteen years to recover from that and to seriously consider that maybe what he said was true. My first thought was, “What says he’s human. Listen to him. It is unbelievable. Even if he is human, I’m just a little snot from New Jersey, that’s all.” Like the psychologists said, the last stage of learning is at age 28. The fact that somebody cannot do something does not mean that they are never going to be able to do it.

**MS:** How would he go about describing the number system to you?

**JM:** To give you an example, the first “Grand Etude” of Barret. (He sings the first few bars.) There are no accents, but most people play (he sings with slight accents on each group of four.) Tabuteau’s numbers for something like that would be something like this: 2,2,1 1,2,3,4 4,3,2 1. In other words the diminuendo will sound full, and you will not hear the top note as an accented note. It is not.

![Musical notation](image)

Figure 9.2: Excerpt from Barret, “Grand Study No. 1,” as described above
Do you have any idea what the big solo in Tchaikovsky 4 would sound like if you played it the way it is written? It would sound stupid. (He sings from the third phrase doing all hairpins.) It is not human. One of the things he was trying to teach was, "This is printed, but..." In other words with his numbers- when you come down in dynamic, you are going out before you come down; therefore, you do not have an accent. In order to have an accent, a note has to stand above what precedes and follows it. It is only an accent if you come from silence, hit it and drop. If you play it and sustain it, that is not an accent. It is all obvious stuff which he did not necessarily go into.

The overt reason for using his number system was to get you to control what he would call your "givings." In other words, scale things so they sound reasonable and continuous. He did not use that word, but that is what he obviously meant-continuous on the way up and continuous on the way down, with very few exceptions. Every now and then there would be an exception. "Grand Etude" number five from Barret is an example of an exception. The explosion is called for on the accented notes.²

The covert purposes of the number system would be to get you to see things his way. In other words, he would have you scaling things the way he wanted them to be done and gradually you would absorb this. I have not thought about numbers in years, other than every now and then when a student has a problem being able to do something a certain way, I might number the piece until they can do it. With many phrases, once you find out the way it works really well, you can play it that way a hundred times and it will sound terrific all the time. It will withstand the test of time. It does not have to sound made up or cold. As a matter of fact, I consider that liberating. You can let yourself go because you can trust yourself. You know you are not going to go out of bounds.

² A.M.R. Barret, Oboe Method (Boosey & Hawkes) 172.
MS: Would he go into great detail, or would he play and show by example?

JM: He played a lot and he talked a lot. He was very persuasive with his command of the language.

MS: Did he play a lot for the wind class as well?

JM: He never played for the wind class. He played all the time in my lessons. Anytime he could not get you to understand by force of speech, he would immediately grab the oboe. I remember once, I do not know what I did, he scrambled to get his oboe out of the case. He was in such a hurry to get his point across.

MS: How long were your lessons in length?

JM: At Curtis, lessons were 45 minutes in length, except for oboe students. Their lessons were one-half hour. I'll never forget the time one of my colleagues was sick and did not show up for a lesson. In order for Tabuteau to get paid for his four half-hours, he told Larry Thorstenberg to go to the library and get some duets. Larry had no idea what was going to happen. Oh my God, it was so horrible. We were reading these duets and I saw a trill coming up. I thought I knew how Tabuteau would want it done, so I did it that way. He stopped us and said, "Mais non, Stupid. I told you, you do that like this." I thought that I had just done that. I was mad. We played it again and he stopped us again, this time screaming at me. "Mack, are you bored?" I replied, "No sir." He asked again, "Are you bored?" I said, "No, I am not." He screamed, "Get out!" So I scrambled for my case, my Barret book, and this and that. I was afraid if I did not get out of there fast enough, he was going to throw me out of school. He was not going to throw me out of school. This occurred on a Monday. After the lessons he taught the string class. After the string class I was to meet him and go to Zimbaliast's room, where he would briefly practice on the Alpine horn for a Christmas party skit. He had given me two contrabassoon reeds to fix for him so he could play them on the Alpine horn. He said, "Just do it somehow." I went to the five and dime. I bought two little things my mother used to stick in the top of
an old ginger ale bottle to sprinkle the laundry before ironing it. It was a little aluminum
thing with a dome head, with holes in it, and a slanted part at the bottom with cork on it. I
took the top out, cut it down with sheers and put the reed in it. I then crimped the
aluminum around it and painted it all with finger nail polish until it was hermetically sealed.
It worked fine. I waited for him and he had no words. Tabuteau practiced and I waited.
He finished and we walked down the stairs together. We walked onto Locust Street in the
direction of his apartment. He stopped and said, “Maybe you weren’t bored.” I thought,
“Mack, keep your trap shut for God’s sake.” Then he went on, “You looked bored. It
could cost you your job.” I was angry. I was furious. The lesson was, if the conductor
thinks you are not interested in what they have to offer, they are going to lose interest in
you really fast. It was over.

**MS:** You probably did not realize that at the moment?

**JM:** No, the instinct of self preservation wells up within us. I wanted to get out of
that room as fast as possible.

Tabuteau could be tough. I don’t know if Louis Rosenblatt told you about his little
gouging machine incident. Tabuteau loaned Rosenblatt a gouging machine, and when he
brought it back, it was all different and the blade was chipped. He accused Lou of
tampering with the machine and used me as a witness. Tabuteau asked me, “Mack, what
was the gouge like when he took the machine? Was the blade chipped?” I replied, “No,
Sir.” He said, “Is the blade chipped now?” I responded, “Yes, Sir.” He then said, “Is the
gouge different now?” “Yes, Sir,” I replied. It was like an inquisition and Lou was “on
the point of the sword” for three weeks until Tabuteau finally figured out what had
happened. Everything had not been tightened properly on the gouging machine and the
blade slipped down a little bit and hit the stays at the ends. Those things happen
sometimes. He said to Louis Rosenblatt, “It was not your fault.” He did not say, I’m
sorry I beat you up for all that time. He did not like to do things like that.
**MS:** What etudes did you play with Tabuteau?

**JM:** I never did anything but Barret and Ferling with him. We transposed a fair amount. Tabuteau never treated me, while I was in school, as though he thought I was any kind of special pumpkins, but I always got the big stuff to play. I played the Bach *Double Concerto* for him to get ready to play it with Stern at the first Casals Festival. He took me to the Casals Festival. Of course, that was also to look after reeds and stuff like that.

**MS:** Did Tabuteau discuss breathing in lessons?

**JM:** I cannot remember him hardly ever discussing breathing, other than he could use the soft pallet as a valve. He never discussed anything like circular breathing. I do not know if he could or not. I'm sure that Minkser could, but he did not discuss it. The physical things Tabuteau discussed were your stance, hand position, and embouchure. At one point I guess he decided I was getting too sneaky with my hands. I could play the last movement of the Mozart *Oboe Quartet* with the 16 against 6 and you could hardly see my fingers move. When you are young that is cool. He decided to fix my little red wagon for me. Without telling me why, he told me that until further notice, I was to pick my fingers all the way up "like the legs of a goose stepping Nazi soldier." He did not want "sneaky Pete fingers." For five weeks I had to pick my fingers up as far off the keys as I possibly could for both fast and slow music. After the fifth week he said I could stop doing it.

**MS:** How did your fingers fall after that?

**JM:** They did like I do now. You pick them up off the keys and put them back down. You don't pick them way up and don't snap them.

In a lesson Tabuteau walked up to me, no explanation before or after, and stuck his face in my face and says, "Mack-No, Yes." (He demonstrates by motioning "No" while nodding his head up and down and "Yes" while shaking it side to side.) What he was trying to tell me was that the music was zigging, and I was zagging. He would do things like that. He would also preach certain things like the last note is always supposed to be
long. For example, in a two and two articulation, notes are to be played Tee-long Tah-Tah. A dot doesn't mean a note is short, it is just articulated. The interesting thing is that Tabuteau would preach this and preach that, and every now and then he would do something totally different. If you were smart enough to figure out what was going on then more power to you. If you weren't, he did not give a damn.

Tabuteau said this: One of the purposes of a teacher should be to teach a student to become their own teacher someday. To me that was such a scary thought. Of course I have been my own teacher for decades now and it is no chore. It is easy to do, but he did not seem that interested in whether his students would be able to teach. It was almost like he figured since Gillet had all those students and he ended up being such a successful teacher, one of his students would end up doing the same. I don't think he knew which one or cared which one. The fact that Tabuteau would not help his students with reeds is an example. I was the only one who got all that, because I was going to make them for him. He even threatened to come back from the grave like an Egyptian curse to haunt me if I so much as showed a piece of gouged cane to somebody, much less a reed, or let anybody try a reed of mine since I had all these precious secrets that he had shared with me so that I could help him. That was for me and me only. He told me, "If you keep this to yourself and don't give it to anybody, who knows, someday you might get to play second oboe in the Philadelphia Orchestra." Of course, I have been spilling the beans left and right for years and years, and Tabuteau has visited me in dreams on many occasions and always with approbation. I have not been scolded once ever.

**MS:** Basically, it sounds like he taught and if you picked it up great, and if you did not, too bad.

**JM:** Well, he insisted on things and he would hound you and hound you. He would not leave you alone. He would not look the other way. He was very thorough about how he wanted something to be played, and he would play it for you.

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I remember at Curtis we would come in two minutes before our lesson time. We were to bring a fresh ash tray for him which would consist of two Dixie cups. One had the bottom cut off upside down and the other set into it with a little water in it. I would hear the last two minutes of the other person's lesson. When they were done, he would say, "You play." You were supposed to be ready. I remember I came into the end of Larry Thorstegen's lesson one time. Larry practiced very intelligently and was much more mature than the rest of us. Tabuteau said something to the effect of, "You are doing everything right, but I don't understand what you are saying." In other words he was following the rules, painting by the numbers, but some musical ingredient was not there that Tabuteau was looking for.

It was inspiring to hear him play. It would just reach in and twist your guts.

MS: Would you consider his teaching to be very structured?

JM: Yes, absolutely. It is what I call schooling, and it is what I try to provide to my students. You start with A and you do A and A1. You don't go to B until you have done A1, A2, A3, A4 and so on. Then you move on. You do not skip anything. He was very thorough, but still he was the first oboe player of the Philadelphia Orchestra where they do everything the same way pretty much. Things were pretty much longish. Classical upbeats were not like George Szell's classical upbeats.\(^3\)

Tabuteau used to preach, "Play the way you think, not the way you feel." You might not feel well. Play the way you think means think beautifully, musically and artistically. Think before you play, and when you play don't think. In other words, what he is saying is, understand something well enough so that you can trust it. That is what I mentioned before. To me the liberation comes when you can play that passage just fine if somebody comes up and hits you on the head. Certain things have happened to me that

\(^3\) George Szell, conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra, had a reputation for interpreting upbeats as short notes; whereas, Philadelphia Orchestra had the reputation of interpreting long upbeats.
have supported that greatly. When I was in the New Orleans, the conductor, Alexander Hilsberg, was the former concertmaster of Philadelphia Orchestra for 25 years and associate conductor of Philadelphia Orchestra. Hilsberg was very popular at that time. Heifitz came and played the Brahms Concerto with us. Milstein played about every other year. Arthur Rubinstein and Rudolf Serkin played every other year. Isaac Stern was in his heyday. These people would show up, play the rehearsal in the morning, take a nap, practice and play the performance in the evening and probably fly somewhere else the next day. I would hear orchestra people say, "I never want to play it the same thing twice." I thought, "Poor you. That means you don't know how you think it ought to go." These men knew how they wanted it to go in every detail and they had enough command to be able to do it that way. I thought, "Tabuteau must have been right." They could not play great otherwise.

I had another experience in New Orleans in a very different way. The touring road company for My Fair Lady came for two weeks. I was in the pit playing oboe and English horn. The actors and actresses were great. Every little nuance was exactly the same each time, and knock your socks off each time. It was so fresh and who knows how long they were going to be on the road doing this. They were cranking it out and leaving you totally enchanted. I thought, "That is a wonderful example of what Tabuteau was talking about." They could not have done what they were doing if they did not have it based on all that understanding and polish.

**MS:** How would you describe Tabuteau's teaching style in terms of his personality and the way he got ideas across?

**JM:** I was in the studio with Tabuteau once and my good friend, Laila Storch, was there. I made so bold as to proffer a musical opinion. Tabuteau in mock fury shouted, "Mack, I want it clearly understood that this studio is strictly one-way traffic." It was his
way. There was no question as to who was the boss of things. As a matter of fact, when Joe Robinson went and studied with him for five weeks in the South of France following a Fulbright Scholarship year, he told me he played and Tabuteau would say things that would give you goose bumps like, “not bad” or “pretty good.” Then when Robinson went in for his first lesson the next day, and Tabuteau almost ignored him and looked at him over his shoulder with a look of disgust, Joe thought, “What happened?” Tabuteau said, “Young man, you are a very sick young oboe player.” Joe said his knees were knocking. Tabuteau then turned around with a little smile on his face and said, “Fortunately for you I have the cure.” Here was the cure: He took the oboe away from him and locked it in his desk. For two weeks of his precious five weeks, Robinson practiced, all day, long tones both detached and legato, with a reed stuck in a tube of cane. He was out on the balcony at their apartment in Nice and he was facing south playing. Tabuteau came out and said an outlandish thing that you would expect from somebody who had such a raging imagination as he. He said, “Young man, don’t waste your notes on the Mediterranean. Play to the Alps.”

I saw Tabuteau for the last time in September 1965, four months before he passed away. He was already working with his tape recorder. I was on tour with Marlboro. He came over from Nice to Menton, the last little French town before Italy. He heard us rehearse. He had not heard me play in twelve years and I had been working very hard. I had played that many more years in New Orleans and practiced that hard and played first oboe for two years in the National Symphony, and I now I was the first oboe to be in the Cleveland Orchestra. He was very excited and I thought, “I’m not playing my best right now.” Obviously, I had made a lot of advancement, and it was obvious to him. He said, “I’m going to tell you two things Mack, and you could be the best.” He made a reed for me. He wanted me to get more of a certain quality in my tone than I had. I said, “Maestro, it seems very flat.” He said, “Yes I know, but I can’t anymore tell if the taxi horn is a B
flat or F sharp.” The other comment had to do with inflections: to always recognize and portray the inflections in the music, whether it is a statement and a question, or a question and an answer, or like the three D’s on the second page of the Mozart Oboe Concerto, a postulation, a questioning thereof, and a quiet assent. That is something I am really good at. I do recognize those things. I don’t even consciously think about it very much. It is because it was injected into me way back.

**MS:** Tabuteau was said to have used many analogies as a teaching tool. Would you consider this part of his teaching style?

**JM:** Sure. He was incredibly imaginative all the time and he used analogies all the time, not always in the nicest fashion. For example, he would say, “Young man, your tone reminds me of a Bermuda onion peel.” In other words, something you could read the newspaper through. He was very good at describing what somebody’s playing reminded him of, whatever it might be. It was something that really put a burr under your saddle. That was one of the best things about him. He put a burr under my saddle for a lifetime.

The reason I got to the point I’m at is because there were things I could hear in Tabuteau’s playing and I wanted badly. I think the combination of what he had to offer and my own personal ingredients made it the sort of thing I could not let go of.

**MS:** What do you think set Tabuteau apart from other teachers of his generation?

**JM:** A very inquisitive mind. I’m going to lay one on you. On several occasions he would say, “Anything I could do my teacher could do. He could do one thing I couldn’t do, which was make good reeds on a gouge that was only 55mm in the middle.” He had some of that cane and showed me. The statement he made about his teacher was totally baffling if you had ever heard Tabuteau talk about how hard he had worked for so long. The way I look at it is, he did not present this statement in the correct fashion. He should have said, “I worked, and thought, and experimented until I could do everything that my
teacher could do.” His statement did not express the story at all. It came to me like a blinding flash out of the blue a couple of years ago. He did not explain it correctly.

He experimented a lot. He did not discuss orchestral passages with his students unless it was something you were playing with the strings and winds together. Four weeks before he was going to do Schubert’s Great C Major Symphony, it was coming out of his oboe all the time. He said lots of stuff about it since I was in his studio. He said in the bars with the accents beginning them that you have the strength in the beginning and nothing in the half bar rivals that strength. Yet you don’t fall away steeply, you do it gradually. You have to have enough residue like Ferling “Etude No. 2.”

When I was in Juilliard, there was a Professor Jacobi whose conducting class was working on the Mozart Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola. He said that he wanted to talk to me after class. He asked if I had ever had lessons with Marcel Tabuteau? I said, “I had last year,” and he replied that he thought so. He said he wanted to tell me something about Tabuteau. He stated that he was at the Met [Metropolitan Opera] when Tabuteau first came there and that Tabuteau sounded like every other French oboe player, but not for long. I think the reason for that was that the pit was a melting pot. The orchestra had musicians from practically every land, and they were doing the music from all those countries. They had guest conductors from all over the place. If you were inquisitive and curious, and Tabuteau certainly was those two things, plus he had a burning imagination, how could you remain in a situation like that and be untouched by it? Play French music like French music and German music like German music and so on. They are all really quite different. I think that had a great effect on Tabuteau.

I think Tabuteau made the oboe more of a crossover instrument than it had been before. Some of the things that I can do come from that idea. I think Tabuteau in his way

4 W. Ferling, 48 Famous Studies (Texas: Southern Music Co.)
was trying to develop the oboe in such a fashion that it was not “standing on one foot.” Way back, French oboe players did all sound the same. He told me that his teacher, Georges Gillet, was a very experimental type person too. He made reeds with a short scrape and with a long scrape, and in-between. I think Tabuteau probably got that from his teacher and he took it further. He was very envious that the string players had capabilities much greater than the oboist. In other words, you could play a note with the same dynamic level with a light pressure and more speed or more pressure, less speed. You also had the capability of playing near the bridge or near the finger board. He was very much into things like that. He wanted to be able to have a greater color range than people were accustomed to with the oboe.

**MS**: Did he talk often about string instruments?

**JM**: Yes he did. It really ate at him. I think it is similar to Marcel Moyse changing the flute a lot. It was playing in the opera that did it to Moyse. He was so envious of what the singers could do that his instrument could not do. Look in the Marcel Moyse *Tone Development Through Interpretation*, and it has all these operatic things in it. Moyse would wait until everybody else was gone, go up on stage, and play the aria trying to reach levels of expression on the instrument that were not generally thought possible. That is the way those things happened I suppose.

**MS**: Do you think Tabuteau attributed a lot of his success to Gillet?

**JM**: Sure. Laila Storch told me a wonderful story once. She was walking him back to his hotel from somewhere and they crossed, let’s say, Locust Street. It was a time of the evening where there was no traffic. Right in the middle of the street, Tabuteau stopped and raising his chapeau said, “Gillet, I take my hat off to you.”

Tabuteau walking and talking on the streets reminds me of another story. Tabuteau ran into Larry Thorstenberg once on the street and said, “Let me see your reeds.” Larry
said that he did not have the reeds with him. Tabuteau gave him holy hell right there in the streets of Philadelphia saying, “What kind of oboe player are you. You don’t have your reeds with you.” You never knew how he was going to respond to something. Despite the fact he gave people a hard time, which he did a lot, he could be exceedingly charming.

Tabuteau could be a firebrand. We had a couple of things happen at the Casals Festival. Many members of the string section that was playing there were what you would consider members of the far left. They tried to “make hay.” We did a broadcast and they decided that we should donate all our money to fight fascism in Spain in Casals’ name, without asking Casals. Tabuteau got up and said that they did not have a right to tell somebody what they were supposed to do with the money they earned. If it was going to be done in the name of the orchestra than it had to be something that everyone in the orchestra would agree with. He personally stuck a crow bar in the works and made it grind to a stop and made it not happen. I remember Tabuteau telling some cellist who was falling for it, “You are a flat fish.” The guy completely went to pieces. Tabuteau could be very righteous in something like that. It was a matter of principal.

When Tabuteau made a crusade for something like this I could not have been more proud of him. Even though he did nasty things to people, he still did an awful lot. He inspired generations of woodwind players and string players by his position at Curtis.

**MS:** Would you say he revolutionized American wind playing?

**JM:** Yes. When we count $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +$, he would not think of it that way. He would count 1, then 2, then 3, then 4. He counted sixteenths not as $1,2,3,4$ but as $4,1234$. In other words, the exact opposite of what we call Indian drums; therefore, you have something that is always going somewhere. That gets taught a lot by people that studied with him. Even as upbeat happy as he sometimes was, he would still come down to the ground with reality now and then and say for instance, “If the theme starts on the downbeat, that takes precedence.”
MS: Getting back to the number system, did he ever say where he got the idea from?

JM: No. Tabuteau in his public utterances gave you the impression that it was all from him.

MS: How did Tabuteau go about teaching you inflections.

JM: He just spoke very much about the up and the down impulse, and you were not allowed to breathe between them. I heard the demise of a student having a lesson on inflections. He played a scale using the inflections and breathed between an up and a down several times. It was November of his first year, and this kid was finished.

MS: Did you play recitals at Curtis?

JM: No, never.

MS: So they weren’t required of the student?

JM: No.

MS: What kind of transposing did you do with etudes, half-steps or whole-steps?

JM: Usually it would be, to quote Tabuteau, “To the nearest most difficult key.” Tabuteau never told you why he was making you transpose. You just did what you were told.

MS: What do you think his reason was?

JM: I don’t know. I can just tell you what my reasoning is, and I think it is probably very similar. I want my students to gain any degree of liberation they can. I think transposing adds a degree of liberation. You can sing it in any key without the music. It is in there and you can sing it. I know people that would faint if you asked them to pick up their instrument and play My Country ‘Tis of Thee in A flat. I like the idea of the jazz player who has such an incredible familiarity with his instrument, that the thought can come right out. I’m more interested in telling my students why they are doing something. If they have an idea why, they may put their heart into it more.
MS: Why would you say that Tabuteau’s teachings had such a positive and lasting effect on all musicians, not only oboe players.

JM: The strength of his personality and the conviction. Sol Schoenbach did an interesting article in the International Double Reed Society Journal in which he spoke of Tabuteau. He never studied with him, but he talked about the line and barlines a great deal. He said that if he asked Tabuteau something, Tabuteau would tell him. Tabuteau did not proffer anything to him though. He said this was probably because he was a bassoon player. I thought, no, it was probably because Tabuteau thought it would be unprofessional to do that if not invited.

Tabuteau could do articulations on the line to perfection without moving his jaw, but he could not explain how. I asked him once. I asked if it was with the lips or the tongue. He couldn’t give a straight answer, and he started to get angry so I had to change the subject. That was certainly a hallmark. Tabuteau wanted the line to be intact no matter what the articulations were. I remember when I was in twelfth grade he said to me that at least I did not move my jaw when I articulate. I thought, “I don’t? I’m glad to hear that.” I had no idea. I remember doing one of the last “Grand Etudes” in Barret, where the bass part is in the treble clef in C major. I spent about six weeks on that one with different articulations. I remember doing it with a particular articulation in D flat and Tabuteau said, “That’s it, Mack, you’ve got it!” I had goose bumps all over. I felt like I was flying. I couldn’t do it the next day. He couldn’t tell me what to do. He could do it. He couldn’t or wouldn’t tell me how. He was against giving out hard won information, which is proof positive of the fact that he learned a lot on his own. He worked hard for it and he felt if he gave it away in an easy fashion, its real worth would not be appreciated. It’s another generation now. I think—give them anything. Give them everything and hope that

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something happens beyond them. One of my favorite slogans is, "I wish Mozart to be alive and well 400 years from now." We only need three things. We need the world to not destroy itself. That is hard enough right there. Two, we need talent. Talent floods from every corner of the earth at all times. Three, we need the passing on of accumulated knowledge. That’s my department. If you can do it, do it in spades.
CHAPTER 10
INTERVIEW WITH FELIX KRAUS

**MS:** What years did you study with Tabuteau?

**FK:** 1949-1952

**MS:** Did you take both oboe lessons and woodwind class with him?

**FK:** Everybody at Curtis who played a woodwind instrument took woodwind class with him. He was the only one who did ensembles at that time.

**MS:** Was there also an orchestra repertoire class?

**FK:** Yes, but it was very strange. At that time Hilsberg was the conductor. He was also the assistant conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra, as well as the concertmaster. He used the Curtis repertoire orchestra to prepare for the times when he got to conduct the Philadelphia Orchestra so we did not do a whole lot of repertoire. Things eventually changed. Most of the string players had zero interest in the orchestra. They all thought they were going to be soloists.

**MS:** Can you describe a typical lesson with Tabuteau, or was there a typical lesson?

**FK:** It depended on what stage you were at. Since I had not had Philadelphia training, I started at ground zero. This meant Barret articulation exercises. At a typical lesson, Tabuteau would be sitting at an easy chair in his studio. The studio had two pianos and a chair. It was a rather dark room. Tabuteau would sit slumped in his chair and every so often he would say, "Stupid," or something to that effect. It was quite terrifying.
You would play a Barret articulation exercise and the next week you would have that in a different key and the next one. It was like going across a field full of land mines, because there was just one thing after another that had to be done a certain way and all sorts of things you were not allowed to do. Once I got past the articulation exercises then came the melodies and sonatas. These had a lot more notes and when it came to transposing I found it a terrible burden at the time, because it meant essentially memorizing everything. I’m glad he had me do it, but it was not easy for me as it was for some people. Doing things in a different key presents a different problem. You get something a half-step off and the notes line up differently, and it gives the piece a different flavor, particularly from a player’s point of view. What were the good notes no longer are. I still today, when preparing orchestral passages, play in different keys to find out how much of what I’m doing is me and how much the instrument is making me do. I hated it at the time.

MS: Did he ever demonstrate by playing at your lessons?

FK: Almost never, in fact never at lessons is the correct word. Only on a special occasion would he play. I seem to remember him playing something that involved a C#. He played it open, with one finger down in the right hand or something like that, but only because he wanted to demonstrate an articulation on it. It was something he would not have allowed us to do, but he showed off on something or other. He enjoyed showing off. He was very much “on stage” a good bit of the time, but that is part of being a musician I suppose. He was fond of saying “you have to play with a lot of make-up so that it will register in the top balcony.” Generally speaking he was right. If it does not come across with a lot of conviction close-up it sure is not going to at a distance.

MS: Did he have you play scales and broken thirds at your lessons?

FK: Yes, now that you refresh my memory, in fact every lesson began with exercises involving scales. This is the first time you became conscious of what barlines were and what a cardinal sin it was to breathe at a barline. For example if you were playing in 4/4
time you would count 1, 2, 3, 4 1, 2, 3, 4 and you only got to breathe after the 1. All the scales turned around in such a fashion that it would work out that your last note would be a 1. You got yelled at if you took a breath in a place other than after 1. He had these mantras that he yelled at you, “1, 2, 3, 4, 1, exhale,” before it became second nature.

![breathe]

Figure 10.1: Example scale showing above explanation

One of the curious things is that now when you find yourself playing with someone who has not been through this kind of training, either directly or through the generations of subsequent students who then became teachers, you wonder how is it possible not to know this. Although, one also has to admit that there are other ways that a prayer expressed as music is acceptable to God. It doesn’t necessarily have to be according to Philadelphia rules. It’s easy to forget that and to think it’s heresy if notes are not articulated on a line, for instance. That was another thing that scales served to do. You did them slurred and articulated. The whole principle was that you have to connect the notes, even if they are separated. The routine was that you played the scale through slurred and then without stopping, you played it articulated. Again you could only “take on fuel” at the approved places. We did chromatics that way and major and minor thirds also. That is about all I recall about rudiments like that.
MS: Did he ever have you do scales thinking of up and down inflections, rather than numbers?

FK: The two are inseparable. You must have heard a good deal about the number system by now. This was one of the miracles of his teaching. He could make anybody play better than they had ever previously under his control. Although his number system did not stand up to really close scrutiny, it was marvelously suggestive. It was basically that if a number was repeated, there was a separation. If there was a consecutive number, there was a connection. This way, he could make it clear to any student where the points were that you really had to connect carefully. During woodwind class which was in Curtis Hall, “This Temple of Art,” he always said that we should make it dance, and he showed us how to do it.

In the scales, besides describing where the connections were, there was also the matter of intensity. The higher the number the greater the intensity. This can sometimes translate directly into volume, but he would have been highly offended to think that was all there was to it. Maybe there was a direct correspondence with speed of wind, but it is possible to play softly with high velocity wind. As I said earlier today, he used the phrase, “Play the life of the note,” which essentially meant that any note requires a certain way of approaching it, partly a matter of speed of the wind, which makes the instrument ring on that note. He was very into that. So you could be playing a passage quite softly, but the number he chose to describe it could have been 5, 5, 5, 6, even though it was at a low dynamic level. Generally speaking, when you played long tones which was also part of the lesson, he would say to play from 1 to 9 and back. Sometimes he would also use the numbers to substitute as pitches (he demonstrates 1(DO), 5(SOL), 9(RE), 5(SOL), 1(DO). It might call for whole notes going to DO, SOL, RE, SOL, DO with those numbers being sung. He always made a big production about getting from the SOL back to the DO at the end. He said the SOL should be like cigarette smoke curling up. The attack on DO in
theory, but probably not in practice, was softer than SOL. I would say that the SOL trailing off was softer than the DO, but the DO was directed. It was placed.

![Musical notation](https://example.com/musical-notation.png)

**Figure 10.2: Example of above long tone exercise**

There may have been other teachers who did that, but they did not do it with as much success. It was simply impossible to think about him without taking this approach into account. It became very much second nature. He certainly had wonderful students. Of course, he had the choice of the best students. Everyone wanted to study with him.

**MS:** How long were your lessons in length?

**FK:** Endless - all of thirty minutes. They were short, but they did not seem short. I was not unique in being ill on days of lessons. There were people who threw up regularly. It was very stressful. While I was there nobody ever got thrown out, but the threat was present that if you did not measure up, since it was all scholarship, you would be out.

**MS:** What made him so intimidating in the lessons, besides calling you “Stupid.”

**FK:** He was very much larger than life. He was not a terrifically large man, but he certainly loomed large. It was a little bit like you were with God when you were with him. You’d better be afraid. It was the appropriate emotion to have.
**MS:** Can you describe a typical woodwind class, and how it differed from a private lesson?

**FK:** If his students did not play well at woodwind class, he took pains to disown them at woodwind class, "Who did you say your teacher was?" If anything he was rougher when it was in public. It felt worse to be humiliated with your colleagues around you than in the lesson.

The repertoire that we played was not very large. I’m not very fond of woodwind quintets, partly because of the terror of those early years. I recall that we did Ibert’s *Trois Pièces Brève.* If you recall, the second movement is mostly a duet for flute and clarinet and the oboe only joins in at the end. Tabuteau said, "Here comes the hair in the soup." It was very humiliating at times. It was also very instructive. It was there in woodwind class that I watched him make a horn player play a phrase really well, in a way that the horn player could not have done without Tabuteau’s prdding.

**MS:** I’m really trying to get at what set him apart from other teachers in this way? Was it just because he used the number system or because he was intimidating also?

**FK:** I would say what distinguished him was that other people talked about fingers, rhythm, and dynamics. He talked about music. What is even more important is that he had a way of getting across how you should play so you could produce something that could qualify as music. I’ve never had any other teacher who even came close to being able to accomplish this. Of course I have to question myself. Not everybody studied with Tabuteau and not everybody played the oboe, and there are an awful lot of people who play their instruments wonderfully, so his was not the only way. He was fond of saying that the oboe was just a “stick” and what he was interested in was the music, but he paid a lot of attention to the stick too. He spent an enormous amount of time on reeds and gouging machines.
I had to leave Curtis and go to the Army. That is probably when I learned the most from him. When I finished my basic training, it was possible for me to go to Philadelphia on the weekends. I would spend the entire time with him in his studio, sometimes listening to him give the occasional private lesson. Most of the time was spent watching him work on the gouge and make reeds. At that point he treated me somewhat differently because I was performing a slightly useful service in splitting cane, and he felt he had less justification to yell at me. I heard him play here. As I said, he did not play at lessons. In his studio, he was forever noodling. That is also when it dawned on me that the approach that seemed required at lessons was not really what was going to work ultimately. He sang in the studio. He was not walking on eggs. When he went for something he went for it with great soaring arches of line that one did not dare do when playing for him, for fear that you would commit some sin that left an "i" undotted or a "t" uncrossed.

**MS:** So you mean that you held back, but when he actually played he played out?

**FK:** Yes. That is not to say that he did not play extremely softly too, but it was a very satisfying experience to hear him play. There were certain excerpts that he liked to play in particular. He kept experimenting with the entire repertoire. It was by no means cast in stone. That is what he did after all. He was first and foremost a musician. When you are talking about somebody like him, to call him first and foremost an oboe player was not an insult, even though he himself denigrated the importance that it was an oboe.

**MS:** Would you have considered him a good communicator?

**FK:** Yes, because of what he was able to achieve. He was superlative, but he hardly spoke great English. It is a mystery that after all those years he still had a heavy accent and he made strange grammatical errors. Sometimes he may have cultivated some of that because, as I have said, he was very much a theatrical person, but then again maybe not.

**MS:** Tabuteau was said to have used many analogies as a teaching method. Would you agree with that.
FK: Yes. To get across the idea that you have to have a line with some direction, he would say it is like a car. Unless you are in gear you are not going to move, you are just going to race your engine. To make the story even clearer he told the story of a village fair in France where they had an exhibit of a dancing chicken. There was this chicken in a cage and after you paid your money, the chicken would begin dancing. The explanation was that a gas jet underneath the cage would make the floor get hot. The whole point was that the chicken would move and not get anywhere and, similarly, you have to have a direction in what you are doing for it to count for anything. He was full of analogies like that. It was frequently something that was funny and quite dramatic to make an impression. I think his insults were intended in a way to be humorous. It could well be that much of the delivery in which the insults were handled was intended to strike one in a way to remove the sting, although I assure you it did not. They were to be dramatic so that the lesson would stick. He was a great communicator.

MS: Did Tabuteau ever tell you where he got the idea from for his number system?

FK: He did not, because he claimed that it was his own; however, while I was at Curtis someone at school found a book which I saw by some German musician that predated Tabuteau by a generation at least, who had written some kind of treatise that broke up phrases using numbers that was not far removed from what Tabuteau did. As I said earlier, the numbers did not stand up to really close scrutiny. You have to understand the concept behind the number system in order to really apply it. If somebody did not know anything about music, I do not think it would have worked. It was a means of communication and to the extent that Tabuteau communicated with it extremely well, he was the original.

MS: Was the book by Riemann?

FK: Do you know how many years ago that was?
MS: John Krell spoke of a German book by Hugo Riemann. I was wondering if that is the book?

FK: It is possible. It may have been the reason I was called on to look at the book, because I could read it where someone else might not have been able to read it. As far as Tabuteau was concerned, he claimed ownership to the extent that he talked about writing a book about it himself, writing that is, if somebody wrote it for him. He applied to various of us, myself included, "Would you write something about the number system for me." I never did and nobody else ever did either, so I do not feel all that guilty.

MS: If you would have written this book for him, would this have been an easy task?

FK: It would have been very difficult then as it would be very difficult now. His abilities as a communicator would be essential in order to make what was a rather limited and not particularly perfect concept as transcendent a teaching method as it was for him. I've already described it. A few sentences will do: repeated numbers are not connected, consecutive numbers are. Ascending numbers are mainly intensity and may be dynamic. That is essentially it. From there you need somebody who is an artist, such as he was, to breathe life into that inconsequential idea.

Once I was no longer at Curtis and was in the U.S. Army in Washington D.C., Tabuteau would visit with the Philadelphia Orchestra. I think they had a season there of maybe six concerts. I would spend time with him then. I recall walking around the Ellipse with him and he was rhapsodizing about the beautiful shape of a tree, how symmetrical it was, like a beautiful phrase. He was capable of idealizing something, and perhaps the average phrase is not like that tree. Yes, it has a high point in the middle, but it probably does not go smoothly outward. But for points of illustration, Tabuteau would make a one-to-one correspondence with things. If nothing else, it got across the idea that there was an ideal even if it did not describe the ideal perfectly.
MS: How many ideas do you think Tabuteau took from Gillet?

FK: I have no way of answering that. He never mentioned Gillet. It was as if he sprang fully formed, and of course, he did not. However, there was probably a whole lot that he did that was unique and original. None of the French oboe players used reeds like he did.

MS: Did Tabuteau have you do exercises for controlling your wind, other than long tones?

FK: The first thing you had to do, starting at the level I started, was not play on an oboe at all. You stuck the reed into a piece of cane and played long tones that way.

MS: You literally stuck the reed in the tube.

FK: Yes. Basically the problem with playing any given note is finding how to blow on that length of tube. That simplified a whole lot of things. I played long tones slurred and articulated.

MS: How long did you have to do that?

FK: Perhaps it was just the first three weeks, and maybe I got to play a little oboe also.

MS: Is that what you would do for your lesson, blow into the tube? That must have made for a very long half-hour.

FK: I don’t have a clear memory of doing that for a half-hour. When I came to my audition, I had a wire on my oboe reed. It is funny that a wire is standard on English horn. He took the wire off the reed and told me to play. It played badly with the wire, but it did not play at all without the wire. This brings me to my first oboe lesson. The reed I was playing did not have a wire, but he wanted to see my reed and said, “Bring me better ones.” How? Not a word was said.

MS: He did not tell you how, he just wanted better reeds?
FK: Yes. I'm not sure what the theory behind that was, but I never learned a thing about reeds from him until he expected me to help him make reeds, at which point he showed me some stuff. For instance, he gave me a reed that was not quite finished. All it needed was a clip at the tip, but it played so much better than anything I had that I was not about to touch that reed. Later he wanted to see what I had done with it, and I showed it to him. He was quite disgusted that I had not done what it needed. Similarly apropos of his playing being external and outward going, he let me play on his equipment once. I approached it and nothing came out. His reeds were healthy. You did have to blow.

Because he was so intimidating, it underlined the possible transgressions more than the “thou shalt”. After a certain point, it was not as great of an issue, but I felt greatly trammeled while I was in school by the “thou shalt nots.” It took a long time to discover that a couple of random sins here and there were more forgivable than not actually singing. The point was that one had to take the initiative. It was risky because you would get yelled at if things were not done properly, but I discovered that I also got yelled at for the other. He had a pretty good yell on him.

MS: What were some of the “thou shalt not’s”?

FK: Breathing on the barline was perhaps the cardinal sin. In woodwind class if he said start at the third bar of J, you better not start on a note that did not begin the phrase. If the first note was a resolution, you had better not start there. You did not repeat that mistake more than once.

In a slur two, tongue two articulation, the only slurred note of the four notes was the second of the slurred notes. The first one was attacked. The second note was the slurred one and; therefore, it had to be long. He would say, “Tee-long, tah-tah.” I now believe that there are other ways to do that. You can get off the second note short and still have it bridge the gap. I’m sure one could find recorded versions of his playing where he realized
that. It was a common fault in Philadelphia that everything was long. Frequently in Philadelphia there were no short notes, or so it seems to me today.

**MS:** Did he ever have you play scales thinking inflections?

**FK:** Of course, anytime he applied the number system. There was no such thing as not knowing whether you were thinking up or down. That was as basic as not breathing on a barline. Breathing on a barline meant that you had taken a breath on an up inflection. Other instrumentalists and teachers do this naturally sometimes, I'm sure.

**MS:** Did Tabuteau ever relate wind playing to string playing?

**FK:** There is a video of Ivan Galamian, the famous violin pedagogue, teaching. One of the exercises he demonstrates involves scale passages stretching over many notes (say 11, 13, or 17 notes). Because the bow is of finite length, a player must be able to instinctively divide the available bow to accommodate the required number of notes.

At the beginning of Barret there are pages of such scales with the number of notes per scale progressively increasing. While Tabuteau never assigned these pages, I do recall him suggesting a related exercise:

Establish a slow regular pulse (whole note=around m.m. 40) and say “one” on the downbeat of each bar.

With a regular pulse firmly established, in place of “one” say “two” (indicating that you are now in 2/2 time), say “one” on the 2nd half of the bar and say “two” on the downbeat of the following bar. Repeat for a bar or so and the say “three” on the downbeat of the next bar, placing “one” on the 2nd third of the bar and “two” on the 3rd third, and “one” on the downbeat of the next bar. After a couple of bars like this, say “four” on the downbeat and “one”, “two”, and “three” on the remaining beats of what is now a 4/4 bar and say “one” on the downbeat of the next bar. Continue increasing the number of beats into which the firmly established bar length is divided to some higher number (the upper limit is relative to the speed of the initially set pulse) and then begin to say a different
number on the downbeats of successive bars which of course makes the exercise a little more challenging.

\[ \text{Figure 10.3: Felix Kraus written exercise as discussed above} \]

Once again the object was to establish that music always has direction and; therefore, notes must have a destination, in this instance, the note following the next barline. He was very careful to establish an all encompassing grammar for music. Playing that did not conform to this grammar was unacceptable.

**MS:** Would you say that Tabuteau revolutionized American wind playing?

**FK:** Yes, absolutely. Did you ever see the Italian picture called "Orchestra?" It had to do with an orchestra in Italy at a time when the communists were in power. The point of this had to do with a larger concept than the music. For musicians it was fun, because it parodied the way musicians think of themselves. One of the things made clear is that we all think that our instrument is the most important and most beautiful instrument. Tabuteau, on the one hand, probably felt that the oboe was most important, but on the other hand, he had sense enough to realize that that was a fairly ridiculous concept. That is why he made
the point of saying that it was not just about this silly piece of wood. There was a higher calling.

**MS:** How would the woodwind classes be run. Did he spend lots of time picking through phrases?

**FK:** Yes, that was the aggravating part about the class. We would spend a half-hour on eight bars. He simply would not go on until everything was exactly right. Here were five of us, and somebody was bound to do something that was not quite what it was supposed to be. I'm talking about mainly the first-year students. The upper-classmen played more and longer. My chief memories are about the awful beginnings when you played a few bars and you know you could not do it right because you never had done it right. And, sure enough, it wasn't right this time either.

Alfred Genovese entered Curtis the same year I did. He was already a star then. He was doing Ferling and I was doing the articulation exercises at the beginning of Barret. But Tabuteau was pretty rough on him too, at times. We once discussed staging an armed rebellion in woodwind (quintet) class. (Our weapons were to have been the bells of our oboes). Needless to say, all of this was pure fantasy. Tabuteau was extremely intimidating. I seem to recall an incident in woodwind class when Tabuteau threw a chair at (or at least toward) somebody. He could lose his temper in a most frightening way, but on the other hand, he was also jolly and full of fun-frequently at some hapless student's expense.

**MS:** Did you ever talk about embouchure with Tabuteau?

**FK:** This plaster cast is the only lesson on embouchure I ever got from Tabuteau. It's a cast of Tabuteau's lower teeth. Can you see how much this tooth protruded before his teeth were straightened?

**MS:** So he did have them straightened out?
FK: Yes, it was not like that when I knew him. He proclaimed that this protruding lower tooth had been the secret of his embouchure. It was a valuable lesson. The point he was making was that the upper and lower lips have different functions in supporting the reed. The lower lip must provide firm support for the reed; the reed can not be set in an amorphous soft mess and that pushing the lower jaw forward (in the absence of a conveniently protruding lower tooth) provided the proper firmness. This was the only instruction on embouchure I ever had from the man, but he bugged me a whole lot about hand position. He took great exception to the lifting of the thumb prior to using the first octave key. He wanted the thumb on the instrument at all times. He might have been right, but there are quite a lot of people who have quite dazzling techniques who are not totally neat about the way they do things. Here I would be standing trying to struggle through a transposition exercise and he would be complaining, “The thumb, Stupid, the thumb.” He was equally endearing with most other students.

MS: What was the single most important musical concept you received from Tabuteau.

FK: It would have to be the line. You always have to be going somewhere. The moment you do not have direction, it is no longer music; it is just notes. I think that is a worthwhile thing to keep in mind.
CHAPTER 11
INTERVIEW WITH LOUIS ROSENBLATT

**MS:** What years did you study with Tabuteau?

**LR:** 1949-1951.

**MS:** What classes did you take with him?

**LR:** Oboe lessons and woodwind class.

**MS:** Can you describe a typical lesson with Tabuteau? Was there a typical lesson?

**LR:** Yes, I can say that. He used to get furious if a student came in and started to noodle around, just to warm up, let’s say. He did not have any patience for that. You’d walk into the room and start to play. If you tried your reed he would get very angry. Then you played your lesson. I believe that every student who ever studied with him played Barret études. If you finished all the Barret then the next thing, in my case anyway, was the Brod études and then Ferling études. That took up three years. Some students actually went further and played Gillet études. Most of the time his oboe was there for him to try his reeds if he had a rehearsal that day and he wanted to fix his own reed. He rarely looked at a student’s reed. I think, long before, he had decided that he did not want to be bothered with students’ reeds. In the three years that I was his student, I believe he looked at my reed twice, maybe three times. One of those three times he actually fixed my reed and really made it a lot better. He certainly knew what he was doing! Otherwise, he did not pay much attention to the reed unless he did not like the way it sounded; then he would really rake you over the coals.
Tabuteau expected the oboe students to buy instruments from him. If you did not buy an instrument from him he might kick you out of school. It sounds like an exaggeration but he actually did that, in my experience, to one of his students. I did buy an oboe from Tabuteau and really liked it. A few weeks after that I was playing a lesson, and he handed me a different instrument and said, “Here, try this instrument.” I tried it and did not like it very much, but he took back the first one and left me with the one I did not like.

**MS:** Did he ever demonstrate by playing?

**LR:** Yes, but not very often. His playing was very inspiring, certainly to me. I imagine it was to everyone. He was a great artist, no question in my mind. He was just a rotten guy, but he certainly was a great musician.

**MS:** How long were the lessons?

**LR:** According to his contract I think they were supposed to last 40 or 45 minutes, and they never lasted any longer than that. Time ran out and that was that.

**MS:** Did he ever discuss breathing in lessons?

**LR:** Yes, but not a lot. I cannot make a generalization about that because it may be that one student had a different problem from another student. Actually, in my case, I did have some problems with breathing in the beginning. I would get all choked up and did not know quite what to do about it. It was hard to ask him what to do. He did not like students saying anything. He did not like them talking to him. You could ask him a question, but he would act as if you did something wrong if you asked him a question. I don’t remember that he helped me much with breathing. At that time I decided that if I took singing lessons it might help me to breathe better. There was another student at the school, a vocal student, who was a very smart fellow and I did take some singing lessons from him, and it did help. I believe this would help any person who plays an instrument requiring breathing, as opposed to a string instrument.
He did not say much about fingerings. He did observe one’s fingerings. It depended, of course, on whether or not he thought you were fingerling the notes correctly.

The main thing for him was expression. To teach this he employed a now-famous numbering system which he certainly used with every student, including string players.

**MS:** A lot of people felt that he never adequately explained the number system. He applied the numbers and you caught on-or did not.

**LR:** Tabuteau’s number system was actually not hard to comprehend. It was a quite simple system. It became legendary but there was little to it, really. It was very inspiring because he not only said or sang the numbers, but also explained how the numbers should be applied. These numbers were his “scientific” way of explaining how to bring out the expression of a passage. I don’t believe any of his students failed to understand him. The people in his string class perhaps did not understand the system itself, but they certainly understood what he was getting at. It had value because, instead of merely suggesting a poetic way of expressing the notes, “Play this passage and imagine the sun rising over the horizon,” he proposed numbers, i.e., as the numbers got larger you were to play louder, and that sort of thing. It was a way of making the expression more concrete than by simply using very poetic words. He also sang or played how he wanted it to sound and one then understood. That was the inspiring part, not just the numbers by themselves, but how he sang them. His manner of explaining was very inspiring. The numbers were an interesting device, but it was the way he used them that was so great. His students went out into the world and used the “number system” with their own students, but it probably did not work quite as well as when he used it.

**MS:** Did he ever mention where he got the idea from?

**LR:** No, not that I ever heard.

**MS:** Have you ever heard of a book by Lucien Capet?
I.R.: No, but now that you mention it, there is another book which may very well have been a source of some kind of instruction on learning to play with expression. It is one that I own, which has been translated into English, from the original French.

MS: What is the name?

It's entitled *Musical Expression*. Tabuteau never mentioned this book, but in the course of meeting other French musicians of the older generation it seems very likely to me that it was very influential with people of his time. It is quite thick, and has all sorts of instructions about how to sing and play expressively. The author is Mathis Lussy (See Appendix C for a synopsis).

Tabuteau used to say that he did not teach anything new; everything he taught was what his teacher had already taught him. That may have been an exaggeration, but there is probably something to it.

MS: Was Tabuteau a good communicator?

I.R.: Oh, yes.

MS: In your opinion are there a lot of teachers nowadays that still teach the same way Tabuteau did?

I.R.: No, I do not think so. Very few still use the numbers, for example.

MS: Tabuteau was said to have used many analogies when he taught. Would you consider that to have been part of his teaching method?

I.R.: Yes, definitely. He did use a lot of very picturesque analogies, especially if there was an audience. When he taught the woodwind class, people would sometimes come to watch. He did not mind people hanging around watching. When he had an audience he really went overboard with these analogies. I can still remember an arrangement of *Toccata and Fugue in d minor* by Bach, for wind instruments. At that time, for some reason, there was a big audience in the hall used for his classes. He was describing how to play a certain passage. It had something to do with how dough is kneaded for baking. He made
extravagant gestures. It was all tempered by the fact of using the numbers, as if employing a scientific method, as opposed to a purely romantic approach. (Very French, in my opinion.)

**MS:** Did classroom instruction differ from private lessons?

**LR:** It was the same. He could be abusive at times. He really made people very nervous. You had to have a thick skin to get through these sessions. Some people never did manage to get over their nerves. I remember people being absolutely terrified in woodwind class. They could hardly play a note; the tone shook. He could be very rude. He often called people “Stupid”. (He demonstrates in a thick accent.) He had a very heavy French accent, but I think he liked having it. He lived in the United States for a long time and spoke English perfectly, but I think he just hung on to that accent. He could make very insulting analogies about how somebody played.

**MS:** Would you say Tabuteau revolutionized American wind playing?

**LR:** American oboe playing, yes. I think revolutionized is too strong a word, but he did have an influence on American wind playing in general. He influenced his colleagues in the Philadelphia Orchestra with his “numbers” and his method of teaching, and his approach to expressing music. Tabuteau had a very clear vision of how music should sound. He did not mind telling anyone that they were not playing correctly. His colleagues got to hear plenty from him about how they should make corrections, but were glad to hear from him because, as I believe, they admired his ideas. He also had some influence on brass players, certainly on wind playing in general. Of course, there are famous teachers of other instruments who might not want to agree entirely. There were other teachers who were very influential too, of course.

**MS:** Like Kincaid?
MR: Kincaid was very influential, but he was also influenced by Tabuteau. I think everybody around Tabuteau was affected by him, even string players. Influenced, yes, but not revolutionized.

MS: How did Tabuteau go about teaching phrasing? Did he teach it exclusively with his number system?

MR: No, not just the number system. I would have to say it was, in a way, an elementary kind of teaching. He wanted people to learn certain basic things, even if they did not apply in all cases. For example, he would tell students never to breathe on the bar line. That, as he knew, is not always true, but he insisted on it anyway. He himself might deviate from his own rule. The point was to cause students to notice where phrases end and begin. It was a way of directing them towards thinking a certain way about how to play the music. That had nothing to do with numbers. Also, he might show a student what he called “cells,” a group of notes that belong together. Then he might add the numbers to that, because the numbers made it more concrete. The understanding of groupings came first, and the numbers were a way of solidifying the idea. I don’t think using the numbers was the most important part of his teaching. It was a way of teaching that became very well known, even famous, because nobody else did it. He did not teach phrasing simply with numbers.

MS: How much of Tabuteau’s success as a teacher and performer did he attribute to Gillet, his teacher?

MR: All of it, but I don’t think he really meant it. He spoke very highly of Gillet. When he mentioned Gillet’s name it was always with great respect. As I told you before, he said that whatever he knew about music he had learned from Gillet. He had a gouging machine of Gillet’s. Sometimes he would pull it out and show it to a student in a very respectful way. He did attribute his knowledge and success to what he learned from Gillet. He may have said that, but perhaps it was for effect.
**MS:** Why would you say Tabuteau's teachings had such a positive and lasting effect on musicians?

**LR:** It was very inspiring. You were led to believe that you could do a lot more with music than you had ever thought. He saw more in music than most musicians that I have known. He gave students and his colleagues the idea that they would find more in music if they would only look a little harder.

**MS:** Did Tabuteau treat all of his students equally?

**LR:** Yes, in his demand for the highest standards and in his abuse of students when he felt that the standards were not being met.

**MS:** What was the single most important musical concept you took from Tabuteau and used as a teacher?

**LR:** That is a hard thing to pin down. I can tell you that at Tabuteau's time there was a great deal of individuality allowed the players of the orchestra, especially in the Philadelphia Orchestra. It was really highly prized. Tabuteau was a great example of that. I think his idea of being a great individualist was one important teaching. A more specific concept would be the finding and shaping of phrases. In other kinds of instruction such as string players get, perhaps, phrasing may not be emphasized as much. They think about playing with expression of course, but I don't think teachers point out as often that the melody is divided into parts. Tabuteau spoke very much about that. That was a big concept, but more important than that, in my opinion, was the idea of playing with a great deal of individuality. Nowadays there are a lot of very fine players, but I do not think they are as different from each other as they used to be in Tabuteau's day.

**MS:** How did Tabuteau teach inflections?

**LR:** He would use the idea of bowing as in string instruments, very often. When he had string classes he would tell them how to bow, but I don't think he knew very much about the technicalities of bowing a string instrument. He thought, if one note leads to

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another note, you use an up bow. All his oboe students attended most of his string classes because it was very interesting to hear how he taught them. He often spoke about bowing, but I never heard him use a word that is technically associated with bowing. He used the example of bowing but would just say “up” and “down” to explain inflections.

The French often like to think they are being very scientific about aesthetic matters. Tabuteau’s way of being scientific, as I told you, was by using his number system. It is a good method of teaching. If a pupil plays a few notes and thinks in terms of the second note being at a higher level than the first note (as for example, 1,2,3), than the idea of the numbers getting bigger is a little more concrete than just saying “get louder.” If you played a phrase and got too loud too soon, then he would say you were playing 1,2,5, not 1,2,3. The student understood very clearly from that, that it got too loud all of a sudden. It was a helpful way of explaining how the music ought to sound.

Tabuteau also had a lot of influence on the conception of oboe tone. I remember him saying that he tried to achieve a synthesis of the French style of oboe sound and the German. When he came to the U.S.A., he was still playing in the style he had been taught in France. Little by little he began to develop a kind of tone which he thought could be a combination of the French and German. At that time, the German idea called for a thick and dull sound, with little vibration. The French was the opposite. That eventually became a very important part of his thinking about oboe sound. He may have carried it to an extreme at the end of his stay in the U.S.A., in my opinion. When a student had a reed with a very bright sound, he objected. He would either break the reed or tell the student not to come back if he was going to play on a reed like that. He acted as if you were trying to insult him. Sometimes he would pick up the stand and threaten to hit you with it. I don’t think he would have done it, but you believed he could. He conveyed a clear idea of how he wanted you to sound. Certainly one could hear him play. How he played showed how he wanted you to sound. He rarely did much with reeds with the students.
**MS**: Did he seem to treat other woodwind players the same as oboe players in the woodwind class?

**LR**: Yes, he was equally hard on them. Occasionally, there were one or two people who he thought had little talent. To those he was nice.

**MS**: So the abrasiveness was a part of the training?

**LR**: Yes, that is true. In my opinion, being nasty came first, then came the rationalization of it. He explained that he was abusive because he was trying to teach people how to get along in a hard world with rude conductors. I remember him saying once, “They say I’m a bad man! But I’m trying to teach you, etc.” I don’t remember the rest of it. It had to do with the fact that since you were going to have to put up with tough conductors, he was training you to deal with it. I think the fact of his being nasty came first, then he rationalized that he was doing it in your best interest. There actually was something to it, because in his day conductors were pretty darn nasty. Nowadays they are usually polite.

**MS**: Beyond the context of him as a teacher, was he the same way in social situations?

**LR**: He tried to be charming outside of school. He was actually not a very refined character. He gave a New Year’s Eve party for three of us students, once. The party was in his apartment and he and his wife cooked, but it did not last very long. I don’t think even until midnight. The food was very good. At about eleven o’clock he looked at his watch and said, “Say, what time is it?” That was a signal. Larry Thorstenberg, who was a little older and more mature than the other two of us, had been a soldier and seemed to have a little bit more know-how about social situations. He recognized immediately that Tabuteau had decided that we were to go. Larry immediately got up and said, “I think it’s quite late, and we should go.”
At another party his wife was to have tea with two other ladies and Tabuteau was to be the guest of honor. She invited me and Larry as escorts to the two older ladies. Tabuteau was interested only in talking about himself and how he played "the life of the notes."

**MS:** Did he act similarly in the orchestra and with colleagues?

**LR:** He was very outspoken in the orchestra. Apparently, he did not care what he said to conductors. When he retired from the Philadelphia Orchestra, Eugene Ormandy was the conductor. I understand that Tabuteau gave a speech to the orchestra and said something like, "It is a well-known fact that musicians play best for conductors that they hate. That's why we play so well in the Philadelphia Orchestra." Ormandy was standing right there!

When I was a student I went to a concert early and Tabuteau was one of two people on stage prior to the concert. He was trying out his reeds and a violin player was tuning. Tabuteau evidently decided that the violinist's pitch was wrong. Probably he thought it was too sharp; he always thought violinists were too sharp. The man playing the violin had not seen him coming when Tabuteau stuck the bell of his oboe in the guy's ear and blew an A. It shocked the man—totally took him by surprise. He jumped out of his seat. He immediately started to retune his instrument. People were nervous with Tabuteau. Some of the older men in the wind section would laugh about this. He did have a good sense of humor. He was not always abusive of course, just most of the time. He had certain great qualities, his musicianship above all. He was a very clever man. He could think up wonderfully imaginative explanations of how music ought to sound, really clever examples.

They say he liked to gamble, and also that he played the stock market. Apparently he was not good at either of those things. He was not a very complicated person. Tabuteau was a great musician and often an unpleasant fellow, otherwise. I don't think he was generally abusive; he did not pick on specific people. His wife taught French at the Curtis
Institute and all the oboe students took French with her because they thought it would help them get good grades with him. Mme Tabuteau regarded her connection with her husband as putting her in a high-level social stratum. If you ran into her outside of school she feigned not to know who you were; as if she had never seen you before even though it was not a large class.
CHAPTER 12
ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

Tabuteau’s ideas were in a state of evolution over the course of thirty years of teaching. It was the entire “package” that made Tabuteau an exceptional teacher. Indisputably, Tabuteau was a fabulous musician. This musicianship coupled with his excellent communication skills and inspiring manner of delivery is the reason why Tabuteau stands out among teachers of his generation.

Abba Bogin spoke about Tabuteau’s music skills in this way, “I think Tabuteau had to be, from when he was a little boy, a musical genius. The talent was just there. With it came a personality, training and a background. Everyone that played or sat down next to him was influenced by him.”

Felix Kraus believes that it was Tabuteau’s ability to communicate the music that set him apart from other teachers.

I would say what distinguished him was that other people talked about fingers, rhythm, and dynamics. He talked about music. What is even more important is that he had a way of getting across how you should play so you could produce something that could qualify as music. I’ve never had any other teacher who even came close to being able to accomplish this.

John de Lancie described Tabuteau’s communication skills in a similar manner:

He was the only man I ever heard who explained music to us. Everything about music. He just seemed to have an

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1 Abba Bogin, Interview with author, 7 August, 1998.

2 Felix Kraus, Interview with author, 9, September, 1998.
understanding about the structure of music, how music was supposed to sound and how it was played. In other words, he could take a "dumbbell" or a "turkey" or whatever you want to call it, and make them play well. Of course, in our youth and naïve approach, we thought he could make them play well forever. He could, however, make them play well as long as he was there telling them what to do, but when they would go out and try to do something by themselves they would be back to square one. He could work with some kid who was not good and show him how to play a phrase that was very beautiful, and it would be startling. Then, if the kid had to do something by himself, if it was somebody that was not talented, he didn’t seem to know what to do.  

All interviewees agreed that Tabuteau was able to communicate his ideas without any difficulty; however, according to several interviewees, Tabuteau went about communicating at times through intimidation. Felix Kraus stated, “Tabuteau was extremely intimidating. I seem to recall an incident in woodwind class when Tabuteau threw a chair at (or at least toward) somebody. He could lose his temper in a most frightening way but, on the other hand, he was also jolly and full of fun—frequently at some hapless student’s expense.”  

John Krell spoke of Tabuteau’s teaching practices in this way: “There was fun, but you had to know when to laugh and when not to laugh. He used to threaten us. He would make fists and so forth. If you could play for him, you could play for anybody.”  

Louis Rosenblatt thought that perhaps it was Tabuteau’s desire to prepare the students for the “real world” that led Tabuteau to intimidate them. “He explained that he was abusive because he was trying to teach people how to get along in a hard world with rude conductors. I remember him saying once, ‘They say I’m a bad man! But I’m trying to teach you…”  

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3 John de Lancie, Interview with author, 17 August, 1997.

4 Kraus, 1998.


6 Louis Rosenblatt, Interview with author, 1 September, 1997.
A significant part of Tabuteau’s success as a teacher was that his ideas, while internally structured, were not tied to specific deadlines or a syllabus. He was able to teach “music for music’s sake.” According to John de Lancie:

He got them (ideas) across so well because there was never any structure in any of his lessons or his classes. You had four pieces and you did not necessarily go through all four pieces. You could spend the whole lesson doing 8 measures, and you would never get beyond that if things were not happening. In the orchestra classes or woodwind classes it was the same thing. He wanted to make sure you understood and you were going to stay on that until the two hours were up. To give you an example, we had woodwind classes with him. We played one concert a year. We started at the end of September and in April we played a concert. You could have, during the concert, dumped a bucket of ice water over each one of us playing, and we would have kept right on playing and playing well.7

Tabuteau did not have a syllabus that stated in writing how much material must be covered over a certain period of time. In fact, students were not required to give recitals while at Curtis as a necessity for graduation, and students of Tabuteau were not allowed to play in the Curtis orchestra at least until the end of their first year of study. They could be thrown out of school, however, if their teacher did not feel they were playing up to par. Instead of a syllabus of specific deadlines, Tabuteau taught by what I call an “internal structure.” Concepts were clearly organized in his mind. The final output was a well-trained musician, but his method of achieving this goal might be slightly different from student to student. Tabuteau explains this best in his own words, “Each student must be treated as an individual problem. How often have I had the experience, in teaching a class of three or four, of correcting one student with a certain observation, and finding myself called upon to say the exact opposite to the next one.”8

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7 de Lancie, 1997.

In order to teach each student, both John Mack and Hershel Gordon spoke of Tabuteau’s method of teaching. John Mack said, “It is what I call schooling, and it is what I try to provide to my students. You start with A and you do A and A1. You don’t go to B until you have done A1, A2, A3, A4 and so on. Then you move on.” In other words, Tabuteau had a definite plan in his head of how concepts were to be taught. According to Hershel Gordon, “It did not come out of a book. It came out of him. It was not a lesson plan. It was sitting down and playing and really discussing the music, the phrasing and that sort of thing.”

Probably the most well known of Tabuteau's musical concepts is what is referred to as the “number system.” Tabuteau was obviously aware of the importance of this concept, since there is evidence that he asked students to write about the number system. Felix Kraus states, “He talked about writing a book about it himself, writing that is, if somebody wrote it for him. He applied to various of us, myself included, ‘Would you write something about the number system for me?’ I never did and nobody else ever did either, so I do not feel all that guilty.” When Felix Kraus was asked if writing these ideas down would have been an easy task he replied, “It would have been very difficult then as it would be very difficult now. His abilities as a communicator would be essential in order to make what was a rather limited and not particularly perfect concept as transcendent a teaching method as it was for him.”

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11 Kraus, 1998.

12 Kraus, 1998.
What follows is a summary of the interviewee’s comments about Tabuteau’s musical concepts including: the number system, his connection to string instruments, breathing, wind control, and his use of analogies.

John Minsker states that the number system did evolve over the course of years, and when he studied with him from 1930-34, it was in its infancy. John Minsker said, “I think the number system began around [Robert] Bloom’s time when it was fairly simple and gradually developed into the complex system he describes in the record and CD that Wayne Rapier made, where almost every note has a number.¹³ He didn’t go that far when I was there.”¹⁴ John Minsker states the following specifics about the number system:

He did give you the general idea: 1,2,3 3,4,5. A note repeated begins a different group. In other words they’re not together. His numbers were never intended to be just loud and soft. They were intended as intensity and an increase in color. The crowning glory of his teaching was his ability to make you think about every note you played.¹⁵

John Minsker makes it clear that when a number is repeated (the 3’s), they do not belong together as part of the same unit. Numbers do not just indicate a dynamic level, they indicate degree of intensity and change in color. It seems that Minsker was not alone in his assessment of the number system. John de Lancie, John Krell, John Mack and Felix Kraus all described the number system in terms of intensity. As the numbers ascend, the idea was not to necessarily get louder, but to increase the intensity of the sound. Minsker also mentioned that the number system had to do with the grouping of notes. John de Lancie, Abba Bogin, Hershel Gordon, John Mack, Felix Kraus and Louis Rosenblatt also described the number system as a way to show which notes of a phrase belonged together.

¹³ Marcel Tabuteau, rec. 1965, Art of the Oboe, Columbus, Ohio: Coronet Recording Company.


¹⁵ Minsker, 1997.
and which notes did not belong together. It seems that repeated numbers were not connected and consecutive numbers were. Several interviewees also mentioned that the number system could also have had something to do with dynamics, but this was the least of its functions.

Most interviewees, when asked, did state that the number system was not “spelled out” for them by Tabuteau. It was a part of Tabuteau’s routine for teaching expressiveness, and students were expected to catch on to the method or be left behind. Tabuteau taught the number system in his woodwind and string classes. Louis Rosenblatt summarized the number system in this way:

These numbers were his “scientific” way of explaining how to bring out the expression of a passage. [...] It had value because, instead of merely suggesting a poetic way of expressing the notes, “play this passage and imagine the sun rising over the horizon” [...] It was a way of making the expression more concrete than by simply using very poetic words.¹⁶

Although the number system was successfully implemented by Tabuteau, it was not used in the same way by his students when they became teachers. While his students understood the overall purpose of the system, to attain musical expression, it would have taken a lot of practicing to be able to execute the system the same way that Tabuteau did. Helner (1987) cites that this system “in Tabuteau’s own words, was subjective and applied inconsistently.” John de Lancie spoke specifically of the problem with the number system:

The numbers zero, and eleven presented a problem because they were two-syllable; whereas, one through ten were all single-syllable, with the exception of seven. This problem made the system somewhat limited. Tabuteau agreed with the mathematical fact that measurement begins with the number zero, not one; therefore, he would have liked to begin his use of numbers on zero. Orally executing zero or eleven was extremely clumsy for Tabuteau or anyone else.

This made it difficult to apply the numbers to lengthy or involved phrases.\textsuperscript{17}

Also, as many of Tabuteau's students stated, it was not just the system specifically that was significant, but it was the way in which Tabuteau delivered this system that was so remarkable. It was his combination of teaching the numbers and his personality that cannot be duplicated.

It seems that Tabuteau would sometimes use the number system while speaking about the \textit{quality} of sound as well. The development of a quality sound began with Tabuteau having students learn how to control their wind. Many of the interviewees spoke of how each wind class began with the students doing what they referred to as "intensity drives" or "long tones." According to Mason Jones, Tabuteau counted out the numbers 3,2,1, and the student was to enter on 1. Students would then, one by one, play a note which would start from nothing and grow in intensity to the peak, and then decrease in intensity back to zero. Each student was required to do this in front of his peers. It was in this way that the students learned to control their wind, shape their line, practice soft attacks and develop a quality sound. The numbers were then applied to the chamber music to re-emphasize where to go with the sound in terms of intensity. Both sound and intensity were discussed synonymously with many interviewees.

Tabuteau, as part of his method for teaching, used many references to string playing. Most of the interviewees including John Minsker, John de Lancie, John Mack, Felix Kraus, Mason Jones, and Louis Rosenblatt spoke of how they were taught to play scales using inflections of up- and down-bows. Students were to internalize that they were playing a string instrument and using the bow. Students were not allowed to breathe between an up- and a down-bow (inflection). This is because the up-bow led to the down-

\textsuperscript{17} John de Lancie, phone interview, November, 1996.
bow, giving the music a horizontal direction. This is why students were not allowed to breathe on the bar line. The note before the bar line was generally an up impulse that led over the bar line. John Krell explains the use of inflections as follows:

He related everything so much to the fiddle, to string playing, except he'd find string players always used the wrong bowing. He had all the impulses of bowing. He insisted there was a difference between a down-bow and an up-bow. He insisted we think about them. In the thinking you realized it was a lifting and a resolution. Downbeat, a lift to the next beat and then a resolution. That is the way it generally happened harmonically also. There is a resolution on the beat notes. He scolded us for phrasing on the beat notes: 1, up, up, up, down [in 4/4 time]. The impulses added something to the length of notes too. It's in the mind, but it makes a difference in the playing.\(^{18}\)

Felix Kraus states, "There was no such thing as not knowing whether you were thinking up or down. That was as basic as not breathing on a bar line. Breathing on a bar line meant that you had taken a breath on an up inflection."\(^{19}\) Tabuteau also related wind playing to a string players bow in the string class he taught. Hershel Gordon stated:

I think he had an effect on us on how we bowed the music when we did bow it. We looked at the bow as being part and parcel of the phrase, what notes we played on a bow before we made a change. He talked about where we took a breath. We have to take a breath like a wind player.\(^{20}\)

John Mack spoke of Tabuteau's fascination with string players.

He was very curious that the string players had capabilities much greater than the oboist. In other words, you could play a note with the same dynamic level with a light pressure and more speed or more pressure, less speed. You also had the capability of playing near the bridge or near the finger board. He was very much into things like that. He wanted to be able to have a greater color range than people were accustomed to with the oboe.\(^{21}\)

\(^{18}\) Krell, 1998.

\(^{19}\) Kraus, 1998.


There is also clear evidence of this relationship to string instruments in the recordings, *The Art of the Oboe* and *Marcel Tabuteau's Lessons*.

Tabuteau balanced this "scientific" method of teaching musical expressiveness with a logical and perhaps more humanistic approach in his use of analogies and similes. Each interviewee spoke of the influence of Tabuteau's analogies. They made it clear that it was an important part of their training. There are many examples of the analogies used by Tabuteau throughout the oral histories. For example, John Mack spoke of a description Tabuteau once used to describe a student's sound, "Young man, your tone reminds me of a Bermuda onion peel."22 Perhaps it was a way of Tabuteau shocking the student into the reality of the situation at hand.

A common practice of today is for the teacher to demonstrate by playing for his or her student. It seems that Tabuteau did very little or no playing in lessons for his students early in his teaching career, but around the time John Mack studied with him (1945) until the end of his teaching career, he did do some limited playing for his students. Both John Minsky and John de Lancie stated that Tabuteau did not play for them unless their lessons were at Tabuteau's studio, and then it was mostly a case of Tabuteau wanting to fix his own oboe reeds. It seems a little later in his teaching career, Tabuteau did play to demonstrate for John Mack, Felix Kraus and Louis Rosenblatt. All of the interviewees did say that Tabuteau never demonstrated by playing the oboe for the woodwind class or string class. Although Tabuteau did very little modeling for his students in lessons or classes, hearing him play in the Philadelphia Orchestra was an important weekly education.

Breathing is also another issue that is spoken of rather frequently in this generation. With regard to Tabuteau, it seems that he did very little speaking on the subject, if at all.

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One mention of Tabuteau talking about breathing comes from John Minsker. He was told by Tabuteau to blow on a candle to keep it from extinguishing. The idea was to blow on the flame without putting it out, in other words, control the bending of the flame. This was a method to learn how to control the wind.

When asked if Tabuteau’s private teaching and class instruction were different, most interviewees said that they were about the same, but perhaps a bit worse in the class. It seems that Tabuteau enjoyed the audience, but the students mostly felt humiliated when they were singled out.

It is interesting to note that both oboists and non-obois who were interviewed seemed to speak of having been taught the same musical concepts with equal importance. For example, Hershel Gordon, cellist, speaks about a string class:

A typical class was a group of us sitting in Curtis Hall, Tabuteau sitting on the podium with his glasses at the end of his nose, conducting and talking with us about the music. He would talk about the phrasing of one measure to another and one note to another, the relationship of the measures and the notes to each other. I think what we got out of that class was not only a sense, but the knowledge of how you look at a piece of music. All of us would have looked at a piece of music differently had it not have been for his class and the exposure to him.23

This shows that Tabuteau rose above teaching the oboe; he taught music first and foremost. Future endeavors to supplement this work might include a greater in-depth study of non-obois, particularly string players.

CONCLUSION

The insight gained into Marcel Tabuteau, the teacher, from doing this oral history project was exceptional. Tabuteau was a very complex individual who touched the lives of countless musicians. The hope is that this project has given more people an understanding of his enormous contribution to music.

It seems that Tabuteau had the ability to make even the least proficient musician sound outstanding, if only for the few moments he was with them. Tabuteau accomplished this goal with a set of teaching tools that were firmly established in his mind. These tools, combined with Tabuteau’s personality, allowed him to communicate his pedagogical concepts for teaching musical expressiveness in a successful manner.

Albeit Tabuteau had a set of tools that were utilized to teach music, any attempt to be an absolute authority on his concepts would be wrong. Laila Storch, a student of Marcel Tabuteau, spoke of Tabuteau’s desire to have his musical ideas put into writing: “Tabuteau never wanted to write a method, feeling that it could only be misinterpreted without live illustration and example.”24 Felix Kraus did speak of Tabuteau wanting to put his number system “down on paper,” but as mentioned earlier, no attempt was ever made.

Marcel Tabuteau had a profound effect on many musicians. He concentrated on teaching music, not the mechanics of playing the oboe. He made all students think about each and every note they played and its relationship to the whole. It was the package of the man that made Tabuteau stand out among teachers of his or any other generation. His ideas, musicianship, inquisitive mind and ability to communicate were the essential elements of the package. The success of his teaching is evident by the number of his

students that were successful in attaining the top orchestral jobs in the United States. It is also evidenced in the number of second-generation Tabuteau students who are successful today.
APPENDIX A

FOLLOW-UP TO JOHN DE LANCIE’S INTERVIEW

Although he is known for his accomplishments on the oboe, Tabuteau’s musical career actually began with the violin sometime between the age of eight and ten. In a recent conversation with John de Lancie, former Tabuteau student and his successor in the Philadelphia Orchestra, he stated that Tabuteau thought in terms of bowing because of his experience with the violin. His ideas for phrasing, or “the number system” as it is sometimes referred, were a result of thinking about the distribution of the violin bow.

According to John de Lancie, Tabuteau’s formative ideas about bow distribution were influenced by a book called, Die Hohere Bogentechnik (The Superior Bow Technique), by Lucien Capet (1927). One can draw many parallels between Capet’s teachings on bow distribution and Tabuteau’s teaching of phrasing.

Tabuteau states that “Wind control is the equivalent of the bowing distribution on a string instrument.”¹ Therefore, one can deduce that Tabuteau believed: wind control = bow distribution control. Capet defines the distribution of the bow by dividing it into several parts and attaching numbers to the parts as follows²:

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¹ Marcel Tabuteau, Art of the Oboe, Coronet Recording Co., 1965.
Capet then explains why the bow is divided into different parts. "...to even the speed of the bow as well as to prevent uneven tone production." ³

³ Capet, p.13.
Therefore, control of each section of the bow would need to be mastered in order to create different effects or colors. Leopold Mozart described four dynamic ‘divisions of the bow.’ The purpose of these divisions was ‘to cultivate purity of tone, variety of expression and mastery of the bow in all its parts.’\(^4\) Comparing Tabuteau’s statement regarding wind control being the equivalent to bow control, one could deduct that Capet’s quest for even tone production was the same as Tabuteau’s quest for controlling the wind. By controlling the bow or the wind, one is able to experiment with different tone colors. Tabuteau referred to his progression of numbers as just that, “a scaling of color.”\(^5\) Of special interest to oboe players is the fact that Tabuteau also applied the distribution concept to reeds. He demonstrates in the *Art of the Oboe* how distributing the reed in your mouth (playing from the very tip to the bottom) can create different colors on the same note.

As stated by de Lancie, the number system was utilized to indicate several things at the same time. They include: intensity of going to the peak, note groupings, and dynamic changes. Intensity and note groupings were fairly equal in importance.

Intensity was explained by Tabuteau as an up-down distribution. “The up-down distribution has to do with *air speed* filling in gaps between two different notes which determine the interval.”\(^6\) There is no doubt that his ideas of up-down inflections came from his violin influence. String players spend their lives thinking in terms of “up” and “down” bows. John de Lancie once said that we as wind players do not have the visual advantage

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\(^5\) Tabuteau.

\(^6\) Tabuteau.
of playing in an up or down inflection. We have to create the illusion that we are playing up-down inflections with our wind.

Tabuteau also used the numbering system to show groupings of notes. An example of this concept of note grouping is as follows:

![Figure A.3: author's example of numbers to show note groupings](image)

In this system, two repeated numbers do not belong together, as indicated by their different up-down inflections. John Krell offers a good example of this system put to actual music. The highest number indicates the peak of the phrase.⁷

![Figure A.4: Example of number system from Krell](image)

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Capet applied numbers to help explain the concept of bow distribution. One exercise he offers is as follows:\footnote{Capet, p.13.}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure_a5.png}
\caption{Numbers as they apply to bow distribution}
\end{figure}

People often misinterpret the idea of going to the peak of the phrase with dynamics. John de Lancie stated that the number system should not be construed as dynamics. One does not always have to reach the peak at a loud dynamic. It is the intensity of wind that propels you toward the peak.

Tabuteau’s number system, although very effective, did have some inherent problems. Hefner cites that this system “in Tabuteau’s own words, was subjective and applied inconsistently.”\footnote{John de Lancie, p.13.} John de Lancie stated that the numbers zero, and eleven presented a problem because they were two-syllable; whereas, one through ten were all single-syllable, with the exception of seven. This problem made the system somewhat limited. Tabuteau agreed with the mathematical fact that measurement begins with the number zero,
not one; therefore, technically his use of numbers should have started on zero. Orally executing zero or eleven was extremely clumsy for Tabuteau or anyone else. This made it difficult to apply the numbers to lengthy or involved phrases.

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APPENDIX B
FOLLOW-UP TO JOHN KRELL’S INTERVIEW

Mr. Krell showed the author an entry in the Harvard Dictionary of Music (1956) under the title “Phrasing,” which specifically reads: “the ‘law’ of phrasing, namely, Riemann’s Auftaktigkeit, according to which every musical phrase begins with an ‘Auftakt,’ i.e., an upbeat.” Mr. Krell seemed to remember there being some connection between this idea and Tabuteau’s ideas for phrasing. Mr. Krell stated that he was very interested in finding this treatise to see what relation it had to Tabuteau’s ideas.

Researching led me to a book published in 1912 by Hugo Riemann entitled, Vademecum der Phrasierung (Guidebook for Phrasing). Within the book is an introduction to and chapter on the agogic accent (V), as well as a chapter on strong and weak measures (IV), and a chapter on phrasing (I).

It should be pointed out that the following is based on a summary of the book, not a literal translation of every word. The book is difficult to read due to the German vocabulary of 1912 and the style of writing.

An agogic accent is defined as not a dynamic accent, but emphasis of weight.¹ Riemann states that if the barline is changed within a phrase, the emphasis of where the importance lies also changes. This is pointed out in the excerpt below.² The emphasis of

² Riemann, 52.
the quarter notes changes depending on where they fall in relation to the barline. The pattern begins with notes leading over the barline; however, in bar 8, the emphasis shifts to being on the barline. Tabuteau spoke of making sure that phrases carried over the barline. This was an important part of his teaching philosophy.

![Musical notation]

**Figure B.1: Beethoven, Symphony No. 3**

It seems that, as early as 1793, Chr. Heinrich Koch, in an attempt to explain musical form without words, used numbers. Koch used numbers to show the weight of the notes in a bar. According to Riemann, Karl Bargheer, a student of Spohr, used numbers to show different emphasis of each measure in a phrase.

The first phase of this new knowledge shows itself in smaller parts in which there is a (v) with a number 2,1, or 3 over the barline in order to indicate the weight (strength) of the measure in a phrase. He used the numbers to point out the emphasis of each measure with Bach Inventions and Clementi Sonatinas. The (v) was the sign of the strong measures. The measure numbers in parentheses are used to show strong bars in a phrase. He uses 2,4,6, and 8 in brackets to show the relationship between strong and weak

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3 Riemann, 4.
bars. He also uses two different types of phrase markings to show motives going over the bar.\textsuperscript{4}

While it seems that Tabuteau's number system for teaching intensity and grouping of notes may have been original in presentation, the "concept" of numbering to explain musical expression has been in existence for a long time. Tabuteau took it further and applied it to wind playing, which does not have the physical/visual component that string playing does. In addition, it is interesting to note that Bargheer also used markings to show how motives go over the barline, a concept that Tabuteau believed in strongly. Many of the interviewees discuss that while studying with Tabuteau, breathing on the barline was not an option. Phrases always carried over the barline.

Since Tabuteau was gifted in his ability to explain music and phrasing, it is interesting to note that "The expression phrase as a sign of an independent section of a melody is discussed first in German theoretical literature by composer, Joh. Abr. Peter Schulz, in his article 'Performance,' in Gulzer's Theory of Fine Arts in 1772. This is the first mention of phrase in German theory."\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{4} Riemann, 4.

\textsuperscript{5} Riemann, 7.
APPENDIX C

FOLLOW-UP TO LOUIS ROSENBLATT’S INTERVIEW

Mathis Lussy’s book, Musical Expression, is, as the title implies, a method for teaching musicians how to play expressively. The book shares one very important idea with Tabuteau, that even the poorest musician can be taught a method which will allow him to sound musical, if only at the moment they are being instructed. The premise of Lussy’s, Musical Expression, states, “The science and art of expression by means of clearly defined formulas and easily applied rules will produce artificially, even in inferior performers, those qualities which true artists produce by instinct” (p.11); therefore, it could be said, that Tabuteau acquired the germ for teaching expression from Lussy. For example, John de Lancie spoke in his interview of how Tabuteau could “take a ‘dumbbell’ and make them play well, if only for that moment.”

Tabuteau’s “number system” and some of his ideas for phrasing are not mentioned in Lussy’s book. Musical Expression does contain some interesting insight into various aspects of playing music including, metrical accentuation, rhythmical accentuation, expressive accentuation, nuances and intensity of sound, and the normal or metronomic tempo.
APPENDIX D
LIST OF TABUTEAU STUDENTS

Here is a list of 47 Tabuteau students from Anne O’Donnell, Director of Alumni Relations, at the Curtis Institute of Music:

Rhadames J. Angelucci (Oboe 1936)
Perry W. Bauman (Oboe 1942)
Robert Bloom (Oboe 1935)
Don E. Cassel (Oboe 1936)
William N. Criss (Oboe 1942)
Robert O. Davison (Oboe 1942)
John de Lancie (Oboe 1940)
Sidney B. Divinsky (Oboe 1932)
Charles Edmunds (Oboe 1948)
Martin Fleisher (Oboe 1938)
Livingston Gearhart (Oboe 1937)
Alfred J. Genovese (Oboe 1953)
Charles E. Gilbert (English Horn 1940)
Isadore Goldblum (Oboe 1933)
Harold Gomberg (Oboe 1935)
Ralph Gomberg (Oboe 1941)
Donald L. Hefner (Oboe 1954)
Theodore C. Heger (Oboe 1954)
Robert B. Hester (Oboe 1933)
Wilbur I. Hilles (Oboe 1952)
Edmund H. Jurgensen (Oboe 1936)
Richard S. Kanter (Oboe 1957)
Robert Kosinski (Oboe 1939)
William I. Kosinski (Oboe 1937)
Felix Kraus (Oboe 1952)
Abraham E. Krupnick (Oboe 1930)
Marc Lifschey (Oboe 1948)
Albert London (Oboe 1940)
Joseph Lukatsky (Oboe 1937)
John W. Mack (Oboe 1951)
Arno Mariotti (Oboe 1934)
John Minsker (Oboe 1935)
Victor J. Molzer (Oboe 1939)
Charles M. Morris (Oboe 1947)
Thelma Neft (Geiler) (Oboe 1942)
Bernard Raphael (Oboe 1929)
John J. Rigano (Oboe 1931)
Louis Rosenblatt (Oboe 1951)
Martha Scherer (Alsee) (Oboe 1947)
Harry Shulman (Oboe 1937)
Marguerite Smith (Anderson) (Oboe 1946)
Laila Storch (Oboe 1945)

George H. Thomas (Oboe 1948)

Laurence Thorstenberg (Oboe 1951)

Lloyd Ullberg (Oboe 1928)

Kenneth Van der Heuvel (Oboe 1940)

William A. Vitelli (Oboe 1939)
APPENDIX E
INTERVIEWEE BIOGRAPHIES

John Minsker was born on January 23, 1912, in Charleston, West Virginia. He began his musical career in 1920 studying violin with Franz Kneisel. Mr. Minsker began his oboe studies in 1929 with George Crumb, Sr., father of the composer. In 1930, John Minsker received a scholarship at Ithaca College with Ernest Williams, former first trumpet of Philadelphia Orchestra. From December 1930 to April 1931, John Minsker studied privately with Marcel Tabuteau. In 1931 he entered the Curtis Institute of Music under the instruction Marcel Tabuteau and Fritz Reiner, orchestra conductor. In 1934, prior to graduation, Mr. Minsker attained the English horn position with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Ossip Gabrilowitsch, conductor. In 1936, Mr. Minsker left the Detroit Symphony to play English horn in the Philadelphia Orchestra, Leopold Stokowski, conductor. He is the English horn player on the famous Disney Fantasia recording. John Minsker resigned from the Philadelphia Orchestra in November, 1959. Mr. Minsker also taught at the Philadelphia Musical Academy, Philadelphia Conservatory, and the New School of Music. In 1979 he was appointed to the Marcel Tabuteau Chair for Woodwind Studies at the Curtis Institute of Music. His successful students include: William Criss, Alfred Genovese, Earnest Harrison, John Mack, Charles Morris, and Louis Rosenblatt.¹

¹ John Minsker, letter to author, April 10, 1999.
John de Lancie was born in Berkeley, California, in 1921. He studied oboe at the Curtis Institute of Music with Marcel Tabuteau. In 1940 de Lancie joined the Pittsburgh Symphony under Fritz Reiner, and in 1942, he left Pittsburgh to enter the U.S. Army. In 1946 John de Lancie joined Marcel Tabuteau and the Philadelphia Orchestra as associate solo oboist. In 1954 de Lancie became principal oboist of the Philadelphia Orchestra, upon the retirement of Marcel Tabuteau. John de Lancie remained principal oboist until his retirement from the orchestra in 1977. That same year he became the Director of the Curtis Institute of Music, a position he held until 1985. In 1987, de Lancie became the Director of the music conservatory and high school at the New World School of the Arts in Miami, Florida, a position he held until 1992. He is currently a member of the faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and is very active in giving master classes. John de Lancie gained world-wide recognition through his appearances as a soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra, his numerous orchestral and solo recordings, as a founding member of the Philadelphia Woodwind Quintet, and as a teacher at Curtis Institute of Music and the Aspen Music Festival. One of Mr. de Lancie’s interests throughout the years has been to expand the repertoire of concertos for oboe and orchestra. This interest began after meeting Richard Strauss during World War II and persuading him to write his only Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra. In 1959, Mr. de Lancie commissioned the French composer, Jean Francaix, to write L’Horloge de Flore for Oboe and Orchestra, which received its world premiere in 1961. In 1962 Benjamin Lees was commissioned by de Lancie to write a concerto which was premiered in 1964 by Mr. de Lancie with the Philadelphia Chamber Orchestra. Many of Mr. de Lancie’s students hold top positions in orchestras throughout the United States and Canada.

Mason Jones was the principal horn of the Philadelphia Orchestra for nearly forty years (1939-1978). Mason Jones was a student of Anton Horner. After retiring from playing, he became the Personnel Manager of the orchestra. Mr. Jones was co-founder of the Philadelphia Woodwind Quintet in 1950, and co-founder of the Philadelphia Brass Ensemble in 1957. Mr. Jones was the assistant conductor of the Philadelphia Chamber Orchestra from 1961-1964.\(^3\) Mason Jones’ recordings of the standard horn repertoire include: the concertos of Mozart and Strauss, and the Hindemith Sonate with pianist, Glenn Gould. Some of his published editions are still available: Solo for the Horn Player and 20th Century Orchestra Studies.\(^4\) Mason Jones taught horn and brass ensemble at the Curtis Institute of Music and was a member of the faculty at Temple University College of Music.

John Krell was solo piccoloist and a member of the flute section of the Philadelphia Orchestra from 1952 to 1981. After graduating from the University of Michigan, he studied with William Kincaid at the Curtis Institute of Music and later joined him as a colleague in the Philadelphia Orchestra. John Krell has been an instructor at the Curtis Institute of Music, the Philadelphia Musical Academy, Temple University, and the Settlement Music School. His published works include 20th Century Orchestra Studies for Flute (G. Schirmer). Mr. Krell received the Citation of Merit from the University of Michigan, the C. Hartman Kuhn Award, given by the Philadelphia Orchestra for outstanding service, and, in 1995, the Lifetime Achievement Award of the National Flute


John Krell passed away several months following the interview with this author. He will be greatly missed.

**Abba Bogin** graduated from the Curtis Institute of Music in 1949. He studied piano with Mme. Isabella Vengerova, conducting with Alexander Hilsberg, and Orchestration and Composition with Samuel Barber and Gian-Carlo Menotti. In 1947, Mr. Bogin won the prestigious Walter W. Naumburg Award. In addition, in 1948, he was awarded the Philadelphia Orchestra Award, the Chamber Music Guild Award in Washington, DC, and the YM-YWHA Recital Award in New York, NY. Mr. Bogin’s career is multi-faceted and includes conducting, arranging, teaching, music administration, as well as being an accomplished pianist. He conducts for such media as opera, ballet, theatrical shows, TV programs, films, school-age children’s programs for young audiences, and Symphony Orchestras, including: the Boston Pops, the American Symphony, The Queen Symphony, New York City Light Opera, Queens Opera Company and The Springfield Symphony. Mr. Bogin was the Music Director for twelve Broadway Musical Productions and in 1960 was nominated for a Tony Award for “Greenwillow.” After winning the Young Artists Competition of the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1948, Mr. Bogin began a career as piano soloist with major orchestras and conductors, including Chicago (Steinberg), Houston (Kurtz), Kansas City (Schwieger), National Symphony (Mitchell), Brooklyn Philharmonia (Foss), Queens Symphony (Katz), Tanglewood (Burgin), etc. Mr. Bogin’s most recently released 2-compact disk set is the complete works for Violin/Viola and Piano by Schubert, collaborating with Masako Yanagita for Town Hall Records. Mr. Bogin currently conducts the Mohawk Trail Chamber Orchestra in Western Massachusetts, as well as some annual

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concerts by the Queens Symphony Orchestra. For the past 30 years, he has been a member of the staff and a consultant for the Music Program of the New York State Council on the Arts, a member of the Board of Directors and Assistant Treasurer of The American Symphony Orchestra, Artistic Coordinator of The Lake George Opera Festival, Artistic Director of the Tappan Zee Concerts for the Rockland Center for the Arts, Associate Director of the Mohawk Trail Concerts in Massachusetts, a member of the Board of Directors of the Bohemians (New York Musicians Club), Treasurer of the New York Recording Musicians Association and Personnel Manager for the Queens Symphony Orchestra in New York.\(^6\)

**Hershel Gordon**, cellist, entered the Curtis Institute of Music at age sixteen. He was a student of Gregor Piatigorsky. In January 1945, he was drafted into the U.S. Army, where he spent one and one-half years in the tank corps in Germany. While in the Army, Mr. Gordon spent four months with the Glenn Miller Band at special services in Germany and France. In 1947 Mr. Gordon returned to the Curtis Institute. He entered the cello section of the Philadelphia Orchestra in September, 1948, while still a student at Curtis. He graduated from the Curtis Institute of Music in 1950. Also in 1950, Mr. Gordon became a member of the Stringart Quartette. Hershel Gordon was awarded the C. Hartman Kuhn award from the Philadelphia Orchestra. In 1955, Mr. Gordon left the Philadelphia Orchestra to pursue his interests in the Electronic Industry. He then attended the University of Pennsylvania and American Management at Colgate University to pursue his electronic

\(^6\) Abba Bogen, letter to author, Aug. 10, 1998.
interests. In 1980 Mr. Gordon joined the Reading Symphony as first cellist, where he is still a member today. Mr. Gordon retired from the Electronics Industry in 1994.  

John Mack was born in 1927 in Somerville, New Jersey, where he received his early musical training. He began playing the oboe in sixth grade, and by the time he was in high school he was studying with Bruno Labate and Marcel Tabuteau. Mr. Mack studied oboe at the Juilliard School of Music with Harold Gomberg. Following his study at Juilliard, Mr. Mack attended the Curtis Institute of Music and studied with Marcel Tabuteau. His professional orchestra career began with the first oboe position in the Sadler’s Wells Ballet Orchestra from 1951-1952. There followed eleven seasons (1952-63) as first oboe with the New Orleans Symphony, and two seasons (1963-65) with the National Symphony in Washington DC. During this time Mr. Mack also participated in both the Casals and Marlboro Festivals. In 1965, George Szell appointed John Mack principal oboe of the Cleveland Orchestra, a position he still holds today. Since first appearing as a soloist with the Orchestra in January, 1967, Mr. Mack has been featured as a soloist on numerous occasions - at Severance Hall, Blossom Music Center, and New York’s Carnegie Hall, as well as on many local, national, and world tours. In 1976, he performed the American premiere of Luciano Berio’s Chemins IV, for oboe and strings, under the composer’s direction. Also since 1965, Mr. Mack has chaired the oboe department at the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he now serves as administrative chairman for the woodwind division. In addition, he has been a faculty member of the Blossom Festival School (now Kent/Blossom Music) since its inception in 1968, and every June since 1976, has taught and performed at the John Mack Oboe Camp in North Carolina. Many of Mr. Mack’s

students hold positions with America’s major orchestras. Interested in chamber music and recording as well, John Mack is a founding member of the Plymouth Trio. Mr. Mack has released several recordings with the Plymouth Trio (Christina Price, soprano, and John Herr, keyboard). Mr. Mack can also be heard on Cleveland Orchestra recordings and recordings for the Marlboro Festival. He has played numerous chamber music performances with ensembles such as the Severance String Quartet, the Guarneri String Quartet, and the American String Trio, as well as in joint recitals with other instrumentalists and vocalists.\footnote{John Mack, letter to author, April 6, 1999.}

Felix Kraus was born in Vienna to philologists Drs. Karl and Elsa Kraus. Mr. Kraus has been a member of The Cleveland Orchestra’s oboe section since 1963. He was appointed solo English horn player of the Orchestra in 1979 by Lorin Maazel. Mr. Kraus began his oboe studies with Leslie Schiavo and Raymond Duste of the San Fransisco Symphony. He then attended the Curtis Institute of Music as a student of Marcel Tabuteau. After serving as English horn player in the United States Army Band in Washington DC, Mr. Kraus returned to college as a mathematics major at the University of California at Berkeley. A year later he became first oboist of the Portland Symphony (now Oregon Symphony). Subsequently, Mr. Kraus served for three years as principal oboist of the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington DC. Felix Kraus was invited by George Szell to join The Cleveland Orchestra. Felix Kraus has been a featured soloist with The Cleveland Orchestra both at home in Cleveland and on tour. He has been featured in such works as Donizetti’s Concertino for English horn and Orchestra, Copland’s Quiet City, Mozart’s “Adagio” in C major for English horn and strings (K. 580a), Reicha’s Scena for English horn and Orchestra, Sibelius’s The Swan of Tuonela and the Ferlandis/M. Kraus
Concerto in C for English horn and Orchestra. Mr. Kraus has also appeared as soloist with the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, among other ensembles. As a chamber musician, his performances have included the world premiere of Paul Turok’s Quintet for English horn and strings, a work that was written specifically for him. Mr. Kraus resides in Cleveland Heights with his wife, Marcia. His hobbies include the study of foreign languages, particularly Japanese.⁹

**Louis Rosenblatt** was born in 1928 and is a native of Philadelphia. Mr. Rosenblatt’s oboe study began with Nicholas Lannutti at the South Philadelphia High School for Boys and then with John Minsker. Louis Rosenblatt attended the Curtis Institute of Music as a student of Marcel Tabuteau. Mr. Rosenblatt served in the U.S. Army Field Band during the Korean War. In 1954, he became the English hornist with the Houston Symphony. The following season, he joined the New Orleans Philharmonic. His tenure with the Philadelphia Orchestra began in 1959 as assistant principal oboe. When John Minsker retired from the orchestra, Louis Rosenblatt assumed the position of English horn. Mr. Rosenblatt spent fourteen seasons with the Philadelphia Orchestra and several years associated with the Marlboro Music Festival. Louis Rosenblatt has had numerous solo appearances with the Philadelphia Orchestra including: Sibelius, *Swan of Tuonela*, Honegger, *Concerto da Camera* for flute, English horn and strings, and Diamond’s *Elegies* for flute, English horn and strings. He was soloist in Stanislaw Skrowaczewski’s *Concerto for English horn and Orchestra* with the composer conducting. Mr. Rosenblatt has had a long tenure on faculty with the Temple University, a position he still holds. He has produced many pupils who are now playing in orchestras throughout the U.S. Mr. Rosenblatt has an interest in languages and can speak fluent German, Yiddish, and French.

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⁹ Felix Kraus, program 25 notes, letter to author, April 26, 1999.
He has also studied Hebrew, Italian, and Spanish. In addition, he has learned how to speak, read and translate Japanese.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{10} “Oboes in the Philadelphia Orchestra”.

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