FORD II, RONNAL VANTÉ, D.M.A. The Western American Oboe Reed As Constructed By John Ellis. (2019)
Directed by Dr. Mary Ashley Barret, 131 pp.

John Ellis, oboist for numerous Hollywood movie scores, was partially responsible for bringing the Western American oboe reed style to the east coast of the United States. As the former oboe professor at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA) from 1984 to 2010, he imparted a reed-making style that was popular on the west coast on his students on the east coast. His contributions as a performer include Grammy-Award-winning film scores such as *Memoirs of a Geisha*, *Angela's Ashes*, and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, in addition to the Grammy nominated film score *Munich*. Despite his achievements and accolades, his name is little known outside the Piedmont Triad area of North Carolina. This document will provide a brief biography of John Ellis, discuss the origin of his reed-making style, compare his reed-making style to the standard American Long Scrape style started by Marcel Tabuteau, and discuss how his students have modified his style, with the goal of making his contributions more widely known and his reed-making style more available to professional and aspiring oboists.

THE WESTERN AMERICAN OBOE REED

AS CONSTRUCTED BY JOHN ELLIS

by

Ronnal Vanté Ford II

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Musical Arts

Greensboro
2019

Approved by

_____
Committee Chair

©2019 Ronnal Vanté Ford II

To John Ellis, who taught me oboe and reed making at the (University of) North Carolina School of the Arts, and to his wife Claudia, who provided much of the biographical information and his reeds after John's passing.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation written by RONNAL VANTÉ FORD II has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Chair _____

Committee Members _____

_____

_____

_____
Date of Acceptance by Committee

_____
Date of Final Oral Examination

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHY OF OBOIST JOHN ELLIS

While the name John Ellis is lesser known to most oboists, his oboe sound is known throughout the world. Ellis's final teaching position was at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA), but his career path had many other interesting facets before and during his tenure at UNCSA.[1] His sound is so familiar because he was one of the unseen musicians in numerous motion picture scores. In addition to performing music for film, he also had the opportunity to work with great composers such as John Williams, Leonard Rosenman, and even Igor Stravinsky.

A native of California, Ellis (1943–2015) was born into a musical family. Both of his parents were professional singers. His mother, Carol Ellis, was the singing voice of Titania in the 1935 movie *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Max Reinhardt and William Dieterle.[2] He began studying with oboist Norman Benno in junior high school. Benno had been playing oboe for various motion picture scores and popular artists likeElla Fitzgerald and Frank Sinatra.[3] Ellis continued his training with Benno through

---

[1] When Ellis began his tenure at the school, The University of North Carolina School of the Arts was known as the North Carolina School of the Arts. The "University of" was added at the start of the 2008 academic year, under chancellor John Mauceri.

[2] "A Midsummer's Night Dream," Internet Movie Database, accessed 27 June 2019, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0026714/?ref_=nm_knf_t1.

[3] J. Wilfred Johnson, *Ella Fitzgerald: An Annotated Discography; Including a Complete Discography of Chick Web* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, 2001), 89; Luiz Carlos do Nascimento Silva, *Put Your Dreams Away: A Frank Sinatra Discography* (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 2000), 454.

senior high school, which was the end of his formal oboe education. The rest of his training was on-the-job while working alongside other experienced colleagues. After graduating from high school in 1961, he both attended and taught at Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles, California. The college had been a private, all-girls school, but began transitioning to a co-educational school, with the music department as one of the first departments to begin the conversion. Many of the graduates went on to become "artists, musicians, educators, journalists, doctors, lawyers, judges, and stars of stage and screen."[4] The college's environment was a perfect breeding ground for a film musician. Ellis attended the college as a non-traditional student. In addition to attending the school, he also taught oboe, as a kind of fellowship, where he would earn his tuition through his service to the institution. During his time in college, Ellis also was an apprentice of oboe maker, William Lym. Ellis originally went to Lym to study repair, a skill that he would take to his teaching career. Lym began to teach Ellis how to build oboes. Lym's oboes were popular amongst early film oboists, also aiding his connections in the film industry.

Soon after starting college, Ellis dropped out to begin working professionally. In 1963, he began working on his first motion picture score for the Oscar-Award-winning film, *Cleopatra*, starring Elizabeth Taylor, with music by Alex North. In *Cleopatra*, Ellis can be heard playing first oboe, although the position was not due to his merit as an oboist, but simply how the parts were arranged. Oboists Norman Benno and Arnold Koblentz were also in this orchestra. Although Benno and Koblentz had more credits to

[4] "History," Immaculate Heart High School and Middle School, accessed January 21, 2018, https://www.immaculateheart.org/page/about-ih/history.

their names, Ellis was designated as first because the other parts called for multiple auxiliary instruments—including English horn and bass oboe—and Ellis did not have much experience on the auxiliary instruments at the time.[5] This film began his career as a studio musician.

Ellis did most of his formative musical study through performing with other more established musicians. These performances not only included film work, but also playing in the "Monday Evening Concerts" series at the University of California, Los Angeles and the Glendale Symphony. Benno and Ellis played first and second oboes, respectively. This kind of "on-the-job" training also influenced his teaching style. His masterclasses at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts were heavily focused on orchestral excerpts and playing together as a section rather than solo playing.[6] He understood that as an oboist, one is more likely to play solos as part of an orchestral section rather than in front of the orchestra as one would do for concertos. Through his involvement with the "Monday Evening Concerts," he was able to continue his apprenticeship with Norman Benno. He also had a chance to work with many composers, both new and established. The music at the "Monday Evening Concerts" was very contemporary and avant-garde, which prepared him for future endeavors in film music and influenced the type of reeds he would play on throughout his career.[7]

---

[5] Claudia Ellis, Interview by author, Mocksville, NC, 28 December 2017; There is another oboist on this recording, but Mrs. Ellis could not recall his name.
[6] At many other universities, these were called Repertoire Classes, where students would play solo pieces and etudes that they have been working on for their peers.
[7] C. Ellis, interview.

The "Monday Evening Concerts" allowed Ellis to meet many influential musicians in California, including Phil Coggins, a contractor for the series. He would use many of the studio musicians in the other orchestra for which he contracted, the Glendale Symphony, making the Glendale Symphony a top-rate group. The "Monday Evening Concerts" became a showcase for many contemporary composers to feature their works. While the series mostly featured up-and-coming composers, it also featured a few composers who were well established, like Leonard Rosenman, an award-winning film composer.[8] Ellis would soon develop a working relationship with Rosenman that would help further his career. He also began to perform and record with oboist Gordon Pope. Pope would give Ellis tips about playing during their sessions. Claudia recalls that Pope taught Ellis a lot during these sessions and shared how influential Pope was on Ellis's playing, especially considering that Ellis did not study with him formally.[9] Pope made suggestions regarding phrasing technique and timbre. Pope's influence can be heard on Ellis's recordings with the Hollywood Studios Woodwind Quintet, which share aspects of style, phrasing and timbre with Pope's recordings with the Los Angeles Wind Quintet.

Ellis began to work very steadily in the film industry, but in 1968 he was blackballed from the profession. As contractors began preferring Ellis to other more established oboists, Arnold Koblentz took issue with this development. Koblentz tried to force Ellis into a system where Ellis would need to call Koblentz and offer the service to

[8] Rosenman would go on to win awards for the music for *Barry Lyndon, Bound for Glory, Sybil* and *Friendly Fire*.
[9] C. Ellis, interview.

him before Ellis could take it. Claudia recalls her husband saying that he would have none of that.[10] At Ellis's refusal, Koblentz began to exert his influence over the contractors to prevent Ellis from getting work. This situation did not keep Ellis form working for very long. Leonard Rosenman, after working with Ellis at the "Monday Evening Concerts," took Ellis on tour with him. After the tour, Rosenman also requested Ellis to play on all his films. Rosenman's tendency to call Ellis first would lead other composers to request Ellis, which meant that the contractors had to honor their requests, therefore dissolving Koblentz's desired hierarchy. Koblentz made sure to let Ellis know how he felt about the situation,[11] and thus began the first of many confrontations Ellis faced in his business (and later, academic) dealings.

Ellis went on tour with the choral director and composer Roger Wagner in 1974. Wagner was sent to the Soviet Union as a U.S. State Department Cultural Ambassador and took a group of musicians with him. On the tour, Ellis and flutist Louise DiTullio were featured on the performances of Arthur Honneger's *Concerto da Camera* for flute and English horn. Even though Koblentz attempted to push Ellis out of the studio music business, Ellis continued to thrive and make a name for himself as a top soloist and oboist by performing outside of the film industry.

---

[10] Ibid.

[11] C. Ellis, interview; Claudia recalls an interesting interaction between Ellis and Koblentz. "Arnold eventually had to accept [the work situation] even [more] when John was sitting first and Arnold was sitting second. And every day [that] he would come in on a call, Arnold would say, 'See that [points to watch], $2000.' Next day he would come in and have another watch, 'See that one?' –he would be bragging about another one. And on the third day, John opened up his wrist and said 'See that? Timex. 9 bucks.'"

In 1979, however, Ellis decided to leave the studio music business to be more hands-on with taking care of his family. He had seen many other professional studio musicians struggle to balance a hectic work schedule and family schedule, and he and his wife believed that it would be in their best interest for him to step away. Being first-call for many of the major studios was extremely taxing, leaving Ellis little time to be a good husband and father. Ellis and his family moved to a farm in Pennsylvania. The decision was a very big one—once a musician leaves the studio music business, reentry can be difficult. Ellis risked sacrificing his career for his family. They lived on the farm for five years and learned that the farm was not producing enough money to support them. Therefore, he started taking small jobs. He performed with various orchestras and opera companies in Ithaca and Binghamton, NY. He was even offered a teaching position at the State University of New York at Binghamton, but with the proposed salary, he was not going to be able to afford the travel. Around the same time he saw an advertisement for the oboe teacher position at the North Carolina School of the Arts. Claudia recalls that one of the questions that they had for him during the interview process was, "How could anyone with your kind of credentials be on a farm in Pennsylvania?"[12] He was invited to audition for the position, and once they heard him play, he was invited to teach at the school. Ellis taught at the school for twenty-six years, which is where this author studied with him for six years. In addition to teaching oboe, Ellis was the woodwind technician for the school. The skills he acquired while apprenticing with Lym were a valuable tool in working with the school. Ellis often spent time teaching his students to understand

[12] C. Ellis, interview.

their instruments and how to maintain them.[13] He was able to introduce a new career path to the students at the school, as many had not been exposed to performers of film music.

However, his background as a studio musician also came with its own complications when he began working at the university. Many of the faculty had professional performance obligations away from North Carolina, and they were given leave to perform those obligations. Ellis, however, encountered much opposition when he would request leave to go to California for studio work. The university did not view film studio work as being at the same level of artistry as orchestral and solo work. Even though Ellis had been away from the studio music scene for a while, he was offered the opportunity to play principal oboe with the Hollywood Bowl Symphony, under the direction of John Mauceri who later became the Chancellor of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA). The position with the Symphony was the catalyst needed to request leave from the school. During a concert with the Hollywood Bowl Symphony with John Williams as the guest conductor, Williams noticed that Ellis was back in town performing and began requesting Ellis again for his films. Working with the Hollywood Bowl Symphony allowed him to receive time off from the school to perform as a studio musician again.

In 1998, Williams hired Ellis to play *Stepmom*, which kick-started the revival of Ellis's film music career. After *Stepmom*, Williams hired Ellis for *The Patriot*, *Memoirs of a Geisha*, *Munich* and *Angela's Ashes*. *Angela's Ashes* became a very important film

[13] At one point during the school year, Ellis had all of his students take their instruments apart, put them back together, just before a rehearsal with the orchestra!

for Ellis, in that it was the first time he was given screen credits for playing oboe on that score. During those years, Williams began composing more challenging, prominent parts for trusted players like Ellis with whom he had years of collaboration. Flutist Louise DiTullio also earned screen credit for the prominent part Williams composed for her in *War Horse*.[14] A key element to Ellis's successful career as a studio musician was his ability to learn difficult music in a short amount of time. Composers such as John Williams were able to trust him to perform the music at the highest of standards which gave them the autonomy to write freely.

During his tenure with the Hollywood Bowl Symphony Orchestra, Ellis went on numerous Japanese tours, the first of which occurred in 1990. In her interview, Claudia noted how much of an ambassador Mauceri was to Japan and how determined he was to bring American film music to other cultures around the world. This exposure to Japanese culture came at an important moment in Ellis's career, as he went on to perform the music for John Williams's score for the 2005 movie *Memoirs of a Geisha*, a motion picture set in Japan, alongside violinist Itzhak Perlman and cellist Yo-Yo Ma. Traveling from North Carolina to California and to Japan, as well as tackling challenging film music, influenced his innovations to reed making.

Towards the end of his tenure with the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, Ellis suffered many misfortunes. One of his sons was diagnosed with cancer and passed away, and Ellis suffered a stroke which caused him to resign from the Winston-

[14] C. Ellis, interview; Ellis had worked with DiTullio many times for film and other projects, including the tour of the Soviet Union with Roger Wagner where Ellis and DiTullio were the featured soloists for Honneger's *Concerto da Camera*.

Salem Symphony and UNCSA. However, the impact he had on oboe reed making and the oboe sound used in film orchestras is still carried on through his students. After his stroke, he was determined to play the oboe again, and worked his way back into performing, but this time in less stressful settings. He played oboe and oboe d'amore in his daughter's wedding, and for the Watchtower Orchestra at the Jehovah Witness Annual Convention in 2011. The Watchtower Orchestra was composed of professional musicians that were also Jehovah Witnesses, and they would gather together to volunteer their time for the convention. Ellis saw the opportunity as a way to give back to his community. Ellis eventually succumbed to his own battle with cancer in 2015.

Ellis's career as a studio musician played an important role in his teaching method. In the film studios, as displayed by John Williams's music, it was common for the musicians to receive extremely difficult scores. Having the ability to learn difficult music with high accuracy, and having a reed that was able to play all styles of music, were common skills that he taught his students. He emphasized that the reed was one of the most important elements of the oboist's arsenal. With a good reed, the player had the flexibility to perform both lyrical and technical passages with ease. This document seeks to answer the questions:

1) What qualities did the Hollywood film oboists demand from their reeds to perform the type of music they were employed to play?

2) How did John Ellis and the other Hollywood film oboists create a reed that fit the qualities they needed, but also allowed them to create a warmer sound than their original reeds?
3) In the development of the Western American Long Scrape style, what did Ellis and his colleagues have to change from the standard American Long Scrape to suit their recording needs?
4) And lastly, how did Ellis's students use and modify his reed-making style to suit their own needs?

In seeking answers to these questions, the goal will be to validate his unfamiliar reed style, which was often misunderstood due to the deviations from the standard style used in America.

CHAPTER II

THE BIRTH OF THE AMERICAN LONG SCRAPE STYLE

Oboe reed making has long been a craft that both frustrates and excites most oboists. More than any other reed player, the oboist spends a lot of time making reeds. The time spent on the reed is due both to its complex construction and its short life span. While reed making can be a time-consuming task, it can also be the oboist's secret weapon. According to Martin Schuring, professor of oboe at Arizona State University and a leading American oboist, "We can construct a reed to match our instrument, our embouchure, and our physical capacity. We can even tailor it to the music we're about to play and to the acoustical situation that surrounds us."[15] Oboists develop new reed styles in order to adjust to the various challenges, which has given us our American Long Scrape Reed, created by Marcel Tabuteau.

Tabuteau is responsible for modifying his French reed-making style to match the needs of American conductor and composer Leopold Stokowski, and for creating the American oboe sound.[16] Tabuteau, born in France, came to America for the first time in 1905 as part of a group of French musicians who were hired to play as the principal and solo winds of the New York Symphony Orchestra. Tabuteau was hired to play solo English horn. After one season of playing in the orchestra, he returned to France to enter

---

[15] Martin Schuring, *Oboe Art and Method* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 101–102.
[16] Geoffrey Burgess and Bruce Haynes, *The Oboe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 199.

the army, as required by the French government. Tabuteau returned to New York again in 1907 to begin the new season.[17] In 1915 he was appointed as the principal oboist in the Philadelphia Orchestra and as a professor at The Curtis Institute of Music. Leopold Stokowski, Music Director and Conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra, challenged Tabuteau to develop a new American oboe sound. Stokowski searched for his "First Class Oboist" for a very long time before settling on Tabuteau. He knew that he wanted a French or Belgian oboist for their sweet timbre, and finding one was proving to be a difficult task. Stokowski wanted to create a slightly darker sound, while keeping the sweetness defined by the players from that region of Europe. Creating a darker sound required Tabuteau to modify his French reed-making style. Stokowski changed many factors to create the "Philadelphia Sound," from the seating of the orchestra to the acoustics in the hall. Philadelphia Orchestra's music director, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, describes the "Philadelphia Sound" as "a generosity of sound, spirit, and emotion, handed down through generations of musicians, who breathe and phrase together in a way that produces the most exceptional colors, the most uniquely identifiable sound."[18] Within his first year as music director of the Philadelphia Orchestra, Stokowski fired thirty-two musicians, with the backing of various board members, to mold the sound of the orchestra in his likeness.[19]

---

[17] Laila Storch, *Marcel Tabuteau: How Do You Expect to Play the Oboe If You Can't Peel a Mushroom?* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), 50–52.
[18] Margaret Smith Holt, "An Exploration of the Philadelphia Sound – The Philadelphia Orchestra Announces its 2015-2016 Season" (5 February 2015), https://www.philorch.org/blog/news/exploration-philadelphia-sound-philadelphia-orchestra-announces-its-2015-16-season#/ (Accessed 3 January 2019).
[19] Joseph Horowitz, *Classical Music America: A History of its Rise and Fall* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2005), 183.

As he brought in new members to the orchestra, Stokowski had to be sure that those musicians would be able to achieve his vision. Especially important to his vision were the principal players of the orchestra, including Tabuteau. The principals not only had to work individually, but also together as a group to achieve the musical style that Stokowski was seeking.

> In order to do all that with the Philadelphia Orchestra, I begged the players to notice all those differences and I said to them, "Each one of you must be a poet as well as a great player of your instrument, and through your poetic feeling, you can express every kind of music."… Do not permit yourselves to become, as is the tendency in the world today, standardized, so that you all think and feel the same way…. Give your personality, all your inner feeling, give that expression through music.20

Stokowski also wanted each player in the orchestra to have input into the interpretation of the music. He wanted them not only to follow his direction, but also to explore other methods of expression. Tabuteau's new reed style allowed him more freedom and flexibility to express the music. Stokowski placed a great amount of responsibility on his players. He gave them the authority to create the music that the performers imagined, rather than micromanaging the orchestra, allowing them to be as expressive as they could.

In his search for the "Philadelphia Sound," Stokowski preferred "a less rigid performance style, including 'free bowing' for string players, [which] created the warmer, more intense and continuous sound that became the hallmark of the Philadelphia

---

[20] Leopold Stokowski interviewed by Gordon Stafford, March 1956, quoted in Storch Laila, *Marcel Tabueteau: How Do You Expect to Play the Oboe If You Can't Peel a Mushroom?* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), 89–90.

Orchestra."[21] The creation of the "Philadelphia Sound" relied on each member of the orchestra influencing each other, allowing them the opportunity to explore different sounds. Tabuteau was able to achieve the change in sound concept by modifying his reeds from the French style, which was generally described as exuding a bright timbre, to what is now known as the American style, whose timbre has been described as darker, thicker, and richer. The new American style reed blended much better with the darker timbre of the German brass and bassoon players, while still being able to blend with the sound of the other woodwinds.

It was obvious that Stokowski thought highly of Tabuteau's sound and musicality. Tabuteau student Laila Storch writes, "Philadelphia Orchestra musicians who remember this era have said that Stokowski would often stay after a rehearsal and ask Tabuteau to play a particular phrase over a number of times. The next morning Stokowski would propose that same phrasing [and color] to the whole violin section."[22] It was evident that Tabuteau understood the impact his reeds had on the situation. He searched for just the right way to construct his reeds. Storch recalls:

> For Tabuteau, to have his search for color and imaginative interpretation not only encouraged and appreciated by the conductor, but recognized, must have affected his lifelong striving to make the exact reed he needed—painstakingly scraping the cane to a point that would best allow the expression of his musical ideas and at the same time have the particular quality of sound he envisaged for Mozart, Brahms, or Wagner.[23]

---

[21] Joseph C. Schiavo, "Philadelphia Orchestra" Accessed 18 January 2019, https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/philadelphia-orchestra-2/.
[22] Storch, 90.
[23] Ibid.

To suit Stokowski's concept of sound, Tabuteau modified the French oboe reed by lengthening the scrape on the back of the reed, thus creating the so-called American Long Scrape. Both European-style reeds of the time had shorter scrapes, and the new American style was named due to the longer scrape in the back. The French short-scrape reed features a V-Shape. It is called short-scrape because the reed maker only scrapes the first third or first half of the reed. On the French Scrape, the back of the reed is left virtually unscraped, resulting in more bark remaining on the reed. The bark keeps much of the reed from vibrating and focuses the vibrations at the tip of the reed. The "predominance of tip vibration causes a *brighter* quality because the vibrations are short, and therefore facilitates the production of brighter overtones."[24] In both the French and American styles of reed-making, the tips of the reeds are very thin. However, in the French style, the shortness of scrape created a reed that is brighter and more vibrant. The American Long Scrape style focuses on scraping further to the back of the reed, allowing for the vibrations to be dispersed more evenly throughout the reed.

Tabuteau, by scraping further down the reed, created a reed with a "design [which] is intended to establish a balance between vibration and resistance, by allowing the reed to vibrate freely, while at the same time possessing the stability to produce a rounder and more lush tone."[25] However, he still needed to blend with the rest of the orchestra. Stokowski was importing players from various countries in Europe. He obtained many of his woodwinds from France, and most of the brass and bassoons from

[24] Robert Sprinkle and David Ledet, *The Art of Oboe Playing* (Los Angeles, CA: Summy-Birchard Music, 1961) 95.
[25] Reid Messich, "The Philadelphia Influence on the Art of Reed Making" (DMA diss., Florida State University, 2012), 4-5.

Germany. The different sound concepts for the various sections of the orchestra influenced the way that Tabuteau would construct reeds to blend with the orchestra. He needed to preserve flexibility and ease of articulation to maintain a connection with the upper woodwinds, while altering the French sound to an American timbre, often described as, "dark, warm, controlled, [and] stable,"[26] allowing him to blend with the brass and bassoons.

Schuring has provided the most detailed diagram of the quintessential American oboe reed to date.[27] According to his diagram, reproduced as Figure 1 below, the main sections of the reed are the tip, heart, spine, back, rails and bark. The tip is the thinnest part of the reed, often measuring around .12 mm in the center and around .02 mm at the edge of the tip. The tip is blended into the heart of the reed, one of the thickest portions of scraped cane that measures around .4-.5 mm. Below the heart are two windows, separated by a spine. The spine is often very thick as well, measuring close to .5 mm. The windows, however, are graded, moving from .2 mm at the section closest to the heart to .5 mm as it blends into the bark. The bark of the reed is left un-scraped, and measures around .6 mm.[28]

---

[26] Geoffrey Burgess and Bruce Haynes, *The Oboe* (New Haven, CO and London, England:Yale University Press, 2004), 206.

[27] Schuring studied with John De Lancie, a student of Tabuteau, where he would have learned to make reeds according to Tabuteau's style.

[28] Schuring's book, "Oboe: Art and Method" gives a detailed guide to creating an American scrape oboe reed.

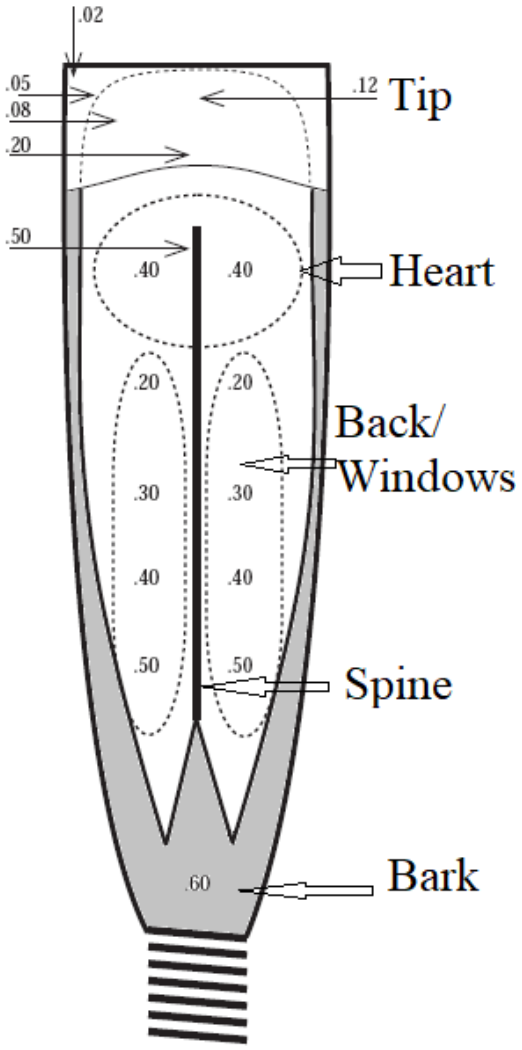


Figure 1. Martin Schuring Oboe Reed Diagram. Source: Martin Schuring, Oboe: Art and Method, (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 148. Edited by Ronnal Ford to Add Labels for Sections of the Reed.

Graham Salter's book, *Understanding the Oboe Reed*, shows the reeds of various reed makers around the world. Figure 2 contains two pictures of the quintessential reeds of the French and American Oboe reed-making style. The left reed is from the collection

of Alain de Gourdon.[29] With a length of 73.78mm and an unusually thin gouge of .52mm, the reed sounds an A between 435 and 439hz. The thin gouge and overall length of the reed contribute to the lower pitch. Nancy Ambrose King's reed is 70mm long and sounds an A at 440hz with the typical modern gouge of .60mm. Many of the modern French style reeds have an overall length of 71 to 73 mm when sounding an A at 442hz, while most American Long Scrape Style reeds have an overall length of 69 to 71 mm, even though they are constructed to play at a lower pitch where A sounds 440hz. The difference in length of the same type of reed can change the overall pitch and scale of the instrument.

[29] As of 2019, Mr. de Gourdon is the president of the F. Lorée oboe manufacturing company, a major oboe manufacturer.

Figure 2. French Oboe Reed (Left) by an Unknown French Oboist, American Oboe Reed (Right) by Nancy Ambrose King. The measurements placed on the reed illustrate the thickness of the cane in hundredths of millimeters. The horizontal lines are each 1mm measurements. Photos by Graham Salter, as printed in 'Understanding the Oboe Reed' © 2018.
Source: Graham Salter, Understanding the Oboe Reed (London: Bearsden Music, 2018), Fig. 3 and Fig. 99.

Along with the differences in length of the overall reed, each reed has a different scraped length. The French style reed only scraped 9mm of reed, where the American has 20mm of reed scraped. The longer scraped section of the reed is why it has been named the American Long Scrape. The French reed scrape typically stops where the heart of the American Long Scrape reed ends. The extreme tip of the American style reed is also much thinner than that of its French counterpart. The longer scrape, shorter reed and thinner tip of the American reed help to modify the timbre of the oboe to fit the specifications of the American sound.

Schuring's diagram (Figure 1) is used by many oboists as the standard for the American Long Scrape oboe reed. While each oboist may deviate from these dimensions due to climate, altitude, personal preference regarding hardness, response, timbre, and other factors, these basic ratios are present in most American reeds. These measurements will be the determining quantifiable measurements in finding the differences between the American and Western American scrape reeds.

David Ledet, in his landmark book *Oboe Reed Styles: Theory and Practice*, demonstrates how the different sections of the oboe reed can change the overall timbre of the reed, and therefore the instrument. Ledet notes that there are six physical characteristics that shape timbre:

> (1) The number of partials present in a tone; (2) the distribution of the partials; (3) the relative intensity of the partials; (4) the inharmonic partials; (5) The formant (range and amount of partials present in tone); and (6) the total intensity. These characteristics can be modified (changing the timbre) by any of the three units that join to make the acoustical system: the player, the reed, or the oboe.30

For the sake of this document, the focus of adjustment made will be on the reed. Ledet goes on further to document "the *inharmonic partials* can make the quality either richer or unpleasant. These partials are the result of out-of-tune harmonics, difference tones, summation tones, reed buzz and air noise."[31] Scraping the back of the reed distributes the vibrations further down the reed, thus changing the partials present within the reed which can be demonstrated by the crow of the reed. Scraping the back area will also lower the

[30] David A. Ledet, *Oboe Reed Styles: Theory and Practice* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 43.
[31] Ibid.

pitch of the higher partials or harmonics, therefore bringing some of these partials in the oboe reed in tune. Lowering the pitch of the higher harmoics also lowered the *formant range*, which is just below C8 for the oboe, giving the instrument its characteristic tone. Because of the human ear's sensitivity to these higher partials, lowering them makes the tone more pleasant.[32] Scraping the back of the reed not only brought the pitch of those higher partials lower, but it also brought the overall pitch of the reed and instrument lower. To compensate for the lower pitch, Tabuteau had to make his American reeds shorter than his French reeds so that the pitch center of the instrument would be maintained. The difference in length is illustrated in Figure 2, where King's reed is considerably shorter than the French reed.

To reiterate, Tabuteau, and the American reed style that he developed, was highly influential not only on the timbre of the oboe, but also on the timbre of the American orchestra.[33] At the time of writing this document, most oboists in American orchestras use his design, or one of its variations. Stokowski gave Tabuteau the responsibility of changing the tone of the oboe, thus changing the tone of the orchestra. Tabuteau's mastery of developing the new oboe reed to create the new sound that Stokowski had envisioned set him apart from the other oboists that Stokowski considered for the principal position in the Philadelphia Orchestra. Even though Stokowski encouraged every player to be individuals, he searched for musicians that had a sound concept similar to his own vision.

---

[32] Ibid.

[33] Stokowski used Tabuteau as an influential figure in the orchestra, often having Tabuteau demonstrate phrasing for the rest of the orchestra.

CHAPTER III

THE BIRTH OF THE WESTERN AMERICAN SCRAPE STYLE

As previously mentioned, the Western American Scrape is a product of the practices of the oboists involved with the Hollywood film studios. The various schools of reed-making develop due to a set of criteria that are imposed on the players of that style. In *The Art of Oboe Playing*, Robert Sprenkle and David Ledet mention several criteria for adjusting and adapting reeds: *Musical Demand, Aural Concept*, and *Physical Necessity*. *Musical Demand* refers to playing in extreme ranges and extreme dynamics, performing music of various eras and styles, the type of articulation, or the pitch level of the orchestra.[34] As the skill of the player improves, so does his ability to adjust his reeds. A skilled player will demand more function, resonance, and control from his reeds. These changes help aid the player's *Musical Demand*.[35] *Aural Concept* refers to timbre, which can be adjusted due to the requests of their conductors, or, for example, to match the sound of the other players in the ensemble. Reed adjustments for *Physical Necessity* are meant to help the player with his individual needs, as no two players are exactly alike. *Physical Necessity* encompasses embouchure size, shape and aperture, which are different for each player.[36]The correct adjustments can improve the performer's endurance, change the amount of reed in the mouth, change the aperture of the reed, or

[34]Robert Sprenkle and David Ledet, *The Art of Oboe Playing* (Miami, FL: Summey-Birchard, 1961), 90.
[35] Schuring, 103.
[36] Ibid.

aid with breath capacity and control. The criteria influences the physical needs of the player, and influenced Tabuteau's need to develop the American style.[37] The Western American oboists took all of these elements into account when crafting their specific sound.

In California, due to the long motion-picture recording sessions that could easily fatigue the musicians, oboists began to change the way they made reeds. Therefore, part of the adjustments these musicians made to their reeds were for *Physical Necessity*. The fact that they traveled through different regions of the country also influenced the way they needed to adjust their reeds. The musicians in the orchestras on the West Coast had to adjust their reeds and timbre to their climate, thus distinguishing their sound from the musicians on the East Coast. Henri de Busscher, former principal oboist of the New York Symphony and later of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and studio musician in Hollywood, noted that when he moved to Los Angeles from New York, he had to adapt his reed style since Los Angeles was much less humid than New York.

Many of the west coast players developed different ways to cope with the long recording sessions. The primary method was to play on a lighter reed, as it required less endurance. These reeds were very thin, thus creating a lighter, and often more nasal, sound. The advantage of these lighter reeds was that they inherently had less resistance, which improved the endurance of the oboists. The sound that the lighter type of reed produces can be heard on the 1956 film *Around the World in Eighty Days*.

---

[37] Sprenkle and Ledet, 90.

The changes that were made for *Physical Necessity*, such as endurance, also helped with *Musical Demand*. The music that the oboists in the film orchestras were playing also demanded the ability to play rapid and staccato articulations. The *Musical Demand* necessitated and supported the change to a thinner reed. With less cane, the reed allowed faster articulations. In addition to rapid staccato passages, the film music featured the extreme registers of the instrument. Ellis once recounted a playful competition that he and a piccoloist were having in the recording studio. They both claimed they could play higher than the other. The piccoloist, who was playing the instrument capable of playing extremely high pitches, was sure he would win, and played a C8 (4 octaves above middle C). Ellis matched him by playing the same C8. The composer in the booth heard the two of them and wrote the pitch for Ellis to play in the score.[38] While that is an extreme example, in the recording of John Williams's "Wild Signals" in the movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, Ellis played all three oboe parts using the majority of the oboe's range (B♭3 to G6) with extreme register changes and rapid staccato passages.

In contrast to the rapid staccato passages and extreme register changes in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, Ellis was asked to play lyrically in many scores. Ellis's lyrical playing is featured in the movie score for *Memoirs of a Geisha*, where Williams pairs Ellis with cellist Yo-Yo Ma and violinist Itzhak Perlman for the movie's Japanese-influenced music. While the cello is the most prominent instrument in the trio, Ellis and

[38] The events of this story also led to Ellis telling this author to be careful of what you play in front of composers; you never know what they might write for you next!

Perlman are featured heavily in "Chiyo's Prayer" and "As the Water…," as well as "Sayuri's Theme" which is transformed throughout the movie. Lyrical playing necessitated a darker sound, not often associated with reeds that allow for the light, staccato playing heard in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind.* Because studio musicians often did not know what type of music they were to record before arriving at the studio, constructing a reed that would allow for a wider range of styles was paramount. According to Claudia Ellis,

> [John Williams] got very challenging there at the end. It seemed like he had his key players, and he would write concertos for them. –Mimics throwing paper on music stand—This black sheet of paper, "look it over a little, we'll give you a minute to look at it." … In every case it was like playing concertos for something he did.39

Williams' scores frequently contained so many notes that from a distance, the page would appear black with white marks, rather than the opposite. Williams trusted that his players were able to quickly learn extremely difficult music. Because Ellis did not know what music was going to be placed in front of him on that day, he had to be prepared to play any kind of music, from lyrical to extremely technical. The influence on the Western American oboe reed concerning *Musical Demand* is evident in this example, as Ellis was able to use the same scrape of reed to achieve the different styles of playing.

Many oboists have mentioned how climate and the type of music they play influence their reed-making practices. Each musical genre has its own idiosyncrasies that influence *Musical Demand, Physical Necessity,* and *Aural Concept*. The oboists who

[39] C. Ellis, interview.

played for motion picture soundtracks were very vocal about their reed-making practices. Liliane Lhoest Covington, who played first oboe with Warner Brothers, Universal, and Twentieth Century Fox Studios, spoke thus of the need for change in oboe reeds in recording studios: "Here in California on very dry days, it is hard to get reeds to respond with the proper overtones. I find that oboe reeds for recording should be somewhat thinner than for concert work—as a different style, etc., as a rule, is required."[40] In an interview for the journal, *Film Score Monthly,* she is quoted saying,

> For instance, on Land of the Pharaohs [a Tiompkin-scored film from 1954] we had so much overtime because all Tiompkin wanted to do was rehearse, rehearse, rehearse; and it took several sound stages to get the sound just right. I remember we had the strings in one, the winds in another, and the percussion in a third. We would literally rehearse all day until our lips were bleeding!41

These long recording sessions added to the need to adjust their reeds for their physical health. The adjustments made to the reeds gave the musicians the ability to maintain their embouchure for a long period of time. Covington's reeds closely resemble Ellis's reeds, aside from the use of wire towards the staple.[42] Gordon Schoneburg outlined a similar approach:

> Out here we were all influenced by such men as [Philip] Memoli [Jr.] and [Henri] de Busschers, who used thin reeds and small-brilliant-toned oboes. Since these artists…have retired, and the dark 'Eastern' players such as Bert Gassman have come into the fore in Los Angeles, we locally have

---

[40] Ledet, 121.
[41] Bill Powell, "Lost Issue Wednesday: Interview with Liliane Covington, Session Player in the Warner Bros. Studio Orchestra," *Film Score Monthly*, October 30, 2001, accessed March 31, 2018 http://www.filmscoremonthly.com/daily/article.cfm?articleID=3613
[42] Ledet, 120

> had to conform with the change in tonal conception and alter our equipment to produce the dark mellow sound which has become the norm, rather than the exception.43

Oboist Alexandre Duvoir, who held first oboe positions in the Minneapolis Symphony, the RKO Studios, and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, also had to make changes to his reeds depending on where he was playing. He states,

> As you know, reeds are made according to the current occupation, and also, another very important point is the place where you are living. For instance, in my own experience, I played different reeds in France, where the climate is [more] damp and mild, than when I came to this country to Minneapolis, where the climate is dry and cold. Then we had a winter tour, leaving Minneapolis in January for four to six weeks, going south to New Orleans, Miami, etc., traveling in weather from below zero, dry, to 70 plus, humid. In order to be able to maintain my standard of playing, I had to make my reeds as I was traveling; the best Minneapolis reeds could not play well in New Orleans! Now, when I came to California, which is warm and dry, I encountered those treacherous microphones in the moving picture studios. Thus, I had to play with an easier reed and develop a smaller tone.44

The players in the Western American school of playing had to learn to adapt their reeds for the same type of music, but with a darker sound. This change in *Aural Concept* necessitated the birth of the Western American style. Darkening the reed allowed the Western players to blend better with the American players using the standard long scrape, without sacrificing their embouchure endurance.

John Ellis learned his reed making style from his teacher, Norman Benno, a film studio musician who worked with many great performers, such as Ella Fitzgerald, Neil

---

[43] Ibid, 151.
[44] Ibid, 123-124.

Diamond, and Frank Sinatra. Benno also taught oboist Richard Henderson, who was heavily influential in the world of oboe reed-making by pioneering the use of the micrometer to measure reed thickness.[45] The micrometer had been used extensively in bassoon reed making for many years before it was used for oboe reed making. Prior to Henderson's influence, it was only used in oboe reed making to measure cane thickness before the cane was turned into a reed. Bassoonist Don Christlieb first devised the idea of using the micrometer in reed making, and it was experimented with by another bassoonist, Ray Nowlin. These two bassoonists were able to make reeds at their specification due to arriving at a standard thickness and proportion.[46] Christlieb also worked with Ellis to "clone" Ellis's oboe reeds. Ellis's wife Claudia recalls,

> Don actually started making [oboe] reeds to sell, and he developed a machine [to make them]. And he was trying to do it according to John's specifications. So they [recorded measurements of] all of these reeds to get exactly [the shape of John's reeds]. And they weren't bad. I tied a lot of them after they were done because they had the business going for a while and [Don's] son Tony was a part of it. But John was really the model for what they did for those reeds.47

It is worth noting that Lloyd Rathbun, an early adopter of the micrometer who played with Warner Brothers Motion Pictures Studios, stated, "So far, no oboist has developed such a standard, for in the smaller oboe reed, differences in thickness too slight to record on a practical measuring instrument change the playing of a reed considerably."[48] Martin

---

[45] Interestingly, Henderson went on to teach Richard Killmer, who taught Rebecca Henderson, Richard Henderson's daughter.
[46] Ledet, 141.
[47] C. Ellis, interview.
[48] Ledet, 141.

Schuring and others, would go on to create a standard of cane thickness on the oboe reed by utilizing the micrometer. The pioneering of the micrometer and its use with oboe reeds enables a precise comparison of Ellis's reeds to other oboist's reeds.

Because of its use in many of the motion picture soundtracks, the Western American oboe reed became one of the most widely heard types of oboe reeds around the world, even though it is not as widely used as its standard American counterpart. The west coast oboists were looking for a way to withstand the long recording sessions while keeping the darker, American sound, which allowed them the flexibility to play in many different styles of music. To solve this seemingly insurmountable problem, the west coast oboists developed a new style of reed making that gave them the flexibility that they needed.

CHAPTER IV

COMPARISON OF THE WESTERN AMERICAN REED TO THE STANDARD AMERICAN LONG SCRAPE

The Western American reed is a variation on the standard American Long Scrape style. Many of the Western performers currently use the same equipment as the performers from the east coast, such as gougers, shaper tips, instruments and staples. Therefore the only element the Western performers change is the scrape itself. An analysis of Ellis's version of the Western American Reed will discuss the materials used in the reed-making process, the proportions of the reed (specifically the tip, heart, back, and spine), and his procedure for making reeds.

In examining the materials that Ellis used, consideration needs to be made not only for the reed-making materials, but also the brands of oboes he used: namely, Laubin and Lorée. Laubin oboes are known for their dark, even tone and he primarily used this brand for the majority of his playing. If he needed a lighter, softer sound, such as when he played for opera, he would often use one of his Lorée oboes. Ellis primarily used the Mack-Pfieffer shaper tip, although he would sometimes use the Brannen X shaper tip. Both shapes start with an extremely narrow throat area and progress to a medium wide tip.[49] The design results in a larger flare from throat to tip in the reed. The smallest details of oboe reed-making can have a significant impact on the oboe's overall sound. The

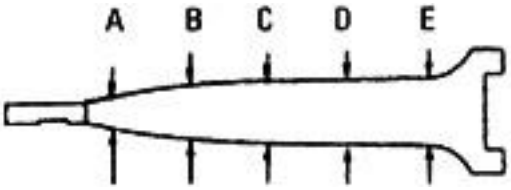
[49] The throat of each of these shaper tips is 3mm and opens up to 7mm. The Brannen X is a tenth of a millimeter wider at the rest of the sections of the shaper tip.

shaper tip affects the stability and timbre of the reed. In his reed guide, University of North Texas oboe professor James Ryon mentions, "The width at the tip of the shape will influence the stability and size of the tip opening of the reed. Wider shapes tend to produce [a larger] tip opening, reduce stability and allow more sound."[50] The measurement where the tip opening occurs on the Mack-Pfieffer and Brannen X shaper tips are identical, as shown in Figure 3 column E, and according to Professor Ryon's guide, are ideal for the width of the tip. Reid Messich, professor of oboe at the University of Georgia, also has a similar approach to choosing a shaper tip. In his dissertation, he recommends a shaper tip:

> where the top of the reed is slightly wider and the bottom is extremely narrow. This helps create the vibration in the reed that characterizes the Philadelphia sound. It also creates stability in pitch…since the bottom of the shaped cane is narrow and fits tightly to the staple it is tied to.51

Messich, a student of Richard Woodhams, who studied with John Mack, uses a Mack++ shaper tip. Figure 3 displays the measurements of the different shaper tips.

[50] James Ryon, "A Brief Guide to Reed Making" accessed 7 June 2018, https://oboe.music.unt.edu/sites/default/files/IDRS_Reed_Clinic.pdf, 3.
[51]Messich, 22.



Shaper Tip	A	B	C	D	E
Brannen X	3.0	4.8	6.0	6.7	7.0
Mack-Pfieffer	3.0	4.7	5.9	6.6	7.0
Mack++	3.3	4.702	5.802	6.502	6.902

Figure 3. Measuring Points of the Oboe Shaper Tip and the Measurements of Various Shaper Tips. Information taken from Forrests Music website, https://www.forrestsmusic.com/oboe_cane_shaping.htm. The throat of the reed is column A, moving toward the tip of the reed, column E.

In comparison to the shaper tips that Ellis used, the Mack++ tip is wider at the bottom of the reed and slightly narrower at the top. Ellis's choice of shaper tip balanced the wider tip with a narrower bottom, aiding in stability while keeping the darkness that a larger tip opening provided. It is important to remember that the Western oboists were trying to emulate the sound of the oboists using the standard American Scrape. Therefore one can see how Ellis and his colleagues on the West Coast were influenced to use these types of shaper tips.

The choice of staple also influences the sound produced by the cane. Ellis exclusively used Sierra 47mm staples made by Mark Chudnow of Chudnow Woodwinds. Chudnow is an innovator in double reed products and is one of the few Americans who received training from the F. Lorée factory in France, one of the top oboe makers in the world. He is especially popular on the west coast since Chudnow is based in California, and he designs products for oboists who performed in that environment. Chudnow's

innovation is significant because "The staple has a substantial impact on the stability and pitch of the reed. The volume, taper, 'ovalness' and thickness of the metal that makes up the staple are all factors that help determine these qualities."[52] The Sierra staple was also the one he suggested students purchase. Ellis would then tie his reeds at 74mm and would reach a final reed length of 70 to 71mm.

In order to understand the sections of the oboe reed, one needs to understand their functions, which can be shared across multiple sections. The player can create balance in the reed by taking cane out of one section and leaving it in others. Refer to Figure 1 to see where these sections occur on the reed. The tip affects response, stability and timbre. Scraping the tip of the reed causes easier response and lower resistance as well as a brighter, more focused sound. Moving down the reed, the heart affects the response and resistance of the reed, as well as the timbre and stability. Scraping the heart will cause the tone to become brighter and the pitch to become less stable. The next sections are the back and spine. Scraping the back of the reed, or the windows as they would be called in the standard American Reed, lowers the resistance and increases response, which gives the reed a warmer, less brilliant sound. Scraping the back and the spine lowers pitch significantly. Scraping the back also forms the spine of the reed. As each player decides how to construct his sound, he can manipulate the different sections of the reed to help him create the desired tone. Each section of the reed can be adjusted to match the *Aural Concept, Musical Demand* and *Physical Necessity* of the individual player. Examining the formation of each section of the Western American Oboe Reed and how they

[52] Ryon, 5.

influence the sound of each performer will allow further understanding of the differences between the standard American and Western American reed styles.

The tip of the oboe reed is the thinnest part of the reed. Most American reeds have one of two different types of tips. One option is an inverted U, which is slightly less pronounced and usually leaves the tip longer. The other is similar to an inverted V, which has sharper angles and is slightly shorter due to the angle. The tips of Ellis's reeds have the inverted U shape, rather than the inverted V shape. Ellis's tips start at 65 or 66 mm from the bottom of the staple. The center of the inverted U to the scrape on the side is only 1 millimeter long. The back of the tip connects it to the rest of the reed, and also influences the shape of the heart of the reed, as shown in Figure 6. Ellis's tips are very similar to those of the standard American Long Scrape.

Scraping the heart can lead to an easier response and resistance, a brighter tone, and a less stable pitch. The shape and thickness of the heart is one significant difference between the Western American Scrape and the standard American Scrape. The heart of Ellis's reed is formed by scraping the back of the reed, whereas the heart of the standard American Reed is formed by scraping that section of the reed separately. The scraping of Ellis's reed back goes all the way through the heart to the tip of the reed, blending the tip to the back of the reed. He used a pivot action to scrape, rather than a pushed action, as described by Joseph Shalita, the author of *Making Oboe Reeds*.[53] The pivot scraping action allows for a gradient in the heart instead of a steep decline in thickness to the back,

[53] Joseph Shalita, *Making Oboe Reeds: "A basic guide to reed making"* Joseph Shalita (Mexico City, Mexico), 52.

as shown in King's reed in Figure 2. The heart of Ellis's reeds is not as large as in the standard American reed. According to Schuring, the heart should be .5mm thick in the center and .4mm thick on the sides, but on Ellis's reeds they tend to be about .4mm in the center and .35 on the sides. The heart in Ellis's reeds is also much shorter than the heart in the standard American scrape, as shown in the side-by-side comparison of Ellis's and King's reeds in Figure 4 and Figure 5. The darker section in the center of King's reed is very prominent. Ellis's reed doesn't contain a very prominent heart, and the darker section isn't easily seen in the photographs.

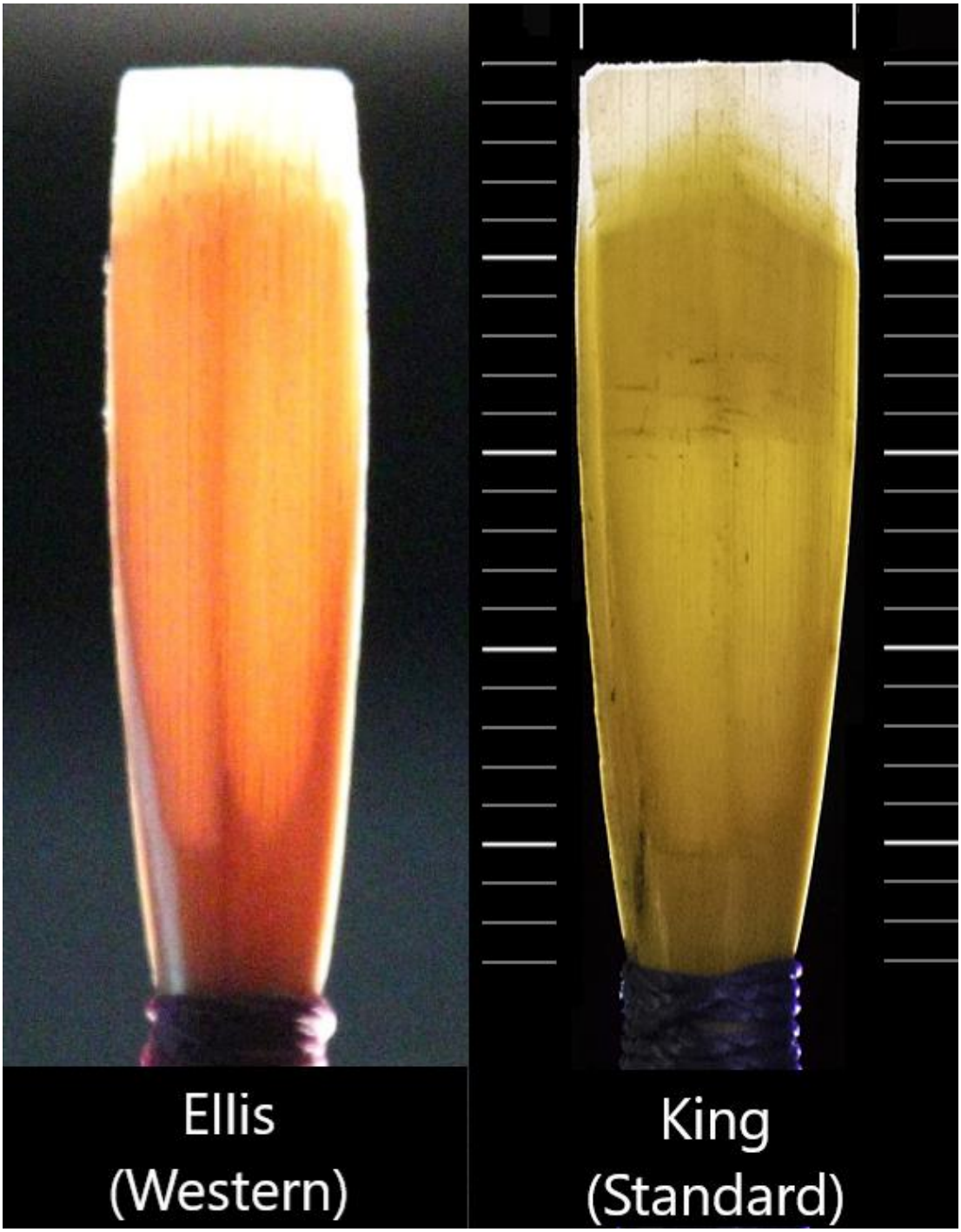


Figure 4. Ellis Reed and King Reed Side by Side.

Figure 5. Ellis Reed and King Reed Side by Side, In Profile.

The average length of the heart in Ellis's reeds is 2.5mm, where the standard American scrape is about 5mm long. Because the heart of the Western American reed is not as long or thick as the standard American reed, the Western American reeds tend to have thicker spines. Removing cane from the heart causes a faster decline in pitch than in other areas of the reed. The Western American reed compensates for the shorter heart by leaving more cane in the spine of the reed. The spines of Ellis's reeds are thicker than the standard American reed because they are truly acting as part of the heart.

The back of Ellis's oboe reeds lacks the traditional windows used in the standard American scrape. The windows, which are ovals scraped into the back of the reed between the heart and the bark in front of the thread, are replaced with a W-shaped scrape, as shown in Figure 4. On Ellis's reed, the W-shaped back extends to the location of the heart in King's reed. The spines on most of his reeds are very heavy and well-defined, and he often goes so far as to leave bark on the spine, whereas most players prefer to take the bark off.

I would argue that the bark here is acting as an extension of the heart, which is shortened due to the W-scrape. The W-scrape used in Ellis's reeds lengthens the back, but makes for a much shorter heart than the standard American counterpart. The back section of the standard American reed is sometimes called the "Channels." In his dissertation on the Philadelphia Oboe Reed, Messich states, "The channels in the back of the reed act much like the heart works, functioning as part of a funneling device to carry vibrations produced in the tip through the entire reed into the oboe."[54] The Western

[54] Messich, 50.

American Reed Style follows the same function as a funneling device. The thicker spine allows more of the vibrations through the center of the reed to be brightened since the cane is not vibrating as unimpeded. The thickness of the spine is counteracted by the longer back, which creates a slightly darker, duller tone. The spine also gives Ellis's reeds structure and stability. Because the heart is much less pronounced, Ellis's reeds use the spine to help carry some of the vibrations through the rest of the reed. Due to the shorter heart, the back and spine are even more important to this reed-making style.

To make his reeds, Ellis gouged cane on a Ross gouger to .6mm. He would then shape the cane using a Mack-Pfeiffer shaper tip. Next, Ellis tied his cane on a 47mm Sierra staple to form a 74mm blank. When tying reeds, Ellis rarely tied the end of the thread to an anchor. Instead, he held the end of the thread against the reed and staple and wrapped it around the cane. After tying his blank and while the reed was still wet, Ellis would start his reed making by scraping the inverted U shape for his tip. After completing the tip of the reed, he would then allow it to dry. With the tip formed and the rest of the reed dry, he would then scrape out the W-shape in the back of the reed. He always made a point to scrape the back while the reed was dry. Part of his reasoning was to clearly see the shape of the scrape as he took bark out of the back of the reed. When the cane is wet, the distinction between the scraped and unscraped sections is less prominent. At this point Ellis would soak only the tip of the reed then thin it out some more until he could open it by placing his plaque through the sides of the reed and slicing the tip open from the inside. As far as my research reveals, he never used a knife or razor blade to open the tip, but always used the plaque. He would only use a razor blade *after* the tip was already

opened to trim the length of the reed, or to ensure a straight line at the tip. Ellis's reeds tended to lean towards a "B" crow, rather than a "C." The lower pitch helps to ensure a darker tone, while still maintaining the reed's pitch stability and response. Opening the tip with the plaque allowed him to make a slightly longer reed without compromising the aperture of the tip by starting the reed too long when tying it on the staple.

It is also worth noting that Ellis was not accustomed to using the micrometer to measure the thickness of his reeds. Even though Ellis worked closely with Don Christlieb, who developed the micrometer and even worked to copy Ellis's reeds, he preferred to rely on feel and sound rather than on a micrometer. He would listen, not just to the sound of the crow, but to the sound of the knife scraping across the reed; he would listen to the pitch produced when the knife hit the plaque while working on the tip of the reed. While these methods might seem less scientific to some, he understood that each piece of cane was a living object, and therefore would react differently. Since he listened to the cane, he was able to approach scraping in a different way.

In order to show the differences between the Western American Oboe Reed and the standard American Oboe Reed, the following graphs document the length of the different sections of the John Ellis's reeds and compare them to some of the standard versions of the American Reed. The measurements of the standard American Oboe Reed use the reeds of Martin Schuring and Dr. Nancy Ambrose King[55] as models.

[55] Dr. Nancy Ambrose King is Professor of Oboe at the University of Michigan and an international soloist.

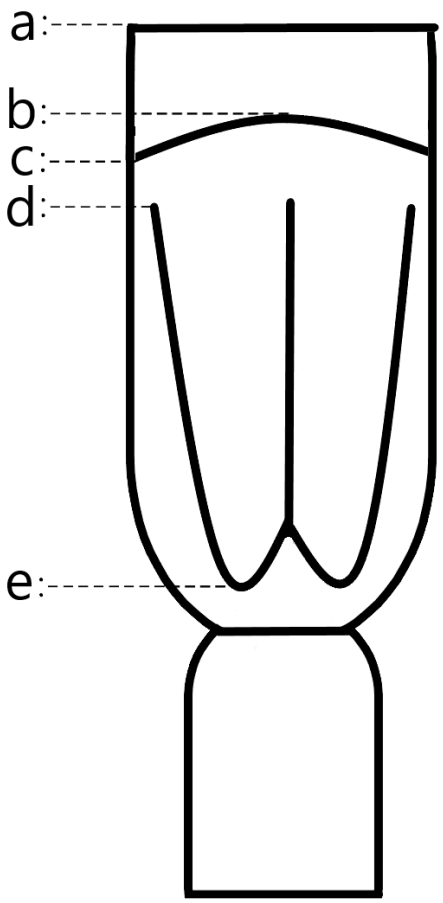


Figure 6. Diagram Showing the Measurement Locations for Ellis's Oboe Reeds in Table 1. The labels are as follows:
a: End of the tip,
b: Where heart and tip meet in center
c: Where heart and tip meet at the side
d: Where heart and back meet
e: Where back and bark meet.

Table 1. Measurement in Millimeters of the Length of the Sections of Ellis's Oboe Reeds From the Staple to the Corresponding Label in Figure 6

Length[56]	**Reed 1**	**Reed 2**	**Reed 3**	**Reed 4**	**Reed 5**	**Reed 6**
a	70	70	70.5	70.5	70	70
b	66	66	67	66	67	67
c	65	65	66	65	66	66
d	63	63	63	64	64	64
e	50	49	50	50	49	50

Table 2. Measurement in Millimeters of the Average Length of Each Style of Oboe Reed, Measuring From the Staple to the Corresponding Label in Figure 6

Average Length	**Ellis**	**Schuring**[a]	**King**[b]
a	70	70	70
b	66-67	67	67
c	65-66	66	65
d	63-64	61	60.5
e	50	50	50

a: Source: Data adapted from Martin Schuring, Oboe: Art and Method, (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 148.

b: Source: Data adapted from Graham Salter, Understanding the Oboe Reed, (United Kingdom: Bearsden Music, 2018), 406.

[56] In this chart, the length of each section refers to where each section starts, measuring from the end of the staple.

Table 3. Measurement of the Average Length of Each Section Using the Labels in Figure 6

Average Section Length	Ellis	Schuring	King
Entire Tip (a-c)	4	3	4
Tip Curve (^ or ◡, b-c)	1	1	2
Heart (c-d)	2	5	5.5
Back (d-e)	13	11	10.5
Thread to Bark (e)	3	3	3

The areas in Ellis's reeds that differ the most from between the Schuring and King reeds are the back and the heart. Ellis's reed has a longer back and a shorter heart, while both of the standard American reed styles by Schuring and King have longer hearts and shorter backs. The difference in length of these sections is what allows for better endurance, while maintaining the warm tone that the Western American oboists sought. The spine of the Western American reed compensates for the shortened length of the heart. Lengthening the back section of the reed carries the vibrations further down the reed, allowing the partials to be diffused into the other sections to achieve the warm tone. Additionally, the thickness of the sections of the reed has a significant effect on the tone. Figure 7 shows the locations measured with the micrometer and Table *4* shows the measurements of Ellis's reeds at those locations.

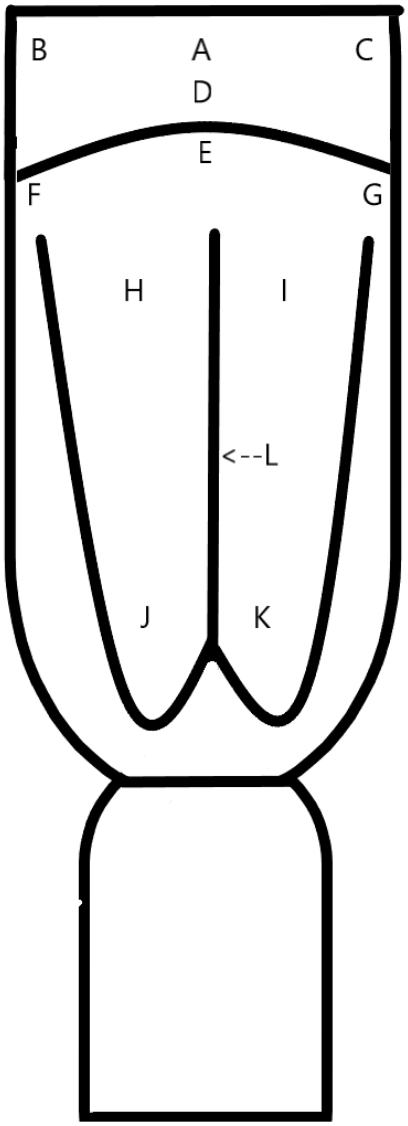


Figure 7. Diagram Showing the Micrometer Placements to Measure the Thickness of Each Section of Ellis's Oboe Reeds.
A: Edge of tip, center
B and C: Edge of tip, sides
D: Tip center
E: Heart center
F and G: Heart sides
H and I: Back/Windows top
J and K: Back/Windows bottom
L: Spine

Table 4. Measurement in Millimeters of the Thickness of the Sections of Ellis's Oboe Reeds Using the Points in Figure 7

Thickness	Reed 1	Reed 2	Reed 3	Reed 4	Reed 5	Reed 6
A	.07	.09	.10	.07	.05	.10
B	.07	.06	.08	.07	.07	.09
C	.05	.06	.09	.06	.05	.08
D	.32	.28	.31	.22	.20	.21
E	.43	.42	.42	.39	.49	.32
F	.34	.37	.38	.39	.37	.32
G	.36	.37	.39	.38	.31	.31
H	.39	.38	.42	.42	.36	.30
I	.35	.39	.38	.39	.32	.32
J	.43	.45	.52	.46	.43	.44
K	.38	.44	.45	.44	.42	.45
L	.50	.50	.58	.55	.50	.49

Table 5. Micrometer Readings in Millimeters of Reeds by John Ellis, Martin Schuring and Nancy Ambrose King.

Average Thickness	**Ellis**	**Schuring**	**King**
Tip Edge, Center (A)	.08	.12	.02
Tip Edge, Sides (B/C)	.07	.02	.02
Tip, at Heart (D)	.26	.20	.20
Heart, Center (E)	.41	.50	.45
Heart, Sides (F/G)	.355	.40	.40
Back, Top (H/I)	.37	.20	.25
Back, Bottom (J/K)	.445	.50	.30
Spine (L)	.52	.50	.45

In Table 4, some of the noticeable differences between the reed styles are the thickness of the sides of the tip (points B and C) and the differences in the gradient in the back (points H and I to points J and K). Table *5* shows the reeds made by Ellis are thicker in the sides of the tip and at the top of the back, eliminating much of the stark definition between sections. It was Ellis's goal to blend the sections of the reed together, rather than show more distinction between each section shown in many of the standard American reeds. In Ellis's reeds, the edges of the tip and the sides of the tip do not show as much of a contrast as those in Schuring's reeds. The blended sections, coupled with the longer back and shorter heart area, aid in the *Aural Concept* and *Physical Needs* of the Western American oboists. More examples of these type of reeds can be seen in the detailed pictures of Ellis's reeds in APPENDIX A. By making reeds using this model, the

Western American oboists were able to extend their playing time while keeping the characteristic warm tone of the oboe.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Throughout John Ellis's tenure at UNCSA, he taught the Western American oboe reed style to many of his students. While he allowed his students to choose whether they wanted to adopt his style of reed making, most of his students did adopt his style as their own and make the appropriate adjustments to their reeds to fit their own *Aural Concept, Physical Necessity* and *Musical Demand*. Most of Ellis's students did not go on to follow in his career as a studio musician. However, many have played in orchestras and chamber ensembles around the world and have taken the lessons and ideals of Ellis's reed-making style with them. Of Ellis's students that answered the poll about the Western American Reed Style, all replied that Ellis impacted their reed making and those that are actively performing use his style with subtle adjustments.

The purpose of this document was to accrue information about the Western American Reed. I proposed the following research questions, and now will answer them. (1) What qualities did the Hollywood film oboists demand from their reeds to perform the type of music they were employed to play? The Hollywood film oboists needed a reed that would allow them to play longer recording sessions, while still maintaining thedarker sound to compete with the players that had studied on the east coast. The original reeds used by these oboists were very thin and brittle sounding. While the thinner reeds helped with endurance, it was not conducive to creating a darker sound. It was Ellis's goal, and

the goal of the Western American oboists, to create a darker sound to blend with the sound of the standard American oboists that were coming to the west coast to perform, while still providing the endurance required for lengthy recording sessions. In her survey response, Anna Morris noted that she preferred the "smoother and darker sound of John Ellis['s] style [versus the] brighter thin sound of traditional standard style." Morris's reason for switching is a common thread amongst all of Ellis's students that switched to Ellis's reed-making style. The Western American style achieved its goal of creating a darker sound, therefore changing the sound of their predecessors who had very bright timbres.

(2) How did John Ellis and the other Hollywood film oboists create a reed that fit the qualities they needed, but also allowed them to create a warmer sound than their original reeds? By making the heart of the reed shorter, lengthening the back of the reed and creating a more defined spine, they were able to make the reed require less endurance to play. Blending the tip to the back of the reed allowed vibrations to smoothly transition to the instrument, rather than the vibrations moving through the very thick heart. The players were thus able to find a balance between darkness and endurance.

(3) In the development of the Western American Long Scrape style, what did Ellis and his colleagues have to change from the standard Long Scrape to suit their recording needs? The Western American Long Scrape and the standard American Long Scrape reed makers both use some of the more popular shaper tips, like the Brannen X and Pfeiffer-Mack tips, along with the standard staples, such as the Sierra by Mark Chudnow. Ellis also used the same brands of oboes, like Lorée and Laubin, used by the east coast oboists.

The main goal of the Western American players was to create a sound that blended with the players from the East, but that allowed them to play for longer periods of time. In Chapter IV, I compared the measurements of Western American and standard American reeds. The major differences between them are the length of the back and heart, and the thickness of the spine and heart. A front view of the reeds shows you can also see less definition in the Western American reeds with regard to the heart section. The lack of definition is due to Ellis scraping the back of the reed through the heart, rather than stopping at the bottom of the heart.

(4) How did Ellis's students use and modify his reed-making style to suit their own needs? Most students who studied with Ellis were utilizing another style of reed making prior to studying with Ellis. Given that the Western American reed style is truly unique to a small region of the United States of America, it was unfamiliar to his students. Switching from one style to another causes a student not only to rethink reed making, but also readjust how they play. A colleague of John Ellis, David Sherr, who studied with another Hollywood studio oboist, Bill Criss, was accustomed to using a similar reed style to Ellis. He stated, "Like John (and David Weiss, among others) I don't like to make 'windows' in the back of the reed. Bill Criss did."[57] Sherr adopted this style even though he studied with an oboist who did not use the blended back style. Sherr shared a story about John Ellis, which might have been influential in his reed-making style. "[Ellis] handed his oboe to me once (on a break from a televised concert we were

[57] David Sherr, survey response.

doing) and told me to try it and when I said it played itself, he said 'That's what they're supposed to do.' He said he 'blended the tip into the back.'"[58] It could be considered the dream of an oboist to have a reed that feels like "it plays itself." Having this kind of stability in a reed is a must for a recording musician, since they need a reed that can record music the same way multiple times, and not have too many changes in timbre between takes. Anna Lodico also had a similar response with regard to switching to the Western American reed-making style. "I had to get used to not scraping defined windows, but make a subtle blend through the heart. I found this to be difficult! It's not a straightforward shape, but graduated, and I tended to take out too much cane too soon."[59] Achieving such a subtle blend between the tip, heart and back takes time to master, but when done correctly, the reed plays beautifully. Lodico studied with Ellis in high school and college and had many years to master this style. She was principal oboist of the orchestra and wind ensemble at UNCSA for many years and often hand-picked by the orchestra director because of her mastery of performance and reed making, which was the Western American reed scrape.

The Western American Reed Scrape has its advantages over the European scrapes also. Michał Rogalski, former second oboist in the Winston-Salem Symphony and student of John Ellis, began his oboe studies in Poland, where he learned reed making using the German scrape. When he switched to the Western American style while studying with Ellis, he remembers the reeds having "better response and depth of lower

[58] Ibid.
[59] Anna Lodico, Survey

register"[60] He goes on to state, "when playing on [a Western] American scrape reed one doesn't have to 'reach up' in the upper register, but rather 'look down' to adjust intonation; in other words: the upper register tends to be a bit sharp, rather than flat."[61] Rogalski's remarks demonstrate how Ellis's style of reed making allows the oboist to play in all registers effortlessly. Having a reed that does not require you to bite in the upper register allows you to relax while playing in this register, increasing your endurance. Mateusz Zechowski, who studied with John Ellis after switching from one of the European styles, stated the "long scrape allows for a richer sound and better intonation balance."[62] Both of these performers say that they use a version of Ellis's reed style, but with some adjustments to suit their own *Physical Necessity* and *Aural Concept*.

Many of Ellis's students who went on to study at other schools were often met with opposition to their style of reed making. Ellis often recalled that students would talk to him after graduating and tell them about their teachers influenced them to switch to the standard American scrape. Their reluctance to permit their students to use the Western American scrape is most likely because their teachers' lack of familiarity with it or the players using it. As mentioned previously, John Ellis is not well known, even though his sound has been heard all around the world through the movies that feature his playing on their soundtracks.

Future research opportunities include how Ellis's oboe reed making style influenced his reeds on other instruments that he regularly played, including English

[60] Michal Rogalski, Survey
[61] Ibid.
[62] Mateusz Zechowski, Survey

horn, oboe d'amore, and even bass oboe and Hecklephone. He often played these instruments in recordings and in concert. The reeds of other West Coast oboists—players such as Bill Criss, David Weiss, and Richard Henderson, along with other Norman Benno students—would also be of interest. David Sherr, who studied with Criss, noted that Criss's reeds had some of the elements traditionally used on the standard American scrape. Since bassoonists also make their own reeds, comparing the reeds of the bassoonists from the Hollywood recording studios and those who play in traditional orchestral musicians would be another possible direction for research. The bassoon reed shares characteristics to the Western American oboe reed's blended sections. Bassoonists who worked with Ellis would be of the highest interest, especially Don Christleib who worked to clone Ellis's oboe reeds.

The Western American reed style was developed to fit the *Physical Needs*, *Aural Concept* and *Musical Demands* of the oboists primarily playing in the recording studios for motion picture productions. Although the Western American reed style is not well known in the oboe community, the performers using this reed style are some of the oboists whose sound is heard throughout the entire world. Players like John Ellis, his teacher Norman Benno, and some of his other colleagues such as Arnold Koblentz, Bill Criss and David Sherr were responsible for developing this style of reed that allowed the flexibility and control needed for the demands imposed on them by music for motion pictures. The Western American reed style began to migrate towards the East Coast when players like John Ellis and Richard Henderson started teaching at universities further east

than California.[63] Their contribution to American oboe reed making will continue through their recordings and their students who are now teaching this style of reed making to a new generation of oboists.

[63] Henderson was professor of oboe at North Texas State University, El Paso, and played in the El Paso Symphony.

REFERENCES

Burgess, Geoffrey and Bruce Haynes. *The Oboe*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.

Ellis, Claudia. *Interview by Author,* Mocksville, NC. 28 December 2017.

Holt, Margaret Smith. "An Exploration of the Philadelphia Sound – The Philadelphia Orchestra Announces its 2015-2016 Season." Accessed 3 January 2019. https://www.philorch.org/blog/news/exploration-philadelphia-sound-philadelphia-orchestra-announces-its-2015-16-season#/.

Horowitz, Joseph. *Classical Music America: A History of its Rise and Fall*, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2005.

Johnson, J. Wilfred. Ella Fitzgerald: *An Annotated Discography; Including a Complete Discography of Chick Webb.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, 2001.

Ledet, David A. *Oboe Reed Styles: Theory and Practice*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981.

Messich, Reid. "The Philadelphia Influence on the Art of Reed Making." DMA diss., The Florida State University, 2012.

Powell, Bill. "Lost Issue Wednesday: Interview with Liliane Covington, Session Player in the Warner Bros. Studio Orchestra." *Film Score Monthly,* 30 October 2001. Accessed March 31, 2018. http://www.filmscoremonthly.com/daily/article.cfm?articleID=3613.

Ryon, James. "A Brief Guide to Reed Making." Accessed 7 June 2018. https://oboe.music.unt.edu/sites/default/files/IDRS_Reed_Clinic.pdf.

Salter, Graham. *Understanding the Oboe Reed.* London: Bearsden Music, 2018.

Schiavo, Joseph C. "Philadelphia Orchestra." Accessed 18 January 2019. https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/philadelphia-orchestra-2/.

Schuring, Martin. *Oboe Art and Method*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Shalita, Joseph. *Making Oboe Reeds: "A basic guide to reed making."* Mexico City: Crispin's Creations, 2003.Sprinkle, Robert and David Ledet. *The Art of Oboe Playing.* Los Angeles: Summy-Birchard Music, 1961.

Storch, Laila. *Marcel Tabuteau: How Do You Expect to Play the Oboe If You Can't Peel a Mushroom?*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008.

APPENDIX A

PICTURES OF JOHN ELLIS REEDS[64]

Figure 8. John Ellis Reed 1, Front and Side Views. Photographs courtesy of Taiki Azuma.

[64] Due to the age of the reeds, they do not fully seal on the sides anymore.

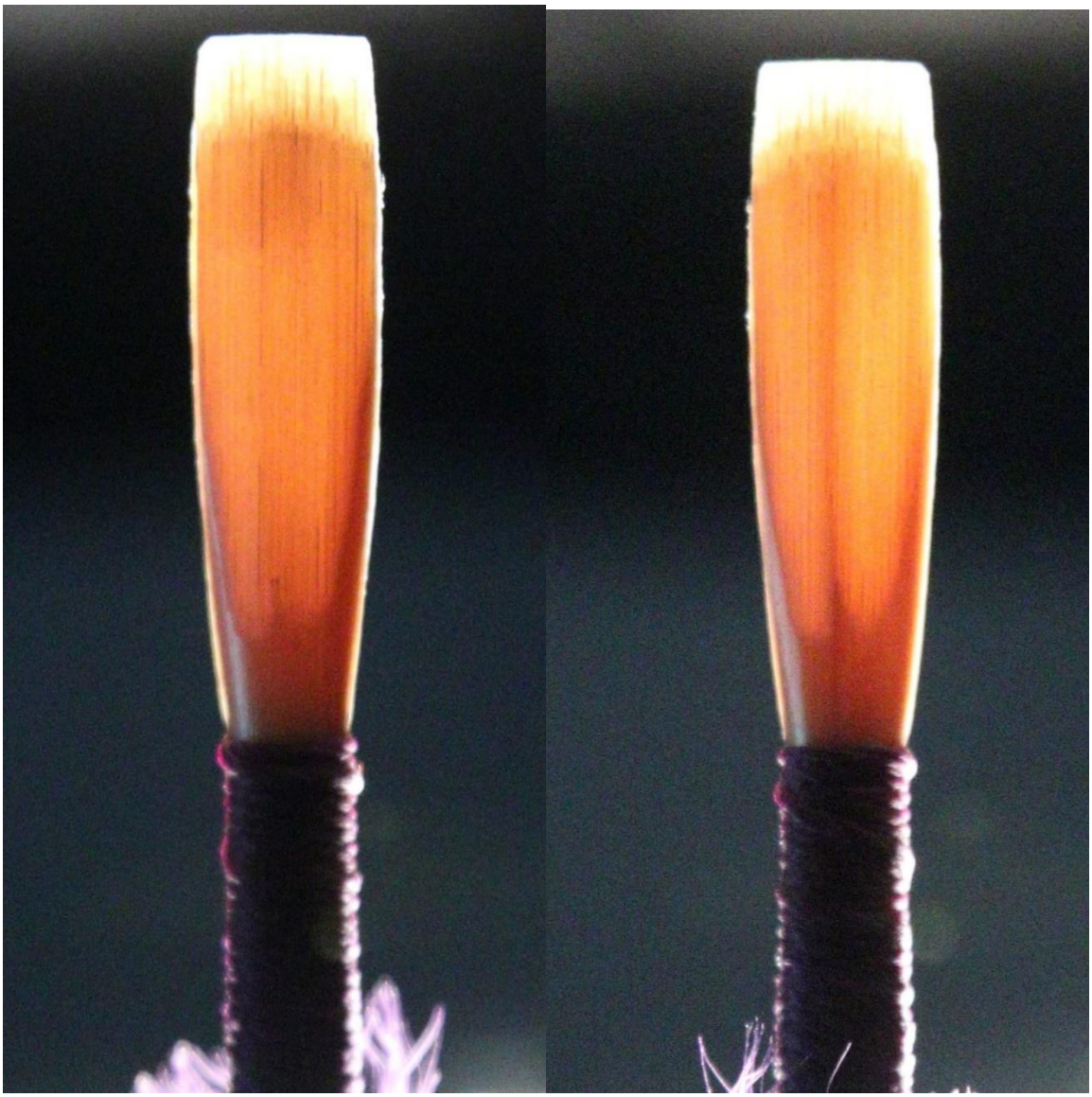


Figure 9. John Ellis Reed 1, Backlit. Photographs courtesy of Taiki Azuma

Figure 10. John Ellis Reed 2, Front and Side Views. Photographs courtesy of Taiki Azuma.

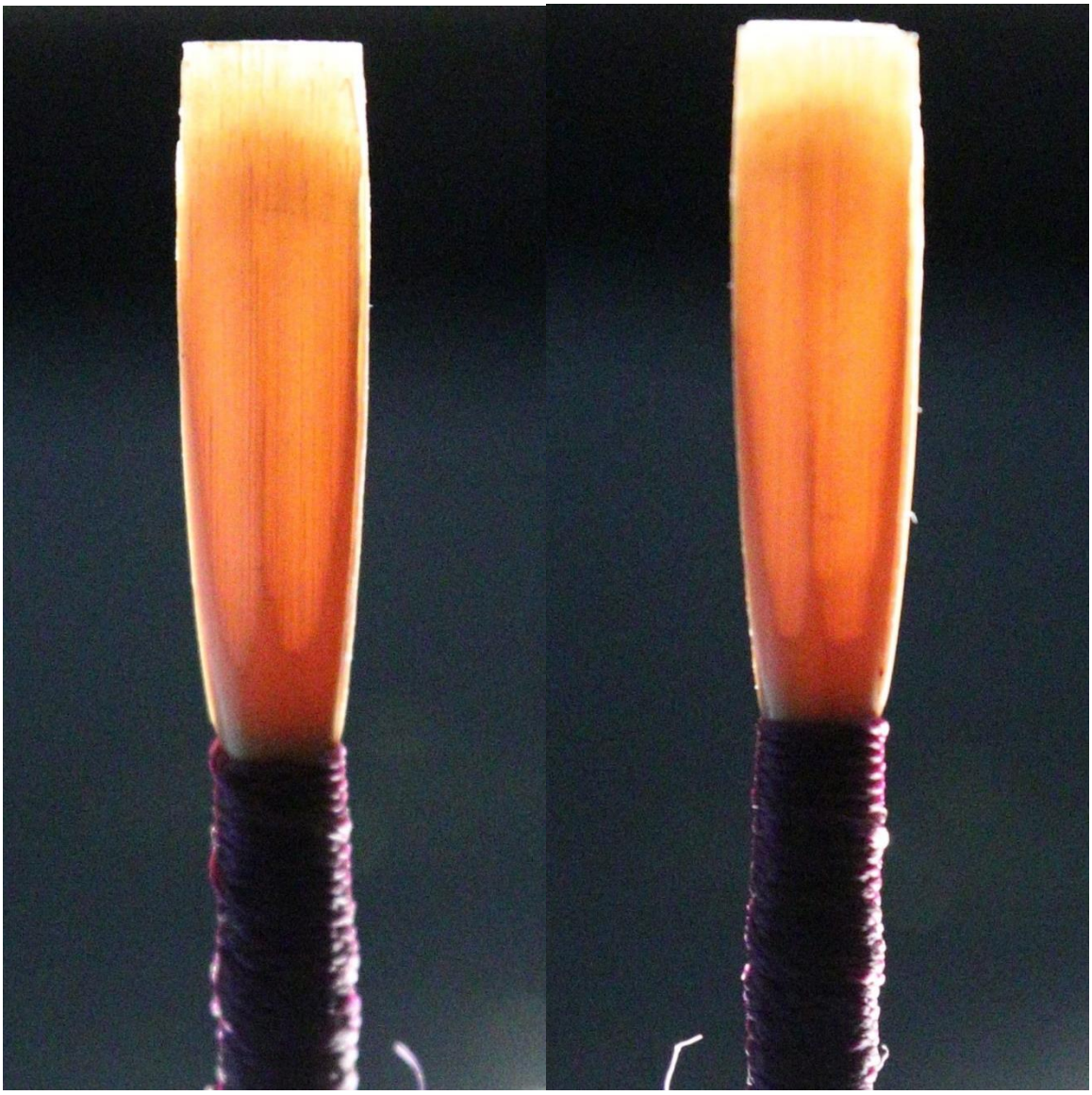


Figure 11. John Ellis Reed 2, Backlit. Photographs courtesy of Taiki Azuma.

Figure 12. John Ellis Reed 3, Front and Side Views. Photographs courtesy of Taiki Azuma.

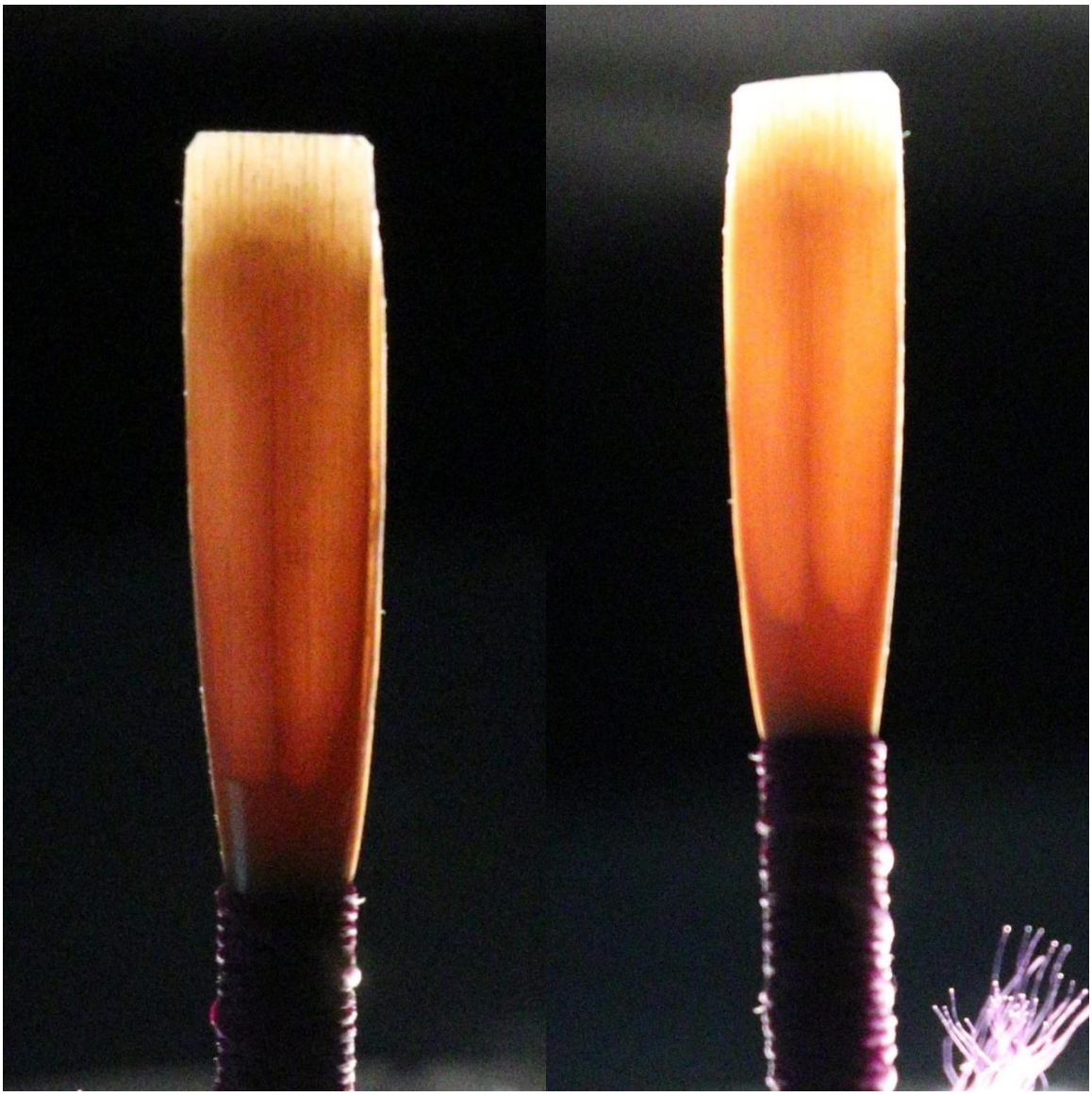


Figure 13. John Ellis Reed 3, Backlit. Photographs courtesy of Taiki Azuma.

Figure 14. John Ellis Reed 4, Front and Side Views. Photographs courtesy of Taiki Azuma.

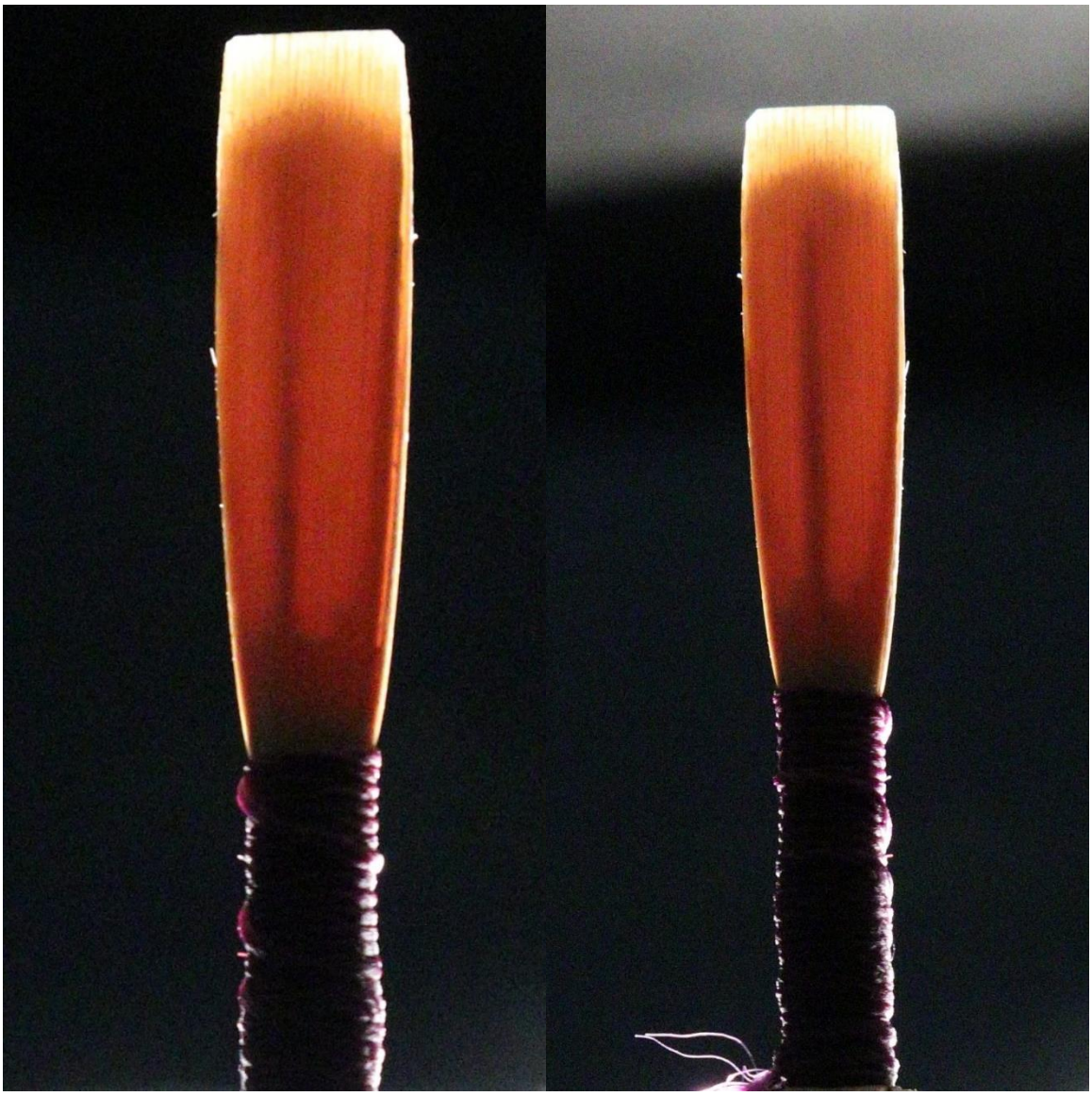


Figure 15. John Ellis Reed 4, Backlit. Photographs courtesy of Taiki Azuma

Figure 16. John Ellis Reed 5, Front and Side Views. Photographs courtesy of Taiki Azuma.

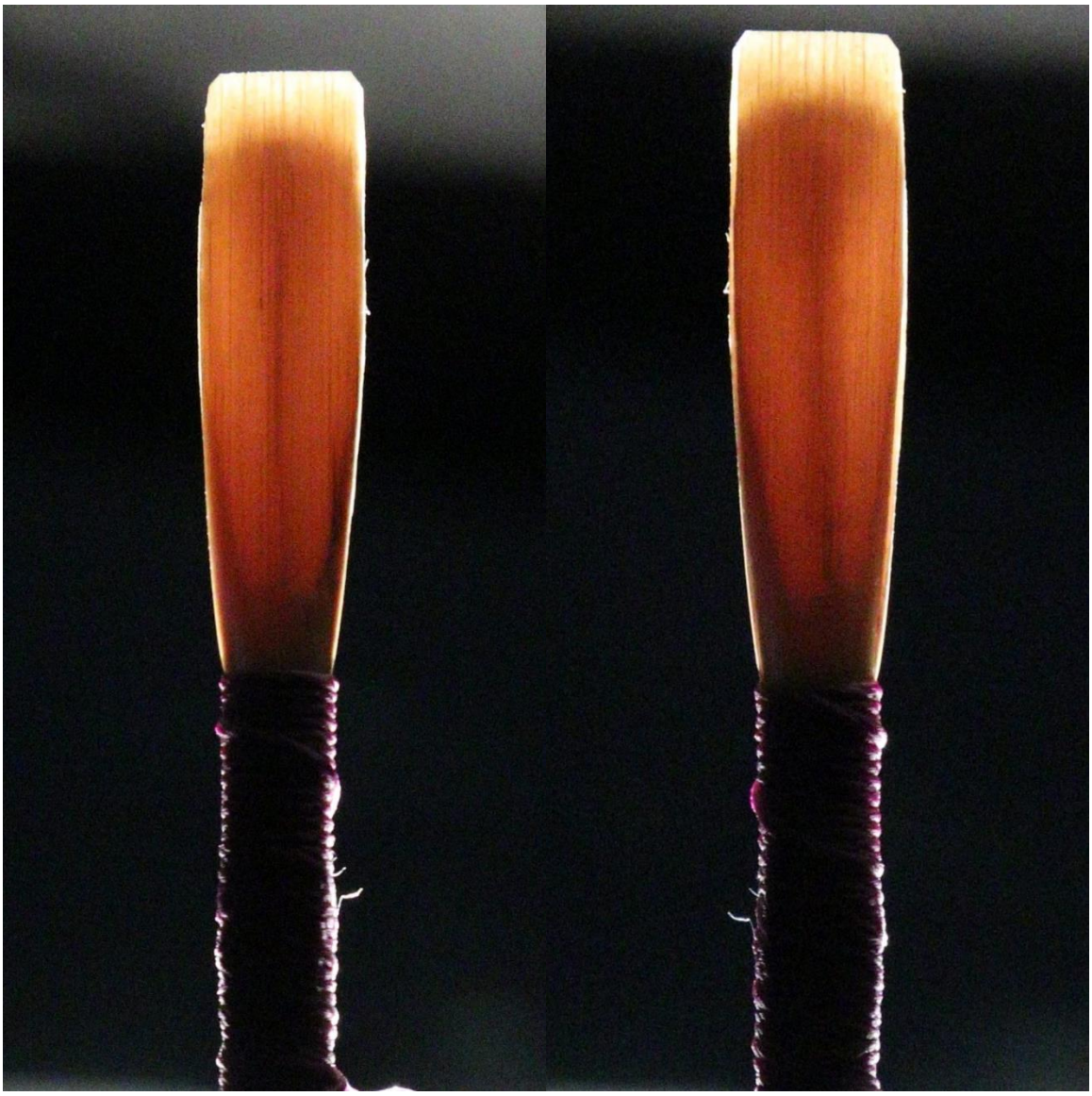


Figure 17. John Ellis Reed 5, Backlit. Photographs courtesy of Taiki Azuma.

Figure 18. John Ellis Reed 6, Front and Side Views. Photographs courtesy of Taiki Azuma.

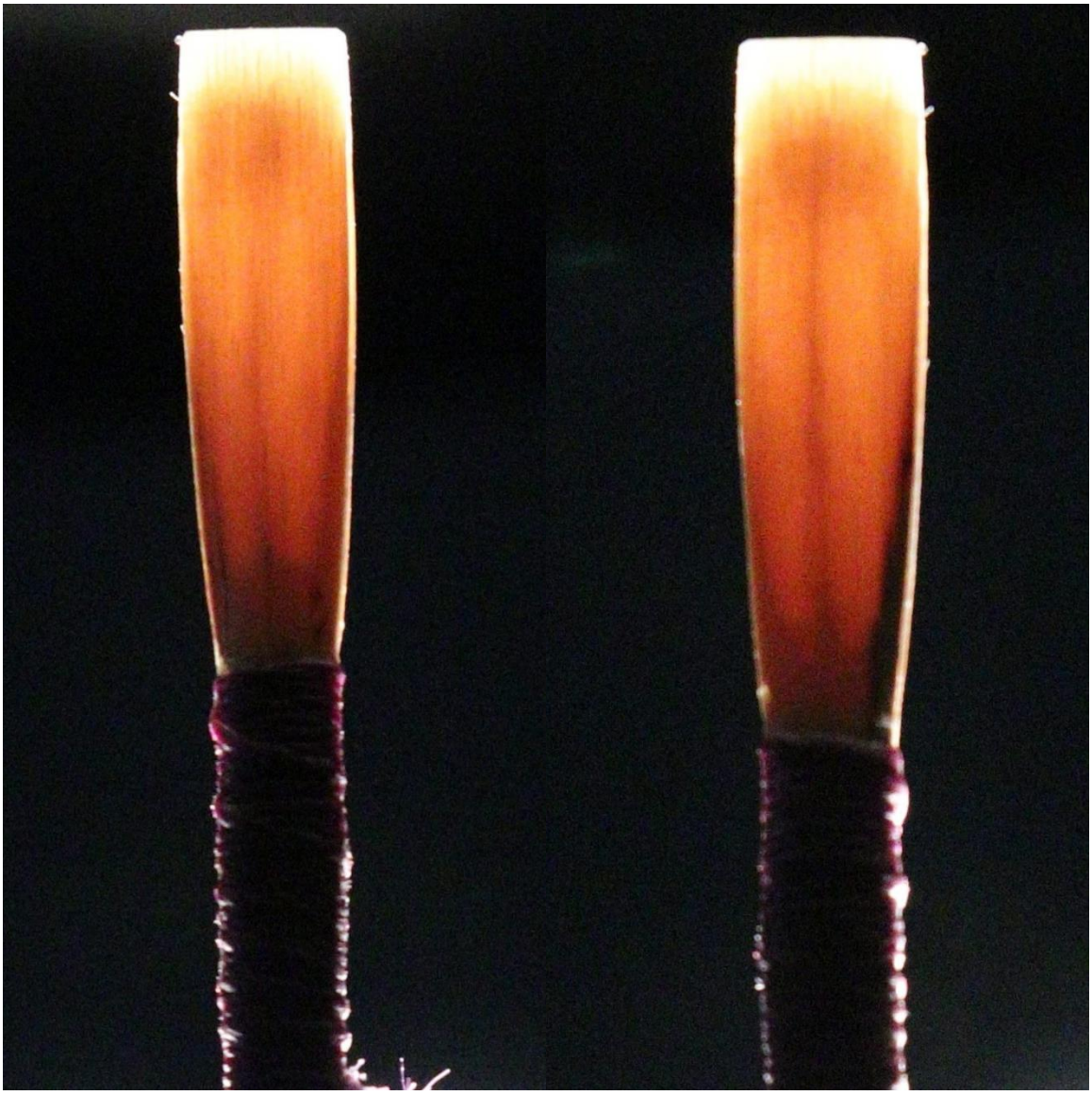


Figure 19. John Ellis Reed 6, Backlit. Photographs courtesy of Taiki Azuma.

APPENDIX B

JOHN ELLIS DISCOGRAPHY

Cinema

Cleopatra (1963), Alex North

Dr. Zhivago (1965), Maurice Jarre

Planet of the Apes (1968), Jerry Goldsmith

Funny Girl (1968), Jule Styne

Hello Dolly (1969), Jerry Herman

The Godfather (1972), Nino Rota and Carmine Coppola

The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds (1972), Maurice Jarre

Towering Inferno (1974), John Williams

Jaws (1975), John Williams

Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977), John Williams

Star Trek: The Next Generation (1987), Jerry Goldsmith

Beauty and The Beast (1991), Alan Menken

Homeward Bound: The Incredible Journey (1993), Bruce Broughton

Baby's Day Out (1994), Bruce Broughton

River Wild (1994), Jerry Goldsmith

Anastacia (1997), David Newman

Stepmom (1998), John Williams

Angela's Ashes (1999), John Williams

Patriot (2000), John Williams

A.I. (Artificial Intelligence) (2001), John Williams

E.T. (2002 re-release), John Williams

Memoirs of a Geisha (2005), John Williams

Munich (2005), John Williams

Bambi II: Bambi and the Great Prince of the Forest (2006), Bruce Broughton

Other

John Denver's Greatest Hits (1976)

Paul Hindemith Anthology, Volume 5 (1975)

APPENDIX C

SURVEY RESPONSES FROM ELLIS'S STUDENTS AND COLLEAGUES

This questionnaire is to collect information for the dissertation that I am writing about the "Western American Long Scrape" reed and about John Ellis. Any help that you can give would be greatly appreciated!

John Ellis referred to his reed style as the Western American Style. It differs from the standard American Scrape by an elongated back scrape that continues through the heart of the reed, rather than the traditional windows that stop at the heart.

1. What is your first and last name?
2. Are you comfortable providing your name in the responses?
3. How did you know John Ellis?
4. Who are your principal oboe teachers?
5. Where did you study?
6. Who are some of your influences for oboe sound? (This can be oboists and non-oboists)
7. Ellis called his style of reeds the "Western American Style." Have you come into contact with any other people that use this style?
    a. If so, who?

Oboe Equipment

8. What shaper tip do you prefer?
9. What length staple do you use?
10. What brand(s) of staple do you use?
11. Cork or O-ring bottom?
12. What material do you prefer for your staples?
13. What type of cane do you use?
14. What diameter cane do you use?
15. What kind of knife do you prefer?
16. What kind of blade style do you use with your knives?
17. What were the determining factors in choosing your reed making equipment?
18. What brand and model of oboe do you play?
19. What were the determining factors in choosing that instrument?
20. Did you consider any other brands? If so, which?

Comparisons

21. Have there been any particular types of equipment you noticed that worked best with this Western American reed style? What were they?
22. John Ellis mentioned that his reeds tended to last a long time. On average, how long do yours last? What do you think could be the reason?
23. How has your reed making changed over the years? Have you adopted other styles? What elements of each do you use?
24. If you started with the traditional standard American style of reed making, were there changes you had to make to adjust? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
25. If you switched to the traditional standard American style of reed making, what were the reasons why? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
26. If you started with a non-American reed scrape, what were the changes that you had to make to adjust? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
27. What problems did you have when encountering other students/teachers when they saw/tried your reeds?

Current Reed Style

28. At what length do you tie your reeds? (In mm)
29. What is your average, finished reed length?
30. How long (in mm) is your window/back scrape?
31. What is the shape of your reed tip?
32. What pitch do you aim for in your crow?
33. How would you describe the timbre, pitch stability, flexibility, etc. of your reeds?
34. Would you be willing to send 3 reeds to me for measurements? I would be more than happy to send them back to you if you would like.

Final Thoughts

35. If you would like to leave any additional message about John Ellis, the “Western” American reed style, or anything else that would pertain to my research, feel free to do so here. Thank you!

Responder 1:

1. What is your first and last name?
    a. Anna Morris
2. Are you comfortable providing your name in the responses?
    a. Yes
3. How did you know John Ellis?
    a. Teacher
4. Who are your principal oboe teachers?
    a. Bobby Taylor, Ellen Menking, John Ellis, Joe Robinson
5. Where did you study?
    a. Vanderbilt University, Western Kentucky University, UNCSA
6. Who are some of your influences for oboe sound? (This can be oboists and non-oboists)
    a. Bobby Taylor, John Ellis, Joe Robinson, John Mack, Robert Listokin, Mark Popkin, etc.
7. Ellis called his style of reeds the "Western American Style." Have you come into contact with any other people that use this style?
    a. No

Oboe Equipment

8. What shaper tip do you prefer?
    a. Gilbert -1, Brannen X
9. What length staple do you use?
    a. 47
10. What brand(s) of staple do you use?
    a. Lorée, Glotin, Chudnow, Stevens, Rigotti
11. Cork or O-ring bottom?
    a. Cork
12. What material do you prefer for your staples?
    a. Brass
13. What type of cane do you use?
    a. Lorée, Pisoni, Rigotti, Glotin
14. What diameter cane do you use?
    a. 10-10.5
15. What kind of knife do you prefer?
    a. Chudnow, Landwell
16. What kind of blade style do you use with your knives?
    a. Double Hollow Ground
17. What were the determining factors in choosing your reed making equipment?
    a. quality, consistency
18. What brand and model of oboe do you play?

    a. Lorée AK
19. What were the determining factors in choosing that instrument?
    a. sound, feel, intonation
20. Did you consider any other brands? If so, which?
    a. Lorée, Buffet

Comparisons

21. Have there been any particular types of equipment you noticed that worked best with this Western American reed style? What were they?
    a. Chudnow knives & fine sandpaper for blending
22. John Ellis mentioned that his reeds tended to last a long time. On average, how long do yours last? What do you think could be the reason?
    a. My reeds tend to last a month or longer if rotating reeds. Reasons: tips not as thin, maybe the blending technique similar to bassoon reeds.
23. How has your reed making changed over the years? Have you adopted other styles? What elements of each do you use?
    a. I've moved back to more defined tips and windows not as much of the full blend. reeds seem to be more stable
24. If you started with the traditional standard American style of reed making, were there changes you had to make to adjust? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
    a. Biggest change was knives. I moved away from the thin Philadelphia Herder style to thicker knives like Chudnow for blending and I use a Landwell for finishing touches.
25. If you switched to the traditional standard American style of reed making, what were the reasons why? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
    a. Reasons: influence of teacher at the time. Smoother and darker sound of John Ellis' style vs. brighter thin sound of traditional standard style.
26. If you started with a non-American reed scrape, what were the changes that you had to make to adjust? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
27. What problems did you have when encountering other students/teachers when they saw/tried your reeds?
    a. responsiveness sometimes too easy or brighter/unstable sound, pitch instability

Current Reed Style

28. At what length do you tie your reeds? (In mm)
    a. 73
29. What is your average, finished reed length?
    a. 70
30. How long (in mm) is your window/back scrape?
    a. 11-12
31. What is the shape of your reed tip?
    a. Upside-down U (∩)
32. What pitch do you aim for in your crow?
    a. C
33. How would you describe the timbre, pitch stability, flexibility, etc. of your reeds?
    a. great question! depends on the day & depends on the reed. I aspire for a smoother dark sound, stable pitch and great responsiveness in the low register.
34. Would you be willing to send 3 reeds to me for measurements? I would be more than happy to send them back to you if you would like.
    a. No, I do not want to participate.

Final Thoughts

35. If you would like to leave any additional message about John Ellis, the “Western” American reed style, or anything else that would pertain to my research, feel free to do so here. Thank you!

Responder 2

1. What is your first and last name?
    a. Mateusz Zechowski
2. Are you comfortable providing your name in the responses?
    a. Yes
3. How did you know John Ellis?
    a. Teacher
4. Who are your principal oboe teachers?
    a. S. Malikowski, J. Ellis, R. Killmer
5. Where did you study?
    a. Warsaw Academy of Music, NCSA, Yale School of Music
6. Who are some of your influences for oboe sound? (This can be oboists and non-oboists)
    a. H. Holliger, T. Indermühle, A. Vogel, F. Leleux
7. Ellis called his style of reeds the "Western American Style." Have you come into contact with any other people that use this style?
    a. No

Oboe Equipment

8. What shaper tip do you prefer?
    a. Brannen X
9. What length staple do you use?
    a. 47
10. What brand(s) of staple do you use?
    a. Pisoni (Rigotti...?) don't remember
11. Cork or O-ring bottom?
    a. Cork
12. What material do you prefer for your staples?
    a. Silver
13. What type of cane do you use?
    a. Alliaud
14. What diameter cane do you use?
    a. 10.5-11
15. What kind of knife do you prefer?
    a. Pisoni
16. What kind of blade style do you use with your knives?
    a. Double Hollow Ground
17. What were the determining factors in choosing your reed making equipment?
    a. Functionality
18. What brand and model of oboe do you play?
    a. Lorée AK

19. What were the determining factors in choosing that instrument?
    a. Sound and intonation
20. Did you consider any other brands? If so, which?
    a. Marigaux

Comparisons

21. Have there been any particular types of equipment you noticed that worked best with this Western American reed style? What were they?
    a. Lorée - sonority and projection
22. John Ellis mentioned that his reeds tended to last a long time. On average, how long do yours last? What do you think could be the reason?
    a. This is relative. I'd save Best reeds for long time.
23. How has your reed making changed over the years? Have you adopted other styles? What elements of each do you use?
    a. I adopted typical American scrape (J. Mack, R. Killmer)
24. If you started with the traditional standard American style of reed making, were there changes you had to make to adjust? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
    a. It was other way around. First short scrape, then long scrape then American.
       Long scrape allows for a richer sound and better intonation balance.
25. If you switched to the traditional standard American style of reed making, what were the reasons why? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
    a. Balance. Better intonation and responsiveness.
26. If you started with a non-American reed scrape, what were the changes that you had to make to adjust? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
    a. European scrape requires teeth-bite making it very difficult to stabilize.
27. What problems did you have when encountering other students/teachers when they saw/tried your reeds?
    a. Not stable reeds.

Current Reed Style

28. At what length do you tie your reeds? (In mm)
    a. 72
29. What is your average, finished reed length?
    a. 69
30. How long (in mm) is your window/back scrape?
    a. 4-6 mm
31. What is the shape of your reed tip?
    a. upside-down V (Λ)
32. What pitch do you aim for in your crow?
    a. C
33. How would you describe the timbre, pitch stability, flexibility, etc. of your reeds?
    a. Dark, stable and responsive. Not too dark though... so there is a bright color margin.
34. Would you be willing to send 3 reeds to me for measurements? I would be more than happy to send them back to you if you would like.
    a. No, I do not want to participate.

Final Thoughts

35. If you would like to leave any additional message about John Ellis, the "Western" American reed style, or anything else that would pertain to my research, feel free to do so here. Thank you!
    a. I'm actually not playing anymore... I sold my oboe couple years ago (now it is a spare instrument at Eastman School of Music)

Responder 3:

1. What is your first and last name?
    a. Anna Lodico
2. Are you comfortable providing your name in the responses?
    a. Yes
3. How did you know John Ellis?
    a. Teacher
4. Who are your principal oboe teachers?
    a. John Ellis
5. Where did you study?
    a. NCSA
6. Who are some of your influences for oboe sound? (This can be oboists and non-oboists)
    a. Robert Listokin
7. Ellis called his style of reeds the "Western American Style." Have you come into contact with any other people that use this style?
    a. No

Oboe Equipment

8. What shaper tip do you prefer?
    a. (No answer)
9. What length staple do you use?
    a. 46
10. What brand(s) of staple do you use?
    a. (No answer)
11. Cork or O-ring bottom?
    a. Cork
12. What material do you prefer for your staples?
    a. Brass
13. What type of cane do you use?
    a. Rigotti
14. What diameter cane do you use?
    a. (No answer)
15. What kind of knife do you prefer?
    a. (No answer)
16. What kind of blade style do you use with your knives?
    a. (No answer)
17. What were the determining factors in choosing your reed making equipment?
    a. I went with what John recommended, and was most affordable.
18. What brand and model of oboe do you play?
    a. Lorée

19. What were the determining factors in choosing that instrument?
    a. (No answer)
20. Did you consider any other brands? If so, which?
    a. No

Comparisons

21. Have there been any particular types of equipment you noticed that worked best with this Western American reed style? What were they?
    a. (No answer)
22. John Ellis mentioned that his reeds tended to last a long time. On average, how long do yours last? What do you think could be the reason?
    a. Around 3 weeks, sometimes longer.
23. How has your reed making changed over the years? Have you adopted other styles? What elements of each do you use?
    a. (No answer)
24. If you started with the traditional standard American style of reed making, were there changes you had to make to adjust? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
    a. I had to get used to not scraping defined windows, but make a subtle blend through the heart. I found this to be difficult! It's not a straightforward shape, but graduated, and I tended to take out too much cane too soon.
25. If you switched to the traditional standard American style of reed making, what were the reasons why? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
    a. (No answer)
26. If you started with a non-American reed scrape, what were the changes that you had to make to adjust? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
    a. (No answer)
27. What problems did you have when encountering other students/teachers when they saw/tried your reeds?
    a. (No answer)

Current Reed Style

28. At what length do you tie your reeds? (In mm)
    a. (No answer)
29. What is your average, finished reed length?
    a. (No answer)
30. How long (in mm) is your window/back scrape?
    a. (No answer)
31. What is the shape of your reed tip?
    a. upside-down V (Λ)
32. What pitch do you aim for in your crow?

    a. C

33. How would you describe the timbre, pitch stability, flexibility, etc. of your reeds?
    a. (No answer)
34. Would you be willing to send 3 reeds to me for measurements? I would be more than happy to send them back to you if you would like.
    a. No, I do not want to participate.

Final Thoughts

35. If you would like to leave any additional message about John Ellis, the “Western” American reed style, or anything else that would pertain to my research, feel free to do so here. Thank you!

Responder 4

1. What is your first and last name?
    a. Michał Rogalski
2. Are you comfortable providing your name in the responses?
    a. Yes
3. How did you know John Ellis?
    a. Teacher
4. Who are your principal oboe teachers?
    a. John Ellis, John Snow
5. Where did you study?
    a. UNCSA, University of Minnesota
6. Who are some of your influences for oboe sound? (This can be oboists and non-oboists)
    a. Heinz Holliger, Albrecht Mayer, François Leleux, Alex Klein
7. Ellis called his style of reeds the "Western American Style." Have you come into contact with any other people that use this style?
    a. No

Oboe Equipment

8. What shaper tip do you prefer?
    a. Mack-Pfeiffer
9. What length staple do you use?
    a. 47
10. What brand(s) of staple do you use?
    a. Sierra, Lorée AK
11. Cork or O-ring bottom?
    a. Cork
12. What material do you prefer for your staples?
    a. Brass
13. What type of cane do you use?
    a. RGA or German cane from oboecane.com
14. What diameter cane do you use?
    a. 10.5-11
15. What kind of knife do you prefer?
    a. Jende, Rigotti, Swiss
16. What kind of blade style do you use with your knives?
    a. Bevelled, Folding
17. What were the determining factors in choosing your reed making equipment?
    a. (No answer)
18. What brand and model of oboe do you play?
    a. Lorée AK, Lorée Royal (regular bore)

19. What were the determining factors in choosing that instrument?
    a. beautiful and even sound colour and consistent intonation throughout the entire range of the instrument
20. Did you consider any other brands? If so, which?
    a. Howarth, Buffet

Comparisons

21. Have there been any particular types of equipment you noticed that worked best with this Western American reed style? What were they?
    a. Sierra staples
22. John Ellis mentioned that his reeds tended to last a long time. On average, how long do yours last? What do you think could be the reason?
    a. They last months and months; I rotate reeds every couple days
23. How has your reed making changed over the years? Have you adopted other styles? What elements of each do you use?
    a. Not very much; there are maybe tiny alterations and adjustments but the general style is as taught by John
24. If you started with the traditional standard American style of reed making, were there changes you had to make to adjust? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
    a. (No answer)
25. If you switched to the traditional standard American style of reed making, what were the reasons why? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
    a. (No answer)
26. If you started with a non-American reed scrape, what were the changes that you had to make to adjust? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
    a. Better response and depth of lower register in American reed scrape; also it's a bit easier to make them because of the larger scrape area. Another pro is that when playing on an American scrape reed one doesn't have to "reach up" in the upper register, but rather "look down" to adjust intonation; in other words: the upper register tends to be a bit sharp, rather than flat).
27. What problems did you have when encountering other students/teachers when they saw/tried your reeds?
    a. Many people find my reeds very resistant, although responsive

Current Reed Style

28. At what length do you tie your reeds? (In mm)
    a. 72
29. What is your average, finished reed length?
    a. 70

30. How long (in mm) is your window/back scrape?
    a. 10
31. What is the shape of your reed tip?
    a. upside-down V (Λ)
32. What pitch do you aim for in your crow?
    a. C
33. How would you describe the timbre, pitch stability, flexibility, etc. of your reeds?
    a. not too dark, with easy low register, perfectly stable in the entire range (that's a must!)
34. Would you be willing to send 3 reeds to me for measurements? I would be more than happy to send them back to you if you would like.
    a. Yes, I would like to participate, please send micrometer measurement placements

Final Thoughts

35. If you would like to leave any additional message about John Ellis, the "Western" American reed style, or anything else that would pertain to my research, feel free to do so here. Thank you!
    a. I think that a very important an under-appreciated aspect of John's reed making was tying: both the thread that he used and the way the cane was tied to the staple

Responder 5

1. What is your first and last name?
    a. David Sherr
2. Are you comfortable providing your name in the responses?
    a. Yes
3. How did you know John Ellis?
    a. Colleague
4. Who are your principal oboe teachers?
    a. Bill Criss
5. Where did you study?
    a. LA
6. Who are some of your influences for oboe sound? (This can be oboists and non-oboists)
    a. Bill Criss
7. Ellis called his style of reeds the “Western American Style.” Have you come into contact with any other people that use this style?
    a. No, John’s reeds were unique in my experience.

Oboe Equipment

8. What shaper tip do you prefer?
    a. wide
9. What length staple do you use?
    a. 47
10. What brand(s) of staple do you use?
    a. various
11. Cork or O-ring bottom?
    a. both
12. What material do you prefer for your staples?
    a. both, mostly silver
13. What type of cane do you use?
    a. Rigotti
14. What diameter cane do you use?
    a. 10-10.5
15. What kind of knife do you prefer?
    a. Rigotti, or Chudnow or Vitry
16. What kind of blade style do you use with your knives?
    a. Wedge
17. What were the determining factors in choosing your reed making equipment?
    a. trial and error. Mostly error.
18. What brand and model of oboe do you play?
    a. Lorée

19. What were the determining factors in choosing that instrument?
    a. Bill Criss used Lorée
20. Did you consider any other brands? If so, which?
    a. Laubin

Comparisons

21. Have there been any particular types of equipment you noticed that worked best with this Western American reed style? What were they?
    a. John played Laubin when he was in LA, but that was a long time ago. His reeds were unique and I have not, until now, heard the phrase "Western American" reeds. His reeds were 72mm long with a very short tip. I don't remember the shape. The crow was a B and had at least three notes, all of which seemed to be of equal intensity. He handed his oboe to me once (on a break from a televised concert we were doing) and told me to try it and when I said it played itself, he said "That's what they're supposed to do." He said he "blended the tip into the back."
22. John Ellis mentioned that his reeds tended to last a long time. On average, how long do yours last? What do you think could be the reason?
    a. No real consistency.
23. How has your reed making changed over the years? Have you adopted other styles? What elements of each do you use?
    a. It changes with each reed.
24. If you started with the traditional standard American style of reed making, were there changes you had to make to adjust? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
    a. Like John (and David Weiss, among others) I don't like to make "windows" in the back of the reed. Bill Criss did.
25. If you switched to the traditional standard American style of reed making, what were the reasons why? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
    a. (No answer)
26. If you started with a non-American reed scrape, what were the changes that you had to make to adjust? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
    a. (No answer)
27. What problems did you have when encountering other students/teachers when they saw/tried your reeds?
    a. (No answer)

Current Reed Style

28. At what length do you tie your reeds? (In mm)
    a. 73
29. What is your average, finished reed length?

    a. 72
30. How long (in mm) is your window/back scrape?
    a. short. I stop before the binding. John, in those days, scraped all the way to the binding but didn't take much out of the back.
31. What is the shape of your reed tip?
    a. could be either
32. What pitch do you aim for in your crow?
    a. C
33. How would you describe the timbre, pitch stability, flexibility, etc. of your reeds?
    a. stable pitch so I can play with no pressure against the reed.
34. Would you be willing to send 3 reeds to me for measurements? I would be more than happy to send them back to you if you would like.
    a. No, I do not want to participate.

Final Thoughts

35. If you would like to leave any additional message about John Ellis, the "Western" American reed style, or anything else that would pertain to my research, feel free to do so here. Thank you!
    a. I would love to see your dissertation.

Responder 6

1. What is your first and last name?
    a. Phillip Ayling
2. Are you comfortable providing your name in the responses?
    a. Yes
3. How did you know John Ellis?
    a. Colleague
4. Who are your principal oboe teachers?
    a. Norman Benno
5. Where did you study?
    a. Primarily in Los Angeles
6. Who are some of your influences for oboe sound? (This can be oboists and non-oboists)
    a. Oboists Norm Benno, John Ellis, Gordon Pope
7. Ellis called his style of reeds the "Western American Style." Have you come into contact with any other people that use this style?
    a. Yes, Norm Benno

Oboe Equipment

8. What shaper tip do you prefer?
    a. RDG 1, but I shape by hand after reed is scraped.
9. What length staple do you use?
    a. 46.5
10. What brand(s) of staple do you use?
    a. Chudnow CA
11. Cork or O-ring bottom?
    a. O-Ring
12. What material do you prefer for your staples?
    a. Gold-Plated Nickel Silver
13. What type of cane do you use?
    a. Rigotti, Glotin
14. What diameter cane do you use?
    a. 10.5-11
15. What kind of knife do you prefer?
    a. Chudnow, Chiarugi
16. What kind of blade style do you use with your knives?
    a. Double Hollow Ground
17. What were the determining factors in choosing your reed making equipment?
    a. My own trial and error
18. What brand and model of oboe do you play?
    a. Lorre Normal Model with AK Bell in Honduran Palisandre

19. What were the determining factors in choosing that instrument?
    a. Stability and playback sound on recordings.
20. Did you consider any other brands? If so, which?
    a. Laubin, Howarth, Patricola

Comparisons

21. Have there been any particular types of equipment you noticed that worked best with this Western American reed style? What were they?
    a. (No answer)
22. John Ellis mentioned that his reeds tended to last a long time. On average, how long do yours last? What do you think could be the reason?
    a. Weeks to months; I break them in slowly; meaning I don't take off too much wood so that they play immediately. I also rotate reeds and also clean them internally and externally.
23. How has your reed making changed over the years? Have you adopted other styles? What elements of each do you use?
    a. Style hasn't changed too much. I use slightly more cane on a slightly shorter tube, so that overall length is a little longer than it used to be. Scrape is quite blended and smooth. Very little in the way of 'windows or steps.
24. If you started with the traditional standard American style of reed making, were there changes you had to make to adjust? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
    a. I use a reed very much like Norm Benno's (and John Ellis). It is American but different from a Tabuteau or East Coast Americanstyle reed.
25. If you switched to the traditional standard American style of reed making, what were the reasons why? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
    a. NA
26. If you started with a non-American reed scrape, what were the changes that you had to make to adjust? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
    a. NA
27. What problems did you have when encountering other students/teachers when they saw/tried your reeds?
    a. My reeds were more resistant or required more diaphragm pressure.

Current Reed Style

28. At what length do you tie your reeds? (In mm)
    a. 73
29. What is your average, finished reed length?
    a. 71
30. How long (in mm) is your window/back scrape?

    a. 18-20 mm
31. What is the shape of your reed tip?
    a. Somewhat like upside down U, but with less taper. Angling is right at the rails.
32. What pitch do you aim for in your crow?
    a. C
33. How would you describe the timbre, pitch stability, flexibility, etc. of your reeds?
    a. (No answer)
34. Would you be willing to send 3 reeds to me for measurements? I would be more than happy to send them back to you if you would like.
    a. Yes, I would like to participate, please send micrometer measurement placements

Final Thoughts

35. If you would like to leave any additional message about John Ellis, the "Western" American reed style, or anything else that would pertain to my research, feel free to do so here. Thank you!
    a. I want to give this some thought, but I will send something. John's reeds tended to vary depending on whether he was playing a Lorée, or the Lym and Laubins he used early own, They also changed somewhat during the time he was making reeds and tools for Don Christlieb.

Responder 7

1. What is your first and last name?
    a. Alec Sherman
2. Are you comfortable providing your name in the responses?
    a. Yes
3. How did you know John Ellis?
    a. Teacher
4. Who are your principal oboe teachers?
    a. Dr. Michele Kirkdorffer, John Ellis, Joseph Robinson
5. Where did you study?
    a. University of North Carolina School of the Arts
6. Who are some of your influences for oboe sound? (This can be oboists and non-oboists)
    a. John Mack, Nathan Hughes, John Ferrillo, Joseph Robinson
7. Ellis called his style of reeds the "Western American Style." Have you come into contact with any other people that use this style?
    a. No

Oboe Equipment

8. What shaper tip do you prefer?
    a. Gilbert1N, Gilbert1
9. What length staple do you use?
    a. 47
10. What brand(s) of staple do you use?
    a. Lorée oboe staples AK
11. Cork or O-ring bottom?
    a. Cork, O-Ring
12. What material do you prefer for your staples?
    a. Silver
13. What type of cane do you use?
    a. Pisoni, Rigotti
14. What diameter cane do you use?
    a. 10-10.5
15. What kind of knife do you prefer?
    a. Jende, Rigotti, Landwell
16. What kind of blade style do you use with your knives?
    a. Double Hollow Ground, Bevelled
17. What were the determining factors in choosing your reed making equipment?
    a. Influence by masterclasses at JMU and oboe teachers during my music festivals.
18. What brand and model of oboe do you play?

    a. Lorée AK P42
19. What were the determining factors in choosing that instrument?
    a. My Professor at James Madison University says they are the best.
20. Did you consider any other brands? If so, which?
    a. Lorée

Comparisons

21. Have there been any particular types of equipment you noticed that worked best with this Western American reed style? What were they?
    a. Using the hollow ground knives. I use brass staples from Mark Chudnow
22. John Ellis mentioned that his reeds tended to last a long time. On average, how long do yours last? What do you think could be the reason?
    a. N/A
23. How has your reed making changed over the years? Have you adopted other styles? What elements of each do you use?
    a. Since going to music camps and festivals, learning from professionals, I have adapted my reed making style to fit my needs and how I want to sound like.
24. If you started with the traditional standard American style of reed making, were there changes you had to make to adjust? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
    a. Yes. I adapted Nathan Hughes' concept of reed making.
25. If you switched to the traditional standard American style of reed making, what were the reasons why? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
    a. N/A
26. If you started with a non-American reed scrape, what were the changes that you had to make to adjust? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
    a. N/A
27. What problems did you have when encountering other students/teachers when they saw/tried your reeds?
    a. Sometimes the reeds I make are very easy to play. I always try for stablity, in tune and has a little resistance. the reed should feel (and sound) easy. It should also be stable, in tune.

Current Reed Style

28. At what length do you tie your reeds? (In mm)
    a. 73
29. What is your average, finished reed length?
    a. 71
30. How long (in mm) is your window/back scrape?
    a. up to 65mm

31. What is the shape of your reed tip?
    a. upside-down V (Λ)
32. What pitch do you aim for in your crow?
    a. C
33. How would you describe the timbre, pitch stability, flexibility, etc. of your reeds?
    a. dark, warm
34. Would you be willing to send 3 reeds to me for measurements? I would be more than happy to send them back to you if you would like.
    a. No, I do not want to participate.

Final Thoughts

35. If you would like to leave any additional message about John Ellis, the "Western" American reed style, or anything else that would pertain to my research, feel free to do so here. Thank you!
    a. N/A

Responder 8

1. What is your first and last name?
    a. Siri Bloom
2. Are you comfortable providing your name in the responses?
    a. Yes
3. How did you know John Ellis?
    a. N/A
4. Who are your principal oboe teachers?
    a. Basil Reeve, Mark McEwen, David Weiss
5. Where did you study?
    a. New England Conservatory (BM), University of Southern California (MM)
6. Who are some of your influences for oboe sound? (This can be oboists and non-oboists)
    a. N/A
7. Ellis called his style of reeds the "Western American Style." Have you come into contact with any other people that use this style?
    a. No

Oboe Equipment

8. What shaper tip do you prefer?
    a. It's a mystery shape given to me by Mark McEwen
9. What length staple do you use?
    a. 47
10. What brand(s) of staple do you use?
    a. N/A
11. Cork or O-ring bottom?
    a. Cork
12. What material do you prefer for your staples?
    a. Silver
13. What type of cane do you use?
    a. Lorée
14. What diameter cane do you use?
    a. 10-10.5
15. What kind of knife do you prefer?
    a. Chang, Chiarugi
16. What kind of blade style do you use with your knives?
    a. Double Hollow Ground, Bevelled
17. What were the determining factors in choosing your reed making equipment?
    a. The advice of my undergrad teacher, Mark McEwen

18. What brand and model of oboe do you play?
    a. Lorée Royal
19. What were the determining factors in choosing that instrument?
    a. Tone quality, even scale, comfort of playing the instrument
20. Did you consider any other brands? If so, which?
    a. Yamaha

Comparisons

21. Have there been any particular types of equipment you noticed that worked best with this Western American reed style? What were they?
    a. N/A
22. John Ellis mentioned that his reeds tended to last a long time. On average, how long do yours last? What do you think could be the reason?
    a. My reeds can last anywhere from 2-4 weeks. I believe this is because I rotate my reeds frequently and never use one reed constantly for all practice, rehearsals, and concerts. I also make my reeds slowly which I've found lends to the reeds lasting longer.
23. How has your reed making changed over the years? Have you adopted other styles? What elements of each do you use?
    a. N/A
24. If you started with the traditional standard American style of reed making, were there changes you had to make to adjust? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
    a. N/A
25. If you switched to the traditional standard American style of reed making, what were the reasons why? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
    a. N/A
26. If you started with a non-American reed scrape, what were the changes that you had to make to adjust? What do you see as pros and cons of each style?
    a. N/A
27. What problems did you have when encountering other students/teachers when they saw/tried your reeds?
    a. N/A

Current Reed Style

28. At what length do you tie your reeds? (In mm)
    a. 73
29. What is your average, finished reed length?
    a. 70
30. How long (in mm) is your window/back scrape?
    a. N/A

31. What is the shape of your reed tip?
    a. upside-down V (Λ)
32. What pitch do you aim for in your crow?
    a. C
33. How would you describe the timbre, pitch stability, flexibility, etc. of your reeds?
    a. N/A
34. Would you be willing to send 3 reeds to me for measurements? I would be more than happy to send them back to you if you would like.
    a. No, I do not want to participate.

Final Thoughts

35. If you would like to leave any additional message about John Ellis, the "Western" American reed style, or anything else that would pertain to my research, feel free to do so here. Thank you!
    a. N/A

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW WITH CLAUDIA ELLIS

Interview Date: 12/28/2017

Ron: John's Birthday

Claudia: 3/26/1943

R: and when did he die?

C: 11/9/2015

R: Did he ever talk to you about his teachers? I know he said he studied with Norman Benno some, I think he said it wasn't real formal?

C: It was formal. Norman was his first teacher, and his last teacher. I don't know exactly how many years he studied with him, but he started in JR high. And I think he probably finished taking lessons in his last year in HS, because he started teaching himself and he also started teaching at the Immaculate Heart College as almost a Fellowship there, earning his tuition through his teaching and his performing. It had been an all-girls school, but had gone co-ed especially in the music dept.

So, he probably gone to school there a couple of years and then he started working professionally. His first picture was Cleopatra. He actually sat 1st oboe on that picture. However, that wasn't because he was the most proficient or the best oboe player there, it had to do with the way the parts were laid out. And he took the top voice, but all of the rest of them were very involved and all challenging parts. I think that they had some bass oboe parts going on there too. Norman had played bass oboe,

and I can't remember who all was on that part, I know John was, and Norman and possibly Arnold Koblentz.

C: When he first started, he was involved with the Monday Evening Concerts at UCLA. Norman was active in it too. The studio musicians were all involved in the Glendale Symphony. It was a small community, but the symphony was all made up of all studio musicians. So it was really top rate. John Played with Glendale, Norman played with Glendale. Norman was first, and John was second. They all performed part-time, everyone was independent, no one was under contract with anyone. All of that system went away years before, so they worked with contractors. Phil Coggins contracted for Glendale Symphony and he also contracted for Monday Evening Concerts. So that was a showplace for young artists, especially composers, to showcase their work. Some, even like Leonard Roseman, did some things there. He wasn't exactly a young artist, but it was more in a contemporary vein and a little Avant Garde, sometimes very Avant Garde to the point that it wasn't very entertaining! (Laughter) But I used to laugh because I would sit in the audience and sit with these people listening to some of this music that seemed that the whole purpose that the composer was trying to get at is break every known rule in music and come up with something. So people would be sitting there going, "Oh, isn't that wonderful" and I'd say, "No, it really isn't." (Laughter)

R: It was "something"

C: But I felt like it was something they thought they should say, not because it was really sold or they were enjoying any of it at all.

R: They just wanted to be a part of this thing…

C: In the know. We get the same thing from people coming up here to the winery. "Give me the driest thing you have!" And I know when they say that, that they haven't been drinking wine all that long.

R: Trying to look good.

C: Yes, trying to look good.

R: I know those people too! Did he study with anyone else?

C: No, but he got his study really from application. He learned a tremendous amount from Gordon Pope who really took him under his wing. Gordon was a very good teacher who taught him many, many things. It wasn't private lessons, but he worked with Gordon and Gordon would give him tips about things and he was a fine, fine oboe player.

R: Kind of a guide while performing?

C: Right, yes. Now, Arnold Koblentz was also a fine musician, but he had a little issue with John. He had this little system that when John started getting first call, [Arnold] came to [John] and said [John] had to ask for [Arnold's] permission before he could take a call and offer it to [Arnold] first, and if he didn't want it, John could take it. And John would have none of that. So, in 1968, he was absolutely blackballed in music business. He wasn't getting called because Arnold had his little hierarchy that he was working. But, turned out that when Leonard Roseman went on tour, he took John and requested him for his pictures and that got him going again. Then other musicians started requesting John and so they couldn't turn him down. Arnold eventually had to

accept it even better when John was sitting first and Arnold was sitting second. And everyday he would come in on a call Arnold would say, "See that [points to watch], $2000." Next day he would come in and have another watch, "See that one?" –he would be bragging about another one. And on the third day, John opened up his wrist and said "See that? Timex. 9 bucks."

R: Hilarious. (I tell a story that mentions John Mauceri at UNCSA off the record).

C: Now see, John Mauceri. That's another story. We knew John [Mauceri] in California. Not when we lived there, but John [Ellis] would go out there and play the Hollywood Bowl season for 10 years, every summer. John Mauceri was the conductor and John [Ellis] went on a couple of tours with him to Japan. And when I saw John Mauceri, I really honored the man because he was so kind, and such a gentleman to everyone and respected other cultures. The first tour to Japan he had an interpreter that helped him announce his music. But the second time, he was able to announce his own and give just a little introduction. The third time he had no interpreter at all. He learned Japanese for the purpose to be able to speak to the people in their own language. And I really respected that. Plus I really saw him have tremendous respect and honor for older composers, like Miklós Rózsa who was in a nursing home and completely forgotten. But John Mauceri went and picked him up and brought him to a rehearsal where they were playing his music. He even did the same thing for John [Ellis]'s Mother. He found out that she had been the voice of Olivia de Havilland in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, the old, old *Midsummer Night's Dream*. He was so excited to learn that, that he arranged for them to come to a concert. We went and picked them up from Sacramento,

brought them down, and he gave them his [Mauceri's] parking place at the top of the bowl, brought them in, gave them a box seat and honored them just because she had done that many, many years ago. But he remembered those things; he respected them. So I felt that he was a remarkable man.

I don't know what happened at the School of the Arts, but I wouldn't be surprised if he probably wasn't appreciated there because the general tone there was no respect for motion picture music. And for that reason John [Ellis] had his issues there too when he wanted to get off. He had the opportunity to bring John Williams to the school; he was going to come do a masterclass at the school, but they turned him down.

R: Really, that's crazy? I feel like that's changed a lot now.

C: Well the Film School should have changed something, and [Dale] Pollock might have had something to do with it.

R: I'm good friends with Pollock's wife actually, we play string quartets together, and we were just playing 2 weeks ago. She would host chamber music parties at her house. She would invite people over, and send people off to different rooms to play chamber music and bring them together to play a larger work like the Mendelssohn Octet, and then split off again. I do know that the new Dean [Brian Cole] is really into having the school work together more. He was wishing that we could have had more students involved [in the orchestra] for the drama production because that's another venue that the music students need to know about. Playing for theater music because I got to do a film score with the film school. I remember that Michał [Rogalski] had to leave for something, I was playing second, he was playing first, and I had to end up playing both

oboe parts. I played his part during the rest of the recording session and went back to play mine after everyone left. It got me interested in recording myself, and learning a little about multitrack recording. I find it is a great tool to use for myself while I'm practicing a lot of different instruments. I'll record myself playing oboe, and then play another instrument with the oboe, and see how in tune I am and how well I blend, timing and other stuff and can I put it together. It's a great teacher for yourself. Putting two of the same instrument together is much easier, but learning how to put 2 other instruments together, oboe and flute, flute and clarinet, allows you to learn about those instruments and their tendencies so that you can predict what is going to happen. It allows you to think about vibrato and what you can do to blend.

C: Those are things that John taught.

R: He did. That was one of the great things for me; he encouraged me to play other instruments. I could almost predict where a flute… I remember one time in masterclass, we were playing a passage where we would be in unison with the flute and it came to a D above the staff, and he asked where is the flute going to be?

C: Flat! (laughter)

R: and what are you going to do to help the flute out? He said put your ring finger down. It allowed me to think about when I'm playing with those people, what can I do to help them out.

C: What a wonderful thing to think about, "What are you going to do to help the flute player out?" How many musicians do you know that would do that? They're going to say "Look, this is the pitch; get there or else!"

R: When I got to UNCG for the doctorate, and in orchestra, the flute player said how easy it was to play together. And as an oboist, we learn that we have to give into it and that our instruments sometimes take over and we feel like we have little control over certain things. We have to learn to blend into everyone because of our timbre. If I can add a few keys here and there to fix timbre, intonation and other things, I don't mind because it's like putting a piece of the puzzle together. How can I mold my piece to fit in with the rest of the puzzle? That's one thing that he really stressed in teaching and one of the things that helped me the most.

At school [UNCSA], I wanted to major in English horn, and Mr. Ellis was very supportive of that idea, and he himself was an excellent English horn player. Did he do a lot of playing of other oboes?

C: John actually played Heckelphone. And it's really more a bass oboe, of course it was created by Heckel and it fits somewhere in the middle there. There's a Hindemith Trio…

R: For Heckelphone (or tenor sax), Viola and Piano

C: That was a great piece of music. It's recorded somewhere.

R: With him [John]?

C: Yes. It's so funny because we didn't…he never did do a lot with trying to hang onto recordings of himself or make a big deal about that. We all sort of took it for granted because we thought it was going to go on forever; now I wish we had it. Wish we had a lot of it.

R: I'm sure it's somewhere.

C: I'm sure it is.

R: I saw that he did a recording of William Grant Still's Miniatures [for flute, oboe and piano]. I was looking through a catalog [William Grant Still's Bio-bibliography] and noticed that he did the first recording, or something like that. So that's got to be a recording of something like that out in the world. I'm trying to put together a discography, or whatever it would be called, with the music scores and pure audio works. That's part of this too, as much of that as I can. I feel like he's relatively unknown for the amount of recording that he has done.

C: Yeah.

R: I've inquired about a few of them. I put out a call to find out if any of his students, or people that worked with Benno or studied with a student of Benno's…

C: Louise DiTullio would be a good one to ask. And Sheridan Stokes. Vince Derosa (horn). John Mauceri would be a good person to talk to too. He didn't just work with him at the school. John [Ellis] was on his way out when [John Mauceri] was on his way in. They kind of passed each other that last year. John [Ellis] was careful not to…well he didn't want anyone to feel like he had any kind of connection. John worked with Leo Arnaud, and he also was the one that did the fanfare for the Olympics. I think they just changed it this last year, but it went on for years and years. Leo actually ended up moving to North Carolina, and when he found out that John got the job at School of the Arts, he invited us to come stay with him while we were looking for a place to live. So we stayed there for a while, and got to know his family. Well Leo died some years back [1991], his wife [Faye] died also, but Faye's daughter lives in that house and all of

Leo's music and his instruments are there, in Hamptonville, NC. People were trying to get at it and she was very protective of it. She wanted the right thing done to it, and felt very unqualified to know what to do. So I called John Mauceri and talked to him about it and said "So they already made a CD of Leo's Music without permission and you know that this kind of thing can't happen." So we both agreed that probably going to SC was probably going to be the best thing to do, and that's what eventually was done. It was such a huge burden for Sonya and I'm not sure they did her any favors to leave her this enormous house with all of this music and all of his stuff. She knew nothing about what to do with this stuff and beautiful, beautiful pieces of music in there. Leo was a great composer. He was a good arranger too; he wasn't always on the composing side. But he actually died of Lou Gehrig's disease. There were a few people around who appreciated, but then again, there was that stigma of film music. It was a genuine stigma at the School of the Arts. The school had the opportunity to have all of [Arnaud's] music.

R: Really?

C: Didn't want it.

R: I feel like the music librarians would have loved it. Leslie Kamtman had a decent collection of film music in the library, mostly John Williams stuff. I used to work in the library and go look at the scores and be amazed at the parts that were being played, and dissect the music a little myself.

C: [John Williams] got very challenging there at the end. It seemed like he had his key players, and he would write concertos for them. *–Mimics throwing paper on music*

stand—This black sheet of paper, "look it over a little, we'll give you a minute to look at it." Louise DiTullio got screen credits for something she did with him, and so did John, and his pianist also got screen credits for something he did. In every case it was like playing concertos for something he did. John got it for *Angela's Ashes* and I can't remember what Louise got it for; it was after that.

R: That's amazing to have someone of that caliber to write music for you with your sound in mind. Thinking about it now, was he really aware of how big of a reach that John Williams was having and his music was taking at the moment?

C: Oh no, he knew. We walked out of Los Angeles in 1979. John, in essence, quit the music business in that time, basically for the family. He had already done a lot of good things with John Williams prior to that, but we bought a farm in Pennsylvania, and he really did this for me and the family. Because we had kind of seen what was happening to other musicians and their kids, and we had seen what kind of schedule they were on over there; there was no room to be both, to be a father and first call on all of the studios too. Plus we also had some pressure from my step-father after my mother had died, and it was a serious thing. We just felt that we had to get our family out of LA, and we did. He walked right away from it. We bought this farm, we lived there for 5 years. We realized that we never were going to make a living on that farm, so he started doing some small jobs; Ithaca, Binghamton. He played for the opera there and the symphony in Binghamton. They offered him a job teaching at the college in Binghamton, but it was going to be $2500/year to teach there and he needed a job. So the North Carolina School of the Arts had an ad in the orchard and he answered it. And

one of the questions they had was, "How could anyone with your kind of credentials be on a farm in Pennsylvania? These two things don't mesh." But they heard him play and heard what he did and he got hired. So he taught there for 28 years. It was perfect for us; it gave him a job that was kind of his base. But then, he was asked back to LA when he was playing the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra with John Mauceri, John Williams came in as guest conductor and when he saw John, it started all over again. That's when he got *Stepmom* [1998], that was the first one he did with him when he came back. And he did that, and *Patriot*, *Angela's Ashes* and *Memoirs of a Geisha*.

R: *Munich?*

C: Yes, *Munich*.

R: I was at school during *Memoirs* and *Munich*. I remember him leaving to do those. I had this really weird moment with *Memoirs of a Geisha*. I had rented it from Blockbuster and was watching the movie and listening, and kept thinking something sounds familiar. I finished the movie and watched the second DVD and it had something about the orchestra and I said "Oh! That's why! I remember this now!"

C: I never watched *Munich* or listened to the music, and I heard it's wonderful, but John wouldn't let us watch *Munich*. He said it was really…

R: It's a dark movie. I watched because he was playing in it. But *Memoirs* was a great movie.

C: I liked *Memoirs*. *AI*, he did that. There's a beautiful oboe solo in *AI.* And what was the one…Blue Marigolds. I can't remember the name of it, but he played for that too. He had a lot of solo stuff in that. Of course he also played with Jerry Goldsmith, Hans

Zimmer, Bruce Broughton, Leonard Rosenman, Michel LeGrand. He played with a lot of people.

R: I remember he said something about Stravinsky.

C: Oh yes, he played for Stravinsky.

R: When was this? Oh! I remember writing something about this down.

C: There's a pretty good story connected to that.

R: Oh really? One that you can tell?

C: Well yea. Bob Craft was trying to get as much music of Stravinsky recorded.

[interrupted by dog]

C: So they formed a little orchestra, "Beverly Hills Orchestra" or "Beverly Hills Symphony." It was formed specifically really for performing Stravinsky's works. Well he was still alive and so he was the conductor. And they did *Firebird* and they did *Petrushka*, *Rite of Spring*, and I can't remember what all they played, but those for sure.

R: *Symphony of Psalms?* There's a big oboe solo, that's why I was thinking about it.

C: Well John was playing first and Hugo Raimondi was on clarinet. And Dominick Fera was on bassoon and I think, well that was generally the woodwind section. John finger slipped on one of the solos that he had and he ended up with a B-flat instead of a B-natural or vice-versa. Hugo had that same line that followed it, and he did exactly the same thing. And Stravinsky just kind of looked at him and John was absolutely mortified that he made a mistake in front of Stravinsky. But Hugo swears up and down that the same thing happened to him and it was an accident! But you know very well that it wasn't. But that's they kind of guy and that's the way that they were. They had

that comradery to support one another. It took out all of that stigma away from John. He didn't stick out quite like a sore thumb. It was a nice experience and Stravinsky died shortly after that. I think he was in his 90's when he conducted that. He walked out on that stage so feeble and he sat there at the podium. And when he started to conduct though, it was like he was a young man. He was so pale, his complexion was like tissue paper, and very thin, but he did that concert. They recorded a lot of his work before he died.

R: So that's the Beverly Hills Symphony. I have to look that up now. I was looking for it, and I remember writing notes trying to find where those performances were.

C: They were at the Beverly Hills Hotel.

R: And these weren't the ones done around 1962 were they? Because I think Hollywood Bowl…

C: No, these would be 1966. We were in Reseda at the time, so either '65 or '66. We were married in '64. I believe it was the second year that we were married when we were doing that. So he was still a very young man in the music business.

R: I remember looking up [about this]. Bob Craft was Stravinsky's assistant, right? And he conducted, I believe it was the Hollywood Bowl, with Stravinsky in attendance; *Rite of Spring*, July 26, 1962. I think it was Hollywood Bowl or one of the orchestras associated with the Hollywood Bowl before it was the actual Bowl Orchestra.

C: Well the LA Pops orchestra used to do the Hollywood Bowl Performances. They were kind of taken out of the symphony and would do the summer season. A lot of them were the same players as the LA Philharmonic. John Mauceri got in there, I can't

remember, but there was something going on. And the Philharmonic wasn't going to be available, so Mauceri took it over and had it for 10 years. It was always a bit of a struggle and a tussle there, because he was doing things. Phillips had a contract going with the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra, and they were recording a lot of nice classics. And the LA Philharmonic didn't like that. They wanted them to stay strictly pops and keep the classics out of it.

R: They wanted to have the monopoly on that part of the music?

C: Yea, but Mauceri didn't follow that. Truth was, the orchestra [Hollywood Bowl] sounded better!

R: Was there something with Copland also? I remember him saying something about *Quiet City*. Recording or premiering it with Copland.

C: Might have been, but I don't remember.

R: I was trying to find that too, but it's been difficult locating everything. Doing a little bit of sleuthing myself. Not everything from then is out on the internet, well not everything from that time period. If it was done now, it would be easy to find. I was just trying to find out if there were any other major, non-film composers that he worked with.

C: Ingolf Dahl. He did Ojai Festival. He had several seasons at the Ojai Festival and Ingolf Dahl did his works there. One year, John was in the orchestra. I think Norman was there at the time and John was playing second. And of course Leonard Rosenman. He did concerts up there too. A lot of the contemporary composers performed at Ojai and showcased their work up there.

R: His film history was, well not well documented, but well known. I was also trying to find other stuff outside of the film music that he's also done. Because, well you know there's the stigma around the film industry, so I'd like to get a listing of all facets of performance that he did if I possibly can.

C: Do you remember the composer of *Concerto Da Camera*?

R: Ibert?

C: No, uhm, it's flute and English horn.

R: I might have it here.

C: He did that; on a tour to Russia actually with Louise.

R: I think it have it, but not electronically, I think he actually had me work on it.

C: Beautiful piece of music. It might be Ibert, but somehow that doesn't seem right.

R: That's not it, I had it confused with the *Symphonie Concertante*.

C: Ibert has the saxophone concerto, which is gorgeous. I love that piece of music.

R: I have to find it, I ….Honegger? Is it one of *Les Six*?

C: Honegger…Maybe.

R: That sounds about right. I remember it being a French composer. But I can find it.

C: I'm thinking that's what he played with Roger Wagner when he went on tour to Russia, but I'm not exactly sure of that. I know he played it with Roger Wagner, and he and Louise were showcased on that, but I'm not sure if he took it to Russia or not.

R: So I know about some of his hobbies, like the horses, the farm and the grapes, can you tell me a little more about those and what else he also liked doing?

C: Restoring old cars. He also liked working on clocks, old watches.

R: Ironic about the story with…

C: Koblentz. [both laugh] That was before. But, we would go into an antique store. He had a pile of clocks up in shop, which is just stuff that he couldn't resist buying and fixing them up and making them run. He loved that.

R: Well repairing oboes; I'm sure was very similar, and probably filled a very similar need to tinker.

C: Did he tell you how he actually learned a lot of what he did? Is it Lym? Used to make oboes. Lym actually lived in California, in the LA area. John actually apprenticed with him. He thought that Lym was going to have him making oboes, using the lathe and things like that. But Lym started everything by hand. You know, filing the keys, doing all of that. He had to do it all by hand. And it was great experience for [John]. It served him well all of his life, because he really understood the makings of an oboe and what to do to fix one.

R: I would remember him having these random things he would place in the oboe, around the oboe, and really him just touching your instrument, and you'd get it back and it would feel like a brand new instrument. I remember getting an audition, and coming out to this house to have him look at my instrument, I want to say it was 2009 or 2010…after the stroke.

C: Yeah, he retired I think 2010, and I got cancer 2010.

R: I think the stroke was earlier, I want to say 2009, because I graduated in '08, and your son passed in..

C: 2007.

R: That was my recital date.

C: May 20th.

R: I remember that day very vividly because Tadeu [Coelho] came and told me during the intermission of the recital, why he wasn't there. I remember thinking, "I don't need to know that right now. That could have waited until the end of the recital." I knew that [Brian] was sick. If he wasn't there, I understood why. I wasn't one of the high school students, because they had some issues with that. And some of the older students, we had to let them know that sometimes you have family issues to take care of, and there's nothing you can do about it. I was a Master's student. We were fine. We were learning, at that point, that we have to be able to teach ourselves too, and he was more of a guide so that we could work out in the real world and teach ourselves, and solve our own problems. But during the intermission, he came and told me why John wasn't there, and all I could think was "this could have waited until after." Now I have to go out there on this next piece. I'm not sure where my mindset is going to be at the moment. It ended up being good. I just remember zoning out, solo piece, unaccompanied, and I just remember feeling really naked at that moment, and I normally don't feel that way.

C: That was a rough weekend. Brian(?) was rushed off to the hospital. He was having trouble breathing. He was there Thursday evening. Friday evening they came in and they said that they had a plan and we'd talk about it in the morning. He had a really rough night, and Lisa called and said, "Don't come right away, he really needs to sleep." So we thought we'd come in about 10 o'clock. Meanwhile, one of the interns came to her right away and said, someone needs to be honest with you, because they're

not being honest with you. He's going to die, and he won't leave the hospital, today or tomorrow. Lisa called us and she was practically hysterical, so we tore down there. But to not have been forthright with us, right from the start, if that intern hadn't come and talked to her, his kids wouldn't have been able to talk to him. It was rough, but he died Sunday.

R: I still remember that day. Some of the performances, after so many are just

C: Washed off.

R: Yeah, they've just gone away, only remembering little bits and pieces. I remember playing that, and playing the [Tomasi Evocations]. That was the first piece I played after the intermission. I can still see it. I had a copy that he gave me. His was on yellowish paper, and my copy of it was darker due to it being on darker paper. I don't remember much else from that day, except for that one piece.

[Searching for the title of the recital piece and the flute and English horn solo piece]

R: A friend and I have shared all of our public domain music with each other, and we have a pretty good library between the two of us. It's made it really easy since I've started using my tablet for all of my music. I've always been horrible at turning pages, and the foot pedal has made it so much easier. I remember John telling me about some of the hardest music he had to play was always right after turning the page. He really advocated for memorizing all of our solos for that reason. I also remember him telling me about "controlling the conductor" as he played. If he was playing a big solo, he would look the conductor in the eyes and play the solo. The conductor couldn't help but follow him while he played.

C: The conductor will give a little latitude to the soloist.

R: I've had some that didn't want to, and I made them do it. We did New World Symphony, and he wanted to go faster than I wanted to go. So I said to myself, "I'm going to watch you, but I'm just looking at you, and not really watching you. And you're going to follow me. This is my moment. I'm sitting here for this entire symphony for this one moment, and I'm going to take it!"

C: [laughs] Tacet, Tacet, Tacet!

R: So Restoring old cars, watches, clocks, horses, grapes..

C: The horses were really my thing. But he loved the grapes. I've got a picture of him out in the vineyard. At his memorial, the friend that did it for us said that it was so typical for John to be out in the farm all day, out under some piece of machinery; Run in and take a shower, and 15 minutes take off in a tux and go play a concert. And that was John, and he was typical of him. People that would look at him and know him and that didn't know that he was in the music business would never guess that he was a musician.

R: I doubt people in the music business would never know about this side of him either.

C: That's true. He was so well rounded. He advocated that for his students too. Don't get yourself so focused on one thing that you become obsessed with it. It's good to have other outlets, other things that you enjoy because it makes everything better.

R: It does. I remember him having to cancel a few lessons to help a horse give birth or something.

C: [laughs] Yea, we had to do that too!

R: I remember thinking that I've never heard such a good excuse to cancel a lesson before in my life!

C: Well, we had some experiences, and I had to laugh. A lot of the stuff he got into he did because of me. And he did it so nicely. I told him, "If he hadn't married me, his life would've been so boring!"

[Laughter]

R: I think about him, and I just think that he's going to do it well, and put his all into it. Is that true?

C: Well, after we left the farm, we were up there for 5 years, and we never got a profit. If we got a crop, we made just enough to cover the seed that we put into it. He sold most everything that we had. The last bit was some dishes and some rocking chairs, an ice box, and a kitchen hoosier cabinet. We sold all that stuff for $325, a tent trailer and 6 kids. That's what we had. It turned out that one of the men that was on the board of the symphony was also the president of a bank. He gave us a bridge loan against the farm in Pennsylvania, that we still owned. We were still paying a mortgage on because we had bought some extra land. He loaned us enough money to get the down-payment on the house, to buy furniture, to do repairs on the house that we bought. We were doing good. Turned out, after he did that, he left the bank, and when they found out what he had done, they weren't very happy, because a farm in Pennsylvania wasn't exactly good collateral. But we went up there over Thanksgiving and I was determined that we were not going to leave there until we got the farm sold. Then we got in touch with a man who developed farm land. Manzick. Everyone knew about Manzick, and not

favorably really. But we had to sell it, and he came out and he offered us $70,000 for that farm and 120 acres. And I said well we can't do that because we got this loan down here, and we owe more money. We were about $10,000 short of what we need. And he said I will loan you the $10,000 to pay off our debt here and you have 2 years to pay me back. So in two years, we fixed up that house, and sold it and made $25,000 on it, free and clear and paid him back. He didn't even charge us any interest. He was very fair to us. People didn't like the idea of Manzick, but he was decent. That's how we got started: buying properties that needed fixing. He and I would get in there, change the walls, do whatever we needed to do, like this place. This was the end of all ends as far as remodel. This was two houses put together, both of them old, but you'd never know it looking at it now.

R: I remember the other house, the one before this one.

C: Oh, Chestnut Trail. That was a neat place. But we actually bought this because it had more land. And one of the things, when we came and looked at this place, Rob (one of our sons) and his wife came and looked at this place and they fell in love with it too. Rob actually had the vision of putting the vineyard out here and we were going to try to buy it together, but we couldn't. They couldn't afford to do it at the time. So we wrote a contract on it and asked to have time to sell our place on Chestnut Trail. It took us two years to do that and meanwhile we ended up having to lease this property in order for us to hang on to it. So our daughter who lived in Charlotte they sold a house down there, and wanted to move closer, Salisbury or something, but we had the part of the farm house that was still there and vacant because we were still living on Chestnut

Trail. So they moved in there and gave them a place to live while they were looking for another place. A year later, we finally sale Chestnut Trail and they decided that they wanted to stay. And Rob, he just built that barn down there; it's a "Barndominum". He's got his house, his living quarters, and take one hip off of that barn and part of it is 2 story section of the barn that's partitioned off, and that's where the bedrooms and bathrooms and everything were. That happened because of John, he made that possible. So Rob finally got out here.

R: The family's close now? Was that them that rode by?

C: Yea, that as probably my daughter and her husband.

R: Did he have any particular influences on his oboe playing?

C: Gordon Pope. And Bert Gassman. And of course, Norman, but I think that John ended up with his own sound. He didn't sound like any of them. Gordon had a much lighter sound, Gassman had that big meaty sound. He was first oboe with the Philharmonic, at least I think he was.

R: LA Phil?

C: Yea. There was also a woman, but I can't remember her name. But those people. Just working with them in the studios, he learned a lot. Then eventually he became first call, and other people started learning from him.

R: Then he got to the school, and we all started learning, I guess the West Coast sound from him too. Because it was very different even looking at reeds. This is why the reeds are such a big part of this because they were very different from my current teacher's. I'm very glad that she didn't make me switch my reed style either, because there are a

lot of teachers that say, “Well, you’re going to do my reed style.” And he didn’t force it on us. I played on it, and immediately said, “I like this.” And I switched. Did he ever talk about any opposition to this reed style?

C: Oh, I can tell you somebody else that had a pretty good influence on his too was Don Christlieb, and he was a bassoon player. Don actually started making reeds to sell, and he developed a machine. And he was trying to do it according to John’s specifications. So they mic’ed all of these reeds to get exactly. And they weren’t bad. I tied a lot of them after they were done because they had the business going for a while and [Don’s] son Tony was a part of it. But John was really the model for what they did for those reeds. But Don Christlieb, he was really a fine man. He had been through the Hollywood when they were searching out communists in Hollywood and all of the blackballing at the time. Don, along with a lot of other musicians, got caught in that. But he was very instrumental and he did a lot of chamber work, and used John all of the time. Just trying to help him and encourage him. He was a good influence; they all were. I don’t think John really would say that he learned only from oboe players. Like Hugo Raimondi; Beautiful sound, his phrasing. Louise DiTullio, you know, all of them. They play together and learn from each other. It doesn’t have to be your instrument.

R: I find that to be one of the great things too, you know, learning from other instruments. You really learn a lot from listening and trying to emulate other players. People say when I play violin that I phrase like an oboist. And I just think, well, we’re used to playing long phrases, what’s wrong with that?

C: Easier on violin than it is on oboe!

R: Exactly!

C: You don't run out of air at least! Did John ever teach you to circular breathe?

R: I actually learned before I got to him. That was a weird story for me. I had just started playing oboe and a saxophone player challenged me that he could hold a note longer than I could. I kind of learned on the spot, but it was so much easier on oboe.

I started playing oboe in high school. I was a violinist up through middle school. From 5th grade to 9th grade, I was primarily a violinist. Then in 9th grade I kind of switched. I needed something new to do, I had played all of the string instruments up to that point, and played some piano also. My orchestra in High School wasn't really a challenge. Many of the members had went to other schools, the orchestra teacher left, and the chorus teachers took over the orchestra, and they didn't play any orchestra instruments. The only challenge I had was helping everyone else, but I didn't have the challenge of anyone pushing me to the next level. So I thought I'd learn a wind instrument, and oboe was the first wind instrument that I made.

C: Does your family have any musical background?

R: My dad played violin when he was in Middle school, and possibly a little through high school.

C: So no professionals.

R: No.

C: So what did they think about you becoming a professional?

R: My mom was fine with it because she knows that I was going to make it work. My dad was worried about it because he was scared...If anyone is going to music, I want them to know what's coming ahead. It's going to a hard struggle, it's going to be fulfilling, but it's not going to be easy by any means. And he knew that as well, and wanted me to have as easy of a time as I could. He's fine with it now, because I've made it work as long as I have. He said, "Well you're doing what you need to do to make it work, so I can't say anything about it. You're self-sufficient, you and your family."

We talked about how he got started doing it. Were there any films that you thought that were particularly influential for him? Or were they kind of all similar. I know you said Stepmom was the one that got him back out there after the break. Was that influential in any other way other than starting his career again?

C: Well, it's a beautiful score. And he had quite a lot to do with it. Beautiful solos in there. I think going back doing the Hollywood Bowl had a lot to do with putting him back in the studios. They would find out that he was back out there taking calls. Jerry Goldsmith used him exclusively once he found out that he was available. He'd be quite busy out there in the summer months, and of course during the winter he would fly back and you'd know what his schedule was like if he would take off and fly out. He was actually supposed to do the Indiana Jones, [Kingdom of the Crystal Skull]. But it turned out that they had a strike going on in LA and they cancelled the call. When they rescheduled it, they didn't let him know. So he had a week to get there, and the school wouldn't let him off.

R: Yeah, there's always a lot of "Red Tape." You know, a lot of those guys were coming in, you know, from the school, coming in from out of town. But it was for actual big symphony work, and not film orchestra work, so they were allowed to do it. That's so crazy that they didn't think that was going to be...

C: They just didn't take it seriously. That was the great thing about John Mauceri; He did. He respected film music, and was pretty instrumental in drawing attention to it.

R: Did he mention any favorites that he did?

C: Not that I can think of. *Cleopatra* was the first, and he did *Godfather,* and *Jaws,* and *Towering Inferno.* Of course, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

R: He did all three parts for that, right?

C: Right.

R: I was listening to that earlier today. Kind of as I was listening to it for inspiration of things to think about with his style. Extracting things that he had to play, and thinking about what he had to do to his reeds for that music. *Close Encounters* involved a lot of the higher range of the oboe.

C: He came home with a massive headache, is what he did!

[laughter]

C: It was kind of one of things where they were on the call, and they tried it a certain way and John [Williams] says, "John [Ellis], can you stay after? I want to try something." Because he didn't want the electronic music. It ended up being electronic eventually, but it didn't start out.

R: Right. At some point, it does get ridiculous and impossible on a non-piano instrument.

C: But it moved into that so well...

R: that you don't think about it until you really start to dissect it and realize that it's not the same sound as before. I was listening to it too wondering when it switched. I didn't hear an actual switch. It was blended so well.

C: Right, because you couldn't just speed it up, as that would raise the pitch. So they couldn't do that.

R: Although, playing it half speed and then doubling could have created the high notes that he wanted to play without the headache!

C: Yeah, except for trying to come in with the tuba and all that.

R: I was listening to it and thinking, "It's incredibly high, and it's up there the entire time!". You mentioned *Jaws, Stepmom*, what are some others?

C: *Godfather, Dr. Zhivago* with Maurice Jarre. Now I'm trying to think of the John Williams pictures. *Close Encounters of the Third Kind, Towering Inferno.* Of course I look at that picture now and think, "Corny." I think Richard Chamberlain was in that, and he's never exactly what you call an actor. But anyway, there was *Patriot, Stepmom.*

R: *AI, Angela's Ashes*, and *Munich.*

C: He did *River Wild* with Jerry Goldsmith. He did *Baby's Day Out* with Bruce Broughton. Which is a hilarious movie, you ought to watch it; really cute. *Homeward Bound* with Bruce Broughton.

R: Did he do *Star Trek?*

C: He did, but not all of them. He did the New Generation or Last Generation back in the 90's. I've got some of his posters in here , which he's probably already showed you. I

think Star Trek is one of them. Oh, he did some stuff for Disney too. He did the new *Bambi*. He did *Beauty and the Beast*. He did *Anastasia*, which was not a Disney movie, but the composer that did *Anastasia* was threatened by Disney. That was the time that Eisner was in charge and he was a piece of work. The thing about working for Disney at that time is that they would withhold your check, and they would withhold it until it went into penalty. And they did that because they could gather interest on it, and at the point where it became less profitable for them to hang onto your money than to pay you, that's when they would pay you. And it was a little bit rotten; not showing a lot of respect for their musicians. So it's not like that anymore. Eisner was strictly a businessman.

R: And now they're buying everybody. Did he do, *ET*?

C: No, he did the 2nd *ET*, the reboot. The first one we were in Pennsylvania. *Planet of the Apes*. That was an interesting score. They did all kind of really weird stuff for that, like finger on the bottle to make the sounds…they had all of these bottles lined up, filled with water to make certain pitches. And they played those. You have to listen to that score some day to imagine what kind of stuff they were doing. There's *Godfather*, he did that with Carmine Coppola.

R: Was that just the first one, or all of them, or some part?

C: The first one for sure, not sure about the others. And there was something about Blue Marigolds. And he was real prominent in that score. Something about…I can't remember the name. He did *Hello Dolly*, *Funny Girl* with Streisand.

R: I just played violin on *Hello Dolly* the musical. Oh, was it *The Effect of Gamma Rays*…

C: Yes, on *Man-in-the-Moon Blue Marigolds*. You have to listen to the score for that one. People talked about it, like he was kind of featured in that. I never did hear it.

R: That's a long title. It looked like a book when I was looking it up. Oh, it was a play turned into a movie.

C: Oh, he played with John Denver. He did that album, John Denver's Greatest Hits with Annie's Song. That was John (Ellis). We went in on that recording, one of the ones he did after that one. Chris, our daughter, she was about 3 months old. We had the 3 boys and Chris. He [John Denver] let us come in, he just picked her up and he was just walking around everywhere, and he goes, "Oh, we've just had our kids one year today and I'm just so full of this." And he was so excited about it. Apparently they had just adopted those kids, so they had them one year. He just carried her all around. And then later, I went back to a recording session maybe a year later, and he was a different person. He wasn't the same at all. You know, like the business had gotten to him. And he kind of got into his head a little bit. And life wasn't really going very well for him at that point. And it was sad, you know? I really worry for people who set their heart on that type of career because it's such a trap, and you might as well kiss your life goodbye. If you get it. One of the few people that I know of that has been able to keep it under control is Garth Brooks. And he did very much what John did, he walked out of the business for 15 years, and then he came back. And you know not very many people can do that, or have the courage to do that.

R: It is scary though, to walk away from what's been your life for a long period of time.

C: Well, I know I honored John respected him more for him doing that, probably more than anything else he'd ever done prior to then because it was such a huge thing to walk away from LA. But, for that reason, when it became evident that he needed to get back to do whatever he could do, I never fussed; not any more. I felt like he had already made his sacrifice for the family, and it was our turn. I was really happy for him, that he could do what he could do.

R: And he loved it. I remember the first time he played in my lesson, and seeing how freeing he looked when he started playing. Like nothing was there while he was playing; just him, the music and the oboe. And whatever came out the other side was how he talked to you. It was amazing just to have, and watch him play sometime.

C: I'm going to show you something that he did when he retired, which became part of his life. It may not be anything you want to write about, but something here you might want to see.

R: Have you talked to John Hammerback lately?

C: No.

R: They did a concert to remember him [John Ellis] in Winston, and he said used a reed of his in the concert.

C: He did, and he brought it back.

R: I didn't know he had a reed from him still. I have a couple of reeds from him, an English horn reed and an oboe d'amore reed, but not an oboe reed. I was the English horn person, so I played mostly that.

C: (Searching for video file on the computer) I'll have to give it to you at another time because I can't find it. Well it was a solo he did, when he was playing in an orchestra in New York, and they featured it. He was playing with the Watchtower Orchestra, and they featured it at a convention. It was such a shock, none of us knew it was coming. It was so beautiful. He went up there and did a lot of recordings. He loved it.

R: I remember talking to him about it. He told me he was going to play up there. Is one of your kids up there?

C: Will.

R: I remember something about kids, going to New York, playing oboe, English horn and d'amore. I had asked if he was getting back into playing again. I want to say that was around 2013 or 2014, because I remember changing my dissertation topic to this.

C: Well Ron, if I find it, I'll send it to you. You'd like; it was very pretty and well done.

R: There's also a video folder too.

(Music plays from the Watchtower Convention, Ellis's solo is in the middle and at the end.)

R: Beautiful.

C: Of course that's all original music. Everyone there in that orchestra is a volunteer, there on their own dime. They go up there like twice a year, and record. They come from all over the world, Australia, Europe, and Japan. He was able to do that after he retired. He loved it, just loved it. He probably played for a bigger audience at that, because they played for the convention. Well over 8 million people that saw because it was done all over the world. Something to remember, something to hang on to. I

couldn't watch it for a long time. Anyway Ron, I don't know if any of this has been helpful for you or not.

R: It's been great. Do you mind if we do this again sometime?

C: No, absolutely. If you have specific questions, I'll try to stay on track.

R: Honestly, A lot of this was great for me too. It's like something to remember him by. I've been talking about him to a lot of people around me, about how much of an influence he was to me as a musician. Not even just as an oboist, but about how influential he was for me to branching out to other instruments. It was great. Thank you.

C: You're welcome.

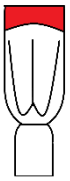
APPENDIX E

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

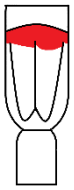
PARTS OF THE REED

Scrape: The scrape of the reed refers to the shape of scraped section of the oboe reed. This document explores the different types of scrapes used in the United States.

Tip: The top section of the reed. The tip is the thinnest part of the reed.



Heart: The section of the reed behind or below the tip. This section is the thickest scraped section of the reed.



Windows/Back: The section of the reed behind or below the heart.

Spine: The center of the scraped portion of the reed.

Rails: The unscraped portion of the reed around the edges. This section typically still has bark on the reed.

Throat: The opening of the reed where the cane meets the staple.

TERMS REFERRING TO OTHER FACTORS IN REED MAKING

Gouge: The scrape on the inside of the cane, done by a machine called a gouger, that influences the thickness of the reed.

Shaper Tip: The device that helps create the shape for the reed. The shaper tip influences the width of the reed.

Staple: The metal tube wrapped in cork or with rubber O-rings to which the cane is tied.

Response and Resistance: Response and Resistance can be corelated to the idea of pushing down a wall. Resistance is how much pressure it takes to push down the wall. Response is how quickly the wall moves after applying the correct amount of pressure. With respect to the reed, resistance is the amount of air pressure it takes to make the reed sound. Response, then, is how quickly the reed sounds once the correct amount of air pressure is applied.