

**Reassessing the impact and influence
of the British oboist Léon Goossens**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and the appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

In 1907 in Liverpool a ten year old boy was presented with an oboe. The significance of this seemingly ordinary act was to change the course of oboe playing in Great Britain. The boy's name was Léon Goossens (1897-1988). Seventy years later at one of Goossens' last solo performances I witnessed how he held a capacity audience spellbound by his playing and reminiscences.

My practice-based study reassesses the impact and influence of Léon Goossens and considers his performing strategies (his unique use of tone colour, vibrato, rubato and tempo), his approach to programming and his central role in the development of the British oboe repertoire. Through a series of my own recordings and reflective commentary I suggest how it is possible to adapt Goossens' distinctive interpretative ideas within the framework of modern-day performance practices. Two case studies are also presented, the Quintet for Oboe and Strings by Arnold Bax and *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid for Solo Oboe* Op.49 by Benjamin Britten, in which I discuss their pedagogical performance traditions and illustrate how, by reflecting Goossens' strategies, their respective narratives can be reconsidered and communicated more effectively.

A thorough analysis of Goossens' performance practice provides a clear understanding of his musicianship. Additionally the range of works with which he was associated as dedicatee, or as part of premiere performances is catalogued.

To place Goossens' contribution in context, preliminary chapters outline:

- The oboe's status at the turn of the twentieth century revealing polarised attitudes towards the instrument.
- The correlation between the oboe's progressive mechanisation and decline in popularity as a solo instrument during the late nineteenth century.
- The advances of the French school of playing supported by the innovative developments of the oboe maker François Lorée (1835-1902).

- Inconsistencies in previous accounts of Goossens' biography are clarified.

This study offers the modern-day oboist an alternative expressive platform to broaden their range of interpretative possibilities through adapting aspects of Léon Goossens' style of playing.

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Introduction

This practice-based study reassesses the significance of the virtuoso oboist Léon Goossens and considers the potential to apply some of his performing strategies in a modern-day context. Despite his success as a performer, his contribution to twentieth-century oboe performing practice has been relatively ignored.

My research objectives are:

- To consider and adapt aspects of Léon's distinctive performance style through a series of recordings, focusing on his use of rubato, tempo and inequality, and to consider the implications of this approach in a reflective commentary.
- To identify works written for, and/or dedicated to, Léon.
- To provide a comprehensive listing of Léon's performing activity, where he was dedicatee, or where he gave the British premiere.
- To consider Leon's approach to programming.

My study contributes towards the reflective commentary on:

- Individual creative practice.¹
- Developments in instrument history.²
- Recent awareness of early twentieth-century performance practice through analyses of recordings.

Significant studies by Michael Chanan, Timothy Day, Peter Johnson, Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, Robert Philip and Peter Walls amongst others have highlighted changing styles of performance through recordings.³ However, until recently Philip's works

¹ See examples, Ilias Devetzoglou, 'Violin playing in France 1870-1980: a practice-based study of performing practices in French Violin Music from Fauré to Ravel (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Leeds, 2010); Paul Goode, 'Increasing the expressive potential of the oboe' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Royal College of Music, 2003); George Kennaway, 'The Phenomenon of the Cellist Auguste van Bienne: from the Charing Cross Road to Bright via Broadway' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Leeds, 2009).

² P. Graham, P., 'Music for brass band: music for wind orchestra; critical commentary (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Salford, 1999); Clare Elizabeth Lawton, 'A study of variation in the quality of oboe reeds made from Arundo Donax 1. (gramiede)' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Reading, 1998); Andrew Mayes, 'Aspects in performance practice in works composed for recorder for Carl Dolmetsch between 1939 and 1989' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Birmingham city University, 2008).

³ Michael Chanan, *Repeated Takes: A short history of recording and its effect on music* (London: Verso, 1995); Timothy Day, *A Century of Recorded Music: Listening to Musical History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Peter Johnson, 'The legacy of recordings', in John Rink (ed.), *Musical Performance: A Guide to Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.197-212; Daniel Leech-Wilkinson,

were the only resources to include all the woodwind family; Emily Worthington's 2013 overview of woodwind orchestral playing in London orchestras during the first half of the twentieth century seeks to readdress the balance.⁴ My thesis complements this field of study by charting the stylistic changes in oboe playing of British oboists (though not exclusively) through their recordings in relation to Léon's approach to performance, as well as contributing to oboe performance research of which studies by oboists Matthias Arter and George Caird are notable.⁵

Within the context of the history of the oboe Léon's impact was significant. No other oboist before or since has enjoyed such iconic status from within and outside the classical music community. In focusing upon Léon's individual performing style, his approach to concert programming and his central role in the development of British oboe repertoire, the current marginalisation of Léon's legacy within present-day performance practice is reassessed.

Chapter one provides a historical overview of the oboe's development, its decline in popularity during the late 1800s and how by the twentieth century the influence of the French style of playing had been established. As much of the published literature on Goossens is selective in its scope, and contains several biographical inaccuracies, chapter two therefore clarifies Léon's biography; it discusses factors that inspired his choice of instrument, the influences that contributed to developing his performance style, and his subsequent professional journey from orchestral player to international soloist. Chapter three provides a thorough analysis of Léon's interpretative strategies and his approach to programming. The final chapter outlines the framework for my recorded performances, detailing selected material and discussion of the works performed. Reflecting on the process of adapting Léon's

'Recordings and histories of performing style' in Nicholas Cook (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 246-62; Robert Philip, *Early Recording and Musical Style: Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance, 1900-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Peter Walls, 'Historical performance and the modern performer' in John Rink (ed.), *Musical Performance: A Guide to Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.17-34.

⁴ Emily Claire Worthington, 'The Modernisation of Wind Playing in London Orchestras, 1909-1939: A study of playing styles in early orchestral recordings', (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of York, 2013).

⁵ Matthias Arter, 'Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958): Oboe Concerto (1942), A critical evaluation of three first recordings of Mitch Millar (1947), León Goossens (dedicatee, 1952), and Evelyn Rothwell (1956)', *e. marterart.ch*.

< http://www.marterart.ch/en/forschung_vaughanwilliams.html > [accessed 4 March 2017];

George Caird, *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid: Anatomy of a Masterpiece: Anatomy of a Masterpiece* (London: Oboe Classics, 2004);

interpretative principles within the context of modern-day performance, I present two case studies: a study of the Quintet for oboe and strings by Arnold Bax, written for and dedicated to Léon, compares the relatively reserved approach in modern recordings with Léon's 1926 recording; a discussion of Benjamin Britten's *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid for Solo Oboe* Op. 49 (1951) explores the status of the oboist in relation to Britten's apparent insistence on the accuracy of his musical notation which has led to a lack of experimentation by performers of this piece. Through my performances of a wide range of oboe works, I suggest that adapting Léon's idiomatic use of rubato, tempi, rhythmic inequality and phrase shaping offers new interpretative strategies for modern-day oboists.

Léon's last concert tour in 1977 included a performance at Wells Cathedral in Somerset at which I was the page turner for his accompanist John Simpson. Although I have little recollection of his sound, the memory of Léon's musicianship achieved with apparent ease, and how he held a capacity audience spellbound by his performance and reminiscences has stayed with me. This work is in part inspired by that memory, but is also a tribute to a great artist and his impact and influence on a generation of musicians.

Chapter 1: The Oboe in Context

1.1 The status of the oboe at the turn of the twentieth century

The bitter-sweet oboe which is first heard marshalling the orchestra to tune, continues, as music proceeds, to assert its small but inexpressibly poignant voice.¹

The modern-day oboe represents a culmination of development and innovation which began in France in the early seventeenth century with the introduction of the *Hautboy*. The production of the *Conservatoire* oboe over two hundred years later in effect concluded the instrument's construct; ever since, beyond minor adjustments, 'creative experimentation on the basic design of the oboe has all but ceased.'² The transformation from the unkeyed baroque instrument to the complicated mechanism of contemporary models has been achieved by the fortitude and inspiration of a few instrument makers was not always an easy evolution. In fact by the early 1900s the oboe had sustained a period of mechanisation and streamlining that 'affected not only the oboe's appearance and technique, but its tonal character and ultimately its expressive potential.'³ Although the French oboe maker François Lorée's innovative design of 1881 had stabilised the oboe, the constant development of the instrument from the early 1800s may in part explain why the oboe's initial popularity as a solo instrument had largely been ignored by major composers of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Yet within these turbulent times for the oboe the foremost composers of the period, notwithstanding their relative neglect of solo repertoire, wrote 'beautiful, sensitive and demanding solos for the oboe in their orchestral compositions.'⁴ There were a few celebrated oboe virtuosi such as Stanislas Verroust (1814-63), Theodore Lalliet (1837-92), Baldassare Centroni (1784-1860), and notably Antonio Pasculli (1842-1924), who was compared to Paganini.⁵ These virtuosi often composed and performed their own works which were designed to display their prodigious technical facility on the instrument. The showpieces of Pasculli in

¹ Philip Bate, *The Oboe: An Outline of its History, Development and Construction*, 3rd ed. (London: Ernest Benn Ltd, 1975), p. 3.

² Geoffrey Burgess and Bruce Haynes, *The Oboe* (London: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 3.

³ Burgess and Haynes, p. 125.

⁴ See *Introduction* in James Brown, ed., *Our Oboist Ancestors: A Guide to Who Was Who in the Nineteenth Century Oboe World* (Malmesbury: Abbey Printing Ltd., 2006), n.pag.

⁵ Lucienne Rosset 'Antonino Pasculli, the -"Paganini of the Oboe"', *The Double Reed*, 10. 3 (1987), pp. 44-45. Pasculli was purported to be the first Italian oboist to play a French model oboe made by Triébert.

particular involved the need to use circular breathing,⁶ and remain challenging repertoire for modern-day players. As the oboist Christopher Redgate has observed, ‘what sets the music of Antonino Pasculli apart [. . .] is the extreme technical demands he makes upon the oboist.’⁷ The extract in Example 1 from Pasculli’s *Le Api* represents 30 of 196 bars of continuous music.⁸ The piece can only be successfully navigated using a circular breathing technique although most players take advantage of the cadence at the end of bar 84 to take a single ‘regular’ breath. According to the Italian oboist Sandro Caldini, Pasculli wrote thirteen *Fantasias* or *Grand Concerti* based on themes of popular nineteenth-century operas of which nine are available today published by Musica Rara. The four remaining unpublished works include a Trio for violin, oboe and piano on themes from Rossini’s *Guillaume Tell*.⁹

Although there were no comparable virtuosi in Britain, the performances of Johann Griesbach (1769-1825), a German immigrant who established a successful career in London from c.1794, were favourably compared to those of Centroni and the French oboist Gustav Vogt¹⁰ for the Philharmonic Society in 1824 and 1828 respectively.¹¹ Oboe virtuosi made infrequent appearances as soloists in Britain and as they played their own material, which was neither published nor known to concert audiences, such events would have remained of novelty value. Burgess and Haynes suggest that the deaths and retirement of these oboists by the late 1880s are key to the decline of the ‘itinerant oboe virtuoso’ (Pasculli retired early in 1884 on medical advice);¹² younger players were considered to lack the ‘calibre of the finest of the previous generation.’¹³

⁶ See Barry Kernfeld, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1988), i.212: ‘A technique used principally by wind players to enable them to produce a continuous stream of notes without breaking to draw breath.’

⁷ Christopher Redgate, ‘The Paganini of the oboe, Pasculli’ *e.oboeclassics.com*. <<http://www.oboeclassics.com/Pasculli.htm>>[accessed October 2012].

⁸ The work was first performed on 14 July 1874 at the Conservatorio di Musica in Milan and first published in 1905.

⁹ Sandro Caldini, ‘Browsing Among Pasculli’ *The Double Reed*, 17.3 (1994), p. 42.

¹⁰ August George-Gustav Vogt (1781-1870) established the French style of oboe playing. He taught at the Paris Conservatoire 1816-55 and was a prolific composer of oboe and cor anglais works most of which remain unpublished. See Brown, pp.108-9.

¹¹ ‘The Rise and Progress of the Hautboy’, *The Quarterly Music Magazine and Review*, 9.36 (October 1827), 465. Centroni’s playing had been described in 1824 as ‘above and below Griesbach, but certainly will not be so highly esteemed as that player by English judges.’ See ‘Public Music in London’, *The Quarterly Music Magazine and Review*, 6, 22 (April 1824), 237. See also ‘The Philharmonic Concert’, *The Harmonicon* (24 March 1828), 90.

¹² See Rosset, p. 44.

¹³ Burgess and Haynes, p. 191.

Ex.1. Antonino Pasculli, *Le Api: Studio Caratteristico*, oboe part, bars 30-196¹⁴

The image shows a page of a musical score for the oboe part of Antonino Pasculli's *Le Api: Studio Caratteristico*. The page is numbered '3' in the top right corner. The score consists of ten staves of music, numbered 56 through 83. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The music is characterized by a dense, rhythmic texture with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. Dynamics include *ppp* (pianissimo), *p* (piano), *dim.* (diminuendo), and *senza rall.* (without slowing down). There are also markings for *cres:* (crescendo) and *pp* (piano). The notation includes various accidentals and articulation marks.

Some of these young oboists such as Theodore Lalliet (1837-92) and Charles Fargues (1845-1925) from France as well as the Italian oboist Giovanni Daelli (1800-1860) continued to compose and perform their own material, but their performances were apparently only occasional. The instrument was also not a popular choice for amateur musicians; it was noted as early as 1827 that the oboe was ‘little cultivated among amateurs.’¹⁵ One potential deterrent to taking up the oboe was its reputation for unpredictability; writing in 1874, A. Ernst suggested that ‘The study of the oboe is difficult; the instrument is full of traps for the student [. . .] it is sour and harsh, when

¹⁴ Pasculli, Antonio, *Le Api: Studio Caratteristico per oboe con accompagnamento di pianoforte* (Milan: Ricordi, 1989), pp.2,3.

¹⁵ ‘The Rise and Progress of the Hautboy’, p. 465.

the performer is inexperienced or lacks taste of a true artist.’¹⁶ These sentiments are still echoed today. A 2005 discussion of instrument choice noted that whilst ‘in the hands of an outstanding professional musician’ the oboe ‘can sound exquisite’, when played ‘by most children’ the sound is ‘unpleasant and rasping’; there is even the suggestion that no teenager should play the instrument when unwell as ‘the intercranial pressure can spread the infection into the eyes and the brain causing complications and even disability.’¹⁷

A few journal articles and accompanying correspondence during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century did attempt to address the neglect of the instrument by amateur musicians. Topics covered included an overview of the history of oboe as well as practical advice on purchasing an instrument, reeds, recommended repertoire and the importance of maintaining a daily practice regime.¹⁸ Cautionary comments threaten to undermine this more positive reappraisal, however; discussing breath control, for example, it was suggested that a beginner may experience a ‘feeling of suffocation and consequent distress.’¹⁹

By the 1890s the instrument had undergone the most progressive advances in its development and yet at the same time critical assessment by many respected musical figures had diminished the instrument’s potential universal appeal most notably in chamber and solo repertoires, but also emphasised a limited use in orchestral music. According to Burgess and Haynes the oboe’s lack of a ‘prominent solo existence’ was the consequence of being ‘deemed too delicate for military music, too difficult for the amateur and too brash for the domestic salon.’²⁰ Although it was suggested in 1893 that audiences enjoyed listening to a well-played oboe solo ‘with great attention and interest’,²¹ this was a rare voice amidst a sea of critics. Percy Rowe, for example, thought concertos for the instrument were ‘not distinctly oboe

¹⁶ A. Ernst, ‘Hautbois’, *Grand Dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle*, 16 vols. (Paris: Pierre Larousse, 1874), ix.111: ‘L’étude du hautbois est difficile; l’instrument est plein de pièges pour l’élève...ils sont aigres et criards, quand l’exécutant est inexpérimenté ou qu’il manque du gout, qu’il fait vrais artistes.’

¹⁷ Atarah Ben-Tovim and Douglas Boyd, *The Right Instrument for your Child*, 2nd ed. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005), pp. 45-6.

¹⁸ See Amateur Oboist, ‘The oboe for amateurs’, *Musical Opinion and Music Trade Review*, 16 (1 July, 1892), 482-3; ‘Notes on the Oboe’, *Musical News*, 7 (1 December 1894), p. 462; ‘The Oboe’, *Musical News*, 18 (10 March, 1900), 231; Percy R. Rowe, ‘On Oboe Playing’, *Musical Opinion & Music Trade Review*, 28 (May, 1905), pp. 586-7.

¹⁹ See Rowe, p. 586.

²⁰ Burgess and Haynes, p. 128. See also F. A. Gevaert, *A New treatise on Instrumentation*, trans. E.F.E. Suddard (Paris: Henry Lemoine & Co., 1906), p.146.

²¹ Weygthe, ‘Oboe playing and oboe music’, *Musical Opinion and Music Trade Review*, 16 (July, 1893), 588-9.

music' and Ebenezer Prout regarded the 'predominance of oboe tone' in Mozart's canon of chamber works for winds as 'wearisome.'²² Thomas Dunhill's perspective was polarised; he viewed pairing the oboe with the piano for any substantial composition as ineffective, yet he wrote two works for oboe and piano – *Three Short Pieces*, Op. 81 (c. 1941 – *Romance* is dedicated to Léon) and *Friendship's Garland* Op. 97 (c.1944); the former was a popular item in many of Léon's recital programmes. He also considered the instrument's 'real usefulness' lay in its 'prominence as a melodic voice' when combined with 'other wind instruments', but it was ineffective in the Beethoven's *Trio for two oboes and cor anglais* Op.87 because of its limited tone-colour.²³

Given a predominantly negative perception of the oboe as a solo instrument, and in many cases also in chamber music, Heinz Holliger's observation that 'there was no tradition of oboe playing in the nineteenth century [and] the instrument nearly disappeared' is unsurprising.²⁴ Yet his comment could have applied to other instruments in the wind family who all suffered similar neglect during this period. Berlioz, for example had viewed wind instrument solos of 'little amusement',²⁵ and in discussing the principles of instrumentation in chamber music, Dunhill leaves the reader in no doubt as to his disdain for wind instrumentalists, suggesting that 'no wind player has quite the same control over tone-quality or intonation that is possessed by a string player.'²⁶ Perhaps most damning of all was the German critic Eduard Hanslick (1825-1904) who regarded woodwinds as 'boring little pipes.'²⁷

Little had changed by the turn of the twentieth century for the oboe. The orchestra was seen as the 'true field of action' for the instrument where it was admired for its 'expressive and melodic' qualities as well as 'one of the most eloquent organs of dramatic instrumentation.'²⁸ According to Stanford, the conductor Hans Richter said that a fine orchestra relied upon the 'excellence of the second bassoon,

²² Thomas F. Dunhill, *Chamber Music: A Treatise for Students* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1913), p. 255; Rowe, p. 587. Ebenezer Prout, *The Orchestra*, 2 vols. (London: Augener Ltd., 1879), ii.276.

²³ See Dunhill, pp. 253, 255.

²⁴ Frederic Palmer, 'A conversation with Heinz Holliger', *The Double Reed*, 6.1 (1983), 49.

²⁵ Hector Berlioz, *La Critique Musicale 1823-1863 édité sous la direction de H. Robert Cohen et Yves Gérard*, 5 vols. (Paris: Buchet/Chastel, c1996-2003), iii. 556: 'Les solo d'instruments à vent passent pour assez peu divertissant de leur nature.'

²⁶ Dunhill, pp. 246-7.

²⁷ See Colin Lawson, *The Cambridge Companion to the Clarinet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 83.

²⁸ See Gevaert, pp.142, 145 and Prout, p. 115.

the drums, and the first oboe.²⁹ Gevaert, whose *Treatise* Richard Strauss recommended,³⁰ described how the oboe's 'expressive character of its timbre immediately engrosses the hearer's attention.'³¹ Although marginalised in the solo repertoire, in its orchestral capacity the oboe was celebrated as 'so distinct a solo instrument' and a 'favourite instrument for solo passages.'³² Prout mentioned the *Funeral March* and *Finale* from Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony as worthy examples, but above all he regarded the opening oboe solo to the air 'For my soul thirsteth for God' from Mendelssohn's *Forty-Second Psalm* as the best solo 'ever written' for the instrument.³³ Similarly in referring to a short solo in Act Two from Wagner's opera *Tannhäuser*, Strauss considered that 'no other instrument could reveal the sweet secret of love's innocence in such affecting tones'.³⁴ Opinions differed as to perceived good practice; for instance Frederick Corder thought that Beethoven's use of the instrument was 'unkind to the oboe' suggesting that the 'rustic theme in the scherzo of the *Pastoral* symphony is uncomfortably high'; Geveart on the other hand, citing the same extract, thought the oboe 'recalling the shepherd's bagpipes evokes ideas of merriment' (Ex.1.2).³⁵

Ex. 1.2. Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No.6, 'Pastoral', 3rd movement, oboe 1, bars 91-98.³⁶



However, some orchestral treatises presented characteristics of the oboe in less than sympathetic terms. Edwin Evans, for example, thought the oboe's timbre 'peculiarly penetrating' and that 'anything passing beyond bucolic cheerfulness would be

²⁹ Stanford, p.18.

³⁰ See Berlioz and Strauss, p. 1. Stanford, p. 69, thought Geveart's study as more practical [than Berlioz], but less imaginative and suggested that Forsyth's *Treatise* was 'by a long way the best'.

³¹ Gevaert, p. 141.

³² Corder, p. 40 and Prout, p. 115.

³³ Prout, pp. 115, 117.

³⁴ Berlioz and Strauss, p.175.

³⁵ Corder, p. 39, Geveart, p. 141.

³⁶ Ludwig van Beethoven, 'Symphony No.6, 'Pastoral'', 3rd movement, in *Difficult Passages for Oboe and Cor Anglais*, ed. by Evelyn Rothwell, 3 vols. (London: Boosey and Hawkes Ltd., 1953), i.7.

unsuitable.³⁷ Rimsky Korsakov adopted a more pragmatic approach in characterising the oboe as one of the ‘nasal’ and ‘melodic’ instruments of the orchestra (the bassoon sharing the same categorisation) – ‘artless and gay in the major, pathetic and sad in the minor’ in the middle range, ‘wild’ and ‘hard and dry’ in the low and high registers respectively.³⁸ Gevaert’s assessment is the most exultant: ‘its characteristic feature is frankness; no instrument expresses what it is able to say in such a strikingly realistic fashion’; he also quoted André Grétry, who a century earlier had described the oboe as ‘a ray of hope to shine in the midst of distress.’³⁹

Clearly the oboe was seen in a more positive light in the orchestra particularly in its solo capacity in projecting a variety of emotions. Yet there still remained an air of caution in exploiting its distinct characteristics. Few saw beyond a restrictive function of melodic pastoral characterisation for the instrument; Cecil Forsyth challenged this assumption, citing examples from Rossini amongst others, ‘good Oboist can deliver a series of rapid light *staccatos* are among the most charming characteristics of the instrument.’⁴⁰ Berlioz presents a conundrum in his admiration of the oboe’s virtues of ‘artless grace, pure innocence, mellow joy, the pain of a tender soul,’ whilst advocating that fast passage work produces ‘an ungraceful and almost ridiculous effect.’⁴¹ Yet not only did he use the oboe to great lyrical effect (such as in the opening duologue between the oboe and cor anglais in the ‘Scène de Champs’ from the *Symphonie fantastique*), but demonstrated the instrument’s capacity to sound elegant in brilliant passage work (as in the overture to *Benvenuto Cellini*). Evans, probably taking his lead from Berlioz, advised that ‘rapid passages, frivolous ornamental arpeggios and so forth, however practical mechanically, should be avoided.’⁴² Conversely Richard Strauss celebrated not only the instrument’s capacity to ‘rattle, bleat, scream just as it can sing, lament nobly and innocently, or play and warble cheerfully’, but also its distinct quality for humour

³⁷ Evans, ii.43.

³⁸ Nicolas Rimsky-Korsakov, *Principles of Orchestration*, ed. by Maximillian Steinberg and trans. by Edward Agate (London: The Russian Music Agency, 1912), pp.18-9.

³⁹ Gevaert, pp. 141, 144.

⁴⁰ Cecil Forsyth, *Orchestration* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1914), p. 208.

⁴¹ Hector Berlioz, *A Treatise on Modern Instrumentation and Orchestration* trans. Mary Cowden Clarke (London: Novello, Ewer and Co., 1882), p. 81.

⁴² Evans, p. 43.

‘with its thick and impudent low tones and its thin and bleating high notes, especially if these are exaggerated, is suitable for humorous effects and for caricature.’⁴³

Despite its orchestral status, perceptions of the oboe as an effective solo or chamber instrument were primarily negative; recent discoveries of solo works by Bellini, Donizetti, Hummel, Kalliwoda, Krommer, Pasculli, Rossini and Wederkehr have contributed to a more positive reception. Léon Goossens’ role in encouraging the more prominent status of the instrument, as discussed later, was a significant development.

1.2 National Schools of oboe playing

By the turn of the twentieth century the national characteristics of oboe playing in European countries as well as Russia and America had been grounded in the instrument’s development both mechanically and stylistically from either France or Germany; the light and expressive French sound contrasted with the thicker and less flexible tone quality of the German style. Until the late 1960s individual schools of playing remained highly distinctive and were influenced by one or more players in each country: the French school, light, brilliant and expressive; the German school, warm, dark and restrained; the British and Italian schools, similar to the French sound if a little darker in timbre; the Russian School, a robust bright and direct tone based on the German school; the American school, a dull-edged French sound established by the émigré Marcel Tabuteau (1887-1966).⁴⁴ These descriptions are a generalisation, but convey the overall variation and distinctive national qualities. Other countries such as Australia, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, Switzerland and the South Americas have been influenced by one or more of the European schools.

The significance of the advances by the Triébert dynasty (1810-78) in France and their development of the prototype of the modern-day oboe not only overshadowed developments in Germany and Austria, but ultimately acquired an international standing with which few schools were able to compete. The narrow bore

⁴³ Hector Berlioz & Richard Strauss, *Treatise on Instrumentation*, trans. Theodore Front (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1991), p. 176.

⁴⁴ For historical performance examples see *The Oboe 1930-1953* (Oboe Classics, C2012, 2005). Featured oboists include Georges Gillet (French), Fritz Flemming (German), Bruno Labate (Italian), Marcel Tabuteau and Lois Wann (American) and Léon Goossens (British). Any pre-1980s Russian recordings offer an excellent example of their style of oboe playing.

of oboes introduced by Frederic Triébert in 1855 differed from the slightly larger bores of English, German and Viennese oboes, and, combined with a narrow reed, facilitated a more subtle tone quality; as Strauss suggested, ‘the French instruments are of finer workmanship, their registers are more even, they respond more easily in the treble and allow a softer pp on low tones.’⁴⁵ By the late nineteenth century the German and Viennese instruments, which were based on earlier designs with a wider bell, were less mechanised than French oboes. The Viennese oboe has seen little change since the nineteenth century.⁴⁶ However in Germany the oboist Fritz Flemming (1873-1947), principal of the Berlin Philharmonic, having studied in France, became the first known German oboist to play on a French instrument and is said to have popularised the Conservatoire instrument in Germany.⁴⁷

Since the 1970s there has been a gradual blurring of timbres between the European schools; even the unique and highly distinctive American sound has begun to soften. It is from this time that players started to explore the darker tone qualities of the German school; oboist Neil Black (1932-2016) suggested that the influence of Lothar Koch (1935-2003) was pivotal in the resurgence of interest in the Germanic timbre which became known as the ‘Berlin Philharmonic Sound’ (Koch was principal oboe in the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra 1957-91). According to Black, Koch’s 1975 recording of Mozart’s Quartet for oboe and strings K370⁴⁸ was the ‘sound that rocked the world’, although Black found Koch’s performance style ‘a little inflexible’ and best ‘suited to the orchestra.’⁴⁹ Yet towards the end of the twentieth century German oboists looked towards the French school; the oboist Albrecht Mayer (1965-) epitomises this blend of the Franco-German style of playing.⁵⁰ Martin Gabriel, the principal oboe in the Vienna Philharmonic since 1982, plays on the traditional

⁴⁵ Berlioz and Strauss, p. 183.

⁴⁶ For an example of the unique Viennese sound see *Musik für Oboe Alleine*, Alfred Dutka (Precise Records, 91030, 1996).

⁴⁷ See Burgess and Haynes, pp. 175-6.

⁴⁸ W. A. Mozart, *Oboe Quartet in F K370*, Lothar Koch (Oboe), Norbert Brainin (Violin), Peter Schidlof (Viola), Martin Lovett (Cello) (Deutsche Grammophon, 437137, 1992). This CD is a rerelease of the original 1975 recording.

⁴⁹ Neil Black, ‘Oboists of My Time’, *The Double Reed*, 33.1 (2010), 56.

⁵⁰ Mayer has been principal of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra since 1992. For an example of his playing see *Albrecht Mayer New Seasons: Handel for Oboe & Orchestra*, Albrecht Mayer/ Sinfonia Varsovia (Deutsche Grammophon, 002895681, 2006).

Viennese oboe, yet his sound is described more ‘European’ than previous generations of Viennese oboists.⁵¹

These changes were supported by continuing developments in the mechanisation of the oboe; as Michael Britton from the oboe firm T. W. Howarth & Co. Ltd. acknowledges, ‘work on instrument design is a continuous process.’⁵² The top joint bore walls were thickened during this period, for example, which helped to soften the natural tonal characteristics of the oboe, ironing out the vibrant richer resonances of the lower register and the thin tones of the upper notes thus enabling players to produce an overall darker timbre. Manufacturers also began experimenting with different man-made materials as well as lightweight woods such as cocobolo.⁵³

1.2.1 The British School

A defined British School of oboe playing did not emerge until the mid-twentieth century; attributed to Léon Goossens’ fluid style of playing grounded in the French tradition, his impact can be seen as the culmination and a stabilisation of a chequered history. Prior to this innovation, British music institutions had relied upon employing continental players to cover an apparent shortfall in talented British oboists. Consequently, styles of playing were subjected to variation; the émigré oboist Johann Griesbach, for example, was ‘unrivalled’ for the ‘fine rich quality of his tone.’⁵⁴ Five respected British oboists can be identified in the early nineteenth century: John Parke (1745-1829) and his younger brother William Thomas Parke (1762-1847),⁵⁵ Thomas Ling (1787-1851), Alfred Nicholson (1822-1870) and Henry (Gratton) Cooke (1808-89). As a student, Cooke was considered to be the successor to Griesbach, and was declared to be ‘at the head of living English oboeists.’⁵⁶ According to *Musical Opinion*, Mendelssohn wanted Cooke to ‘accompany him to Germany’ to ‘write some

⁵¹ Black, p. 59. Sandro Caldini has highlighted the problems associated with the internationalisation of the Italian oboe timbre; see Andrea Ridilla, ‘An Indissoluble Marriage: Italian Oboe playing and the human voice’, *Double Reed News* 92 (Autumn 2010), 25-8 (p. 26).

⁵² Michael Britton & William Ring, ‘Living traditions-Howarth Oboes’, *e.idrs.org*, <[http://www.idrs.org/publications/DR/dr22.4pdf/Living Traditions.pdf](http://www.idrs.org/publications/DR/dr22.4pdf/Living%20Traditions.pdf)> [accessed January 2010].

⁵³ For a discussion of materials see Nora Post, ‘New Designs and materials in Oboe Manufacture’, *The Double Reed*, 18.3 (1995), 31-5.

⁵⁴ See ‘Deaths’, *Monthly Magazine or British Register*, 57 (March 1825), 184; ‘The Rise and Progress of the Hautboy’, 461; and *The Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review*, 9 (October 1827), 461.

⁵⁵ Brown, p. 76, refers to the brothers as ‘the pre-eminent oboists of the time.’ See also Bate, pp.197-8.

⁵⁶ ‘Royal Academy of Music City Concerts’, *The Harmonicon* (1830), 217.

special music for Mr Cooke's oboe.⁵⁷ Ling was also compared to Griesbach on the 'sweetness and delicate precision' of his playing.⁵⁸ William Parke appears to have been a maverick in his capacity for self promotion, and even described his own playing in his autobiography as 'remarkably sweet, his execution rapid and articulate, his shakes brilliant, his cantabiles and cadences varied and fanciful.'⁵⁹ Parke also claims to have written and dedicated an oboe concerto to George IV, Prince of Wales, which has not survived. Nevertheless he was commended alongside Griesbach for his contribution in raising the profile of the oboe through 'excellence and perfection.'⁶⁰ Nicholson, who studied with the French oboist Barret, established a successful career and reputation; according to William Rowlett, he was 'universally esteemed *facile princeps* amongst English oboe players.'⁶¹ He was evidently a popular man; a benefit concert was given in his honour to raise funds following a sudden illness in 1868 which left him paralysed.⁶²

Griesbach's tenure in England had continued the weightier tones of the German timbre established a century earlier by Johann Christian Fischer (1733-1800).⁶³ However an incident in 1848 at the Philharmonic Society paved the way for a change in the style of oboe playing in Britain: in a performance of Mendelssohn's 'Scottish' Symphony Gratton Cooke was berated in the press for an incorrect entry, for which Cooke, who was culpable, sought to publicly assign blame to the first flute player. Adverse public opinion resulted in Cooke's resignation from the Society,⁶⁴ and the eventual employment of the French oboist Apollon-Marie-Rose Barret (1804-79) by 1853.⁶⁵ Barret had arrived in England in the late 1830s and quickly established

⁵⁷ 'Mr Henry M. A. G. Cooke', *Musical Opinion & Music Trade Review*, 13 (October 1889), 22. Cooke apparently declined the invitation owing to his 'English proclivities'.

⁵⁸ 'The Philharmonic Concerts', *Harmonicon*, 7 (1829), 91-2.

⁵⁹ *A Biography and Historical Dictionary of Musicians*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (London: Sainsbury & Co., 1827), ii, 264-5. According to Burgess and Haynes, pp.328-9, 'numerous composers, including Hook, Shield and Incedon, wrote obligati for Parke.'

⁶⁰ *The Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review*, p. 461.

⁶¹ William Rowlett, 'The Late Alfred Nicholson', *The Musical World*, 48. 37 (October, 1870), p. 613.

⁶² See Rowlett, 613. See also 'Musical and Dramatic Gossip', *The Athenaeum*, 2115 (May, 1868), p. 669.

⁶³ Philip Bate, 'Oboe' in *The New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments* ed. by Stanley Sadie, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1984), ii.804, attributes the adoption of the German style to Fischer, who settled in London in the late 1760s. However performances by German oboist Kaitch (dates and details unknown) at the beginning of the eighteenth century suggest an earlier appreciation. See E. S., 'Reeds and Reed Instruments', *Musical News*, 7 (December 1894), 562-3.

⁶⁴ See 'The First Oboe at the Philharmonic', *The Musical World*, 23 (January, 1848), 65-6 and 'Mr Gratton Cooke and the Philharmonic Society', *The Musical World*, 25 (April, 1850), 215.

⁶⁵ In 'Wednesday Evening Concerts' *The Musical World*, 31.44 (October, 1853), 683, Barret is noted in a general list of players for the Philharmonic Society. The Belgian musicologist and critic François-Joseph Fétis (1784-1871) had recommended replacing the English principal oboe in the Philharmonic Society with a French

a fine reputation. In 1847 he was invited to play principal oboe in the Italian Opera at Covent Garden and remained in the post until 1874. Barret's influence particularly as a teacher and instrument maker had a significant impact in establishing the French tradition of playing in Britain.⁶⁶ The Barret oboe was developed in association with the instrument maker Frédéric Triébert, the design of which included an extension to Bb below middle C and shortened fingering in the second octave was the forerunner of later British models. British oboes had lagged behind continental developments so perhaps a consequence of French influence was that England readily embraced French oboes.

Oboists of the French school continued to gain prominent orchestral and teaching positions in England into the early twentieth century. These players included Antoine-Joseph Lavigne (1816-86), who arrived in England from France in 1841 and had an illustrious career as an orchestral player and soloist. He was principal oboist in the Hallé orchestra for sixteen years (1865-81). Lavigne played on Boehm system oboes (developed initially by August Buffet (1789-1864) and later with Triébert in consultation with Lavigne) notable for their streamline design and particularly the elimination of cross fingering. Lavigne, whilst applauded as a soloist, apparently lacked sensitivity as an ensemble player; according to the *Musical Times*, a performance of Hummel's Septet in D minor was unbalanced by Lavigne's tone.⁶⁷ His harsh tone may have perpetuated negative perceptions of the Boehm instrument. Antoine Dubrucq (1836-1888), originally from Brussels, succeeded Lavigne as principal oboe in the Halle Orchestra and also taught at Trinity College [of Music], London. According to Bate, 'he was supreme and it is recorded that more than once eminent visiting singers interrupted rehearsals to come down to the footlights and applaud the oboist [. . .] his tone was described as "simply heavenly"'.⁶⁸ Dubrucq's son Eugene became a highly regarded cor anglais player who played in the early

player as early as 1829; see Fétis, *Curiosities Historique de la Musique* (Paris: Janet et Cotelte, 1830), n.p. Robert Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style: Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance, 1900-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 119, incorrectly credits Henri De Busscher with introducing the French sound into Britain.

⁶⁶ Barret's studies for oboe, *The Complete Method for the Oboe* (first published in 1850) is still used today. The British oboist Edward Davies (1856-1920) who heard Barret play in 1910 described his sound as 'rather large but more reedy than was popular at the time when the smoothness of Gillet and Lalande was most admired'; see Bate, p. 204. See also 'Concerts', *The Musical World*, 1 (May 1836), 126.

⁶⁷ 'Music in Birmingham', *The Musical Times*, 24 (March, 1883), 137-8 (p.137).

⁶⁸ Bate, p. 206.

performances of Arnold Bax's *In Memoriam*.⁶⁹ Joseph Lievin Fonteyne (1875-1938) also played cor anglais for the Queen's Hall Orchestra as well as the London Symphony and Royal Opera House orchestras.⁷⁰ H.G Lebon (dates unknown), also originally from Brussels, played in various British orchestras from 1870; he was principal oboist during the first season of the Queen's Hall Orchestra and although he was described as 'a mere workman on the Oboe', Henry Wood considered him to be a 'most refined French player.'⁷¹

Henry Wood was consistent in appointing oboists of the French school to the Queen's Hall Orchestra in preference to British players. Taking the French route may have been due in part to the unsuccessful tenure of the British oboist William Malsch (c.1855-1924) as first oboe during the second season of Wood's orchestra. Malsch was considered the pre-eminent oboist of his day – 'a performer of supreme technical ability and great endurance'⁷² – which is presumably why Wood appointed him in the first place. According to Bate, he was 'much loved both for his personal qualities of integrity and kindness and as a great teacher.'⁷³ However Wood admitted that 'his [Malsch's] tone and general playing got on my nerves so much that I appointed [the French oboist] Désire Lalande to take his place.'⁷⁴ By the same token Léon Goossens, who studied with Malsch and acknowledged his musicianship, described his tone as unattractive: 'it was like a comb and tissue paper with no vibrato.'⁷⁵ Eugene Goossens (Léon's elder brother) also thought that Malsch 'ruined the tone-quality of the London Symphony Orchestra for years.'⁷⁶

Désire Alfred Lalande (d.1904) arrived in England in 1886 from France to join the Hallé orchestra (where his father was principal bassoon) becoming first oboe in 1888 until 1892. He then moved to the Scottish Orchestra as principal before

⁶⁹ Lewis Foreman, *Bax: A Composer and his Times*, 3rd ed. (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), p. 196.

⁷⁰ According to Geoffrey Burgess Fonteyne was one of the founder members of the London Symphony Orchestra. An example of Fonteyne's playing is recorded on *The Oboe 1903-1953: Various artists* (Oboe Classics, C2012, 2005), CD1, tracks 5-6.

⁷¹ See Brown, p. 61, and Wood, p. 113.

⁷² Bate, p. 205.

⁷³ Bate, p. 205.

⁷⁴ Wood, p. 113. Robert Philip, p.119, credits De Busscher with replacing Malsch in 1904.

⁷⁵ In Nora Post, 'Interview with Léon Goossens and Edwin Roxburgh August 1, 1982' *The Double Reed e-edition*, 20.1 (1997) <<http://www.idrs.org/publications/DR/DR5.3/goossens.htm>> [8 August 2009], Goossens acknowledge a debt of gratitude in Malsch's teaching method 'I learnt a lot from him, really. We did a lot of exercises. They proved very useful to me.'

⁷⁶ Eugene Goossens, *Overture and Beginners: A Musical Autobiography* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1951), p. 56.

accepting Wood's offer to play first oboe in the Queen Hall Orchestra in 1897. According to James Brown 'he influenced many English oboists with his French style of playing' and was the first French oboist to be asked to play at Bayreuth in 1896; Wood described him as 'one of the finest oboists London ever had.'⁷⁷ Lalande's early death in 1904 prompted Wood to seek a successor from the Paris Conservatoire;⁷⁸ it is possible that Wood's experience of Malsch may have influenced his decision. Henri De Busscher (1880-1975) was appointed, a post he held until 1915 before moving to America.⁷⁹ Wood's account of De Busscher as 'a truly superb player' was echoed by the cellist of the Queen's Hall Orchestra Warwick Evans (1885-1974), who reportedly described De Busscher's playing as 'always perfect', with an 'approach to phrasing' that 'set a standard for the whole orchestra.'⁸⁰ Edward Buttar (1873-1943), a semi-professional oboist who claimed to have worked with De Busscher, agreed, describing De Busscher as a 'heaven-sent musician' whose performances were 'musically impeccable.'⁸¹ De Busscher was particularly influential on Léon Goossens, who noted, 'when I heard De Busscher play I met up with something magical and his tone was mellow and beautifully disciplined.'⁸²

With the advent of the First World War, De Busscher represented the last generation of oboists to migrate from the continent. Nevertheless the number of European players engaged prior to the 1914-18 conflict does raise the question of why so many non-native oboists continued to be employed in preference to British players. Edward Buttar has suggested that 'oboe-playing was really at a very low ebb in this

⁷⁷ Wood, p. 113; Brown, p. 139.

⁷⁸ 'Desire Lalande', *Musical Standard*, 22.569 (November, 1904), 345. Wood, p. 158.

⁷⁹ De Busscher was originally from Belgium. He was the first oboist to perform the solo 'Home Sweet Home' in Henry Wood's *Fantasia on British Sea Songs*. He left London to play principal oboe with the New York Symphony Orchestra (1915-20) and later the Los Angeles Philharmonic (1920-48). He also was first oboe with Columbia Pictures Corporation (1948-56). See Donald Leake, 'Lessons with De Busscher', *The Double Reed*, 17.3 (Winter 1994), 80-1, and Melvin Harris, 'Oboist Extraordinary', *e.idrs.org*, <<http://www.idrs.org/publications/controlled/TWOboist/TWO.V3.3/debusscher.html> - 11.8kb> [accessed November 2012]; according to Harris 'his virtuoso technique and elegant phrasing were legendary and he was considered the absolute master of the 19th century repertoire.'

⁸⁰ See Wood, p. 158; Harris, 'Oboist extraordinary'; also Jeremy Dibble, *Hamilton Harty: Musical Polymath* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013), pp. 78, 99, 100.

⁸¹ Edward Buttar, 'An Historical Letter' in *Our Oboist Ancestors: A Guide to Who was Who in the Nineteenth Century Oboe World*, ed. by James Brown (Malmesbury: Abbey Printing Ltd., 2006), p. 136. This detailed, if a little opinionated, document provides an invaluable record of the number of players active on the musical scene circa 1890-1914.

⁸² Barry Wynne, *Music in the Wind: The story of LÉON GOOSSENS and his triumph over a shattering accident* (London: Souvenir Press, 1967), p. 64.

country from say, the time of Mendelssohn till the end of the century.’⁸³ Léon Goossens also remarked that the oboe at the turn of the twentieth century was ‘still mostly played with a crude and heavy tone.’⁸⁴ With the apparent shortage of British oboists orchestras became major employers of players from Belgium and France. This was a transitional period for both oboists and the instrument, as the influence of the French style had gained momentum in the country since Barret’s arrival; Bate suggested that Lalande’s appointment as principal oboe in the Queen’s Hall Orchestra in 1897 ‘did much to foster a preference for the French school of oboe playing.’⁸⁵ The assimilation of the French school into the British style of oboe playing and woodwind playing in general was not without some reservations regarding volume.

The oboist Charles Reynolds (1843-1916),⁸⁶ who was Léon Goossens’ first teacher, noted a general trend towards a smaller tone quality on the instrument’.⁸⁷ De Busscher appeared to embody this tendency as described by Buttar: ‘without exception his was the smallest-toned oboe I ever heard’ with ‘no compensating “quality”’.⁸⁸ Moreover Wood, discussing a general point of performance style observed a loss of ‘bite’ in the more ‘refined’ timbres of the English and French oboists and bassoonists in comparison to German double-reed players, although he suggested that as a nation ‘we dislike’ the ‘throaty’ timbres of these German instruments.⁸⁹ Additionally, in an article on Beethoven’s symphonies, Wood suggested that whilst developments of woodwind instruments had enabled players to produce ‘better and purer quality’ they not only ‘sound rather too much alike’ but also lack ‘power and piquancy.’⁹⁰ Nevertheless by the late 1890s the influence of the French school was beginning to have an impact on British oboists; according to Brown, William Malsch changed from a German instrument to a ‘Lorée K30 (Barret system)’ model oboe in 1895 ‘in deference to public taste at the time.’⁹¹ Oboists were

⁸³ Brown, p. 136

⁸⁴ Rosen, p. 36.

⁸⁵ Bate, p. 202.

⁸⁶ Reynolds studied with Lavigne, became principal oboe in both Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and Halle orchestras and also worked with Royal Opera House Orchestra in London, see James Brown, *Our Oboist Ancestors*, pp. 85-6.

⁸⁷ Carole Rosen, *The Goossens: A Musical Century* (London: Andre Deutsch Ltd., 1993), p. 34.

⁸⁸ Buttar, p. 136.

⁸⁹ Henry Wood, ‘Orchestral Colour’ in *A Dictionary of Modern Music and Musicians*, ed. by A. Eaglefield-Hull (London: J. M. Dent, 1924), p. 364.

⁹⁰ ‘Concerning Beethoven’s Symphonies: A talk with Sir Henry Wood’, *The Musical Times*, 68. 1009 (March, 1927), 217.

⁹¹ Brown, p. 66. Bate, p. 204.

also emerging from British conservatoires having been taught in the French style by émigré players many of whom had long careers as second oboists, for example Edward Davies (1856-1920) and Henry Smith (1882-1937), suggesting that there were at least some prominent British players. Yet despite Brown's emphasis that Davies worked with the 'great British oboists of his time,'⁹² the younger generation appeared to have been overshadowed by the dominance of continental players in principal positions. Furthermore a perception that the general tone production on the instrument at this time 'was edgy and acid [and] not at all attractive, and that Léon Goossens 'was the first [oboist] to make a beautiful sound', was sustained into the 1920s and 30s.⁹³ Bassoonist Cecil James (1913-99)⁹⁴ reported that Léon Goossens' pupils were in high demand as deputies and if unavailable orchestras 'were faced with somebody who made a noise like treading on an egg,'⁹⁵ and according to Helen Gaskell (1906-2002), Angela Bull (dates unknown), the only other known woman professional oboist at this time, 'was absolutely terrible.'⁹⁶ Remarkably, for the first Glyndebourne Festival in 1934, the conductor Fritz Busch replaced the London Symphony Orchestra oboists with Evelyn Rothwell and Natalie Caine, both pupils of Léon Goossens. Rothwell reported that Busch 'did not like the sound of the LSO oboists. They were very efficient, but it was an old fashioned sound.'⁹⁷

This evaluation of the paucity of oboe playing is perhaps a response of a biased view from a younger generation of musicians. The flautist Richard Adeney (1920-2010), discussing Léon Goossens' influence on a generation of wind players notes that 'those few players, who resisted the Goossens influence, and who to my ears seemed a bit stiff and wooden at the time [during the late 1930s to 1950s], now sound on their old recordings beautifully stylish and twenty-first century.'⁹⁸ Furthermore, given Brown's comprehensive listing of over two hundred active British

⁹² Brown, p. 138. According to Brown, p. 140, Smith (born in Kidderminster) changed his name to Stanislaus whilst working with the Queens Hall Orchestra during the period 1904-08. He emigrated to the United States of America and played second oboe to Ferdinand Gillet (1882-1980) in the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

⁹³ 'Léon Goossens', *Mining the Archives*, BBC Radio 4, 6 June 1997; Rosen, p. 140.

⁹⁴ James was principal bassoonist in the London Symphony and Philharmonia Orchestras during the 1940s-60s.

⁹⁵ Rosen, p. 140.

⁹⁶ See Rosen, p. 139 regarding Angel Bull. Former Goossens pupil Gaskell played cor anglais with the BBC Symphony Orchestra 1933-65.

⁹⁷ Clive Fairburn, 'Lady Barbirolli: The BDRS pays Tribute', *Double Reed*, 83 (Summer 2008), 35-54 (p. 39).

⁹⁸ Richard Adeney, 'Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute – part 11', *Double Reed*, 39 (Summer 1997), 9-13, (p.12).

oboists during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,⁹⁹ it is difficult to justify how music history relegated these oboists to a level of mediocrity; Arthur Foreman (1883-1963) for example, reportedly the first oboist to record Schumann's *Three Romances* for oboe and piano Op.94 in 1911, shapes the 'Nicht Schnell' beautifully, with little sense of any 'acid' tone quality.¹⁰⁰ Similarly the oboe playing on the first recordings by the London Symphony Orchestra produced during 1913 and 1914, although without any trace of vibrato in keeping with the general performance practice of the day, is again clear and musically phrased.¹⁰¹ A listing of oboists for the London Symphony Orchestra 1904-1940 (Fig.1.1) highlights the contingent of British oboe players.¹⁰²

Fig. 1.1. London Symphony Orchestra: oboists 1904-1940

Name	Year	Known Position	Addition Information
William Malsch	1904/12	Oboe 1	
Edward Davies	1904/12	Oboe 2	
Edgar Charles Horton	1904/24	Oboe 2	Cor Anglais 1914/22
F. Murphy	1913/22	?	
W.S. Hinchliff	1914/27	Oboe 1	
J. McDonagh	1920-28	Cor Anglais	
J.H. Field	1923/28	?	
Horace Halstead	1926/31	?	Joint Principal 1927
David Griffiths	1928/36	?	
John Black	1929/31	?	
John McCarthy	1933/49	?	
Evelyn Rothwell	1934/38	Oboe 1	
E. Natalie James	1935/40	Oboe 2	Principal Cor Anglais 1937/40

⁹⁹ J. Brown, p. 119-120. Two women oboists are included in the list: Leila Marion Bull (b.1870) and Mathilde Rowlandson (dates unknown).

¹⁰⁰ *The Oboe 1903-1953*, Track 10. Gordon Arthur Foreman was one of two sons – his brother, also an oboist was Harold George Foreman (1992-1962) – of the oboist George Foreman (dates unknown). He succeeded his father as oboe teacher at the Guildhall School in 1910. See Brown, p. 37 and Bate, p. 206.

¹⁰¹ *Arthur Nikisch*, London Symphony Orchestra & Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra/ Arthur Nikisch (Symposium, 1087/88, 1991).

¹⁰² London, London Symphony Orchestra Archive. *e.lso.co.uk*, <<http://lso.co.uk/history>>[accessed December 2012]

Malsch, despite Wood's dislike of his playing, was clearly a well regarded player to be the first principal oboe in the orchestra; Edward Davies was described as a 'true artist' and although his technical facility was 'not unlimited' his tone was 'flexible' and 'very good;' likewise Walter Hincliff (d. 1928) was considered 'a very good player' if 'on the cold side.'¹⁰³ Hincliff had a distinguished career as a principal oboist in the Scottish Symphony Orchestra prior to his appointment to the London Symphony Orchestra. He also succeeded Charles Reynolds as principal in 1916 in the Covent Garden Orchestra. In addition he established the firm of *Louis Musical Instrument Company* in 1923, and though short lived (the company closed in 1940), Hincliff developed the *Louis* oboe, an instrument favoured by many of Léon Goossens' pupils.¹⁰⁴ The design of this oboe was an exact copy of a *Lorée* instrument which Hincliff apparently reproduced 'by chopping up a first rate *Lorée* oboe.'¹⁰⁵ James MacDonagh (1879-1933) was another distinguished orchestral musician. Although he played oboe, notably taking over as first oboe in the Queens Hall Orchestra when Léon Goossens left to fight in the 1914-18 war, as well as succeeding Malsch as professor at Trinity College of Music in 1924, his principal instrument was the cor anglais. He apparently played the solo cor anglais part in the British premiere of Sibelius' *The Swan of Tuonela* (31 August 1905).¹⁰⁶ His son Terence (1908-86) became a renowned oboist who reportedly had a 'profound influence on British players' of the post 1950s generation.¹⁰⁷

Charles Reynolds is perhaps the most influential figure in providing a foundation for the development of a national style that was brought to fruition and epitomised by his pupil Léon Goossens. Reynolds was considered a 'remarkably fine player' and 'the only great English oboist of his generation' (he was contemporary with Malsch); his 'beautiful sensitivity was in contrast to that of most London oboe players of the time.'¹⁰⁸ Hans Richter celebrated his playing of the *Shepherd's Lament* for cor anglais solo at the opening of the final act from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*:

¹⁰³ Buttar, in Brown, pp. 137.

¹⁰⁴ Burgess and Haynes, p. 182.

¹⁰⁵ Buttar in Brown, p. 137.

¹⁰⁶ Brown, 'James MacDonagh, oboist and cor anglais Player, 1879-1933: The Man and his Instruments', *The Double Reed*, 30.1 (2007), 91-95 (p. 93). See 'Queens Hall Promenade Concerts', *Musical Standard*, 24.610 (9 September 1905), 159-60, and 'Promenade Concerts', *The Musical Times*, 46.752 (October 1905), 670.

¹⁰⁷ Black, p. 54.

¹⁰⁸ 'Obituary: Charles Reynolds', *The Musical Times*, 58 (April 1917), 160, and E. Goossens, pp. 55-6.

‘Of the many oboeists in the world I have heard played that solo, you alone, Mr Reynolds play it as Wagner wrote it.’¹⁰⁹

Reynolds achieved this feat by using circular breathing which he learnt from his teacher Lavigne and in turn taught to Léon Goossens. Although Reynolds’ sound, reportedly ‘very large and broad’¹¹⁰ could be argued as the antithesis of Léon’s more refined timbre, elder brother Eugene Goossens (1863-1962) suggested that it was Reynolds’ influence that was fundamental to the development of Léon’s ‘distinctive and personal’ style of playing.¹¹¹

There were many other British oboists from the nineteenth century such as John Jennings (1817-93), who was principal oboe at Drury Lane Theatre from 1844 and later played first oboe in the Liverpool Philharmonic and Halle Orchestras; G. B. Erskine (b. c.1800), who with Thomas Ling was hailed a worthy successor to Griesbach; William Crozier (1855-1870) was celebrated as a player of ‘great ability’; William Henry Shepley (1872-1947), who played with the Leeds Festival Orchestra and taught at the Royal College of Music; and Thomas Brearley (d.1952), a pupil of Reynolds for whom he deputised as both teacher and player (he also played oboe and Cor Anglais with the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra), became synonymous with the British School of playing as an esteemed reed maker (Léon played on his reeds for most of his professional life).¹¹² Collectively these oboists represent a hidden group of itinerant musicians.

Whilst sources present a detailed account of the development of the oboe in the nineteenth century, the narrative surrounding the soundworld of these changes often characterised the instrument in terms of limited capability, an instrument not for the faint-hearted and even on occasion, overt hostility towards its existence. Furthermore in Britain the concept of generally poor playing standards had been disseminated over time by successive generations without disputation, yet recordings

¹⁰⁹ ‘Obituary: Charles Reynolds’, p. 160. Available live recordings of the *Shepherd’s Lament* suggest no attempt to play the solo in one breath.

¹¹⁰ Brown, p. 86; Nora Post, ‘Interview with Léon Goossens and Edwin Roxburgh August 1, 1982’, *The Double Reed e-edition*, 20.1 (1997), n.pag. e.idrs.org, .

¹¹¹ E. Goossens, p. 55. Eugene III clearly respected Reynolds’ playing, noting how his ‘beautiful sensitivity was in vivid contrast to that of most London oboist players of the time’; see E. Goossens, p. 56.

¹¹² See Brown for further details of British (and European) players of the nineteenth century; ‘The Rise and Progress of the Hautboy’, 461-2; Henry Hersee, ‘New Italian Opera’, *The Musical World*, 47 (May 1869), 309; Nora Post, ‘Interview with Léon Goossens and Edwin Roxburgh’, *The Double Reed*, 26.1 (1997), 31; David A. Ledet, *Oboe Reed Styles: Theory and Practice* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), p. 74; also Liverpool, Liverpool Central Library, The Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

from the early 1900s suggest an alternative history. Whilst this study focuses on a reassessment of Léon Goossens, a review of nineteenth-century British oboists is overdue.

1.3 Development and impact: the influence of the French school

It is a paradox that whilst British audiences in the earlier part of the nineteenth century had been accustomed to the more robust timbre of the German style of oboe playing, by the 1890s the veneration of German music had coincided with the growing influence and ultimate domination of the lighter and more flexible style of the French school on British oboists. Bate notes that although British oboe manufacturers had produced instruments similar to the German model until the 1840s, the mechanised German oboe, which had lagged behind French developments had ‘never really taken root’ in the country.¹¹³ With the influx of French school trained oboists to prominent positions in British music establishments, by the late nineteenth century the landscape of oboe playing in Britain had changed. France had cultivated its own national oboe style of playing through the Paris Conservatoire (founded in 1793) and significantly the institute’s affiliation with the oboe manufacturing industry located in the city encouraged homogeneity of purpose.¹¹⁴ British players were able to purchase instruments directly from Paris and notably British oboe makers at the time were able to import French instruments under their own label. In comparison the German speaking independent states (German unification was not until 1871) neither had a designated centre of musical excellence nor any oboists of influence in Britain following Griesbach’s death, so could not compete with the influence of the French school.

Throughout the century individual players and manufacturers experimented with various mechanisms, materials and design, some of which proved durable, whilst others were ineffective or modified; for example, the introduction of the *thumb-plate* model in 1865 by Barret was a significant innovation that had an enduring effect on British oboists. Conversely the wide bore *Boehm* oboe produced in 1851 by the German manufacturer Theobald Boehm (1791-1881) in collaboration with the oboist Lavigne, despite eliminating cross-fingerings and improving intonation, possessed a

¹¹³ Bate, p. 87.

¹¹⁴ Bate, p. 64.

penetrating timbre that was problematic.¹¹⁵ There were two noteworthy British manufacturers during this period: Alfred Morton (1827-98) who produced oboes based on the Triébert model incorporating the thumb-plate and whose key-work was considered ‘extremely efficient’; and John Sharpe (1881-1940), whose business was in Pudsey, West Yorkshire, and who ‘attracted a good deal of attention’ in his improvements to various mechanisms and overall intonation of his oboes.¹¹⁶

By the end of the nineteenth century there were two distinct types of oboes, the *conservatoire* and *thumb-plate* models. Frédéric Triébert (1813-78) who had studied with Vogt was the father of the present-day *conservatoire* oboe; he developed the prototype *conservatoire* model in 1872.¹¹⁷ Following the success of his *système 5* model first produced in 1849, which apparently not only remained the most popular model in France for much of the century but was also copied by many European manufacturers, Frédéric developed his next model, the *système 6*, incorporating some components of the 1865 Barret oboe design as well as dispensing with the thumb-plate from this previous model. When Frédéric died in 1878 the firm collapsed shortly afterwards. In 1881 François Lorée (1835-1902) who was the foreman at the Triébert Company, set up his own operation and in the same year produced a version of Triébert’s *système 6* oboe. This oboe was chosen by Georges-Vidal-Victor Gillet (1854-1920), oboe professor at the Paris Conservatoire (1881-1919), as the official instrument of the institution. The instrument was an open-hole ring system and named the *conservatoire* model (Fig. 1.2). Initially made of boxwood, Lorée experimented with a variety of different woods, settling on the hard wood grenadilla in the 1890s. Lorée’s son Lucien (1867-1945) also worked with Gillet on refining his father’s design, producing in 1906 a covered-hole system (Fig 1.2), where the main six open holes of the instrument are covered with pierced key-pads or *plateaux*. The oboe was named after Gillet. Although it took a long time to be accepted, this model has an almost universal monopoly in today’s oboe world. Manufacturers continue to produce a variety of student and professional models, but all are produced from the basic concept of the *conservatoire* design.

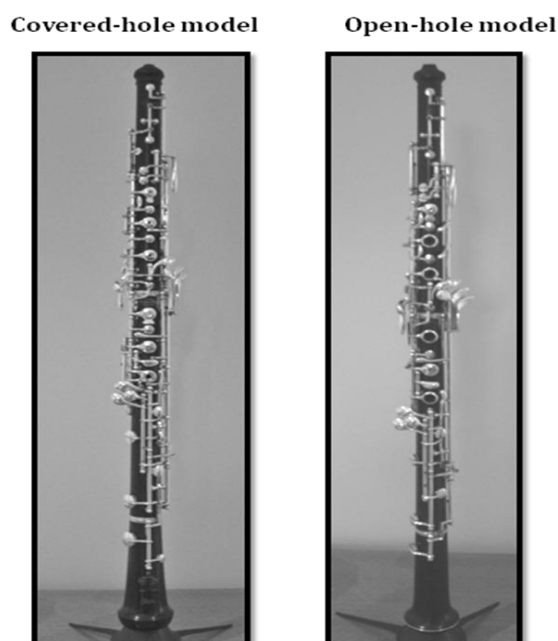
¹¹⁵ Burgess and Haynes, pp. 165-6, note that the *Boehm* oboe remained popular with military bands where a ‘stronger tone’ was favoured, but the ‘radical design’ of the instrument had ‘little impact on the modern-day oboe.’

¹¹⁶ Burgess and Haynes, pp. 150, 182; Bate, pp. 87-8.

¹¹⁷ The Triébert family firm was established by Guillaume Triébert (1770-1848) in 1810 in Paris. Frédéric, was his second son.

British oboists are unique in the world in that they continue to play on *thumb-plate* model oboes, also known as the *English* model. Léon Goossens, who played a *Lorée* simple open-hole thumb-plate model throughout his professional life, helped to maintain the influence of the *English* model ‘long after it had died out in the rest of Europe’,¹¹⁸ where it had been superseded by the *conservatoire* system. The illustrations of modern day oboes show the basic difference between the *conservatoire* and *thumb-plate* models which is essentially with or without a thumb-plate (Fig. 1.3).

Fig. 1.2. Comparison of Covered-hole and open-hole models



¹¹⁸ Black, p. 53.

Fig. 1.3. Differences between thumb-plate and conservatoire models

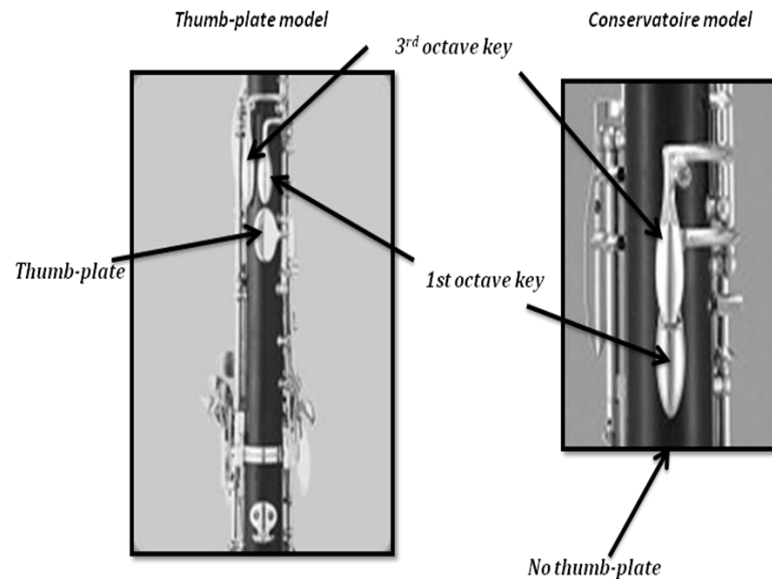
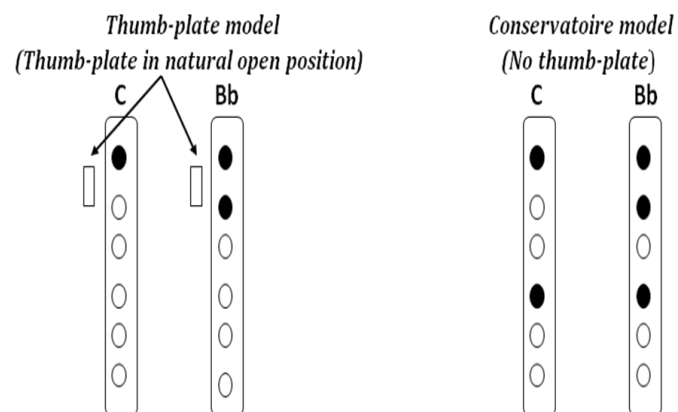


Fig.1.4 . Note fingering differences between thumb-pate and conservatoire models



Simply, the mechanism for playing C and Bb (above middle C) is different on each model (Fig. 1.4). On a *thumb-plate* model the vent keys for C and Bb remain open when the thumb-plate is in its natural position. Closing the first hole will produce C and closing the first and second holes produces Bb. For the *conservatoire* system, the same vent keys remain closed in the natural position. These are opened when closing

the fourth hole of the instrument with the right hand index finger. So C and Bb are fingered as for the thumb-plate model plus the right hand first finger. It is also possible to use *conservatoire* fingerings on most *English* model instruments by keeping the thumb-plate constantly depressed. Today, all professional model oboes are made to *conservatoire* specifications. Thumb-plates can be easily added to the mechanism. It is this additional facility that produces a dual system instrument.¹¹⁹

By the end of the nineteenth century the oboe's appearance and character had little in common with its historical lineage of the hautboy of the late 1800s. The influence of the French school and universal impact of the *Conservatoire* model produced by François Lorée in 1881 established an instrument that has resisted any radical change beyond a series of modifications to the original template. Without Lorée the development of the oboe would have taken a different direction. Equally the introduction of the *thumb-plate* system by Barret in 1865 and significantly, the fact that Léon Goossens played on a Lorée thumb-plate model oboe, altered the direction and concept of a British school of playing.

¹¹⁹ The last dedicated thumb-plate models were produced in the late 1980s by MKD Woodwind Limited, a short-lived small company based in Otley, West Yorkshire.

Chapter 2: Biography and Performance History

The sound of his [Léon's] oboe is woven into the memories of older music lovers.¹

2.1 Biography

Born in Liverpool on 12 June 1897, Léon Jean Goossens was described as ‘the noisiest and worst-tempered baby.’² His father Eugene II (1867-1958) was a conductor, who, having studied violin and composition at the Brussels Conservatoire, worked as an orchestral violinist. He succeeded his father Eugene I (1845-1906)³ as principal conductor at the Carl Rosa Opera Company in 1898 where he remained until 1915. In 1892 Eugene II married a singer from the company, Anne Cook (1860-1946), who according to Carole Rosen became the ‘imperturbable bedrock of a remarkably stable marriage.’⁴ Their children were musically precocious; in addition to Léon’s talent, eldest son (Aynsley) Eugene III (1893-1962), later knighted, became a composer and conductor, Adolph (1896-1916) studied the French Horn, and the two sisters Marie (1894-1991) and Sidonie (1899–2004) had successful careers as harpists.⁵ Their grandfather had encouraged a choice of ‘unusual instruments’, presumably to ensure greater opportunities to ‘earn their living as competent orchestral musicians.’⁶ An ‘extremely strict’ practice schedule – apparently not resented – was central to the children’s daily life.⁷

As a child Léon recalled his father fostering an interest in the oboe during the Carl Rosa opera seasons at the Liverpool Hippodrome, where the family had access to a box for all performances: ‘[the] assistant conductor [Walter van Noorden] used to stand behind [me in the box] and whenever the oboe had anything to play I got a dig

¹ Hugo Cole, ‘Goossens on Radio 3’, *The Guardian*, 24 July 1972, p. 8.

² Carole Rosen, *The Goossens: A Musical Century* (London: Deutsch, 1993), p. 15.

³ Born in Bruges, Eugene I (1845-1906) studied the violin and composition at the Brussels Conservatoire. He moved to Britain in 1873 with his wife, the dancer Celenie van Dieghem. An offer of a conducting contract at short notice led to his establishing a significant reputation. He became principal conductor of the Carl Rosa Opera Company in 1889 and also founded the Goossens Male Voice Choir in 1894. See Rosen, pp. 1-3, 14-5.

⁴ Rosen, p. 12.

⁵ Adolph was killed during one of the Somme offences during World War One. He is buried at the Puchevillers British cemetery near Amiens, France. There was also an older sister Anne, twin to Eugene III who only survived six months. See Rosen, p. 13 and Commonwealth War Graves Commission, *e.cwgc.org*, <<http://www.cwgc.org>>[accessed 23 March 2013].

⁶ Barry Wynne, *Music in the Wind: The Story of Léon Goossens and his Triumph over a Shattering Accident* (London: Souvenir Press, 1967), p. 40; Rosen, p. 27.

⁷ Rosen, pp. 19, 27; Jennie Goossens, ‘Léon Goossens, a memory of my father’, *e.oboeclassics.com*, n.pag. <<http://www.oboeclassics/GoossensJ.htm>>[accessed 25 March 2013].

in the back just to say listen.’⁸ At the tender age of eight Léon was also perceptive in noting that ‘most Belgium and French oboists [who played in the orchestra] made a beautiful sound.’⁹ In 1908 oboe lessons were arranged with Charles Reynolds (1850-1917) at the Liverpool School of Music (now the School of Music at the University of Liverpool) where he also had piano lessons. Léon described his teacher as a ‘very dear man, very portly’, who ‘sat twiddling his thumbs’ and ‘chewing charcoal biscuits’ – Reynolds suffered from unspecified stomach problems.¹⁰ According to Rosen, Reynolds had agreed to teach Léon for half his usual fee at ‘£2 for ten lessons’ as well as recommending the purchase of a Lorée oboe.¹¹ The instrument, ordered from the Lorée Company in Paris, was a bespoke thumb-plate open-hole simple system model (serial number AA89). Léon played this instrument for much of his professional career. Apparently he carved his initials on each of the three joints of the oboe in case of theft; although the instrument was stolen in 1929 after a concert in Brighton, it was recovered from a South East London pawn brokers ‘labelled as a clarinet’ in 1931.¹²

Whilst the Goossens sisters were sent to the Notre Dame Convent School, Léon and Eugene III attended the Christian Brothers Institute on Liverpool’s Hope Street. Apparently beaten frequently for a lack of academic application (scholastic study for all the children was ‘always of secondary importance’), musical life for the young oboist was eventful.¹³ According to Rosen, Léon’s first professional orchestral engagement was at the age of ten at the Kursaal (a public hall) on the New Brighton Pier; he apparently played the Cor Anglais solo from Rossini’s *William Tell* Overture.¹⁴ It is astonishing that Léon managed to play the instrument given the elementary status of his oboe studies. Eugene III confirmed membership of the

⁸ ‘Léon Goossens’, *Mining the Archives*, BBC Radio 3, 6 June 1997.

⁹ *Mining the Archives*.

¹⁰ Nora Post, ‘Interview with Léon Goossens and Edwin Roxburgh August 1, 1982’, *The Double Reed e-edition*, 20.1 (1997), n.pag. *e.idrs.org*,

<<http://www.idrs.org/publications/DR/DR5.3/goossens.htm>>[accessed 8 August 2009]. According to Eugene Goossens, *Overtures and Beginners: A Musical Autobiography* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd., 1951), pp. 56-57. See also Marian Wilson, ‘Léon Goossens, Oboist’, *The Double Reed e-edition*, 9.3 (1986), n.pag.

¹¹ Rosen, p. 23. Reynolds recommended a ‘sharp pitch oboe and cor anglais’ for theatre and ‘ordinary Concert work’ as well as a ‘further two oboes for flat pitch’ as adopted by the ‘very best orchestras in this country’; see Brown, *Our Oboe Ancestors*, p.86. There is no evidence that Eugene II purchased more than the recommended higher pitch oboe (and probably cor anglais) from Lorée.

¹² Rosen, p. 131; Wynne, p. 49. See also Post, ‘Interview with Léon Goossens and Edwin Roxburgh’.

¹³ Post, ‘Interview with Léon Goossens and Edwin Roxburgh’; Rosen, p. 25. Eugene III confirmed that the ‘lay teachers were unnecessarily vindictive.’ See E. Goossens, p. 55.

¹⁴ Rosen, p. 25.

orchestra for ‘all three Goossens brothers’ and noted how ‘Léon surprised us one day by playing the “Ranz des Vaches” from *William Tell* on an English Horn [cor anglais] which he had acquired only two weeks before [the concert]’; there is no mention of Léon’s age.¹⁵ The earliest reference by Léon to any professional engagements was at thirteen years of age – he played third oboe in a performance of Richard Strauss’s *Till Eulenspiegel* with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra; as principal oboe Reynolds presumably secured his pupil the job. The conductor was Thomas Beecham, who asked Reynolds if the ‘little boy playing the oboe [had a] license’ to play.’¹⁶

According to Eugene III and Marie, Léon left school in 1911 aged fourteen to study at the Royal College of Music in London.¹⁷ This is contrary to college records that Léon was registered as a student from May 1912. Yet Marie’s detailed description of their time at lodgings in North London prior to the remaining members of the family relocating from Liverpool to London in April 1912 suggests an alternative account.¹⁸ Léon probably had private lessons at the college prior to his formal registration in 1912.

Reynolds’ final report for his pupil recommended curbing an enthusiasm for playing ‘too loud’ in deference to the prevailing fashion of keeping the ‘tone of the oboe down.’ This was apt advice as Malsch, with whom Léon was to study at the Royal College, had a broad tone – ‘his new teacher I am afraid does the same [in playing too loudly].’¹⁹

¹⁵ E. Goossens, p. 57.

¹⁶ Post, ‘Interview with Léon Goossens and Edwin Roxburgh’. In Alan Blyth, ‘Léon Goossens looks back at 75’, *The Times*, 14 June 1972, p. 15, Léon recalled his relationship with Beecham: ‘I think we understood each other’s shortcomings – and I don’t think either of us was without them – and he was a very good friend to me.’

¹⁷ Adolph and Marie attended the college at the same time, see Marie Goossens, *Life on a Harp String* (London: Thorne Printing & Publishing Co. Ltd., 1987), p. 31; E. Goossens, p. 89. Eugene III had moved to London in September 1907 to study violin, piano and composition at the Royal College of Music. See also BBC - Desert Island Discs – Castaway; Léon Goossens’, *e.bbc.co.uk*, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/proms/archive/search/performers/8c17084f-3942-4a36-bc18-661c6f3f1d27/>>[accessed May 2013].

¹⁸ Royal College of Music, Archive Library [student records 1912-1914] confirmed that Léon was a Junior student from ‘May 1912 to June 1913’ and a Senior School student from ‘22nd September to 17th December 1913’; see also M. Goossens, pp. 31-3.

¹⁹ Rosen, p. 34. Rosen noted that Hubert Parry (Director of the Royal College of Music from 1895 to 1918), ‘delighted by the new influx of Goossens talent’, was not able to ‘offer any reduction in fees’ as ‘wind scholarships were given only to students aged seventeen and over (Eugene III was the only scholar, although Marie received an ‘exhibition in her second year’); see also M. Goossens, p. 35. Somewhat confusingly Eugene III asserted that both his brothers were the recipients of scholarships; see E. Goossens, p. 89.

Within three years Léon had secured the position of principal oboe in the Queen's Hall Orchestra. Prior to his appointment there is limited documentation on his musical life: a *Messiah* at Crystal Palace in 1912 with Malsch 'playing first oboe and [Léon] playing sixteenth' and a performance of the Mozart Quartet for oboe and strings for a private party appear to be the only references to his professional experience.²⁰

Aged seventeen Léon replaced Henri De Busscher in the Queen's Hall Orchestra. De Busscher's playing had been a revelation for his lyrical rounded tone; Léon described his admiration as 'entrancement and hero-worship.' Léon 'absorbed everything [that De Busscher] had to say musically,' and significantly had 'at last really found what [he] was subconsciously seeking in oboe playing.'²¹ There are various accounts of Léon's engagement. Eugene III, who had joined the orchestra in July 1912, had recommended to the orchestra management that 'Léon could possibly replace him [De Busscher]'; Wood agreed to an audition based on a favourable report from Charles Villiers Stanford of Léon's 'outstanding performances' in the Royal College of Music orchestra. It was also suggested that Wood 'sent for him to give an audition' having heard that he was the 'most gifted of young oboe players' of his generation; equally the orchestral manager, Robert Newman had 'summoned [Léon] to an audition' following a conversation with Hubert Parry.²² There is probably a grain of truth in all these elements that led to Léon attending an audition. Whatever the reason Léon felt that his playing on the day had been 'enough to show him [Wood] that I could play and that I had a decent tone.'²³ Eugene, who had attended the audition ('heard from behind a curtain'), claimed it was a 'pretty grilling' ordeal. Following Léon's performance of the concertino 'Solo de Concours' Op. 33 by

²⁰ 'The Handel Festival, Crystal Palace June 22, 25, 27, 29', *The Musical Times*, 51 (August 1912), 522.

According to Eugene Goossens, p.100, the 'Goossens boys were once together at those nights of music-making [at the home of Paul and Ruth Draper]: Adolphe playing horn in the Schubert octet and Leon oboe in the Mozart quartet'.

²¹ Rosen, p.36; Léon Goossens, 'The Oboe as a Solo Instrument', *The Listener*, 19 (19 January 1938), 160.

²² Wynne, p. 65; Rosen, p. 48; Eugene Goossens, pp. 90, 109. Robert Newman (1858-1926) was the impresario responsible for establishing the Queen's Hall Promenade Concerts in 1895. For a full account see Leanne Langley, 'Building an Orchestra, Creating an Audience: Robert Newman and the Queen's Hall Promenade Concerts 1895-1926', in *The Proms A New History*, ed. by Jenny Doctor, David Wright and Nicholas Kenyon (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007), pp. 32-73.

²³ Post, 'Interview with Léon Goossens and Edwin Roxburgh'.

Charles Colin and ‘exhaustive [sight]-reading tests’ delivered with ‘bewildering accuracy’, Wood was seemingly ‘thoroughly amazed.’²⁴

Accounts of the outcome differ; according to Eugene III, his brother was appointed ‘on the spot,’ whereas Barry Wynne reported that Wood concluded with ‘you will be hearing from us, Mr Goossens’ – a more likely outcome.²⁵ Wood made no specific reference to Léon’s appointment other than a sense of pride in his having played with the orchestra and an acknowledgement of his musicality: ‘what a player he is!’²⁶ Conversely Buttar suggested that Wood ‘didn’t want him [Léon], but Lady Cunard insisted’, an account likely to appeal to Buttar who disparaged Léon’s playing as ‘the soppy sounds of a libidinous honeymoon.’²⁷ Nevertheless Wood or Newman could not have been persuaded to appoint Léon to such a prominent position in the orchestra had they not been convinced of his ability. Apparently Léon’s initial response to being offered a ‘ten-week tour of Wales’ (essentially a trial period) as principal oboe was to refuse on the grounds of limited experience, but the management ‘pursued him.’²⁸ A twelve-week wait following the tour triggered a belief that his playing ‘must have proved a disaster.’²⁹ Nevertheless, prior to De Busscher’s departure for New York, Newman offered Léon a contract with the orchestra. Given the patriotism during the war years there may have been pressure to find a British oboist to replace De Busscher, whose departure represented the last in a line of overseas oboists employed by Wood.³⁰ Léon’s style of playing, reminiscent of the French school, would have appealed to Wood and provided him with an opportunity to nurture the young oboist. Léon recalled that in his first performances with the orchestra for the 1914 summer promenade concert season had been a ‘very frightening experience, not knowing the works,’ but Wood had been ‘such a help to a youngster; he gave me courage’:³¹

²⁴ E. Goossens, p. 109.

²⁵ E. Goossens, p. 109; Wynne, p. 67.

²⁶ Wood, p. 341.

²⁷ Buttar, in Brown, p. 136.

²⁸ Rosen, p. 49; Wilson, ‘Léon Goossens, Oboist.’ The date of the Welsh tour is unknown, but is likely to have been either late 1913 or early 1914.

²⁹ Wynne, p. 68.

³⁰ E. Goossens, p.110, noted that ‘at the outbreak of war, all German professional musicians in Britain – and their number was legion – were sent back to the Fatherland, to the great delight of many British artists’.

³¹ Post, ‘Interview with Léon Goossens and Edwin Roxburgh’.

I made more mistakes than ever before or since, but Sir Henry seemed quite satisfied. He warned me that there would be no time to rehearse the Proms repertory and I would be performing two thirds of the work without ever having played them before. ‘Goossens, you must be very brave, I can’t run through everything just for one person. You must rely on me implicitly. I will give you your leads: come straight in. Sometimes I didn’t quite trust him and came in on my own. I was always wrong but he was very charming.’³²

Nevertheless Eugene III believed that ‘in those first months of the season, Léon laid the solid foundation of a great career.’³³

A *Musical Times* review of the opening concert confirmed that Léon, along with his principal colleagues, had been introduced individually to the audience.³⁴ Perhaps a little surprisingly for a first season, Léon played two concertos: the first as one of the soloists in J. S. Bach’s Brandenburg Concert no. 2 in F, and the second, the *Concertstück* for oboe by Charles Colin, performed with piano;³⁵ Eugene III admired his brother’s ‘sang-froid and musicianship’ and his ability to give an ‘immaculate account’ of a ‘succession of new works (many unrehearsed).’³⁶ Yet despite his meteoric rise in the profession Léon had suggested that he was not particularly interested in music as a career: ‘before I really grew up [. . .] I thought about the sea or flying or going off to South America, there to join a pal on a ranch.’³⁷ This initial objective may have been in part the reason for his enlisting in the army (the Middlesex Yeomanry) a year after joining the orchestra.³⁸ Stationed at Arbour Hill Barracks in Dublin, Léon schooled horses before seeing active service in France.³⁹ He was wounded in 1918 narrowly escaping death; a cigarette case (borrowed from his

³² Rosen, p. 49.

³³ E. Goossens, p. 109.

³⁴ ‘The Promenade Concerts’, *The Musical Times*, 55 (September 1914), 588.

³⁵ ‘The Proms Archive’, *e.bbc.co.uk*, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/proms/archive/search/performers/8c17084f-3942-4a36-bc18-661c6f3f1d27/>> [accessed May 2013]. The archive lists Léon’s concerto performances at the promenade concerts 1914-1972.

³⁶ E. Goossens, p. 109.

³⁷ Blyth, 15; Rosen, p. 59, provides an account of Léon’s post-war venture to join a friend, Rex Workman, ‘who was emigrating to the Argentine to train as a ranch manager.’

³⁸ Léon was involved in another performance of Brandenburg Concerto no. 2 on 3 September 1915, so it is likely that he left at the end of the 1915 promenade concerts season. An overview of the 1916 promenade concerts referred to absent players (unnamed), see ‘New Queen’s Hall Orchestra: Promenade Concert Season’, *Musical Times*, 883 (September 1916), 420, and ‘Promenade Concerts: Successful Opening of New Season’, *Observer*, 15 August 1915, p. 8.

³⁹ For a summary of Léon’s war record see Wynne, pp. 70-80.

brother) and pocket shaving mirror ‘deflected a machine-gun bullet, which would otherwise have pierced his heart.’⁴⁰ Following a return to civilian life his intention was to fund any new venture from his freelance concert work. Léon apparently decided to pursue the idea of managing a stud farm in Argentina; he would ‘do a few concerts and then leave,’⁴¹ but the plan was abandoned as he became ‘so involved in music.’⁴²

Having stored his oboe in the vaults of the Midland Bank on Pall Mall in London for the three years that he was at war, the instrument was retrieved, and much to his surprise he was able to play ‘up a scale and down again;’ Eugene noted that his brother’s ‘battle service had failed to impair his artistry and sensitiveness.’⁴³ Léon rejoined the Queen’s Hall Orchestra in 1919 as principal oboe, a post he held until October 1929.⁴⁴ He also participated in his brother’s orchestral and chamber music ventures, which included principal oboe in the British concert premiere of Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*.⁴⁵ Other significant orchestral opportunities included principal oboe with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (1920-122) and the Covent Garden Orchestra from 1924.⁴⁶ In 1930 Léon was approached by Adrian Boult (1889-1983) to join the newly-founded BBC Symphony Orchestra.⁴⁷ Recalling a lunch with Boult and the orchestral manager, Léon claimed that he had been ‘led to believe’ that he was ‘going to be First Oboe.’⁴⁸ However, Alec Whittaker,⁴⁹ rumoured

⁴⁰ According to Eugene Goossens, p.110, Ethyl Smyth presented him with the case ‘after [conducting] her opera, *The Bosun’s Mate*, in 1916’.

⁴¹ Blyth, 15.

⁴² Blyth, 15; see also Wynne, pp. 87-93 for an outline of this venture.

⁴³ Wynne, p. 92; E. Goossens, p. 141.

⁴⁴ Rosen, p. 126.

⁴⁵ Diaghilev staged the British premiere at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, London on 11 July 1913. See Richard Buckle, *Diaghilev* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1979), pp. 257-8. Eugene III conducted a ‘special orchestra of one hundred and five performers’ (his sisters also played) at the Queen’s Hall on 7 June 1921. The programme included the premieres of Lord Berners’ *Spanish Fantasy* and the Prelude ‘The Forgotten Rite’ by John Ireland. See E. Goossens, p. 157-64 and Alfred Kalisch, ‘London Concerts’, *Musical Times* 62 (July 1921), 488-89.

⁴⁶ Léon played on the opening night of the CBSO concert conducted by Elgar on 10 November 1920. See Rosen, p. 126.

⁴⁷ In 1930 Boult was appointed music director at the BBC. The BBC Symphony Orchestra was founded in the same year with Boult as its chief conductor; Boult held both positions until 1951. See Adrian Boult, *My Own Trumpet* (London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd., 1973), pp. 94-9, 148-9.

⁴⁸ Rosen, p. 51.

⁴⁹ Alec Whittaker (1901-1970) was known for his wide range of dynamics in performance, achieved through his preference for thickly-gouged cane with a long scrape (this reed style generally produces a darker timbre than the prevailing brighter tone associated with Léon), see Baines, p. 93. William Alwyn wrote his Concerto for oboe and String Orchestra for Whittaker in 1945, see Andrew Palmer, ‘The oboe Music of William Alwyn’, *Double Reed*, 23.1 (2000), 93-4. See also Archie Camden, *Blow by blow: the memories of a musical rogue and vagabond* (London: Thames Publishing, 1982), pp. 86, 126.

to have been ‘poached from the Halle’, had already been appointed as principal, so instead, rather bizarrely, Léon was offered the *cor anglais* position, which he declined.⁵⁰ Boult apparently ‘wrote a letter to apologise’ for the confusion. Ironically, Léon gave the world premiere of his brother’s *Concerto for oboe and orchestra Op.45* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra in the same year.⁵¹ Although Henry Wood conducted this performance, Léon later worked successfully with Boult, so any grievance was clearly resolved.⁵²

Although there is no evidence that Léon may have hinted at working with the orchestra, this is possible, as Léon was apparently struggling financially in the early 1930s. Wynne’s suggestion of Léon’s ‘burgeoning career contrasts with Rosen’s description of a workload ‘not sufficient to support a wife and family;’⁵³ Léon had married Fay Yeatman in 1926 and they had a daughter, *Benedicta Eugenie* (b. 1927). In addition to the unpredictable and financially precarious life of an itinerant musician, Léon’s marriage failed and the couple separated in 1932.⁵⁴ He considered resolving his ‘professional insecurity by returning to America’ where he had enjoyed considerable success in 1928 and 1929 in a series of chamber concerts.⁵⁵ However in a letter to their parents, Eugene III, who by then was working in the United States, had advised that Léon should not ‘look to America for his salvation’ as this was ‘no country for a foreigner at the moment’.⁵⁶ Yet a decade later he was urging his brother to venture across the Atlantic, where Léon was eventually celebrated through his recordings as ‘the greatest manifestation of oboe playing that has ever been.’⁵⁷ It was Beecham who came to Léon’s rescue in 1932 inviting him to play first oboe in the

⁵⁰ There was a suggestion of ‘wide-spread disdain for Léon’s hyper-expressive delivery’ at Broadcasting House, raising the question as to why an offer of the position was even considered; see Worthington, p. 190.

⁵¹ The performance was given on 2 October 1930, see ‘The Proms Archive’.

⁵² Léon gave two performances of his brother’s *Oboe Concerto* with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra in 1939 and the Czech Philharmonic in 1946, both conducted by Boult. He also gave the UK premiere of the Richard Strauss *Oboe Concerto* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Boult; see Rosen, p. 176, and Kennedy, *Adrian Boult*, pp. 207-8.

⁵³ Wynne, p. 102; Rosen, p. 131.

⁵⁴ Fay emigrated to America with their daughter, where she remarried in July 1933. Léon married his second wife Leslie Burrows in August 1933 and had a further two daughters, Jennie (b. 1936) and Corinne (b. 1940); a son was lost in pregnancy. According to Rosen, p. 329, ‘for many years’ Leslie ‘excised any mention of Léon’s first marriage and oldest daughter from biographical information.’

⁵⁵ Rosen, p. 161. It is probable that Eugene III was instrumental in organising the tours in New York, Boston and Rochester.

⁵⁶ Rosen, p. 160. This was the time of the depression in America. Eugene III had been a visiting conductor to the country since 1923, and by 1931 had had been appointed conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. See also L. Goossens, ‘The Oboe as a Solo Instrument’, p. 160.

⁵⁷ Rosen, p. 230.

London Philharmonic Orchestra. Beecham had assured Eugene III that ‘this position should give him [Léon] sufficient work and also sufficient leisure to make his economic future in London assured.’⁵⁸ Léon’s presence was considered to add ‘a special lustre to the new orchestra’, and it was rumoured that he was the highest paid member in the orchestra.⁵⁹ Gwydion Brooke (1912-2005) who played second bassoon in the orchestra between 1932 and 1934 described Léon as the ‘Laurence Olivier, the Bob Hope of the woodwind world; he was streets ahead of everyone else’, and clarinettist Jack Brymer paid tribute to Léon’s impact on orchestral playing, describing him as ‘a great influence not only on myself, but also on woodwind playing generally.’⁶⁰ This appears to have been a happy time for Léon and probably the pinnacle of his orchestral playing career; he recalled deputising for Beecham at sectional rehearsals:

Sometimes he [Beecham] didn’t turn up, and left a message for me to conduct the wind rehearsal, all the woodwind, brass etc. It was quite fun, and I think I followed them quite well.⁶¹

The standard of playing of the London Philharmonic Orchestra’s woodwind section was extremely high.⁶² Thomas Russell (one of the orchestra’s viola players from 1935) recollected a memorable first rehearsal: ‘I found it difficult to concentrate on my own part through a fascination with the playing of the wood wind.’⁶³ In as much as all the principals of the orchestra were referred to as ‘a collection of

⁵⁸ The orchestra was founded by Beecham and funded by the Courtauld family, see Charles Reid, *Thomas Beecham: An Independent Biography* (London: The Camelot Press, 1961), pp. 197-205 and Thomas Russell, *Philharmonic Decade* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1944), pp. 32-3. See also John Lucas, *Thomas Beecham: An Obsession with Music* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2009), p. 209.

⁵⁹ Russell, p. 17; Lucas, p. 209.

⁶⁰ Rosen, p. 162. Lucas, p. 208, and Graham Melville-Mason, ‘Gwydion Brooke: Bassoonist in Sir Thomas Beecham’s ‘Royal Family’’, *e.independent.co.uk*, <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/gwydion-brooke-6148964.html>>[accessed 11 August 2013] and ‘Léon Goossens, Gifted Oboist Dies at 90’, *New York Times*, 15 February 1988, p.18.

⁶¹ Wilson, ‘Léon Goossens, Oboist’. See also John Cruft’s reminiscences of playing cor anglais in the LPO from 1937, ‘Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute from family, friends and colleagues’, *Double Reed News* 38 (Spring 1997), 6-17 (p. 9).

⁶² For a list of players see Russell, p. 138. The orchestra’s cor anglais player Horace ‘Jimmy’ Green was discovered by Beecham playing in the Folkestone Municipal Orchestra; his playing was ‘magically wistful’ and ‘phrased beautifully.’ Horace Halstead, who was the second oboist, had worked with Beecham as principal oboe during an opera season at the Aldwych Theatre in London in 1916. Beecham had tried to have Halstead’s call-up to fight in World War 1 rescinded in an effort to keep his first oboist, but only managed a ‘two-month deferment’; see Lucas, pp. 209 and 140.

⁶³ Russell, p. 33.

thoroughbreds,' Richard Temple Savage, who joined the orchestra in 1936 as bass clarinetist, suggested that the woodwind section principals were known as 'The Royal Family.'⁶⁴ According to Lucas the phrase was later assigned to the 'second to none' woodwind section of the Royal Philharmonic orchestra.⁶⁵

Under Beecham the orchestra embarked upon ground-breaking recording sessions from 1934 including 'pioneering experiments in sound recording, stereophonic sound and recording on tape.'⁶⁶ One of the first of these recordings was of Delius's *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*; according to Eric Fenby, Delius commented 'never had the sound of strings nor Goossens's oboe-playing seemed so magical.'⁶⁷ A more recent description of the opening bars of the 1935 recording of Delius's *Paris* has characterised Léon's playing as 'effortless poised oboe phrases hanging in the air.'⁶⁸ The violinist Fritz Kreisler recorded the Brahms Violin Concerto with the orchestra under John Barbirolli in 1936.⁶⁹ Kreisler's tribute to Léon's playing of the slow movement from the Brahms Violin Concerto was a testament of admiration: 'if there's one thing more than another I enjoy playing in the whole violin literature, it's the Andante from Brahms' Concerto with Léon Goossens playing the oboe.'⁷⁰ Léon recounted how 'at the end of the [second] movement' Kreisler 'always gave me a little bow.'⁷¹ Of all the recordings with the orchestra Léon thought that Delius's *Brigg Fair* and *La Calinda*, Handel's *The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba* and Rossini's overture *La scala di seta* 'showed his empathy with Beecham to best advantage.'⁷² During a tour of Germany in November 1936, Léon's playing 'created a great sensation', even if one reviewer thought that his 'expressive colouring of the

⁶⁴ Rosen, p. 164. The principals in 1936 were Geoffrey Gilbert, flute, Léon, oboe, Reginald Kell, clarinet and John Alexandra, bassoon.

⁶⁵ Lucas, p. 319. Lucas does not attribute this reference. The woodwind principals were Gerald Jackson, flute, Terence MacDonagh, oboe, Jack Brymer, clarinet, Gwydion Brooke, bassoon.

⁶⁶ See 'Recordings', *e.lpo.com*, <<http://www.lpo.co.uk>> [22 June 2013].

⁶⁷ Eric Fenby, *Delius As I Knew Him*, rev. ed. (London: Icon Books, 1966), p. 23.

⁶⁸ Lyndon Jenkins, 'Sir Thomas Beecham conducts Delius', *The Delius Society Journal*, 137 (Spring 2005), 92. See Frederick Delius, *On hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*, London Philharmonic Orchestra/Thomas Beecham (LPO-0040), and Frederick Delius, *Paris (Song of a Great City)*, London Philharmonic Orchestra/Thomas Beecham (Naxos Historical, 8.110904).

⁶⁹ Johannes Brahms, *Concerto for violin and orchestra*, Fritz Kreisler/London Philharmonic Orchestra/ John Barbirolli (Naxos Historical, ADD 8-110925, 2000).

⁷⁰ Wynne, p. 102.

⁷¹ See *Mining the Archives* and 'Léon Goossens, Interview-3', *e.youtube.com*, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYXyq-62K6w>> [accessed 24 June 2013].

⁷² Rosen, p. 169.

oboe's vibrato' brought 'to mind a saxophone.'⁷³ However, this tour was controversial;⁷⁴ Beecham's decision in accepting the invitation was viewed as 'politically naive' and seen by the Nazi establishment, at least initially, as an 'official British endorsement of their regime'.⁷⁵

By the end of the decade the London Philharmonic Orchestra was in serious financial trouble and although rescued by a nucleus of the players (the orchestra remains self-governed) Léon, along with other orchestra members, 'accepted a secret contract' to join the newly convened BBC Salon Orchestra in 1939.⁷⁶ Léon appeared to have left the London Philharmonic the previous season; he was listed as principal oboe in 1938, but replaced by Horace Halstead in the 1939 season.⁷⁷ Based at Evesham in Worcester (where the BBC administration teams had also been evacuated),⁷⁸ the Salon orchestra, comprised of sixteen of the 'finest players in the country', was established to perform light music for radio broadcasts for the duration of the war.⁷⁹ However, the group was disbanded in early June 1942; the music, although 'delightfully performed,' was considered 'third-rate.'⁸⁰ It is not clear whether or not Léon remained with the orchestra throughout its tenure, as a letter from Eugene III to his parents stated that he was 'surprised and yet not sorry' that Léon was 'resigning from the BBC.'⁸¹ Also the oboist John McCarthy was playing with the orchestra prior to its dissolution.⁸² Coincidentally in 1942 the Liverpool

⁷³ Rosen, p. 172; Berta Geissmar, *The Baton and the Jackboot: Recollections of Musical Life* (London: Columbus Books Ltd., 1944), p. 232.

⁷⁴ The eight-day tour (13-20 November 1936) had been arranged through the German embassy in London with Beecham; see Geissmar, pp. 197-252, and Reid, pp. 216- 17.

⁷⁵ See Otto D. Tolischus, 'Berlin Greets British Orchestra', *New York Times*, 13 November, 1936, p. 1 and 'Hitler at Berlin Concert of London Philharmonic', *New York Times*, 14 November, 1936, p. 22. See also Geissmar, p. 237, Reid, p. 216, and Lucas, pp. 232-5, plus personal accounts of the tour in Russell, pp. 39-49 and M. Goossens, pp. 59-60.

⁷⁶ Rosen, p. 177. Information about the BBC Salon Orchestra is sparse; even Kenyon, despite detailed accounts of the multiplicity of BBC orchestras failed to acknowledge the Salon's existence. For a brief overview of the orchestra see Russell, p. 66, Rosen, p. 254, Charles Reid, *Malcolm Sargent: a Biography* (London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd., 1968), p. 290 and Peter Mountain, *Scraping a Living: a life of a violinist* (Milton Keynes: AuthorHouse UK Ltd., 2007), pp. 133-4.

⁷⁷ Russell, pp. 141-2, notes that Halstead had worked with Beecham as principal oboe during an opera season at the Aldwych Theatre in London in 1916. See also Lucas, p. 140.

⁷⁸ Michael Kennedy, *The Halle 1858 -1983: A History of the Orchestra* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), p.33, and Wilson, 'Léon Goossens, oboist,' incorrectly state that the Salon Orchestra was based in Liverpool and Bristol respectively.

⁷⁹ Reid, *Malcolm Sargent*, p. 290.

⁸⁰ Russell, p. 66. See also Nicholas Kenyon, *The BBC Symphony Orchestra 1930-1980* (London: BBC, 1981), pp.171-6.

⁸¹ Rosen, p. 230.

⁸² Reid, *Malcolm Sargent*, p. 290.

Philharmonic Orchestra became independent and a number of players from the Salon Orchestra were offered employment. Although Kennedy and Rosen both state that Léon was one of the musicians who ‘formed the nucleus’ of the orchestra,⁸³ the principal oboe was John McCarthy as listed in the 1942-43 season.⁸⁴

Following his sojourn with the BBC Salon Orchestra, Léon apparently decided not to accept any further full-time orchestral posts.⁸⁵ However, he did not abandon orchestral playing altogether – he was invited to play with the Sinfonia of London in 1955.⁸⁶ In 1954 he deputised for Terence MacDonagh as principal oboe of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.⁸⁷ Although the significance of his influence in the orchestral sphere was acknowledged by colleagues within the field, had Léon continued primarily as an orchestral musician rather than a solo artist, his place in music history may well have been consigned to a footnote.

2.2. Léon’s’ solo career

Léon’s decision to concentrate on solo performance proved to be portentous in securing a worldwide reputation as well as initiating opportunities to create new works. In as much as his reputation as an orchestral player was assured, Léon’s seemingly astute approach to developing his solo career through recording and broadcast mediums in addition to a variety of live performance platforms made him into a household name. According to Rosen, Léon chose to ‘devote himself to his solo career’ after the Second World War; given the number of solo performances he gave during the war years it is likely that his resolution to pursue a solo platform was well established before this date.⁸⁸ It is possible that following the ‘overwhelming’ success of his performances at the 1939 World Fair in New York – where he was described as

⁸³ Kennedy, *The Halle*, p. 33. Rosen, p. 254.

⁸⁴ Liverpool, Liverpool Central Library, The Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra Archive/programmes 1939-1943.

⁸⁵ Rosen, p. 319. There is a lack of evidence as to whether or not Léon was offered any permanent position with established national orchestras.

⁸⁶ See Rosen, p. 333, and ‘Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute’, p.12. The orchestra, formed by a ‘large breakaway group of players’ from the London Symphony Orchestra following ‘an internal dispute’, recorded music for films including *Raising the Wind* (1961) and Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* (1958). Although the orchestra was disbanded in the early 1960s it was re-launched in 1982. See ‘BBC - Music - Sinfonia of London’, *e.bbc.co.uk*, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/artists/4be87db4-5deb-4b06-b952-9f659711ca0b>>[accessed 15 February 2014].

⁸⁷ *The Times*, 26 August 1954, p. 4.

⁸⁸ Rosen, p. 319.

‘phenomenal’ – Léon saw a future on the solo circuit.⁸⁹ Certainly a significant increase in solo performances from the second half of 1942 suggested a change of focus.⁹⁰ The Council for the Encouragement of Music (CEMA), created at the outset of the war with a ‘mandate to encourage live music across the country’ by funding concerts in a variety of venue settings for both service and civilian personnel,⁹¹ may well have provided an opportunity for Léon to advance his solo career aspirations; he gave numerous concerto and solo recitals during this period funded through CEMA.⁹²

Léon started playing concertos as early as 1914 with the Queen’s Hall orchestra, yet he dated the beginning of his solo career as six years later, when he performed chamber music with orchestral colleagues Albert Fransella (principal flute) and the pianist Francesco Ticciati: ‘we had this trio [The Philharmonic Trio] and gave recitals in London and various provincial towns [...] I gave recitals on my own after that.’⁹³ With his growing reputation, concert societies became receptive to the novelty of an alternative instrumental recital in a world dominated by string, piano and vocal repertoires. Léon proved that ‘woodwind soloists could be put on [a concert platform] without emptying the house.’⁹⁴ Along with Sidonie, Léon was listed with the music agent Ibbs and Tillet on a non-exclusive contract from 1924. He was their only oboist until 1940 and remained with the company until 1963. Léon was also listed under ‘Piano and oboe recitals’ with Cyril Smith (1909-74) for the 1939-40 season as well as the Philharmonic Trio (1929 and 1934-35) and The Léon Goossens Ensemble (1938-41).⁹⁵ Christopher Fifield’s view that ‘references to agents are hard to find in published memoirs’ is evident by the lack of information in the Goossens literature.⁹⁶ A letter from Beecham refers to a meeting between Léon and the agent Harold Holt in

⁸⁹ Rosen, p. 177.

⁹⁰ London, Royal College of Music, Centre for Performance History, Concert Programmes, Léon Goossens Collection (1931-1990).

⁹¹ Jill Halstead, *Ruth Gipps: Anti-Modernism, Nationalism and Difference in English Music* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2006), p. 25.

⁹² Centre for Performance History, Léon Goossens Collection.

⁹³ BBC - Desert Island Discs – Castaway: Léon Goossens’; L. Goossens, ‘The Oboe as a Solo Instrument’, p. 60.

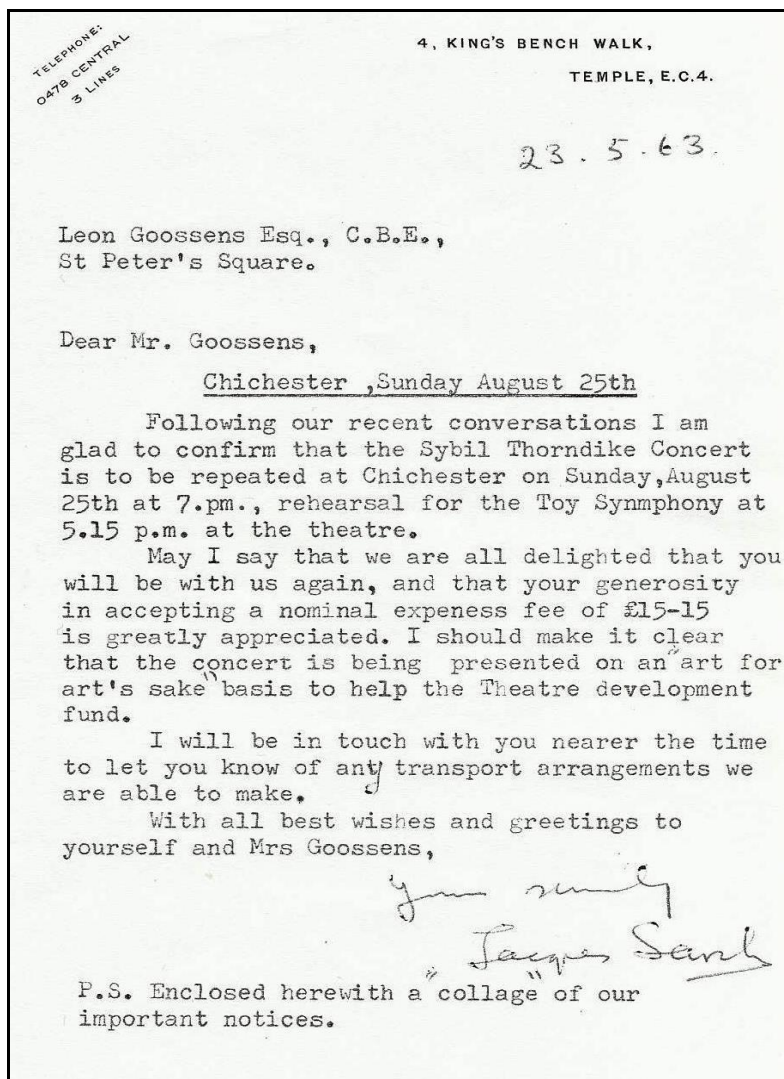
⁹⁴ Aryn Day Sweeney, ‘An Afternoon’s Conversation with Neil Black’, *The Double Reed*, 29. 1 (2006), 103-13 (p. 104).

⁹⁵ Christopher Fifield, *Ibbs and Tillet: The Rise and Fall of a Musical Empire* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 196-7 and p. 486. Robert Leigh Ibbs and John Tillet established their venture in 1906 and became Britain’s best known concert agency. The company folded in 1990. Marie was also listed with the company 1929-1939.

⁹⁶ Fifield, p. 306.

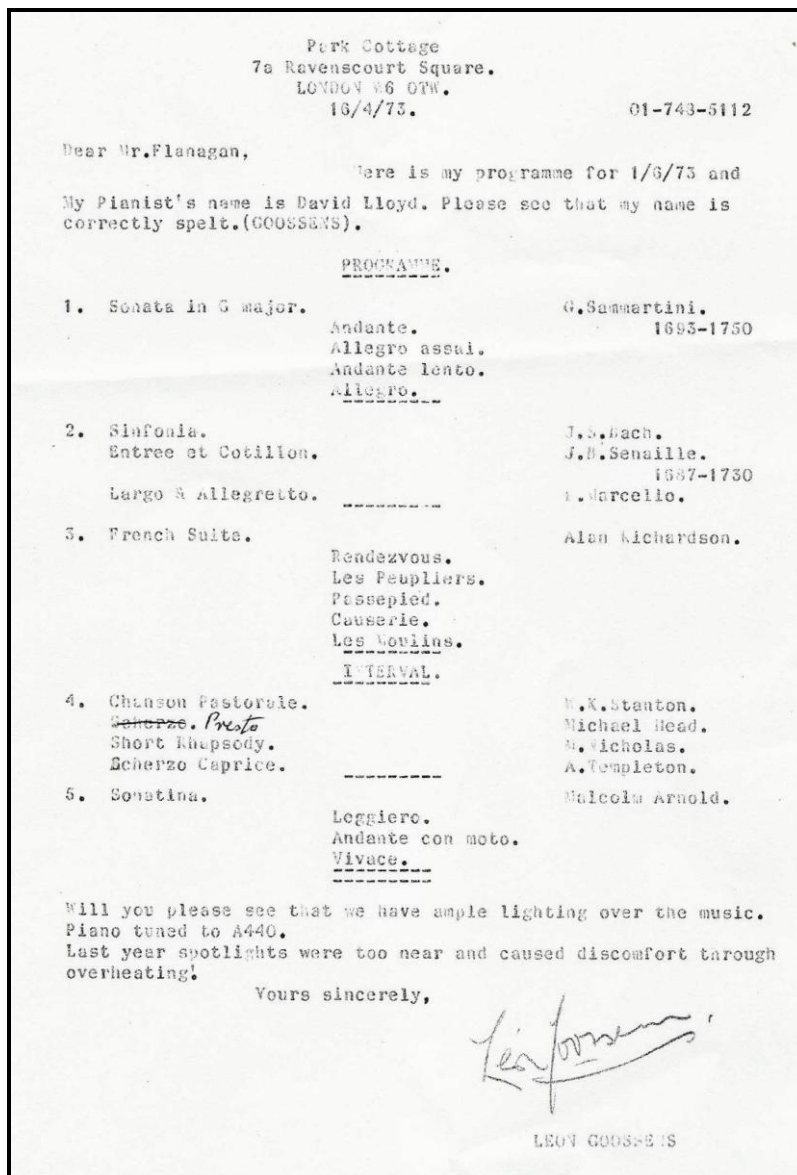
1932,⁹⁷ but there are no further references to, or accounts of, this meeting. Certainly later in his career there were numerous direct invitations from, and correspondence with, music societies, as Figures 2.1 and 2.2 below confirm.

Fig. 2.1 Sybil Thorndike Concert Invitation for Chichester, 25 August 1963⁹⁸



⁹⁷ Rosen, p. 161.

⁹⁸ Centre for Performance History, Léon Goossens, Collection.

Fig.2.2 Programme confirmation letter from Léon (concert venue unknown)⁹⁹

Eugene III had been a significant influence at various junctures in Léon's solo career; Wynne suggested that Eugene had 'protected and guided' his younger sibling to a 'certain extent'.¹⁰⁰ As an established transatlantic conductor from the mid-1920s and later as conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra,¹⁰¹ Eugene was able to initiate important opportunities that helped his brother acquire global status as a soloist. Léon's 1928 debut recital at the Guild Theatre in New York, according to

⁹⁹ Centre for Performance History, Léon Goossens, Collection.

¹⁰⁰ Wynne, p. 36.

¹⁰¹ Rosen, pp. 93-111, 272, 279 and 350-67.

Eugene ‘made the New York public and critics rub their eyes at his incontestable artistry’,¹⁰² and in 1954 Eugene ‘instigated’ an extensive tour of Australian and New Zealand; Léon’s opening concert in Canberra was applauded for its ‘haunting memories’ and ‘extraordinary musical breadth’ both ‘contemplative and reposeful’ and his ‘mellow wistfulness of tone that belied the subtle strength and fine texture of its execution.’¹⁰³

In addition to America and the Antipodes, by the late 1950s Léon’s performance schedule had taken him to Canada, the Middle and Far East, Russia and many Baltic and European cities. He had also given recitals on the Cunard ocean liners.¹⁰⁴ Many of his world-wide audience had discovered his playing through his records and radio broadcasts. Léon’s apparent instinctive commercial understanding of a ‘PR approach’ to his career by taking ‘advantage of the developments in the recording industry’ as well as radio broadcasts from the early 1920s enabled him to consolidate an international standing; as Burgess and Haynes note, ‘up until the middle of the [twentieth] century the only recordings featuring oboe available in most parts of the world were by Goossens.’¹⁰⁵ Despite Léon’s global reputation, it was a devoted British audience that enabled him to sustain a solo career for over fifty years, as evident from his long association with national and local music organisations. He was an egalitarian performer, happy to play in large concert halls as well as small music society venues. Burgess and Haynes present an interesting comparison of Léon’s status with that of the oboist Marcel Tabuteau (1887-1966) who was active, mostly as an orchestral player and teacher, in the United States during the same period; Tabuteau developed the unique quality of the American sound. The assertion

¹⁰² Léon performed the Bliss Quintet and Mozart Quartet with the Marianne Kneissel Quartet and also premiered the Sonata for Oboe and Piano by Harvard musicologist David Stanley Smith; Eugene played the piano part and thought the piece ‘a somewhat gloomy work.’ See E. Goossens, p. 252, and Rosen, p.129. Léon also gave the premiere of his brother’s Oboe Concerto (with Eugene playing the piano). Léon had later suggested that there had been a ‘certain body of opinion’ against his visit on the premise that a ‘virtuoso had come over from England to challenge their own exponents of the oboe’; see L. Goossens, ‘The oboe as a Solo Instrument’, p.160.

¹⁰³ ‘Léon Goossens Gives Polished Recital’, *The Canberra Times*, 19 May 1954, p. 2. The recital was given on Tuesday 18 May at the Albert Hall, incorrectly dated June in Rosen, p. 343. The Antipodean tour comprised twenty-eight concerts including a performance of Eugene’s Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra with the SSO conducted by the composer at the Sydney Town Hall. According to Rosen, p. 344, Léon approached Britten for a new work for the tour: ‘is there a remote chance of your writing a work for me to take to Australia and New Zealand? I do so want to take something that is up to the minute’.

¹⁰⁴ Concert was at Hawkshead, further details unknown; see Centre for Performance History, Léon Goossens Collection.

¹⁰⁵ *Mining the Archive*; Geoffrey Burgess & Bruce Haynes, *The Oboe* (London: Yale University Press, 2004), 198.

of a reputation ‘perhaps even more legendary’ and ‘equally influential’ as that of his British contemporary, is curious. As much as Tabuteau was ‘such a vital figure’ in exerting a ‘decisive influence’ on oboe playing across the American continent,¹⁰⁶ it is difficult to equate his status within the American music world to that of Léon’s international reputation. An acknowledgement by the authors that Tabuteau lacked ‘motivation to develop such an extrovert musical personality’ for a solo career – his style of performance was ‘rooted in the orchestral tradition’ in sharp contrast to that of Léon’s ‘cultivated great panache and bravura’ – is perhaps at best erroneous, especially as Tabuteau made few solo recordings, ‘inspired no new solo works’ and was ‘not even particularly well-known outside the United States.’¹⁰⁷ In contrast Léon’s universal appeal was the consequence of his recordings ‘sent all over the world’ thus his impact was ‘paramount not only in Britain but in other countries as well.’¹⁰⁸

A motor car accident in 1962 left Léon with extensive injuries including fractured ribs and sternum and the loss of teeth, but most devastatingly, irreversible damage to the muscles and nerves of his lower jaw.¹⁰⁹ Léon’s ‘head-on collision,’ which became world news, occurred on 25 June, twelve days after the death of his brother.¹¹⁰ He was admitted to Willesden General Hospital where he received one hundred and fifty stitches into his ‘lacerated mouth.’¹¹¹ Unsurprisingly the aftermath ‘numbed his senses’¹¹² and at sixty-five years old, his career was seemingly at an end. He recuperated for two months in Malta where he was introduced to the ‘senior Royal Naval dental surgeon’ who initiated a year of ‘orthodontic repair’ that was continued

¹⁰⁶ Laila Storch, ‘Marcel Tabuteau’, *e.idrs.org*, <<http://www.idrs.org/publications/controlled/TWOboist/TWOV2.1/TWO.V2.1.Tabuteau.html>> [accessed 30 January 2014].

¹⁰⁷ Tabuteau was born in France and studied with George Gillet at the Paris Conservatoire. He was to play with the New York Symphony Orchestra in 1905. In 1915 he accepted the position of principal oboe with the Philadelphia Orchestra where he remained until 1954. For a detailed biography see Laila Storch, *Marcel Tabuteau: How Do You Expect to Play the Oboe If You Can't Peel a Mushroom?* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008). For an example of Tabuteau’s playing see Johannes Brahms, *Violin Concerto: 2nd Movement*, Joseph Szigeti and Marcel Tabuteau / Philadelphia Orchestra/Eugene Ormandy (Oboe Classics, CC2012, 2005).

¹⁰⁸ Neil Black, ‘Oboists of My Time’, *The Double Reed* (33.1, 2010), 51-65 (p. 52).

¹⁰⁹ See Wynne, pp. 1-14, 22-5, 34-7, 81-119, and Rosen, pp. 89-99, for a full account of the accident and Léon’s subsequent return to the concert hall.

¹¹⁰ ‘Léon Goossens Hurt in Crash’, *New York Times*, 26 June 1962, p. 25.

¹¹¹ Wynne, pp. 6, 9.

¹¹² ‘Léon Goossens Interview 1’, *e.YouTube.com*, <<http://www.youtube.com/user/spence22>> [accessed 9 February 2014].

by Léon's dentist in London.¹¹³ Unable to exert any pressure from his bottom lip to support a reed, let alone produce any sustainable sound, Léon was faced with the prospect of retirement. He considered teaching as a possible employment option; according to Wynne, Léon applied for a post in a 'less [than] lovely West Riding Town,' yet despite being offered the job it proved to be a 'chastening experience and he resolved to devise an alternative method that would enable him to play the oboe once more.'¹¹⁴ Léon's perseverance proved successful; by using his side muscles of the mouth with some pressure from the upper lip he found he was able to sustain a continuous sound, but this was a 'slow, laborious and dispiriting process.'¹¹⁵ In a 1967 BBC interview he described and demonstrated this unique technique:

so now I have to bunch up the side muscles so they push in [. . .] and get behind [the lower lip] and force [the lip] up to the reed and the same time hug it [the reed] a little bit with the upper lip just to continue and complete that pressure around the reed.¹¹⁶

Given the extent of his injuries it is astonishing that Léon returned to the concert platform at all, let alone within a year of his accident. Despite inconsistencies in reports of the length of Léon's absence from the concert hall, concert programmes from May 1963 show that he was performing repertoire of mostly short pieces at various British venues.¹¹⁷ Appearing at small music clubs he gradually increased his performance confidence and stamina.¹¹⁸

In 1964 Léon was invited back to the Sinfonia of London. Clarinettist Jack Brymer recalled his doubt that Léon would 'never make it' after hearing him practise 'in a corner facing the wall, trying to get the old Goossens sound out' before the recording. Yet 'an hour later he was in the orchestra, playing with absolute control,' though his 'sound was a little smaller.'¹¹⁹ Léon considered this engagement was the 'first time' he had 'attempted anything at all seriously' (there are no known references

¹¹³ Wynne, p. 36.

¹¹⁴ Wynne, p.86.

¹¹⁵ Rosen, p. 391.

¹¹⁶ 'Léon Goossens Interview 1'.

¹¹⁷ Wynne, p. 96; George Darby, 'The man who made oboes talk', *The Sunday Times Magazine* (12 June 1977), 23; Centre for Performance History, Léon Goossens, Collection.

¹¹⁸ Rosen, p. 391.

¹¹⁹ Rosen, p. 391.

from Léon to his earlier performance appearances) and that he was ‘absolutely petrified.’ He had a ‘little solo to play’ and was ‘terribly moved’ at the end of the session when ‘the little body of players applauded’ him.¹²⁰ In the same year, his friend Gene Forrell (1915-2005) suggested that Léon should ‘work towards a comeback’ and proposed that they ‘give a baroque concert in the town hall of New York.’¹²¹ According to Wynne, Léon thought the proposition ‘a splendid idea’ if a little daunting. However his account of Forrell’s idea of a mutual opportunity implied a motive driven by self interest. Having made his living ‘in the world of commercialism’ Wynne damned Forrell not only on ethical grounds in seizing his main chance on the back of Léon’s established ‘worldwide reputation’, but also questioned his competence as a conductor for such a venture.¹²² Nonetheless Léon clearly felt that the project was feasible and later considered the event ‘terribly important’ in re-launching his career.¹²³ The concert was given on 25 April 1965 (incorrectly stated as 1966 in Rosen) with the Master Virtuosi Ensemble under Forrell. Léon played two concertos, the Albinoni Concerto for oboe and strings in Bb, Op. 7 No.3 and the Concerto for oboe and strings in G minor by Scarlatti (an arrangement from selected keyboard sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti by Gordon Bryan).¹²⁴ Léon told Brymer that he ‘went onto the platform not knowing whether [he] would be able to get a sound out of the thing!’¹²⁵ The *New York Times* testified to Léon’s ‘marvellous tone and impeccable technique’, suggesting that his timbre was ‘as freshly preserved as his unerring sense of style.’¹²⁶

At sixty-eight years of age having triumphed over adversity Léon returned to Britain and embarked upon a busy performance schedule. Although Wilson cited a concerto performance with the Pro Arte Orchestra at the Festival Hall in October 1966 as his official return to the professional platform, according to Rosen, media

¹²⁰ ‘Léon Goossens Interview 5’, *e.YouTube.com* < <http://www.youtube.com/user/spence22> > [18 February 2014]; Rosen, p. 391. See also Post, ‘Interview with Léon Goossens and Edwin Roxburgh.’

¹²¹ Wynne, p. 96. Rosen, p. 391, notes Forrell was considered an ‘accomplished orchestral conductor’ see also Monica L. Haynes ‘Obituary: Gene Forrell / Award-winning composer and conductor’, *e.post-gazette.com*, <<http://www.post-gazette.com/news/obituaries/2005/09/28/Obituary-Gene-Forrell-Award-winning-composer-and-conductor/stories/200509280252>> [accessed 20 February 2014].

¹²² Wynne, p. 96; Wilson, ‘Léon Goossens, Oboist’.

¹²³ Post, ‘Interview with Léon Goossens and Edwin Roxburgh’.

¹²⁴ Bryan dedicated the arrangement to Léon who gave the first performance on 13 May 1944 with the Jacques String Orchestra at the Wigmore Hall, London.

¹²⁵ Rosen, p. 392.

¹²⁶ Richard D. Freed, ‘Léon Goossens, Oboist, Appears With Master Virtuosi Ensemble’, *New York Times*, 26 April 1965, p.38.

coverage of a recital at Macclesfield in May of the same year reported his performance as a return to ‘complete musical and physical health’, where ‘the tone seemed as seductive, the control effortless, the phrasing as immaculate as ever.’¹²⁷ Léon continued to perform until the early 1980s.¹²⁸ It is astonishing that during his seventy-fifth year (1972) he not only performed the Vaughan Williams Concerto for oboe and strings as part of the composer’s centenary celebrations,¹²⁹ but also played Mozart’s Concerto for oboe & orchestra in C, K.314 at the opening concert of the BBC Promenade season.¹³⁰ With his advancing years a diminishing of skill and stamina were inevitable. Comments on Léon’s post-accident performances reflected this change; in as much as Brymer observed that Léon’s ‘sound was a little smaller’ and Neil Black asserted ‘not until his last days did Goossens ever make a thin sound,’¹³¹ Léon apparently confided to friends that ‘things were not quite what they had been,’ a sentiment echoed by oboist John Cruft that Léon ‘never was able to recover all his previous skill and playing stamina.’¹³² Yet Margaret Eliot, who had studied with Léon, recalled that ‘the sound he made, though different, was as remarkable as ever.’¹³³ Reviewers noted that he had become a ‘more reserved player’ and his ‘immense dynamic range’ reduced; a visible relief at the ‘end of a long solo phrase’ was discerned at one performance as well as a lack of tonal ‘luminosity.’ Nevertheless his musicality appeared to have been universally acknowledged as still embodying the ‘old unmistakable Goossens manner’ – ‘mastery of his instrument, breath control, rhythmic buoyancy and command of nuance’ - in conveying a sense of ‘outside time’ and ‘poise.’¹³⁴ There is no evidence that Léon continued performing beyond 1983; at eighty-six years of age it is astonishing that he could still play for any sustained length of time. A copy of programme details written in Léon’s hand for a

¹²⁷ Wilson, ‘Léon Goossens Oboist’; ‘Mr Goossens in welcome return’, *The Times*, 29 October 1966, p. 6; Rosen, p. 392.

¹²⁸ Rosen, p. 394.

¹²⁹ Leith Hill Music Festival, 14 October 1972. Léon also performed the composer’s ‘Ten Blake Songs for oboe & voice’ with tenor Ian Partridge.

¹³⁰ The performance, which was Léon’s final appearance at the Proms was given on Saturday 22 July 1972; see ‘Léon Goossens’, *e.bbc.co.uk/prom*, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/proms/archive/search/performers/8c17084f-3942-4a36-bc18-661c6f3f1d27/2>>[accessed 10 April 2014].

¹³¹ Black, ‘Oboists of My Time’, p. 52; Rosen, p. 391.



¹³² Hugo Cole, ‘Léon Goossens at the Queen Elizabeth Hall’, *The Guardian*, 3 June 1967, p. 5; Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute from family, friends and colleagues’, p. 10.

¹³³ ‘Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute – part II’, *Double Reed*, 39 (Summer 1997), 9-13 (p.12).

¹³⁴ ‘Mr Goossens in welcome return’; Hugo Cole, ‘Goossens on Radio 3’, *Guardian*, 24 July 1972, p. 8; Max Harrison, Léon Goossens, Wigmore Hall’, *The Times*, 12 April 1976, p. 11.

concert in Truro (probably at the cathedral) in April of the same year represented a final recital as part of a West Country tour (Fig. 2.3).¹³⁵

Fig. 2.3. Final Recital Programme 20 April 1983

Mr. & Mrs. DAVID POPE
Mr. & Mrs. GORDON EVA
Telephone: FALMOUTH (0326) 314545

Penmere Manor Hotel
Falmouth · South Cornwall


CONCERT AT TRURO - 20.4.83

1. SONATA IN C MAJOR - J. B. LœUILLET
I. LARGO CANTABILE II. ALLEGRO III. LARGO IV. ALLEGRO (1680-1730)
2. SICILIANO (FROM CANTATA No. 29) - J. S. BACH
ESPRESSIVO (1685-1750)
3. LARGHETTO - - - JOSEPH HAYDN
4. MATELOTTE - - - WM. BOYCE
(1710-1779)
5. SARABANDE AND PASTORALE - WDR R. FOSTER,

INTERVAL .

6. ELEGIAC DANCE - - - MICHAEL HEAD
7. TWO INTERLUDES - - - FREDERICK DELIUS
FROM PENNIMORE AND GERDA Acc. by ERIC FENBY
8. RONDO LIRICO - - - THOS. B. PITFIELD
9. TWO EXTRACTS FROM "ORPHEUS BRITANNICUS"
BY HENRY PURCELL
 1. LENTO "THE CARES OF LOVERS" (TIMON OF ATHENS)
 2. ALLEGRO "I'LL SAIL UPON THE DOGSTAR
(THE FOOL'S PREFERMENT)

ie friendly world of
est Western



Fine independent hotels
throughout Britain and the world
CENTRAL RESERVATIONS: 01-940 9766

After fifty-two years of marriage Léon's wife Leslie died from myelofibrosis in August 1985 and shortly after Léon suffered a stroke. He moved to Dulas Court, a

¹³⁵ Centre for Performance History, Léon Goossens, Collection.

retirement home in Hereford.¹³⁶ Léon died on 12 February 1988 at the Nuffield Hospital in Tunbridge Wells, Kent ‘after a long illness.’¹³⁷ The funeral took place at the Church of King Charles The Martyr in Tunbridge Wells on 23 February followed by a memorial service at Westminster Abbey on 16 May 1988.¹³⁸

In addition to being honoured by music institutions, Léon was made a Commander of the British Empire (CBE) in 1950.¹³⁹ Other awards included the Cobbett Medal in 1954 for his contribution to chamber music,¹⁴⁰ and much earlier in his career honorary membership of the Royal Academy of Music in 1932. As part of his ninetieth year, in 1987 Léon became an honorary member of The Royal Philharmonic Society – he was the eighty-ninth recipient since its foundation in 1829¹⁴¹ – and a tribute concert was given at the Wigmore Hall in London on Friday 12 June 1987 by oboist Nicholas Daniel and pianist Julius Drake. Apparently Léon was unable to attend this event due to ill-health.¹⁴² The programme comprised of works dedicated to Léon as well as a number of ‘musical tributes’ from various British composers.¹⁴³ A centenary celebration concert presented by Léon’s youngest daughter Jennie followed in 1997 (Fig. 2.4).¹⁴⁴

¹³⁶ Rosen, p. 398.

¹³⁷ ‘Mr Léon Goossens: Prince of oboists’, *Times*, 15 February 1988, p. 14.

¹³⁸ Centre for Performance History, Léon Goossens, Collection.

¹³⁹ Nicholas Daniel, the only other known oboe soloist to be decorated for services to music, received the Queen’s Medal for Music in 2012.

¹⁴⁰ AP, ‘Léon Goossens, Well-Known Oboist, Is Dead at 90’, *New York Times*, 13 February 1988, p. 44. The Cobbett Prize for services to Chamber Music was established in 1924 by Walter Wilson Cobbett; see ‘Cobbett, Walter Wilson’, *e.oxfordmusiconline.com*, <<http://oxfordmusiconline.com/>>[accessed 8 March 2015].

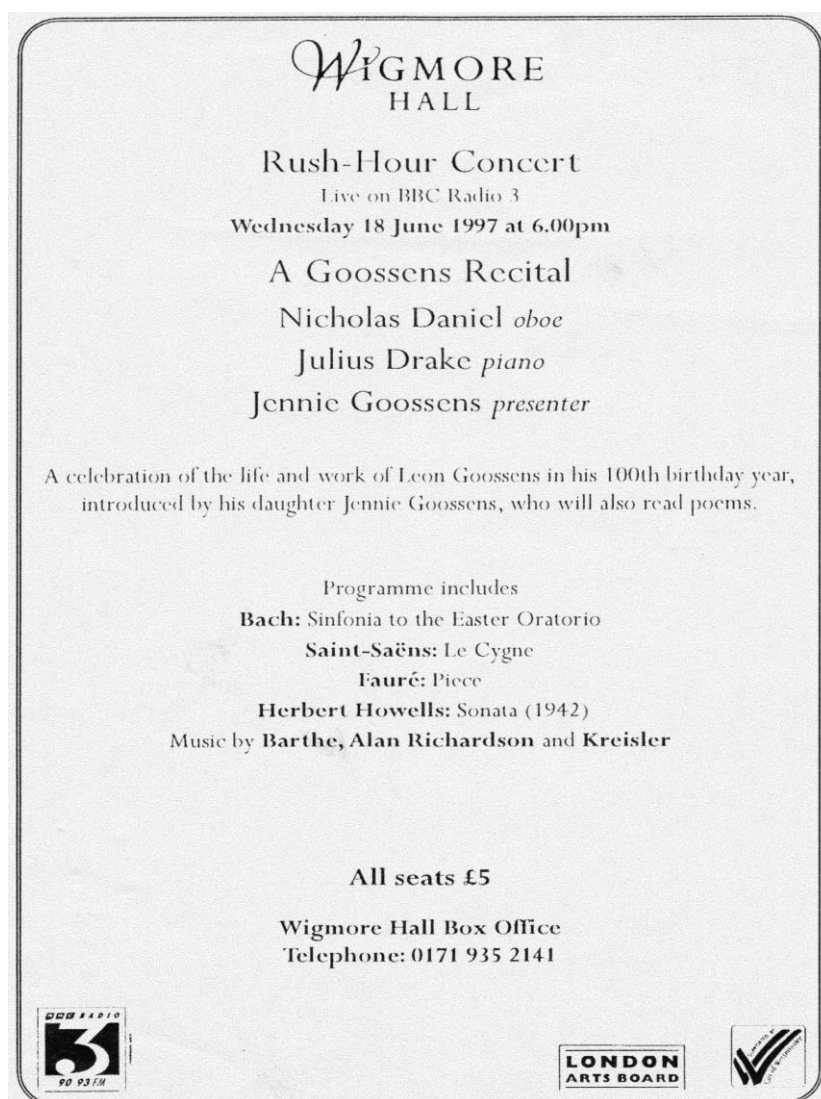
¹⁴¹ Rosen, p.133. ‘Home / Awards / RPS Honorary Membership / Honorary Members Since 1826 / 1950 – 1999’, *e.royalphilharmonicssociety.org.uk*, <http://royalphilharmonicssociety.org.uk/index.php/awards/honorary/honorary_members/members3>[accessed 28 February 2015].

¹⁴² Rosen, p. 398.

¹⁴³ The programme included sonatas for oboe and piano by York Bowen and Herbert Howells; Alan Richardson’s *French Suite for oboe and piano*; and an arrangement by Howard Ferguson of Gerald Finzi’s *Interlude* for oboe and piano, see ‘Léon Goossens’ 90th Birthday tribute’, *e.juliusdrake.info* <<http://www.juliusdrake.info/index.php/performances/archive-performances-the-1980s/performances-1987/1987-06-12-Léon-goossens-90th-birthday-tribute-wigmore-hall-london-nicholas-daniel/>>[accessed 26 May 2014].

¹⁴⁴ Centre for Performance History, Léon Goossens Collection.

Fig. 2.4. Programme for centenary celebration of Léon Goossens 18 June 1997



WIGMORE
 HALL




Rush-Hour Concert
 Live on BBC Radio 3
 Wednesday 18 June 1997 at 6.00pm

A Goossens Recital
 Nicholas Daniel *oboe*
 Julius Drake *piano*
 Jennie Goossens *presenter*

A celebration of the life and work of Leon Goossens in his 100th birthday year,
 introduced by his daughter Jennie Goossens, who will also read poems.

Programme includes
Bach: Sinfonia to the Easter Oratorio
Saint-Saëns: Le Cygne
Fauré: Piece
Herbert Howells: Sonata (1942)
 Music by **Barthe, Alan Richardson and Kreisler**

All seats £5
 Wigmore Hall Box Office
 Telephone: 0171 935 2141

The awards and celebrations were an acknowledgement of Léon's status as a soloist, yet his nurturing a generation of nascent oboists is perhaps an implicit aspect of his overall impact as a musician. Léon taught at both the Royal Academy of Music and Royal College of Music in London from 1924. There is little official information as to Léon's tenure at these institutions other than Rosen noting that he was employed by the college authorities until 1935 and 1942 respectively.¹⁴⁵ It was during this period that Léon found himself at the forefront of teaching a significant influx of

¹⁴⁵ Rosen, pp. 133, 135; Royal College records confirm employment continued in 1941, see London, Royal College of Music Library, Archives and records. However Bate, *The Oboe*, p. 205, noted that Léon was 'succeeded by William Shepley (1875 -1947)' in 1939.

female students that proved to be a turning point for British oboe playing. The nucleus of these students – Joy Boughton, Natalie Caine, Helen Gaskell, Evelyn Rothwell and Sylvia Spencer – not only went on to establish successful playing careers, but influenced a new generation of oboists and composers.¹⁴⁶ The rationale behind these women who reportedly ‘flocked to Goossens’ was predictably reduced to sexual politics. Léon’s evident handsome physique and ‘charismatic’ personality were reasons cited for ‘young ladies running after him.’¹⁴⁷ These motives naturally were not applicable to any male counterparts. The image of Léon as a Svengali figure, although an absurd notion was quickly established: ‘the general impression was that Léon was always attended by a bevy of attractive female neophytes.’¹⁴⁸ Margaret Eliot concurred that he had ‘enormous charm’ yet dismissed the idea of him as a ‘womaniser.’¹⁴⁹

The truth is probably more mundane. Whether or not any of his students actively sought to study with him is not clear, but it is more likely that as first study oboists they were assigned to Léon by default. In addition not all his female students had been directly motivated by him. Evelyn Rothwell was given a ‘frightful instrument’ at the age of eighteen by her music teacher when she was at Downe House School, Newbury and simply encouraged ‘to have a go’; Helen Gaskell, a pupil at St Paul’s Girls’ School Hammersmith, was persuaded by her music teacher Gustav Holst to take up the oboe as he needed more woodwind players;¹⁵⁰ it was Sylvia Spencer who had enthused Natalie Caine to play the oboe.¹⁵¹ Nonetheless Léon’s influence on his students was immeasurable; as Rothwell suggested, ‘the example and inspiration he gave us [. . .] has remained part of our musical heritage.’¹⁵² Viewed as a ‘wonderful teacher in a strange way’ his teaching methods ‘informal, but serious,’ progress was ‘through example’ with ‘plenty of encouragement’ and ‘towards musical

¹⁴⁶ Distinguished pupils were Janet Craxton (Gaskell), Sarah Francis (Boughton) and Nicholas Daniel (Rothwell). Original works written for them included William Alwyn’s *Sonata for oboe and piano* (1934) and Alan Richardson’s *Roundelay* (1936) (Gaskell), Elizabeth Maconchy’s *Three Bagatelles* (1972), Thomas Pitfield’s *Sonata for Oboe and Piano* (1948) (Rothwell), and notably Benjamin Britten’s *Two Insect Pieces* (1935) (Spencer), *Temporal Variations* (1936) (Caine), and *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid* (1952) (Boughton).

¹⁴⁷ Black, “‘Oboists of My Time’”, p. 52; Sweeney, ‘An Afternoon’s Conversation with Neil Black’, p. 108.

¹⁴⁸ ‘Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute from family, friends and colleagues’, p. 8.

¹⁴⁹ Rosen, p. 137.

¹⁵⁰ Lady Barbirolli, ‘The BDRS pays tribute’ *Double Reed News*, 83 (Summer 2008), 35-54 (p. 37); ‘Helen Gaskell’, *Double Reed News*, 62 (Spring 2003), 22-4 (p. 22).

¹⁵¹ Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute from family, friends and colleagues’, p. 12.

¹⁵² Evelyn Barbirolli, *Life with Glorious John: A Portrait of Sir John Barbirolli* (London: Robson Books, 2002), p. 27.

expression.’ Léon apparently always taught from the piano - ‘he was a marvellous pianist and would provide a fluent accompaniment’ – and lessons, described as ‘an oboe club’ by one pupil appeared to be on a continuum whereby ‘pupils would arrive half an hour early and stay well into the lesson after theirs.’¹⁵³ Admired by many as a ‘patient’ and an ‘inspiring’ teacher, who ‘showed a personal interest in all his pupils’ – Sutcliffe described his time with Léon as ‘three lovely years’ - Rothwell thought him ‘not interested in teaching’ and notably ‘not conscientious about it.’ She cited an early experience during her first year at the Royal College of Music when ‘he came on the first day and did not appear again until the last.’¹⁵⁴ She also suggested that despite being a ‘wonderful performer’ and a ‘great innovator’, his ‘intuitive’ musicianship proved unhelpful in being able to ‘analyse’ or ‘solve’ difficulties; Léon acknowledged that his ‘development had been natural rather than philosophical.’¹⁵⁵ Sutcliffe said that ‘he never really went into technical details’ and Peter Graeme felt that he had ‘learnt much more from [Léon] by sitting next to him in the LPO [London Philharmonic Orchestra] than by having lessons with him.’¹⁵⁶

In those early years it seemed that Léon could be ruthless and exploitative: his students quickly learnt not to ‘take their best reeds to lessons’ as they were ‘likely to be replaced with something from ‘his drawer.’¹⁵⁷ They also kept silent about any ‘gig’ work following a report from Rothwell of being undercut by Léon: ‘he wrote to a promoter offering himself at a lower fee than [I] had been offered!’¹⁵⁸ The tables were turned a little when Rothwell started performing solo repertoire. As a newcomer she ‘couldn’t charge’ the same fee as Léon, but he thought that she was ‘undercutting him.’¹⁵⁹ Rothwell also recollected that when the British composer Gordon Jacob started to re-work his Oboe Quintet (written for her in 1933) into a concerto,¹⁶⁰ she took fragments of the developing score to her lessons and in doing so she unwittingly

¹⁵³ ‘Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute from family, friends and colleagues’, p. 13; Sarah Francis, ‘Joy Boughton’, *Double Reed*, 17 (Winter 1994), 63-6 (p. 63).

¹⁵⁴ ‘Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute from family, friends and colleagues’, 8; Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute – part II’, pp.10, 12; Evelyn Barbirolli, *Life with Glorious John*, p. 27.

¹⁵⁵ Evelyn Barbirolli, *Life with Glorious John*, p. 27; ‘Obituary: Sidney Sutcliffe’, *e. theguardian.com*, <<http://www.theguardian.com/news/2001/jul/12/guardianobituaries3>>[accessed 2 March 2014]; L. Goossens, ‘The Oboe as a Solo Instrument’, p. 160.

¹⁵⁶ *Mining the Archives*; see also ‘Peter Graeme’, *The Times*, 4 April 2012, p. 50.

¹⁵⁷ ‘Lady Barbirolli: The BDRS pays tribute’, p. 48.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Neil Black, ‘‘Oboists of My Time’’, p. 53.

¹⁶⁰ Concerto No. 1 for oboe and strings (1935).

lost the dedication of the work to her Léon who promised ‘he would play it with Beecham and the RPO [Royal Philharmonic Orchestra].’¹⁶¹

Unsurprisingly Rothwell’s experience left an indelible mark, so much so that in her early freelancing days she declined an offer of employment with the London Philharmonic Orchestra ‘to ‘cover’ for Léon whenever he was away.’ In part this was due to inexperience – she thought herself not ‘sufficiently knowledgeable about the symphonic repertory’ – but also because ‘Léon would have been very unpredictable in dealing with his ‘cover.’¹⁶² Later when she was married to the conductor John Barbirolli there was perhaps a settling of scores; according to Rosen ‘Barbirolli used his influence’ when under contract to EMI that ‘preferential treatment’ of any oboe recording projects was ‘given to Evelyn.’¹⁶³

James Brown, who worked with Léon as second oboe in the Sinfonia of London from 1956, confirmed that Léon was not immune to bouts of professional jealousy:

The only fault he had was a lack of generosity towards his former pupils; having got them into positions where they could be self-sufficient he rather resented the fact that they were doing all right thank you.¹⁶⁴

Brown also emphasised that his position in the orchestra presented no threat: ‘I enjoyed playing second oboe so there was never any sense of rivalry.’¹⁶⁵ Neil Black

¹⁶¹ Rosen, p.135. The reference to the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra is incorrect as the orchestra was not established by Beecham until 1946 (for an overview of the orchestra see ‘About the Orchestra’, *e.rpo.co.uk* <<http://www.rpo.co.uk/history.php>>). The Concerto No. 1 for oboe and strings was premiered by Léon with the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Beecham on 28 February 1935 at the Queens Hall, London; see ‘Concerto No. 1 for oboe’, *e.gordonjacob.org*, <http://www.gordonjacob.org/w_oboe_conc_1.html>[accessed 4 July 2014]. Evelyn gave the first performance of Jacob’s Quintet for oboe and string quartet a year earlier on 26 February with the Macnaghten String Quartet conducted by Iris Le Mare at the Ballet Theatre Club, London; see ‘Concerto for oboe and string quartet’, *e.gordonjacob.org*, <http://www.gordonjacob.org/w_oboe_strings_conc.html>[accessed 4 July 2014]. The background to the *Interlude for oboe and string quartet* by Gerald Finzi is similar. Originally commissioned for Sylvia Spencer in 1930 and completed in 1933 nothing more came of the work until three years later when the composer ‘sent Léon Goossens [his score], who asked for the dedication’; see Diana McVeagh, *Gerald Finzi: His Life and Music* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), pp. 64, 71, 77.

¹⁶² Evelyn Barbirolli, *Life with Glorious John*, p. 30.

¹⁶³ Rosen, p. 335.

¹⁶⁴ Rosen, p. 333.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

agreed that Léon ‘didn’t like too many people approaching too close to the throne,’¹⁶⁶ highlighting a sense of entitlement – ‘he liked to be made a fuss of.’¹⁶⁷ Reflecting on his pupils’ success later in life, at least in public, Léon was more charitable: ‘they have ‘given me back so much and repaid me, and I get such a thrill just listening to them play.’¹⁶⁸ There were compensations for his pupils as Léon promoted them in the profession often working alongside him in a variety of musical disciplines. Offers of deputy work from Léon were reportedly at the eleventh hour: Rothwell recollected that the experience of sight-reading for a live performance although ‘quite nerve-racking’ was ‘extremely good practice’ in gaining valuable experience as well as helping to establish a reliable reputation; there was ‘no shortage of work’ if you proved that you ‘could really play.’¹⁶⁹ By the 1960s a younger generation of ‘oboists and composers’ had turned against much of the established repertoire; progressive developments of the ‘technical and expressive range of the instrument through the covered-hole system’ begun in the 1950s gradually ‘alienated’ Léon’s influence and his ‘concept of the oboe.’¹⁷⁰

2.3. Léon’s performing legacy: commissions and dedications

One of Léon’s greatest achievements was in encouraging British composers to create works for him; forty-nine were dedicated to Léon (see Appendix 1). Burgess and Haynes suggested that the ‘unprecedented number of concertos and sonatas that were dedicated to him has been exceeded only in the case of [the oboist and composer] Heinz Holliger [1939-].’¹⁷¹ This may be factual in numerical terms, but Holliger’s canon also includes a number of his own solo and chamber compositions for the instrument.

¹⁶⁶ Neil Black, ‘‘Oboists of My Time’’, p. 52; Léon clearly did not find Black a threat – in fact he thought him a ‘very important player’ and liked his ‘conception of the oboe’; see Post, ‘Interview with Léon Goossens and Edwin Roxburgh’.

¹⁶⁷ Rosen, p. 136. Certain circumstances Léon also considered ‘beneath him as an artist’, as Brown discovered when working with him on the film *Raising the Wind*. The Sinfonia of London were filmed on set in performance, but Léon had ‘refused to be seen’ on camera so Brown had to take his place miming to Léon’s playing; see Rosen p. 333.

¹⁶⁸ ‘Léon Goossens Interview 3’, *e.YouTube.com*, <<http://www.youtube.com/user/spence22>> [accessed 4 July 2014].

¹⁶⁹ ‘Lady Barbirolli: The BDRS pays tribute’, p. 11; see also ‘Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute from family, friends and colleagues’, p. 13 & Evelyn Barbirolli, *Life with Glorious John*, pp. 29-30.

¹⁷⁰ ‘Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute – part III’, 40 (Autumn, 1997), 5-6 (p. 5).

¹⁷¹ Burgess and Haynes, p. 196.

The majority of works associated with Léon can be grouped into two distinct categories of uninvited and commissioned works. However there are a number of works where a more complex relationship is evident as in the case of Bliss's Quintet for Oboe and Strings, written for the International Festival in Venice in 1927. Commissioned by Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge,¹⁷² who also insisted on the dedication, the work was actually created for, and inspired by Léon; in essence, he represents a 'hidden' dedicatee. Léon was later to state that although the dedication was not 'to the artist who was going to play it, nevertheless I still call it my quintet.'¹⁷³ Herbert Howells' Sonata for Oboe and Piano (1946) had a more ambiguous history.¹⁷⁴ Completed in 1946 the work had been commissioned by Léon – confirmed by the British composer Edwin Roxburgh (b. 1937) – yet bizarrely the current status of the work, though acknowledged as 'written for Léon Goossens' remains uncontested as an uninvited score.¹⁷⁵ This may be because the work was rejected; Léon had 'serious reservations about the structure of the piece' and returned the work to Howells, who agreed 'to have another go at it.'¹⁷⁶ No further explanation was forthcoming as to the details of Léon's uncertainties about the work. Léon never saw the manuscript again and, as it can only now be presumed, he did not pursue Howells for the promised revision.¹⁷⁷ In fact the work lay unpublished for over 40 years.¹⁷⁸ Roxburgh, who studied with Howells, attested to the work being shelved, in part due to Howells' reserved nature in not trusting self-judgement over any critical appraisal, but also Léon's 'concept of character he had created so strongly for the instrument ' and his vision of 'music composed for it.'¹⁷⁹

¹⁷² Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge (1864-1953), pianist and patron of the arts. Her commissions included Britten's First String Quartet, Poulenc's Flute Sonata and Stravinsky's *Apollon Musagete*.

¹⁷³ Melvin Harris, 'Interview with Léon Goossens' *e.oboeclassics.com*, <<http://www.oboeclassics.com/aGIBax.mp3>> [3 July 2010]. The work was premiered by Léon and the Venetian Quartet.

¹⁷⁴ Herbert Howells, *Sonata for Oboe and Piano* (London: Novello & Co. Ltd., 1987).

¹⁷⁵ 'Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute – part III', p. 5.

¹⁷⁶ Paul Spicer, *Herbert Howells* (Bridgend: Seren, 1998), p. 128.

¹⁷⁷ Spicer, p. 128 noted somewhat provocatively that Léon 'may simply have found it unplayable.' Although Howells' inordinate length of phrases in the piece does create considerable challenges, it is doubtful that Léon would have found the technical demands insurmountable. See also Fabian Huss, 'Style and Structure in the Oboe Sonata and Clarinet Sonata' in *The Music of Herbert Howells*, ed. by Phillip A. Cooke and David Maw (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013), pp. 153-68 (p. 154).

¹⁷⁸ The premiere was given by oboist Sarah Francis and pianist Peter Dickinson at the Cheltenham International Festival, 9 July 1984.

¹⁷⁹ 'Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute – part III', p. 5.

2.3.1 Uninvited scores

In an interview with the broadcaster Sandy Burnett in 1997, Nicholas Daniel asserted that ‘all those works written for n [Léon] just dropped through the letter box’.¹⁸⁰ Celia Nicklin also presented the same hypothesis that ‘Goossens didn’t ask anyone to write for him’.¹⁸¹ As much as it is true that a few of the dedicated works can be designated ‘uninvited scores’, written because of Léon’s prominence and without his input - according to Mabel Lovering they ‘spent many hours going through works sent to him by both well-known and lesser-known composers’¹⁸² – a number of scores were commissioned by Léon.

That Léon ‘championed’ new works has been contested.¹⁸³ Evelyn Rothwell maintained that he ‘didn’t always make use of uninvited scores and referring to one such work, Benjamin Britten’s *Phantasy Quartet* (1932),¹⁸⁴ reasoned that as Léon did not perform the work until 1933,¹⁸⁵ this proved a lack of appreciation of modern music. Apart from the fact that Britten was pleased with Léon’s performance at the premiere (‘Goossens does his part splendidly’), Léon continued to perform the work for many years.¹⁸⁶ Rothwell’s suggestion was perhaps disingenuous as she admitted being ‘startled’ by her first encounter with Britten’s music (a rehearsal of the *Sinfonietta* Op.1 in 1932) and along with her colleagues neither ‘enjoyed’ nor attempted to understand it.’¹⁸⁷ Heinz Holliger also criticised Léon for missed opportunities in not exploiting his ‘access to all the great composers [of the day] through his brother Eugene.’¹⁸⁸ Even Daniel, despite archival evidence to the contrary, suggested that Léon ‘never played’ many of the ‘really big pieces that were written for him.’¹⁸⁹ It is however debateable that Léon did not enjoy ‘modern music.’

In an interview with broadcaster Melvin Harris, Léon described Arnold Bax’s *Quintet*

¹⁸⁰ *Mining the Archives*.

¹⁸¹ Personal comment to the author, 5 March 2009.

¹⁸² ‘Léon Goossens, A Centenary Tribute, from family, friend and colleagues’, p. 14.

¹⁸³ John Warrack, ‘Léon Goossens’, *The Independent*, 15 February 1988, p. 12.

¹⁸⁴ Written in July 1932 for the Cobbett Chamber competition, which Britten won.

¹⁸⁵ *Mining the Archives*; The Phantasy Quartet was first performed by Léon and members of the International String Quartet in a BBC radio broadcast, 6 August 1933.

¹⁸⁶ ‘Phantasy Quartet for Oboe and Strings Op.2 *e.laphil.com*,

<<http://www.laphil.com/philpedia/pieces.detail.cfm?id=1026>> [accessed 3 July 2010]; see also Humphrey Carpenter, *Benjamin Britten: A Biography* (London: Faber & Faber, 1992), pp. 49, 54. Centre for Performance History, Léon Goossens, Collection.

¹⁸⁷ Evelyn Barbirolli, *Life with Glorious John*, p. 28.

¹⁸⁸ Andrew Palmer, ‘Heinz Holliger’, *Double Reed*, 39 (Summer, 1997), 27-9 (p. 28).

¹⁸⁹ *Mining the Archives*; see also London, Centre for Performance History, The Goossens Collection.

for Oboe and Strings as a ‘very fine work that was an awfully nice work to play [. . .] I enjoyed doing it very, very much.’¹⁹⁰ Nevertheless Roxburgh later confirmed that Léon expressed ‘distaste for progressive musical language’, though this did not prevent Léon from commissioning the score *Silent Strings for oboe and piano* (1977) from Roxburgh which they both performed as part of Léon’s eightieth birthday celebrations.¹⁹¹ So where Léon was central to the commissioning process, and where there was a more personal element, he was apparently able to embrace new ideas.

Lyricism is perhaps the most pivotal factor of Léon’s soundworld, of which the British composer Alan Richardson (1904-1978) was one representative in writing a number of works that reflected Léon’s style: ‘plenty of diatonic themes’ as well as ‘rubato flourishes.’¹⁹² Yet again it is unclear whether or not Richardson’s published works for Léon were commissioned. The French Suite for oboe and piano (1949), *Scherzino* (1953) and *A Reverie* (1960) were popular programme choices. A recent discovery of unpublished material by the composer has brought to light a substantial canon of hitherto unknown works for the oboe including three additional pieces dedicated to Léon:¹⁹³ Sonata for Oboe and Piano op.40 (1950), *Goossens’ Birthday Pieces* (1967) and Three Pieces for Oboe and Piano (1977). The latter two works were written for Léon’s seventieth and eightieth birthdays respectively and were probably gifts. The eightieth birthday tribute, one of the last works Richardson completed before his death, was clearly signed ‘from’ rather than ‘by Alan Richardson’ (Ex. 2.1.), suggesting that the piece was a present for Léon rather than a commission.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ Harris, ‘Interview with Léon Goossens’.

¹⁹¹ ‘Léon Goossens: A Centenary Tribute Part III’, p. 5.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ London, The Royal Academy of Music, The Alan Richardson Collection.

¹⁹⁴ Composed between 29 April and 7 May 1977.

Ex. 2.1. Alan Richardson, 'Memento' from Three pieces for oboe and piano, bars 1-13.¹⁹⁵

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the piece 'Memento' by Alan Richardson. The score is for oboe and piano. At the top, it is titled 'Memento' and dedicated 'for Leon Goossens on his 80th Birthday' by 'from Alan Richardson'. The tempo is marked 'Moderato grazioso; quasi andante.' The oboe part is marked 'mf ma dolce' and the piano part is marked 'dolce'. The score includes a section marked 'espress.' and ends with a 3/4 time signature.

The status of the Sonata, however, is not known. The completion date of 1950 (according to Conrad Wilson)¹⁹⁶ suggests it may have been a commission for the 1951 Festival of Britain,¹⁹⁷ although there are no documents confirming any performances during the Festival. Equally there is no evidence of Léon having performed any of these works. An intimation that Léon would have viewed the birthday pieces as a

¹⁹⁵ Alan Richardson, *Three Pieces: An 80th Birthday Tribute to Léon Goossens* (n.p.: n.pub., 1977).

¹⁹⁶ Conrad Wilson, 'Alan Richardson' in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* ed. by Stanley Sadie, 2nd ed., 29 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1980), xxi.334.

¹⁹⁷ Wilson, p. 334. Although Richardson often dated and timed his scores, the sonata manuscript is undated.

present and one not necessarily for public performance or for others to play is illustrated when Gordon Jacob sought to publish his short piece, ‘An 80th Birthday Card for Léon Goossens’ written for the oboist in 1977. Léon had apparently taken ‘umbrage’ believing the work to have been a ‘private tribute.’¹⁹⁸

2.3.2 Dedicated and commissioned works

Dedicated works included concertos by Malcolm Arnold, Rutland Boughton and Ralph Vaughan Williams as well as his brother Eugene III, and chamber works by Benjamin Britten, York Bowen, Arnold Cooke, Gerald Finzi and Gordon Jacob. Perhaps the most significant works in the early days that helped to establish his solo career were the Quintets for Oboe and Strings by Arnold Bax (discussed in Chapter four) and Arthur Bliss. Many scores were undoubtedly orchestral and society commissions, for example Wilfred Joseph’s *Concerto for Oboe, Percussion and Small Orchestra* Op. 58 commissioned by Hemel Hempstead Music Club for Léon’s seventieth birthday celebrations,¹⁹⁹ yet there is little acknowledgement of Léon’s active involvement in commissioning works; only three are documented as personal commissions: Roxburgh’s *Silent Strings* for oboe and piano, Arnold’s *Concerto for Oboe and Strings* Op.39 and Jacob’s *Concerto No. 2 for Oboe and Orchestra*.²⁰⁰ Additionally, Léon’s comment that ‘one got composers, young composers of the day writing small pieces, eventually they got quite substantial’ suggests his involvement in the compositional process.²⁰¹ Lovering also confirmed that Léon ‘replied hopefully’ to composers,²⁰² and elsewhere, Léon hinted at his pivotal role: ‘[I] worked with such composers as Bax, Henschel, Bliss, Jacob and my brother Eugene, and in every case their vision has altered after I have played certain passages as I saw them.’²⁰³ For example Léon recalled that York Bowen ‘came down to my cottage

¹⁹⁸ Eric Wetherell, *Gordon Jacob: A Centenary Biography* (London: Thames Publishing, 1995), p. 94. The work was eventually published five years after Goossens’ death as *An 80th Birthday Card for Léon Goossens* (Ampleforth: Emerson Edition Ltd., 1993).

¹⁹⁹ Premiered by Léon with The Ben Uri Chamber Orchestra conducted by Sidney Fixman (b. 1935) at The Pavilion, Hemel Hempstead, 25 September 1967, Centre for Performance History, Léon Goossens Collection.

²⁰⁰ ‘Léon Goossens: A Centenary Tribute Part III’, p. 5; Alan Poulton, *A Dictionary-Catalogue of Modern British Composers* 3 vols. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000), i.117, ii.909.

²⁰¹ Harris, ‘Interview with Léon Goossens’.

²⁰² ‘Léon Goossens, A Centenary Tribute, from family, friend and colleagues’, p. 14.

²⁰³ Melvin Harris, *Rare Goossens: Léon Goossens*, Léon Goossens/Various artists (Oboe classics, CC2005, 2002).

when we lived in Sussex, and we did the first little-read through of the Sonata [Sonata for Oboe and Piano Op. 85] he had written for me.²⁰⁴ This was the first substantial composition for oboe and piano by a British composer, and has been one of the most performed works in Bowen's canon.²⁰⁵ It was also a popular programme choice for Léon, although in a recital he gave with Bowen at the piano the Sonata was not included.²⁰⁶

The extent of any collaboration is often problematic. Gordon Jacob's widow, Margaret Hyatt, for example, offered a confusing account of Léon's involvement with Jacob on the Second Oboe Concerto. Initially emphatic that Léon would not have 'worked on the score with Gordon,' she subsequently suggested that 'there was very likely a discussion about the kind of work he [Léon] was hoping for at the time of the commission,' and significantly that Léon 'may have made some small suggestions at the end.'²⁰⁷ Conversely Eugene III acknowledged his younger brother's contribution: 'Léon, for whom I had written a tremendous display piece [Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra Op. 45], complained that the cadenza was not showy enough' prompting a revision of the passage with 'some coruscations, which he negotiated brilliantly'.²⁰⁸ Later the composer apparently lamented the amendment as he believed it 'placed the work permanently out of the range of all but two or three great oboe virtuosi.'²⁰⁹

2.3.3 Non-dedicated works

Léon also premiered works written for the oboe that were not dedicated to him (see Appendix 1), many of which are of particular historical interest. On Léon's first visit to the United States in 1928 he was applauded for giving the premiere of the *Sonate Pastorale* for oboe and piano by David Stanley Smith (1877-1949): 'it remained for a Britisher to give the first performance of an American work composed for the oboe

²⁰⁴ Brown, 'Interview with Léon Goossens', p. 33. The work was first performed by Léon Goossens and pianist Kathleen Markwell on 28 October 1930 at Cardiff High School for Girls for the Cardiff Chamber Music Society.

²⁰⁵ Bowen composed individual sonatas for Clarinet, Flute, Horn as well as Oboe between 1927 and 1946. The Oboe Sonata, perhaps the most lyrical of the group, has not been out of print since it was published in 1944, but the other three sonatas were not published until after Bowen's death.

²⁰⁶ 13 January 1946 at Henley for the Henley Concert Society.

²⁰⁷ Personal comment by Margaret Hyatt, Jacob's widow. The Concerto was commissioned by Léon for a cultural visit to USSR sponsored by the British Council and led by Sir Arthur Bliss in April 1956.

²⁰⁸ E. Goossens, pp. 262-3.

²⁰⁹ E. Goossens, p. 263.

many years previously.²¹⁰ And in her memoirs, pianist Harriet Cohen recalled the experience of playing Paul Hindemith's Sonata for oboe and piano (1938) with Léon to the composer prior to their premiere of the work: 'the work was difficult to get hold of, both harmonically and technically. Léon already played his part like an angel and the composer was very gracious to us.'²¹¹ Perhaps one of the most noteworthy premieres Léon gave was the first British performance of Richard Strauss' Oboe Concerto in 1946 (see Fig. 2.5).

Fig. 2.5. Programme for the British Premiere of Richard Strauss' Oboe Concerto in D²¹²

FIFTY-SECOND SEASON OF

HENRY WOOD

PROMENADE CONCERTS

Conductors
SIR ADRIAN BOULT BASIL CAMERON

Associate Conductor
CONSTANT LAMBERT

Organist: Berkeley Mason

Tuesday 17 September at 7

MOZART—STRAUSS CONCERT

Conductor: SIR ADRIAN BOULT

OVERTURE, Don Giovanni	<i>Mozart</i>
OBOE CONCERTO <i>(First performance in England)</i>	<i>Strauss</i>
FERNANDO'S ARIA, Ah, lo veggio (Così fan tutte)	<i>Mozart</i>
SYMPHONY No. 39, in E flat (K.543)	<i>Mozart</i>
<i>INTERVAL</i>	
SYMPHONIC POEM, Don Quixote	<i>Strauss</i>

HEDDLE NASH

Solo Violoncello PIERRE FOURNIER

Solo Oboe LEON GOOSSENS

THE BBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Leader: Paul Beard

3

²¹⁰ L. Goossens, 'The Oboe as a Solo Instrument', p. 160.

²¹¹ Harriet Cohen, *A Bundle of Time: The Memoirs of Harriet Cohen* (London: Faber & Faber, 1969), pp. 275-6.

²¹² Centre for Performance History, Léon Goossens, Collection.

John Warrack considered Léon's performance 'of historical interest',²¹³ as the final pages of the print edition by the publishers Boosey and Hawkes were not the same as the score used for the recording prior to publication:

When Strauss was preparing the work for the engraver, he decided to scrap the first version and extend and alter the final pages. The original MS seems not to survive, or any rate never to have been published: this record is thus, in every sense, the only record of the original.²¹⁴

The British conductor Norman del Mar (1919-1994) also agreed that Léon's recording 'has become an important piece of documentation',²¹⁵ and that the amended coda originates on a separate piece of manuscript inscribed 'Montreux 1. February 1948' and adds eleven bars as well as rejuxtaposing and partially revising the original eighteen, all of which are however retained if in a different order.²¹⁶

Many works and their long association with Léon became regarded as old-fashioned through the gradual dominance of a new generation of oboe teachers at the music conservatories in the 1960s, stimulating a change of study material to reflect the progress of the avant-garde. This effectively dismissed Léon's performance style and his influence on mainstream music. From that time many British oboe chamber scores associated with Léon were relegated to a peripheral status in the repertoire.

²¹³ John Warrack, 'Oboe Concertos, Léon Goossens (oboe and oboe d'amore)', *The Gramophone*, 55 (October 1977), 86.

. The Concerto was premiered in Zurich in 1946 by Marcel Saillet with the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra under Volmar Andreae.

²¹⁴ Warrack, 'Oboe Concertos', p. 86.

²¹⁵ Norman Del Mar, *Richard Strauss: A Critical commentary on his Life and Works*, 3 vols. (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1972) iii.443.

²¹⁶ Del Mar, p. 443.

Chapter 3: Goossens' Performing Practice

The beauty of his tone, the elegance of his phrasing, his matchless technique, and his natural mastery of the so-called 'modern' techniques of double-tonguing and circular breathing – these were all his hallmarks.¹

3.1. Introduction

Léon's style of playing came to symbolise a break from a previous British sound model characterised as 'plaintive' and 'straight' to one of 'colour, sweetness and lightness.'² There are a number of interrelated elements that collectively defined Léon's sound in practice and are paramount to an understanding of his performance style. He had fluid control throughout the range of the instrument, a 'lucid' and 'beautiful' tone, clear articulation and a wide range of dynamics explicit in the dexterity of his technique – 'there was literally nothing in the range of technical complexities [he] couldn't cope with' – and a musicianship characterised by his distinctive approach to breath control, phrasing, use of rubato and vibrato as well as tempi.³ But central to all these facets is the quintessential sound itself that can be situated in the context of Léon's lightweight Lorée simple open-hole thumb-plate oboe system and tapered 'U' scraped narrow-shaped reeds that had little resistance.

3.2. The Instrument

Léon played on a Lorée oboe for much of his career; in comparison, present-day professional oboists often purchase several instruments over a lifetime. The oboe was an open-hole or ring system, single-action model.⁴ Two oboe types had been developed during the nineteenth century - the ring and plateau (Gillet covered-hole)

¹ 'Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute from family, friends and colleagues', *Double Reed News*, 38 (Spring 1997), pp. 6-17 (p. 12).

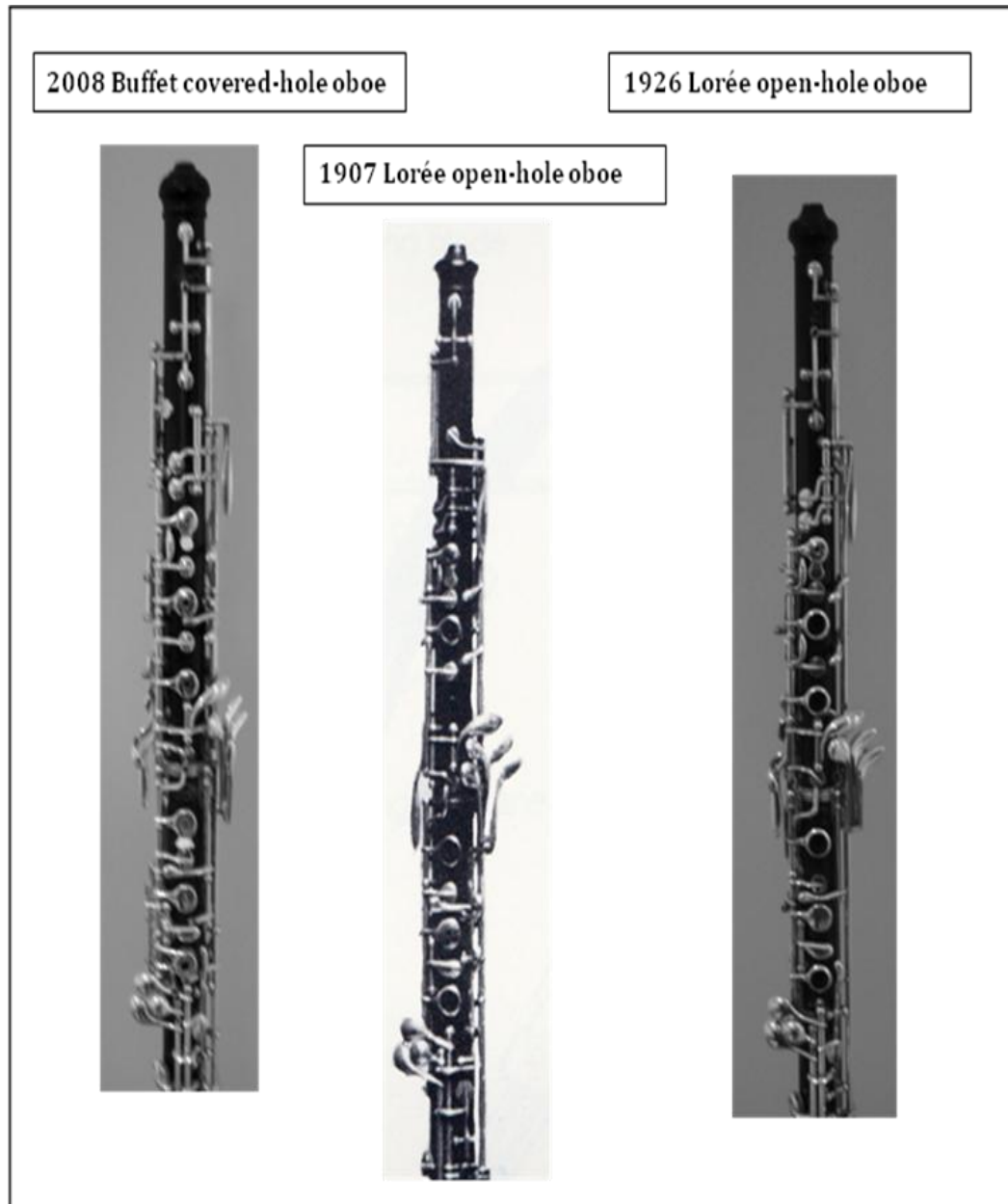
² Aryn Day Sweeney, 'An Afternoon's Conversation with Neil Black', *The Double Reed*, 29.1 (2006), 103-12 (p. 105). Worthington, 'The Modernisation of Wind Playing in London Orchestras, 1909-1939: A study of playing styles in early orchestral recordings', (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of York, 2013), pp. 93, 107, questions Goossens' status as a 'single visionary figure' suggesting that he was more of a 'distinctive voice' who 'emerged from a cast of accomplished contemporaries'.

³ 'Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute – part III', *Double Reed*, 40 (Autumn, 1997), 5-6 (p. 6); Eugene Goossens, *Overture and Beginners: A Musical Autobiography* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1951), p. 241.

⁴ Goossens also owned a Lorée oboe d'amore and cor anglais as well as a Louis oboe and oboe d'amore. Both the Lorée oboe d'amore and cor anglais were made of rosewood, the other oboes from grenadilla; see Alan Blyth, 'A centenary tribute – part IV: Léon Goossens looks back at 75', *Double Reed News*, 41 (Winter 1997), p. 6.

systems, which were both manufactured until the late twentieth century. Figure 3.1 provides a visual comparison of a contemporary covered-hole oboe and an early twentieth-century open-hole instrument.

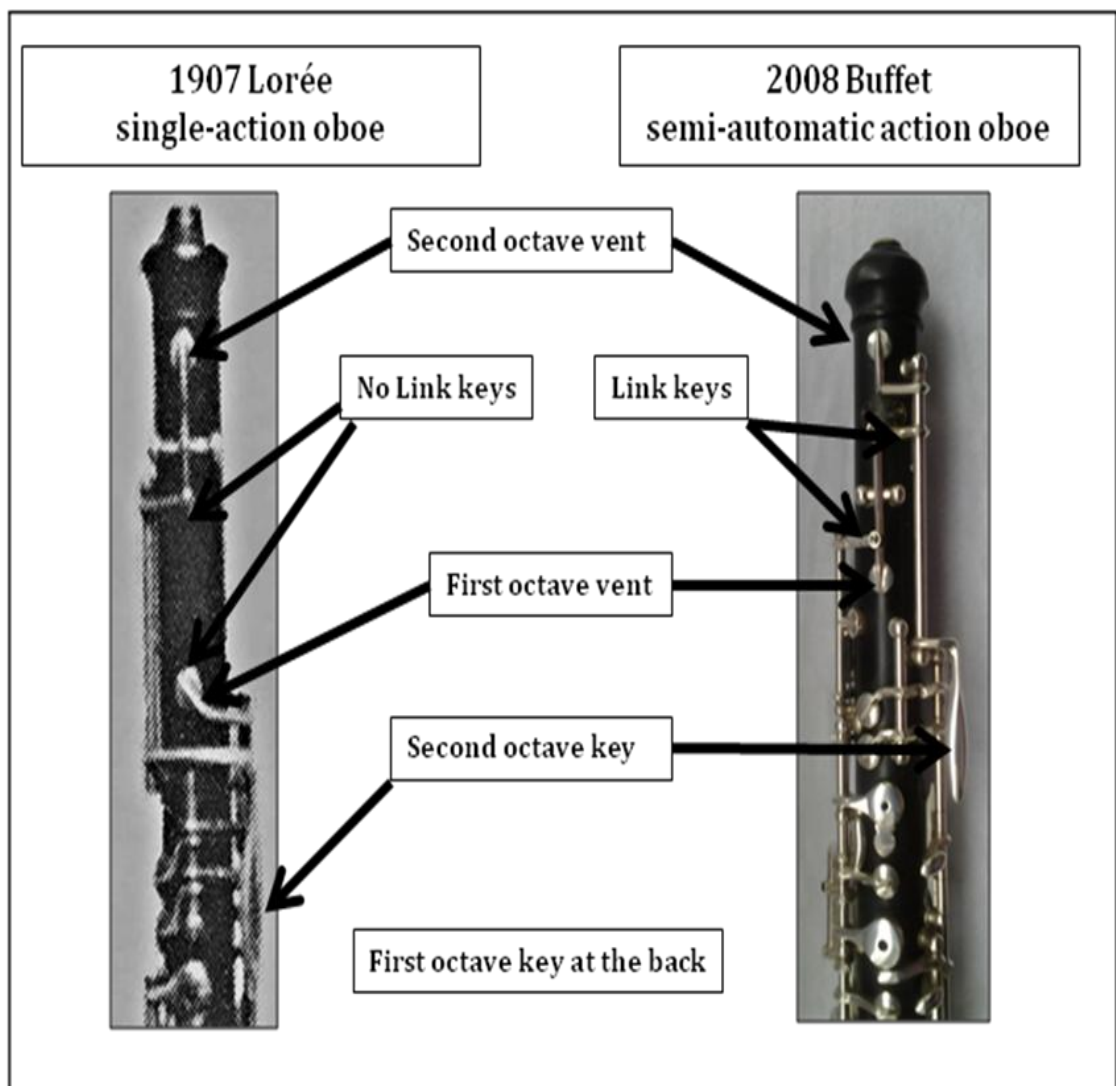
Fig. 3.1. Comparisons of Oboe Models



Single-action relates to the octave keys system. Both the 1926 Lorée and 2008 Buffet models have a semi-automatic octave key facility. Upper register notes that use the

second octave key can be played whilst holding the first octave key down. The action of opening the second octave key automatically closes the first octave vent pad. This innovation was first developed by François Lorée and was a feature of his 1881 oboe. Simpler models had a single action octave system (Fig. 3.2). For this type of oboe the octave keys are operated manually; it is not possible to play second octave notes whilst holding down the first octave key. To ensure a smooth opening and closing of each octave key in transition it is essential to master an effective rotating action when moving to and from the first and second octave registers.

Fig. 3.2. Differences of Octave Action Systems



The oboists Jerold Sundet and Nicholas Daniel both had an opportunity to play Léon's instrument. Sundet was 'struck by the ease of response and brightness of sound' and Daniel suggested that 'it felt like a twig, a branch of a tree [all] wood and hardly any keywork.'⁵ In comparison Léon judged covered-hole models 'too heavy for the delicacy which informed his own artistry.'⁶ Modern-day oboes are heavier than earlier models. The overriding difference between the oboes illustrated in Figure 3.1 is the weight: the 2008 Buffet at 73.1g contrasts with the much lighter weight of both Lorée instruments at 59.6g each. This is due in part to the width differential; the Lorée oboes are narrower and not surprisingly have less keywork than the modern-day Buffet. The Buffet is wider because the bore walls are thicker and the greater amount of keywork adds to the mass.⁷ Arguably contemporary oboes provide players with a more natural richer tone quality at the expense of flexibility of control in relation to dynamics and tone colour variety, whereas earlier lighter models allowed physical flexibility which in turn made projecting the sound easier. Ultimately, whatever the model, it is the player who has to work within the context of the instrument's characteristics; in that respect Adam Carse's concept that the 'bore [of the oboe] is its soul' is perhaps a little fanciful, nevertheless his idea that the oboe's 'nerve-centre lies in its reed' is a closer understanding of the most fundamental factor of the instrument.⁸

3.3. Reeds

Léon's suggestion that 'all serious oboists' should make their own reeds is ironic, given that he played on ready-made reeds for much of his career; as he confirmed during an interview in 1973, 'I haven't made one since 1926.'⁹ His apparent hypocrisy highlighted the fact that after the Second World War, oboists playing on ready-made reeds invited censure. Yet during the interwar years it appeared that players, certainly in Britain, did not make their own reeds; according to Neil Black, 'nobody needed to

⁵ Jerold A. Sundet, 'Léon Goossens - Master Oboist', *The School Musician, Director and Teacher*, 45 (November 1973), 22-4 (p. 23); *Mining the Archives*, BBC Radio 4, 6 June 1997.

⁶ 'Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute – part III', p. 5.

⁷ Despite differences in age the length and (conical) bore dimensions of the instruments illustrated are the same at 60.5cm and 0.8-1.8cm respectively.

⁸ Adam Carse, *Musical Wind Instruments* (New York: Dover Publications, 2002), p. 138.

⁹ Léon Goossens and Edwin Roxburgh, *Oboe* (London: Macdonald and Janes, 1977), p. 31; Sundet, 'Léon Goossens - Master Oboist', p. 24.

because there were dedicated reed makers.’¹⁰ However, references to the oboist John Butterworth who played professionally during the 1930s and 1940s and who was ‘always busy scraping reeds during rehearsals’ - a trait that the conductor Malcolm Sargent found irksome - suggested that reed-making by players had not been wholly abandoned.¹¹ Philip Bate was more specific in naming the ‘influential Goossens “School”’ for being reliant ‘almost exclusively on the beautiful reeds produced with great consistency’ by Liverpool-based oboist Thomas Brearley; James MacGillivray also commented on this dependence.¹² Evelyn Rothwell, who studied with Léon, recalled how Brearley ‘made reeds for everybody including Léon [Goossens]’, and later suggested that Brearley’s reeds ‘had much influence on English oboe playing.’¹³ Rothwell also believed that the lack of any teaching of reed-making skills during the 1930s ‘created a void’, citing Léon as partly responsible for this malaise. Natalie Caine, who also studied with Léon, confirmed that ‘Léon never taught his pupils to make reeds.’¹⁴ Examples of other British oboists – principally orchestral players - who continued to use ready-made reeds (in some instances alongside making their own) included Peter Graeme (1921-2012), Roger Lord (1924-2014) and Terence MacDonagh (1908-1986).¹⁵

From the contemporary standpoint it is difficult to comprehend how ‘the individual skill of one man’ (Brearley) may have resulted in a general neglect of reed-making, particularly at British conservatoires.¹⁶ Whilst there may be less of a stigma attached to buying processed reeds nowadays, the nineteenth-century notion that oboists ‘ought to have some idea of finishing their reeds’ remains prudent advice.¹⁷

¹⁰ Neil Black, ‘Oboists of My Time’, *The Double Reed*, 33.1 (2010), 51-65 (p. 53).

¹¹ James Brown, ed., *Oboists Telling Tales! An Anthology, by and about British Oboists* (Malmesbury: Abbey Printing, 2002), p. 6. With few literature sources discussing reeds and reed making skills of the early twentieth century, the notion that most players (particularly of the 1930s) relied on the ready-made market is perpetuated; see Worthington, p. 87.

¹² Philip Bate, *The Oboe*, p. 17; James A MacGillivray, ‘The Woodwind’, in *Musical Instruments through the Ages*, ed. by Anthony Baines (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1961), pp. 237-76 (p. 273). See also David Ledet, *Oboe Reed Styles: Theory and Practice* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), pp. 74-5.

¹³ Lady Barbirolli: The BDRS pays tribute’, *Double Reed News*, 83 (Summer 2008), 35-54 (p. 38); Ledet, p. 74. There were other ‘dedicated reeds makers who were mostly retired players’ from the forces; see Black, ‘Oboists of My Time’, p. 53. Harry Baker (b.1912), for example, established his own reed-making business and also produced his own guide to reed making; see Ledet, pp.71-4.

¹⁴ ‘Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute from family, friends and colleagues’, pp. 8, 13.

¹⁵ Ledet, pp. 76-9.

¹⁶ Bate, p. 17.

¹⁷ Geoffrey Burgess and Bruce Haynes, *The Oboe* (London: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 157; Ledet, p. xv. See also Bate, pp. 15-7. Many music conservatoires now provide reed-making classes and facilities for the benefit of their students. Extensive advice on reed-making is also available through various media sources.

Learning to make reeds is through a hands-on approach; verbal communication remains the most effective method of teaching the process. Moreover it is a part of the oboe's continuing oral history. So it is not surprising that non-verbal accounts of reed-making during the early twentieth century from players' perspective are scant. Any detailed printed instructions were mostly 'sketchy',¹⁸ a state of affairs which persisted until the latter half of the twentieth century with the publication of a few treatises on the subject including Evelyn Rothwell's 1977 comprehensive guide.¹⁹ Black recalled that there was 'one little notebook' compiled by Rothwell – probably an initial draft to her published manual – that was 'circulated from hand to hand.'²⁰ Léon's description of his own reed-making ability as not a 'strong point' may to a certain extent explain his reluctance to teach the craft, although he could 'make some (usually effective) fine adjustments' to reeds when necessary.²¹ An account by Derek Bell of how Léon altered reeds revealed not only a distillation of Léon's ideal, but suggested consummate skill contrary to Léon's professed deficiency:

Goossens scraped my reeds with wide curved "U"s which occurred exactly half way down the total visible length of the cane and there were no "W"s, no spines, no "hearts", no "windows" and no semicircular (or any) tips! The reeds gradually and evenly got thinner and thinner from the base of the U, right to the tip of the reed. All played perfectly throughout the instrument, all were balanced and in tune, all had good pure tone and were never 'stuffy' or too reedy.²²

Given the transformation of Bell's original reeds it does raise the question as to why Léon did not make his own. A more fundamental explanation is probably due to the fact that he reportedly 'never let [reeds] bother' him, viewing the reed as a conduit to the more important aspect of playing; the Swiss solo oboist Heinz Holliger

¹⁸ For an overview of reed-making in the nineteenth century see Burgess and Haynes, pp. 157-61.

¹⁹ Evelyn Rothwell, *The Oboist's Companion*, Vol. 3 (London: Oxford University Press, 1977).

²⁰ Sweeney, 'An afternoon's Conversation with Neil Black', *The Double Reed*, 29.1 (2006), 103-12 (p. 105).

²¹ Sundet, 'Léon Goossens - Master Oboist', p. 24; 'Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute from family, friends and colleagues', pp. 8, 14.

²² Léon Goossens: 'A centenary tribute - part III', p. 6.

(b.1939) later expressed a similar outlook that ‘there were more important things than making reeds.’²³

Dependence on the ready-made market for reeds was problematic: Brearley’s death in 1952 caused ‘general panic’ when the supply of his ‘guaranteed good reeds’ stopped overnight.²⁴ Léon reportedly purchased a large stockpile of Brearley’s reeds prior to the beginning of World War Two to offset any difficulties with cane supplies from France. This consignment reportedly ‘lasted into his late seventies’, after which Neil Black made reeds for him.²⁵ It was perhaps inevitable that once the Goossens generation of young players had learnt to make their own reeds – Rothwell, for example, was taught by an American oboist Whitney Tustin (1911-2002) – the emphasis was on self-reliance rather than dependence, a return to a previous model of oboists making their own reeds. So it is not surprising that later in her career Rothwell underlined how ‘making reeds is an essential part of the technical equipment of any first class oboist,’ a sentiment echoed by present-day American oboist David Goza that ‘this is a necessity not an option.’²⁶

Léon’s decision to play on Brearley’s reeds was due to a busy performance schedule (and apparently a social life too) and not being able to ‘keep up with [making] the reeds.’²⁷ Léon rarely disposed of a reed, occasionally returning to play on a favoured reed for a performance, even one that had been ‘sitting around for fifteen or twenty years’; he gave a recital in 1982 using a reed from his Australian tour from 1954.²⁸ According to Nora Post, Léon had kept ‘several’ pre-World War One examples in his collection ‘marked DB.’²⁹ These had been made by Henri De Busscher whose playing Léon had much admired. Acquiring these reeds would

²³ Having worked with Holliger in the late 1970s, Neil Black, ‘‘Oboists of My Time’’, p. 57, recollected that he ‘bought some ready-scraped hinges of cane which he tied on, and then cut off the tip with nail scissors’.

²⁴ Lady Barbirolli: The BDRS pays tribute’, p. 38. See also David Goza, ‘Coming to grips with the Oboe: Don’t take ‘no’ for an answer from inanimate objects’, *The Double Reed*, 37. 2, (2014), 110-23 (p. 114).

²⁵ Black, ‘‘Oboists of My Time’’, p. 53; Sweeney, ‘An afternoon’s Conversation with Neil Black’, p. 108. Sundet, ‘Léon Goossens - Master Oboist’, p. 24, also noted that Léon received ‘semi-finished ones, blanks on tubes and finished reeds from admirers all over the world.’

²⁶ Evelyn Rothwell, *The Oboist’s Companion*, iii. p. 5; Goza, p. 114. For a discussion of reed-making in the twenty-first century see Jacqueline Leclair, *Oboe Secrets: 75 Performance Strategies for the Advanced Oboist and English Horn Player* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2013), pp. 85-9.

²⁷ Sundet, ‘Léon Goossens - Master Oboist’, p. 24.

²⁸ Post, Nora, ‘Interview with Léon Goossens and Edwin Roxburgh August 1, 1982’, *The Double Reed e-edition*, 20.1 (1997), n.pag.e.idrs.org, <<http://www.idrs.org/publications/DR/DR5.3/goossens.htm>> [accessed 23 September 2014].

²⁹ Ibid.

probably have been an attempt by Léon in his student days to emulate his idol's style of playing, but also suggests an early venture into the ready-made market.

The illustration of two Brearley reeds (Figure 3.3a) represents the type of reed that Léon and his pupils would have used. The short U scrape of this reed is in stark contrast to the accompanying images of reeds later produced by Léon's former pupils Evelyn Rothwell and Sydney Sutcliffe (Figure 3.3b and 3.3c),³⁰ although Bell's reeds modified by Léon suggested a preference for a longer U shape more in keeping with that favoured by Rothwell than the shorter version produced by Brearley. The Brearley reed is an example of the 'Classic French scrape' characterised by a 'bright, brilliant sound.' This type of reed facilitates 'ease in tonguing and in obtaining a really light, short, fast staccato' as well as a 'very ready response and flexibility' and 'less resistance to breath pressure.'³¹ These distinguishing features reflect an ideal reed that is 'hard enough to give substance to the tone, but soft enough to retain freedom to tongue easily and quickly' and also to 'sustain a relaxed embouchure', thus ensuring ease of musical expression.³² Léon was notably critical of players using hard strength reeds as they 'lacked flexibility', stressing that 'no performer can learn the endurance demanded of the Strauss Oboe Concerto with tight or stiff lips.'³³

In as much as David Ledet judged Brearley's reeds to have had a significant impact on the English school of oboe playing, Léon would have been an influential figure no matter the make or style of reeds. However Brearley's association with the Goossens School can be viewed, in part, as synonymous with Léon's creation of his unique soundworld.

³⁰ Ledet, pp. 75, 81. The individuality of a player's preference is shown by the distinctive variation in the shape and scrape of each reed style as well as variances within each oboist's example, see Rothwell, *The oboist's Companion*, iii. pp. 5, 25.

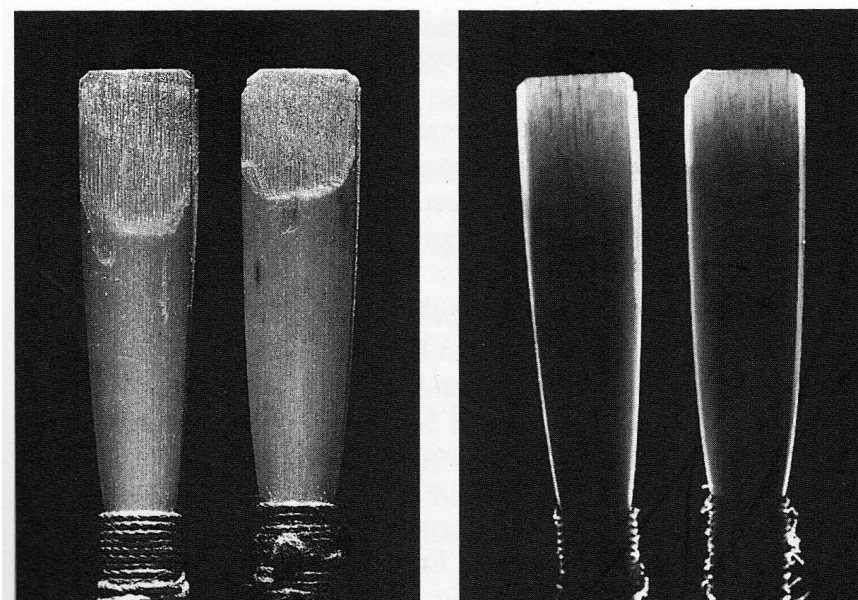
³¹ Rothwell, *The Oboist's Companion*, iii. p. 44. A longer scraped reed as shown by the Rothwell and Sutcliffe examples will help to produce a darker tone quality.

³² Goossens and Roxburgh, pp. 31-2; see also p. 52.

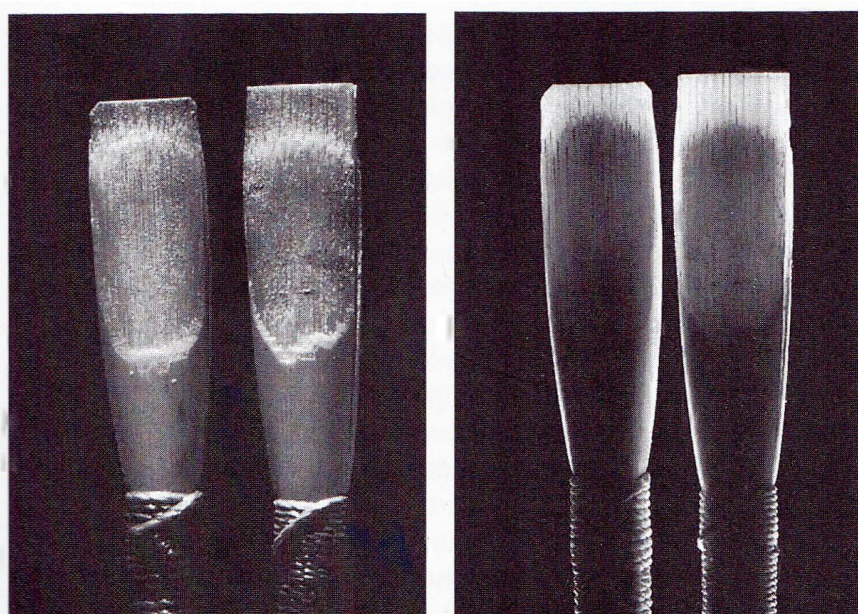
³³ Sundet, 'Léon Goossens - Master Oboist', p. 24; Goossens and Roxburgh, p. 32.

Fig. 3.3. Comparisons of Reed Scrapes

(a) Oboe reed by Thomas Brearley³⁴

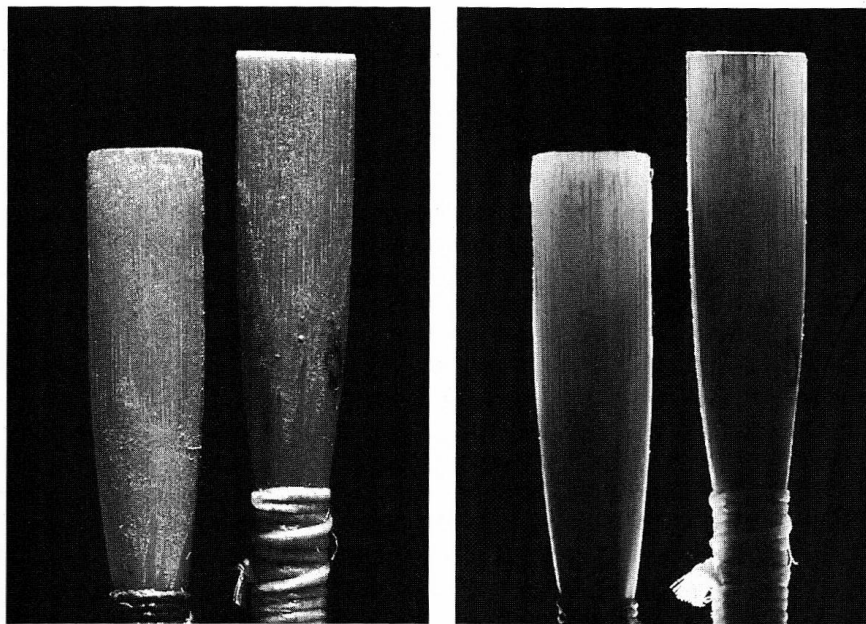


(b) Oboe reed by Evelyn Rothwell³⁵



³⁴ Ledet, p. 75.

³⁵ Ledet, p. 81

(c) Oboe reed by Sidney Sutcliffe³⁶

3.4 Musical features

3.4.1. Phrasing

The greatest facet for any wind player is breath control without which all other proficiency is redundant. Léon had a reportedly formidable technique: ‘high range of dynamics, a vibrato from the heart [and an] incredible finger technique’ underpinned by a breath control described as ‘unbelievable.’³⁷ Léon acquired a reputation as the ‘man who never breathes,’ a similar status shared with the Irish tenor John McCormack (1884-1945) who suggested that like himself, Léon probably took breaths ‘all over the place’ whilst ensuring ‘no one ever sees or hears you doing it’.³⁸ In terms of stamina, in contrast to today’s soloists, it was usual for Léon to play two concertos within a single concert. Generally these programmes consisted of works from his Baroque repertoire; the pairing of the Cimerosa Concerto for oboe and strings and Handel’s Concerto No. 1 in Bb for oboe and strings given at Petersfield

³⁶ Ledet, p. 83

³⁷ *Mining the Archives* .

³⁸ ‘Léon Goossens Interviews 4’, *e.YouTube.com*, < <http://www.youtube.com/user/spence22>>[accessed 14 October 2014]; Carole Rosen, *The Goossens: A Musical Century* (London: Deutsch, 1993), p. 133.

Town Hall, Hampshire on 8 December 1945 was representative of similar programmes from his performing history.³⁹ There were, however, exceptional programming combinations of demanding works that highlighted Léon's capacity of endurance; examples included Eugene Goossens' Concerto for oboe and orchestra programmed alongside the world premiere of Ralph Vaughan Williams' Concerto for oboe and strings in 1944, and the Mozart Concerto for oboe and orchestra with Strauss's Concerto in 1962. The latter performance is particularly remarkable given that Léon was sixty-four years old, an astonishing feat for any present-day oboist half that age.⁴⁰

Reviews consistently emphasised the extent of Leon's 'expressive legato' and 'unfailingly felicitous' phrasing.⁴¹ The pianist Ivor Newton described Leon's musicality in terms of his 'instinctively [feeling] the music.'⁴² Edwin Roxburgh concurred, comparing 'Léon's concept' of phrasing to the 'cellist Pablo Casals, 'thinking of the line, the phrase.'⁴³ Léon expressed his approach in more practical terms: 'never treat nuances by note, always by the phrase, by the sentence,' stressing the 'purity of outline and phrasing.'⁴⁴ In his 1947 recording of the Richard Strauss Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra,⁴⁵ in the extended phrase of the opening oboe solo (an example of Strauss's 'perverse delight in ignoring the need for wind players to take breath'), Léon breaks up the 'elision of phrase beginnings and endings.'⁴⁶ The cadenza at the end of the second movement is one example where Léon disregarded the composer's direction. The extract (Ex. 3.1) is usually phrased as an uninterrupted line from the quaver B flat in the first bar through to the crotchet A following the descending chromatic scale at the close of the extract, and as such is required to be

³⁹ London, Royal College of Music, Centre for Performance History, Concert Programmes, Léon Goossens Collection (1931-1990).

⁴⁰ The Eugene Goossens and Vaughan Williams concerti were given at the Philharmonic Hall in Liverpool with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra under Malcolm Sargent, 30 September 1944, and the Mozart and Strauss works at the Albert Hall in Stirling with the Scottish National Orchestra under Alexander Gibson, 3 April 1962, see Centre for Performance History, Léon Goossens Collection.

⁴¹ *The Manchester Guardian*, 28 March 1956, p. 5.

⁴² 'Léon Goossens Interviews 4', *e.YouTube.com*

⁴³ Rosen, p. 141; Post, 'Interview with Léon Goossens and Edwin Roxburgh'; see also Barrie Hall, 'Pen Portrait: Léon Goossens', *Musical Times*, 101 (May 1960), 295-6.

⁴⁴ Post, 'Interview with Léon Goossens and Edwin Roxburgh'; Goossens and Roxburgh, *Oboe*, p. 158.

⁴⁵ Richard Strauss, *Oboe Concerto in D major*, Léon Goossens/Philharmonia Orchestra/Alceo Galliera (Testament, STB 1009, 1992).

⁴⁶ Burgess and Haynes, p. 211; *Mining the Archive*; Gwyn Parry-Jones, 'Oboe Concertos', *hdtracks.com*, <<http://www.hdtracks.com/index.php?file=catalogdetail&valbumcode=68012580820>> [accessed 19 July 2010].

Ex. 3.1. Richard Strauss, Concerto for oboe and small orchestra, cadenza extract.⁴⁷

played in a single breath. Most players achieve this feat by using either circular or extended natural breathing techniques, whereas Léon altered the phrasing by taking a breath at points [A], [B] and [C].⁴⁸ Applauded for his playing the work ‘as no one else’ with ‘plenty of character and drama,’ as well as ‘convey[ing] a naive optimism rarely encountered in later performances,’⁴⁹ there was some criticism of Léon’s ‘slight fancifulness of phrasing’ in breaking up the musical line that also implied fatigue: ‘the strain does sometime show and Goossens is forced here and there to take a breath that upsets the flow of phrases’, some perceived technical shortcomings were also noted.⁵⁰ Yet in their respective recordings John De Lancie (1921-2002), Pierre Pierlot (1921-2007) and Lothar Koch (1935-2003) for instance opt for breaths in the cadenza at the same points as Léon without any suggestion that this was symptomatic

⁴⁷ Richard Strauss, *Concerto for Oboe and Small Orchestra arr. for Oboe and Piano by Arthur Willner* (London: Bossey and Hawkes Ltd., 1947).

⁴⁸ These letters are editorial additions by the author. See also Burgess and Haynes, pp. 211-2.

⁴⁹ John Warrack, ‘Oboe Concertos’ *Gramophone*, 55(October 1977), 8; ‘Richard Strauss’s Oboe Concerto’, *Building a Library*, BBC Radio 3, 25 October 2014.

⁵⁰ *Mining the Archive*; Gwyn Parry-Jones, ‘Oboe Concertos’.

of fatigue.⁵¹ Similarly John Anderson (b.1954) and Ray Still (1920-2014) take corresponding breaths in their respective recordings at letters [C] and [D] without censure.⁵² A more recent sympathetic assessment of what was a ‘mono-aural’ and ‘sonically disadvantaged’ recording suggested that ‘without the benefit of editing’ Léon had to ‘concede a few finger slips.’⁵³

3.4.2. Tone quality and dynamic range

In as far as breath control supports all aspects of technique; tone colour (the combined elements of articulation, dynamics and quality of tone) is probably the most significant defining feature of musical line and characteristic style. Many oboists are likely to cite timbre above all else. Criticism of present-day obsession over sound to the ‘detriment of [the] height of expression’ is perhaps understandable given that players are often primarily judged for their tone quality. As Rothwell acknowledged, ‘a beautiful tone is the greatest asset of any player.’⁵⁴ Sound has been a contentious issue throughout the instrument’s history with successive generations disparaging former sound concepts. Léon was no exception in describing his teacher William Malsch’s tone as ‘phrased beautifully, but what he brought out with that phrase was nobody’s business!’⁵⁵ Acclaimed as the first British oboist to play with ‘fantastic colour’, Léon was also celebrated for his ability to ‘float long liquid lines,’ as well as the ‘seductive beauty’ and ‘sweetness’ of his tone that was ‘completely satisfying to the ear and spirit.’⁵⁶ In Léon’s recording of the first movement of Handel’s Oboe Concerto in G minor⁵⁷ for example, the simplicity of his phrasing can be heard where

⁵¹ Richard Strauss, *Oboe Concerto in D major AV144*, John De Lancie/Philadelphia Chamber Society Orchestra/Max Wilcox (Boston Records, 1045DDD, 2002); Richard Strauss, *Oboe Concerto*, Pierre Pierlot/The Bamberg Symphony Orchestra/Georges Barboteu (World Record Club, ST 1030, 1969); Richard Strauss, *Oboenkonzert D-Dur*, Lothar Koch/Berliner Philharmoniker/Herbert von Karajan (Deutsche Grammophon, 2530439, 1974).

⁵² Richard Strauss, *Oboe Concerto in D major*, John Anderson/Philharmonia Orchestra/Simon Wright (Nimbus Records, NI 5330, 1992); Richard Strauss, *Oboe Concerto in D major*, Ray Still/Academy of London/Richard Stamp (Virgin Classics, DDD 90813, 1993).

⁵³ Burgess and Haynes, p.201; *Building a Library*.

⁵⁴ Goossens & Roxburgh, p. 82; ‘Lady Barbirolli: The BDRS pays tribute’, 50; Evelyn Rothwell, *Oboe Technique*, 2nd edn. (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 28.

⁵⁵ Post, ‘Interview with Léon Goossens and Edwin Roxburgh.’

⁵⁶ *Mining the Archives*; Information gathered from oboist Sarah Francis, 15 June 2009; John Warrack, ‘Léon Goossens’, *The Independent*, 15 February 1988; Sweeney, ‘An Afternoon’s Conversation with Neil Black’, p. 105; Barrie Hall, 295; ‘Mr Léon Goossens: Prince of oboists’, *The Times* 15 February 1988, p. 14.

⁵⁷ Handel and Mozart, *Testament*, Léon Goossens/Bath Festival Orchestra/Yehudi Menuhin (EMI Records, SBT1130, 1998)

the musical line is clearly articulated and played with remarkable control of tonal colour giving the perception of an ‘effortless’ performance.⁵⁸

Léon equated the oboe’s tone with ‘singing’ and stressed the importance of a ‘clear concept of the quality of tone’ based on a national ‘accepted basic sound’ as well as ‘personal taste,’⁵⁹ but offered little insight into the practicalities of realising such an ambition. In *The Oboe*, for example, his discussion of tone colour was in relation to reed styles rather than any exploration of specific notions of sound and methodology.⁶⁰ He was, however a little more forthright regarding dynamic variation which he considered a crucial ‘element of phrasing.’⁶¹ Whilst he acknowledged the constraints of the ‘limited expressive range’ of the instrument, Léon cautioned ‘there are few experiences more boring than an oboe recital by a player with too small a range of dynamic variation.’⁶² There are a number of recordings that captured the clarity of Leon’s articulation and dynamic variation and offer testimony to Leon’s musicianship at the peak of his career. From an orchestral perspective it is instructive to compare the German oboist Fritz Flemming playing the opening of the second movement from Brahms’ Violin Concerto with Léon’s recording of the same work (Ex. 3.2).⁶³ Both recordings were made with Fritz Kreisler in 1926 and 1936 respectively. Flemming’s playing is beautifully controlled and phrased, with an even tone throughout. Other than a slight relaxation of tempo in bars 21 and 29, the performance is in strict time. There is also minimal use of vibrato - clearly heard on the ascending quavers in bars 16-18. Whereas Léon uses rubato as well as vibrato throughout. His phrasing of bars 15 to 20 moves the music forward before creating a sense of suspension by slightly holding back on the falling semiquaver figures in bars 21 to 23 resolving the phrase onto the Bb at the beginning of bar 24. Léon’s expressive performance is a striking contrast to Flemming’s more prescriptive

⁵⁸ *Mining the Archives*. In *The Goossens Family*, Léon Goossens/Various artists (Chandos, CHAN 7132, 1978), Leon’s recording of the ‘Sinfonia’ from the Easter Oratorio by J. S. Bach with the Fitzwilliam String Quartet is a striking example of his ability to project an extended and graduated phrase.

⁵⁹ Post, ‘Interview with Léon Goossens and Edwin Roxburgh.’

⁶⁰ Goossens and Roxburgh, p. 86.

⁶¹ Goossens and Roxburgh, p. 84.

⁶² Goossens and Roxburgh, p. 82.

⁶³ Johannes Brahms, *Violin Concerto*: 2nd Movement, Fritz Kreisler & Fritz Flemming/ Staatskapelle Berlin/Leo Blech (Oboe Classics, CC2012, 2005); Kreisler and Goossens/London Philharmonic/Barbirolli (Oboe Classics, CC2012, 2005). Flemming was the first German oboist to play on a French oboe in a German orchestra, see ⁶³ ‘Fritz Flemming’, *e.bretpimental.com*, <<http://www.bretpimental.com/woodwinds/oboe/people.html>> [accessed 20 August 2009].

Germanic playing that certainly foresaw a universal style of the later twentieth century, whereby ‘points of emphasis are carefully incorporated into the whole. Nothing is allowed to sound out of place’.⁶⁴

Ex. 3.2. Johannes Brahms, Violin Concerto in D major movement 2, bars 1-32.⁶⁵

Brahms

Léon had a more relaxed view on articulation suggesting that a player’s ‘jaw, teeth and mouth formation’ governed ‘which form [of single, double or triple tonguing] is best.’⁶⁶ Notably in his early career he expressed a ‘preference for single tonguing’ and was able to negotiate notoriously fast tongued passage work – apparently the ‘rapidity’ of his tonguing was considered ‘almost legendary’.⁶⁷ Unfortunately his car accident in 1962 ‘ruined [his] tongue’ such that he had to ‘use double-tonguing’ at ‘comparatively slow speeds.’⁶⁸ It has been suggested that Leon’s ‘incisive articulation,’ also described as ‘perky’ and ‘crisp,’ became one of the ‘prominent markers’ associated with the English style.⁶⁹ The extract (Fig. 3.3) from

⁶⁴ Robert Philip, *Early Recording and Musical Style: Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance, 1900-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 69.

⁶⁵ Johannes Brahms, ‘Violin Concerto in D major Op.77, 2nd movement’ in *Difficult Passages for Oboe and Cor Anglais*, ed. by Evelyn Rothwell, 3 vols. (London: Bossey and Hawkes Ltd., 1953), i. 50.

⁶⁶ Goossens and Roxburgh, p. 79. For an overview of the different styles of tonguing see *ibid.*, pp. 76-81; Leclair, pp. 127-28; and Rothwell, *Oboe Technique*, pp. 30-32.

⁶⁷ Goossens and Roxburgh, *Oboe*, p.79; ‘Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute – part III’, p. 5; Fritz Speigl, ‘Léon Goossens, legendary oboist’, *The Guardian* (15 February 1988), p. 35.

⁶⁸ ‘Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute – part III’, p. 5; Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute from family, friends and colleagues’, p. 9.

⁶⁹ Burgess and Haynes, p. 201.

his recording of the Vaughan Williams Concerto for Oboe and Strings⁷⁰ highlights the precision and transparency of Leon's tonguing technique. Leon also plays this section at a leisurely tempo of crotchet = 94. In comparison, for example to Ruth Bolster's recording of the same work,⁷¹ she produces a 'fatter' centred note with a bounce-like quality in keeping with modern-day practice (adopting a faster tempo of crotchet = 105); post 1960s teaching practice discouraged (and continues to discourage) playing a very short 'clipped' staccato evident in Leon's technique.

Ex. 3.3. Ralph Vaughan Williams, Concerto for Oboe and Strings in A minor movement 1, oboe part, bars 58-61.⁷²



3.4.3. Vibrato

Although the 'principal influences' of Leon's legacy are often associated with his 'tone and the dynamic phrasing,' his idea of vibrato as 'integral to sound' became a central element of oboe playing from the mid-twentieth century; the concept was accepted as 'absolutely critical for warmth and emotional expression.'⁷³ Credited for introducing frequent and varied use of vibrato into orchestral playing at a time when it was seemingly rarely employed by oboists, Leon's 'more present vibrato' (probably 'new in the 1910s') became 'something of a Goossens trademark.'⁷⁴ Léon recalled how his early career as very young principal oboist with the Queen's Hall Orchestra represented 'a period of isolation from the prevalent style of sound production' and that he was the recipient of 'a great deal of abuse and jibing' from other players.⁷⁵ Persistence in his own concept of a beautiful oboe sound, incorporating vibrato as an 'essential aspect of its singing quality' was, according to Léon appreciated by

⁷⁰ Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Oboe Concerto in A minor*, Léon Goossens / Philharmonia Orchestra/Walter Susskind (HMV CLP 1656, 1952).

⁷¹ Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Oboe Concerto in A minor*, Ruth Bolister / English Chamber Orchestra/Stephen Bell (ASV, CD DCA 1173, 2003).

⁷² Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Concerto for Oboe and Strings* (London: OUP, 1947), oboe part, bars 58-61.

⁷³ Philip, p. 123; Burgess and Haynes, p.260, 264; 'Léon Goossens: 'A centenary tribute - part III', p. 27.

⁷⁴ Goossens and Roxburgh, p. 87; Philip, p. 120; Burgess and Haynes, p. 262.

⁷⁵ Philip, p. 120.

conductors and critics of the day such that his conviction was ‘ultimately justified.’⁷⁶ Léon did not discuss any notion or specific source of inspiration beyond admiration for the playing of his predecessor at the Queen’s Hall Orchestra Henri De Busscher. He did, however report that De Busscher used ‘some breath vibrato’.⁷⁷ Available recordings of De Busscher - post late 1930s - demonstrate a selective use of vibrato both ‘subtle’ and ‘variable,’ and notably ‘fairly slow’ and of ‘medium speed’ at variance with the characteristic fast vibrato of his French School training, although he may have incorporated a more traditional vibrato on occasion.⁷⁸ So it is likely this variability motivated Léon.

What appeared to be unique was Léon’s ability to modify the pulse of his vibrato within the music. Described as ‘in diametrical opposition to the hitherto admired Belgian style,’ ‘far from uniform’ and ‘from infinitesimal to wide as [the] style of a piece demanded’, his vibrato was seen in terms of ‘one of the more precious ornaments of contemporary music’ which ‘gave life to the sound.’⁷⁹ Conversely Worthington observed little discernible variety in the early solo and orchestral recorded canon. Elgar had apparently admired Léon’s use of vibrato in playing *Froissart* as ‘divine – what an artist!’⁸⁰ yet bassoonist Gwydion Brooke, although ‘fascinated with [Leon’s] pulsating expression’ thought it ‘not really a vibrato, but extremely effective.’⁸¹ An assumption that Léon’s vibrato was ‘slow’ and ‘virtually always present,’ whilst often evident in much of the recorded solo canon, concealed his belief of its ‘discriminating use’ including exclusion.⁸² In his recording of Fiocco’s *Arioso* for oboe and piano⁸³ for example, Léon plays much of the work with his characteristic continuous slow pulsed vibrato. Yet in the last three bars of the piece (Ex.3.4) he only uses vibrato sparingly on the quavers in bars 17 and 18. He

⁷⁶ Philip, p. 120; Goossens and Roxburgh, p. 87;

⁷⁷ Burgess and Haynes, p. 263.

⁷⁸ Philip, pp. 122-3; see *The Oboe 1903-1953*: Various artists (Oboe Classics, C2012, 2005) for orchestral repertoire example tracks 13-15. See Burgess and Haynes, pp.259-266 for a succinct history of oboists and their use of vibrato.

⁷⁹ MacGillivray, p. 273; Burgess and Haynes, p. 263; Marion Wilson, ‘Léon Goossens, Oboist’, *The Double Reed e-edition*, 9.3 (1986), *e.idrs.org*, <<http://www.idrs.org/publications/controlled/DR/DR9.3/DR9.3.Wils.Goos.html>>[accessed 22 April 2013]; Worthington, p. 263; Sweeney, ‘An afternoon’s Conversation with Neil Black’, 105.

⁸⁰ Philip, p.146.

⁸¹ Unknown cutting, Centre for Performance History, Léon Goossens Collection; ‘Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute from family, friends and colleagues’, p.11.

⁸² MacGillivray, p. 273; Burgess and Haynes, p. 263. See also Goossens and Roxburgh, p. 88.

⁸³ *Rare Goossens: Léon Goossens*, Léon Goossens, Various artists (oboe classics, CC2005, 2002), track 18.

also softens the timbre in bar 17 before observing the written crescendo and plays the final minim G with no vibrato.

Ex. 3.4. J. H. Fiocco, *Arioso for Oboe and Piano*, oboe part, bars 17-19.⁸⁴



Léon's advice for the most effective and appropriate use of vibrato within a specified style of music continues to offer modern-day oboists an introduction to one aspect of 'expressive application' in phrasing; using a fast vibrato in the 'vigorous and playful music of the classical era' to create 'brilliance and panache,' is one of a number of examples. Nevertheless he cautioned that being 'dogmatic,' but stressed developing an understanding to the 'infinite number of possibilities which affect the interpretation of a piece.'⁸⁵

3.4.4. Rubato

Of all the elements of his musical style Léon's use of rubato was considered his most distinguishing feature.⁸⁶ Léon suggested that 'musical notation' had its 'limits' and could 'never give you the full insight into the way to perform', necessitating 'subtle inflection and shadings.'⁸⁷ Although Léon's approach to using *rubato*⁸⁸ on occasion is reminiscent of the more excessive freedom of the 'vacillating of time values' and 'seductive suspension of rhythm,'⁸⁹ associated with late nineteenth century performance, much of his playing reflects the early twentieth

⁸⁴ J. H. Fiocco, *Arioso for Oboe and Piano*, arr. by Arthur Bent and Norman O'Neill (London: Schott and Co. Ltd., 1910).

⁸⁵ Goossens and Roxburgh, pp.87-93.

⁸⁶ Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute from family, friends and colleagues', p. 12.

⁸⁷ *Rare Goossens*.

⁸⁸ For an in-depth analysis of *rubato* and its evolution from Gregorian Chant, to the present day; its early embodiment as a 'component of technique of melodic variation' to the embellishment of the Renaissance period, the arpeggiation and suspensions in Baroque music, the excessive rhythmic flexibility of the late nineteenth century and the more restrained influences of the neo-classical style of the early twentieth century, and its modern-day limiting and dictated use, see Richard Hudson, *Stolen Time: The History of Tempo Rubato* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

⁸⁹ Hudson, *Stolen Time*, p. 300, 330.

century influences of the neo-classical movement which emphasised a more accurate rhythmic account of works.

Solo oboe recordings from 1905 to 1911 imply a ‘smoother and more regular’ approach associated with the latter half of the twentieth century; British oboist Arthur Foreman’s performance of Schumann’s *Romance No. 1* for oboe and piano Op.94, recorded in 1911, is a notable example of a lack of ‘rhythmic freedom.’⁹⁰ Orchestral recordings dating from the mid-1920s show that Léon was not the only oboist to utilise ‘temporal shaping,’ but he may have been the first oboist to use rubato in solo repertoire recordings, such as his 1925 recording of *Solo de Concours* Op.33 by Charles Colin.⁹¹ Richard Adeney observed a similarity with Pablo Casals: ‘both [Casals and Léon] played with lavish vibrato and both had the same rubato styles – for instance, getting louder as they played rising passages, lingering for a rest on the top note and then scuttling down on the other side’ – and to emphasis notes ‘they played them early.’⁹² Conversely Adeney also cautioned listeners to ‘take an historical leap in order to enjoy what is to be relished as his heartfelt and virtuoso playing’ as Léon’s ‘tricky rubato used regardless of what sort of music he played can sound archaic and even comical.’⁹³ Gareth Stainer, on the other hand thought that ‘the particular way Léon used rubato had, in some sense, the effect of re-creating the music,’ and James Brown suggested that Leon’s ‘unique personal use of rubato [. . .] could be exquisite.’⁹⁴

Contrary to Adeney’s assertion, Léon did not in fact use the same approach to performing all music, as his recording legacy demonstrates.⁹⁵ For example in the Malcolm Arnold *Sonatina* for oboe and pianoforte, apart from a slight *accelerando* in a chromatic scale passage from the second movement, his performance is remarkable

⁹⁰ *The Oboe 1903-1953* (Oboe Classics, C2012, 2005), Track 10; see also George Gillet (Track 2) and Joseph Fonteyn (Tracks 5-6); Richard Hudson, *Stolen Time: The History of Tempo Rubato* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 330.

⁹¹ Worthington, p.317; *Rare Goossens*, Track 15.

⁹² ‘Léon Goossens: ‘A centenary tribute - part II’, p. 12.

⁹³ ‘Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute from family, friends and colleagues’, p. 12

⁹⁴ ‘Léon Goossens: ‘A centenary tribute - part II’, p. 11; ‘Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute from family, friends and colleagues’, p. 12. Gareth Stainer is the son of the composer John Stainer, whose Oboe Quartet (1949) was dedicated to Goossens.

⁹⁵ The National Sound Archive at the British Library house extensive radio broadcasts and commercial recordings. Unfortunately the majority of these recordings cannot be accessed due to an embargo on the material at the time of this study.

for its adherence to strict tempi.⁹⁶ It is a shame that this recording is not readily available, as it helps to place Léon's rubato in a wider context; however, although less striking, his playing of the cor anglais solo at the beginning of Peter Warlock's (1894-1930) *The Curlew*⁹⁷ displays a similar approach (Ex. 3.5). Léon notably uses inequality in the last triplet of the first bar.

Ex. 3.5. Peter Warlock *The Curlew*, cor anglais, bars 1-2.⁹⁸



Léon's 1926 recording of the Mozart Oboe Quartet K370 provides an example of the performance practices of the day,⁹⁹ highlighting Robert Philip's supposition that there was a 'general agreement about the need for flexibility in performance.'¹⁰⁰ The combination of Léon's clearly articulated phrasing with the strings' use of *portamenti*, as well as the ensemble's notable use of rubato, particularly in the second movement, would be viewed today as a highly idiosyncratic performance. For example, in the *adagio* movement (Ex. 3.6a, b) Léon's use of rubato is illustrated in bar 8 where he holds the minim top D for an extra quaver beat before resolving the cadence on to the Eb. The tempo is also moved on in bar 17 and then relaxed from bars 18 to 20. This is in contrast to Léon's later recording made during 1933,¹⁰¹ where he employed subtle use of rubato pausing momentarily on the top Eb in bar 8 and also

⁹⁶ Malcolm Arnold, *Sonatina for oboe and pianoforte* (Croydon: Alfred Lengnick & Co. Ltd., 1951), written for, and dedicated to Goossens. A broadcast performance of this work recorded with pianist Frederick Stone in 1957 from the BBC radio programme 'Léon Goossens', *Mining the Archive* is available via the British Library National Sound Archive.

⁹⁷ Peter Warlock, *The Curlew*, Rene Soames (Tenor), Léon Goossens (cor anglais)/The Aeolian String Quartet (divine art historic sound ddh27811, 2008).

⁹⁸ Peter, Warlock, *The Curlew for Tenor Solo, Flute, English Horn and String Quartet* (London: Stainer & Bell, 1924), cor anglais part, bars 1-2.

⁹⁹ W.A. Mozart, *Oboe Quartet in F K370*, Léon Goossens/Spencer Dyke Quartet (Oboe Classics, CC2012, 2005), movement 2, oboe part, bars 8-9, 17-20.

¹⁰⁰ Philip, *Early Recordings*, p. 37.

¹⁰¹ W. A. Mozart, *Oboe Quartet in F K370*, Léon Goossens/Members of the Lerner String Quartet (Testament, ST 1130, 1988); In Burgess and Haynes, pp. 200-201 a comparison of Léon's recordings with the 1951 recording by the American oboist Marcel Tabuteau details stylistic and notably articulation differences. .

on the first semiquaver D of the second beat in bar 18 before returning to a strict tempo in both instances.

Ex. 3.6a. W. A. Mozart, Oboe Quartet in F K370, movement 2,¹⁰²

Oboe part, bars 8-9.



Ex. 3.6b. W. A. Mozart, Oboe Quartet in F K370, movement 2,¹⁰³

Oboe part, bars 17-20.



Although the core perception of Léon's legacy is centred on his prominent use of rubato (and vibrato), many of the scores he premiered would have provided limited opportunity for such musical flexibility. For example, the Hindemith Oboe Sonata has lyrical sections, but the interplay between oboe and piano restricts deviation from the pulse of the music. Even in works where the musical line could easily be elongated, Léon employs restraint in his use of rubato, such as the Morgan Nicholas *Melody*,¹⁰⁴ allowing the lyricism of a score to be expressed through the music, but never subjugating it.

¹⁰² W. A. Mozart, *Quartet for Oboe, Violin, Viola and Violoncello K.V. 370*, ed. by Léon Goossens (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1942).

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ John Morgan Nicholas (1895-1963), Welsh composer. Goossens recorded the work (written in 1949) in the late 1970s. It is included in *The Goossens Family*, Léon Goossens/Various artists (Chandos, CHAN 7132, 1978)

3.4.5. Tempo

Philip states that early twentieth-century recordings ‘very often show substantially greater fluctuations of tempo within movements [and although] lyrical passages are not consistently slower than in modern performances, the high speed of the vigorous passages creates greater contrast.’¹⁰⁵ However, Léon’s recordings of the Mozart Quartet for oboe and strings K370 released in 1926 and 1933 respectively, do not conform wholly to Philip’s generalisation. In the 1933 recording Léon’s overall performance was measured and had little flexibility of tempo within each movement. In both recordings Léon adopted similar tempi for the final movement’s dotted crotchet = 81. In contrast, the earlier recording’s tempo fluctuation is evident throughout the work and most prominently in the final movement; in bars 95 to 108, where the oboe is in split common time against duple compound in the strings, Léon reduces the tempo to minim = 72, returning to the original tempo of 81 at bar 118 with the restatement of the rondo theme. The first movement is also played at a more leisurely pace than in his later recording at crotchet speeds of 110 and 120 respectively. Without any other recordings of the work from the same period it is difficult to assess whether or not Léon’s performances are archetypal or unconventional. From a tempo perspective the recordings conform only in part to Philip’s overview, yet many contemporary recordings are more representative of his general idea of livelier tempi in fast movements such as the recent recordings by oboists Alexei Ogrintchouk (b.1978) and Hansjorg Schellenberger (b.1948).¹⁰⁶ Other works from Léon’s recording canon have highlighted realisations of works at variance with current performance perceptions. Léon’s only known recording of the Malcolm Arnold Sonata for oboe and piano, discussed earlier in this chapter in relation to rubato, represents a stark contrast to more recent readings of the piece.¹⁰⁷ Although Léon maintained a strict pulse comparable with modern performances, his notable steady tempo of dotted crotchet = 126 in the final movement is contrary to the composer’s direction (dotted crotchet = 152). Léon’s balance of panache and sense of fun, stands out against modern-day performances where technical bravura and fluency

¹⁰⁵ Philip, p.17.

¹⁰⁶ W. A. Mozart, *Oboe Quartet in F K370*, Alexei Ogrintchouk/ Boris Broytsyn (violin), Maxim Rysanov (viola), Kristina Blaumane (‘cello) (BIS, BIS2007, 2013); W. A. Mozart, *Oboe Quartet in F K370*, Hansjorg Schellenberger/ Daniel Gigberger (violin), Hariolf Schlichtig (viola), Wen-Sinn Yang (cello) (Solo Musica, C130199, 2014).

¹⁰⁷ *Mining the Archives*.

(though often remarkable, as demonstrated in the recordings by oboists Jeremy Polmear and Gareth Hulse),¹⁰⁸ present Arnold's quintessential quirky writing in this work as a virtuosic technical exercise. The reason that contemporary performances are devoid of any animated characterisation in the finale is likely to be the result of the more prescriptive performance practices of the late twentieth century and a near fervent adherence to composers' tempo markings. Given that the work was written for Léon it would be reasonable to assume that Arnold was happy with his performance. It was a popular work in Léon's repertoire with fifty-eight documented performances over a nineteen-year period.¹⁰⁹ Arnold had completed his work in 1952 when Léon's influence on a younger generation of players was beginning to wane so it is not wholly surprising that Léon's concept of the piece was marginalised.

3.5. Programming

A breadth of experience in a variety of musical genres helped establish a wide audience base for Léon's concerts. As a concerto soloist, he was considered 'incomparable.'¹¹⁰ In addition having worked with dance bands in the 1920s and 30s,¹¹¹ as well as in musical theatre, his recitals and lecture recitals for music society events throughout the United Kingdom offered 'works from the entire literature of his instrument.'¹¹² An essential part of Léon's performance style was his ability to communicate with an audience: 'he never talked down to his audiences, particularly in schools, where he did splendid work introducing music to the young.'¹¹³ He reportedly had a tangible stage presence and 'enormous charm'; oboist Sarah Francis affirmed that 'what people forget today is that Léon was a charming man and a great raconteur'; Mabel Lovering agreed that Léon's 'theatrical background was evident in the immense care he took over every detail of a recital.'¹¹⁴ Although Léon was

¹⁰⁸ Malcolm Arnold, *Sonatina Op.28*, Jeremy Polmear (oboe) and Diana Ambache (piano) (PA3001, 1991); Malcolm Arnold, *Sonatina Op.28*, Gareth Hulse (oboe) and Ian Brown (piano) (Hyperion, CDH55072, 1984).

¹⁰⁹ Centre for Performance History, Léon Goossens Collection.

¹¹⁰ Warrack, 'Léon Goossens', p. 12.

¹¹¹ Léon worked a variety of dance bands of the day including the Van Phillips All-Star Orchestra, see *Rare Goossens*, track 20. In 1959 Léon also recorded a short solo for George Melachrino (1909-1965), see *Rendezvous in Rome*, The Melachrino Strings and Orchestra/ George Melachrino (Vocalion Ltd., CDVS1963, 2010), track 10.

¹¹² 'Mr Léon Goossens: Prince of oboists', *The Times*, 15 February 1988, p. 14

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Mining the Archive*; In conversation with Sarah Francis, March 2009; 'Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute from family, friends and colleagues', p. 13; 'Léon Goossens: 'A centenary tribute - part II'', p.10.

criticised on occasion for his narrative skills - ‘loquacious, talking indeed (about his instrument and pieces) for longer time than he played’ – Sidney Sutcliffe maintained that his ‘personality and platform manner were such that ‘one always felt one had got one’s moneysworth even before [he] had played a note.’¹¹⁵

It was not unusual in his early solo career for Léon to share a concert platform with another solo artist, typically, but not exclusively, a singer. He often appeared with the sopranos Isobel Baillie (1895-1983) and Dorothy Silk (1883 -1942), baritone Sumner Austin (1888-1981) and bass-baritone (Sir Donald) Keith Faulkner (1900-1994); their recitals included one or more Bach Cantata arias with oboe obligato. Over the years Léon also worked with a variety of accompanists of whom he reportedly considered as an ‘equal partner’; notable long associations were with Iris Loveridge, Mabel Lovering (who recalled working with Léon was ‘full of interest and happiness’), Ivor Newton, David Lloyd and Keith Swallow.¹¹⁶ Both Lovering and Newton recollected that concert practice sessions were ‘kept to a minimum’ as Léon believed it ‘interfere[d] with the spontaneity of the performance.’¹¹⁷ Léon also performed with many internationally celebrated pianists of the day including York Bowen, Harriet Cohen, Clifford Curzon and Gerald Moore.

Short pieces were a popular feature of his programming and were his stock in trade for over fifty years; Léon was credited with a ‘Beecham-like ability’ to perform ‘some trivial piece and make it sound masterly.’¹¹⁸ Ernest Bradbury in his *Yorkshire Post* review of a performance in Leeds in 1967 described ‘a characteristic oboe recital of music by no fewer than 10 composers ranging from Bach to modern English works.’¹¹⁹ Léon played various combinations of miniature works regularly, material that would be considered trite and unworthy of a concert platform for modern-day audiences, yet it was rare for him not to include at least one medley of ‘lollipops’ in his concerts (see figures 3.4 and 3.5). Their inclusion was not limited to the recital circuit, as they were also performed at major events; for example, a selection of items was

¹¹⁵ ‘Loquacious Celebrity’, *Yorkshire Post*, 23 October 1961, p. 5; ‘Léon Goossens: ‘A centenary tribute - part II’, p.10.

¹¹⁶ ‘Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute from family, friends and colleagues’, pp. 13, 14; Centre for Performance History, Léon Goossens Collection.

¹¹⁷ ‘Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute from family, friends and colleagues’, p. 13; ‘Léon Goossens Interviews 4’, *e.YouTube.com*

¹¹⁸ Warrack, ‘Léon Goossens’, p. 12.

¹¹⁹ ‘Versatility of Oboeist’, *Yorkshire Post*, 3 November 1967, p. 10.

included in his regular appearances at the Royal Choral Society's annual carol concerts given at the Royal Albert Hall.¹²⁰ It is probable that these pieces which included some tradition folk-song arrangements such as 'The Londonderry Air' and 'The Bard of Armagh' provided additional material to the limited repertoire for the instrument available at the start of Léon's solo career in the early 1920s. On occasions he also played concerto reductions including the Cimerosa Oboe Concerto abridged for oboe and string quartet. Similarly the 'Sinfonia' (adagio section) from the Easter Oratorio by J. S. Bach originally scored for oboe, strings and continuo was programmed in a variety of guises: oboe and string quartet, oboe and organ, as well as oboe and piano.¹²¹

Fig. 3.4. Lecture Recital Programme for Ascot Music Society 30 September, 1945¹²²

ASCOT MUSIC SOCIETY <i>Under the Patronage of Their Highnesses Princess Victoria and Princess Marie Louise</i>	PROGRAMME	
NINTH CONCERT <i>of</i>	I <i>Short Lecture</i>	
CHAMBER MUSIC <i>On</i>	II <i>Sonata in G Minor</i>	<i>Handel</i>
SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 30 th 1945	III	
At 3pm	<i>Arioso</i>	<i>Fiocco</i>
<i>At</i>	<i>Entrée et Cotillion</i>	<i>Senaille</i>
	<i>Prelude, Easter Oratorio</i>	<i>Bach</i>
	<i>Allegro</i>	<i>Loeillet</i>
ST MARY'S CONVENT, ASCOT	IV	
LECTURE RECITAL <i>BY</i>	<i>Pavane</i>	<i>Ravel</i>
LEON GOOSSENS (Oboe)	<i>Pièce</i>	<i>Hue</i>
<i>At the piano:</i>	<i>Adagio</i>	<i>Fauré</i>
MABEL LOVERING	<i>Siciliano</i>	<i>Templeton</i>
	<i>Air and Hornpipe</i>	<i>Purcell</i>

¹²⁰ Ibid. For a selection of recorded short works see *Rare Goossens*.

¹²¹ Centre for Performance History, Léon Goossens Collection. For a performance of the Bach 'Sinfonia' 'with string quartet see *Rare Goossens* and with organ see 'Léon Goossens Interviews 5', *e.YouTube.com*, < <http://www.youtube.com/user/spence22>>[accessed 28 January 2015].

¹²² Centre for Performance History, Léon Goossens Collection.

Fig. 3.5. Recital Programme for Leeds Concert Society, 15 May, 1944¹²³

MONDAY EVENING		
15th May - - - 1944		
LEON GOOSSENS	<i>Oboe</i>	
RONALD STEAR	<i>Bass</i>	
GERALD MOORE	<i>Pianoforte</i>	
PROGRAMME		
<i>I</i>		
Sonata for Oboe and Pianoforte	<i>York Bowen</i>	
Allegretto grazioso Andante Allegro giocoso		
LEON GOOSSENS and GERALD MOORE		
<i>II</i>		
Gute Nacht	}	<i>Schubert</i>
Der Atlas		
Der Doppepgänger		
Auf dem Kirchhofe	}	<i>Brahms</i>
Der Musikant		<i>Wolf</i>
RONALD STEAR		
<i>III</i>		
Sonata for Oboe and Pianoforte	<i>Hindemith</i>	
Munther Sehr Langsam und Lebhaft		
LEON GOOSSENS and GERALD MOORE		
INTERVAL		
<i>IV</i>		
Ye twice ten hundred Deities	<i>Purcell</i>	
Silent Noon	<i>Vaughan Williams</i>	
Trottin' to the Fair	<i>Stanford</i>	
Spring Sorrow	<i>John Ireland</i>	
By a Bier Side	<i>Armstrong Gibbs</i>	
RONALD STEAR		
Es ist vollbracht (with Oboe Obligato)	<i>Bach</i>	
RONALD STEAR and LEON GOOSSENS		
<i>V</i>		
Romance	<i>Debussy</i>	
Couvre-Feu	<i>Barthe</i>	
Aubade	<i>Pierne</i>	
Allegro	<i>Locillet</i>	
LEON GOOSSENS		

Consequently, when the composer Mary Chandler (1911-1996) composed her Concerto for oboe d'amore and strings for Léon in 1953, two alternative arrangements with string quartet as well as a reduction with piano were prepared by the composer.¹²⁴ Later in life Léon expressed a preference for not providing programme details in advance, enjoying the flexibility in deciding recital content on the day or even as a performance progressed: 'if I don't feel like playing one of the works when

¹²³ Centre for Performance History, Léon Goossens Collection

¹²⁴ Mary Chandler, *Concerto for oboe d'amore and strings* (Lancaster: Phylloscopus Publications, 1993). Premiered by Léon in a BBC Radio broadcast in May 1956 with a further two public performances that year. The accompanying notes to the score incorrectly credit Léon with only one performance. Chandler, who had studied with Léon, was principal oboe with the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra 1944-58; see 'Mary Chandler', *Contemporary Music Review*, e.dix. doi.org, <<http://dix.doi.org/10.1080/07494446900640651>> [accessed 28 January 2015].

it comes to it, then I just don't play it. That way I feel I can give the audience what I feel best able to do at the time.'

Despite the significant impact of Léon's contribution to twentieth-century oboe performance practice, his influence, though acknowledged, is rarely considered outside a historical context; his sound in particular grounded in the early twentieth-century French School of playing is seen as old-fashioned and at odds with the universal richer tones of today's practice ideals. Yet the interrelated elements that collectively defined Léon's musicianship – his phrasing and his distinctive use of rubato, vibrato and tempi as well as programming – can offer a complementary approach to shaping music within the modern-day performance sphere.

Chapter 4: Commentary on the Recordings

4.1 Introduction

The practical element of my study explores Léon's interpretative ideals through a series of recordings. In essence each performance represents an adaptation of Léon's subtle and overt use of melodic and *tempo rubato* and tone colouring with my own style of playing. The six recordings are a compilation of audio and video performances are primarily of works written for and/or dedicated to Léon. This includes standard works (for example the York Bowen Sonata for oboe and piano Op. 85) plus repertoire yet to be established such as Alan Richardson's *Three Pieces* for oboe and piano. One recording represents a selection of Léon's short pieces to highlight his distinctive style of programming. Two case studies are presented: the Quintet for oboe and strings by Arnold Bax, written for and dedicated to Léon, compares the relatively reserved approach in modern recordings with Léon's 1926 recording, and my own performance of the work in which I adopt Léon's performance strategies; the *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid for Solo Oboe* Op. 49 (1951) by Benjamin Britten uses Léon's performance ideals to reassess connections between the narrative and musical gestures of Britten's work and to interrogate the enduring performance tradition of Joy Boughton (1913-63), the dedicatee. The recordings offer contemporary and historical perspectives played on a modern-day oboe (a 2008 Buffet Greenline model) and a restored 1926 Lorée oboe of the type played by Léon. Apart from two studio recordings (Benjamin Britten's *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid* and Alan Richardson's French Suite for oboe and piano), the remainder are single-take 'live' recordings to reflect that Léon's career unfolded at a time when the benefits of editing recordings was technically not possible. Minimal editing of my audio recordings was used to reduce the impact of 'slips' as well as acoustic and performance imbalances. Video performances are unedited.

Recording on the 1926 Lorée oboe is limited to the Bax Oboe Quintet. Although a successful recording, given the age of the instrument (despite restoration), fundamental intonation stability and reliability proved to be challenging in performance. As much as it was an informative experience playing an original early twentieth-century oboe from a mechanical perspective (with its lighter weight and

open-hole reduced key function), apart from greater graduation control and some discernible difference in sound quality, overall the differences between the Lorée and the modern-day Buffet are negligible. In so far as the older oboe provided some practical insight into earlier performance practices as highlighted in the previous chapter, it was crucial to reconcile Léon's performance ideals with contemporary ideologies, adapting them to the modern-day performance sphere; ultimately, playing the Buffet was of greater importance than the Lorée.

The aim in performance was to adapt Léon's particular idiomatic use of *rubato* and *tempo* fluctuation, and to a lesser extent varying vibrato speeds and heightened dynamic range. The major challenge was in producing a lighter sound that reflected Léon's ebullient and poignant tone qualities, his thinner timbre contrasting with richer tone ideals of modern-day performing practices. This was achieved by making reeds with cane gouged thinner, narrower in shape than my usual style and, in contrast to Léon's shape, using a long scrape profile. I reverted to my standard reeds following recordings of Alan Richardson's French Suite, and the York Bowen and Arnold Cooke works to reflect a modern-day approach within the context of Léon's ideals.

4.2 Selection process

The recordings represent a broad spectrum of works from Léon's solo repertoire reflecting his influence in championing British composers to write for the instrument as well as pieces that he performed for much of his solo career. The music spans from 1923 (the Bax Oboe Quintet) to 1977 (Richardson's *Three Pieces* for oboe and piano) and the recordings are primarily of works for oboe and piano, although concerto, chamber and solo genres are represented (see Figure 4.1). Alan Richardson is featured prominently as my research uncovered a significant amount of unpublished material housed at the Royal Academy of Music, London. These works were either hitherto forgotten, unknown or thought to be lost.¹²⁵ Much of the Richardson material was for oboe, the majority of which was written for Richardson's wife, oboist Janet Craxton (1929-81).¹²⁶ However there were three works written for Léon: a Sonata for oboe

¹²⁵ Conrad Wilson, 'Alan Richardson', *e.oxfordmusiconline.com*, <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/article/grove/music/23385>> [accessed 15 October 2010], lists a number of Richardson's published works, but does not include any unpublished items.

¹²⁶ London, Royal Academy of Music Library, Alan Richardson Collection.

and piano, believed lost, and two unknown celebration works for Léon's seventieth and eightieth birthdays, *Goossens' Birthday Pieces* and *Three Pieces* for oboe and piano, respectively. I gave the first known UK Northern performance of the Sonata and the first known public performances of the *Three Pieces* and the final movement from *Goossens' Birthday Pieces*.

4.3 Background and Context

The selected pieces highlight the oboe's inherent 'pastoral' qualities, reflecting the manifest lyricism fundamental to Léon's style of playing and one that I have endeavoured to emphasise in my recordings. All performances capture Léon's characteristic approach of balancing rubato, beauty of line and panache. Where relevant I have shown any altered articulation and phrasing under notation in each extract with the original above.

Fig.4.1. Recorded Performances

Title	Works
The Alan Richardson Collection	Sonata for oboe and piano Op. 40 French Suite for oboe and piano Three Pieces for oboe and piano <i>Roundelay</i> for oboe and piano (1935)
Selected dedicated repertoire	Arnold Cook, Sonata for oboe and pianoforte Gordon Jacob, Concerto No. 2 for oboe and orchestra
Non-dedicated repertoire	Lennox Berkeley, Sonatina for oboe and piano Op. 61 Gordon Jacob, Sonatina for oboe and harpsichord (or piano)
Case Study 1	Arnold Bax, Quintet for oboe and strings
Case Study 2	Benjamin Britten, <i>Six Metamorphoses after Ovid</i> for solo oboe Op. 49
Filmed Live Concerts	York Bowen, Sonata for oboe and piano Op.85 <u>Goossens style programme concert:</u> Franz Reizenstein, Sonatina for oboe and piano Op.11 Alec Rowley, Pavan and Dance for oboe and piano Alan Richardson, Vivace from Goossens' <i>Birthday Pieces</i> for oboe and piano J.B. Loeillet, Sonata in C major for oboe and piano Alan Richardson, Scherzino for oboe and piano Op.23 Alec Templeton, Scherzo Caprice for oboe and piano Thomas Pitfield, Rondo Lirico for oboe and piano Alan Richardson, A Reverie for oboe and piano Op. 23 No. 1

4.4 The Performances

4.4.1. CD 1: The Alan Richardson Collection

Alan Richardson was born in Edinburgh in 1904. After working as a pianist for the BBC in the city he moved to London in 1928 to study piano and composition with Harold Craxton (in whose household Richardson lodged and whose daughter, Janet he later married) at the Royal Academy of Music.¹²⁷ Thereafter information of Richardson's life is limited to a reference of a tour of Australia and New Zealand as an accompanist in 1931, working with the violinist Carl Flesch (1873-1944) from 1936 until 1939 and his appointment to teach at the Royal Academy of Music in 1960.¹²⁸ Richardson is mostly remembered, if at all, for his piano compositions.¹²⁹ There is also a large collection of small-scale instrumental works mainly for two or three players. Many of these works included the oboe, a favourite instrument of the composer 'due to the inspiration and encouragement of his great friend Léon Goossens.'¹³⁰ Janet and Alan often worked together and notably gave the UK premiere of Poulenc's Sonata for oboe and piano.¹³¹ They also produced and edited two books for oboe beginners for which Alan wrote some of the short studies and pieces.¹³² The *Allegretto* from the Aria and Allegretto for oboe and piano (1964) is the only available recording from his canon of oboe works.¹³³

¹²⁷ Harold Craxton (1885-1971), influential teacher, composer and pianist. He is probably best known for his editorial work with Donald Tovey on the Beethoven piano sonatas and Chopin piano works published by the Associated Board.

¹²⁸ Conrad Wilson, 'Alan Richardson' *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. by Stanley Sadie, 29 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1980), xxi.334.

¹²⁹ Janet Craxton, 'About Alan.' in *Thanksgiving Concert in memory of Alan Richardson*. Wigmore Hall Thursday 3rd January 1980.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ The performance was given at the Wigmore Hall on Monday 17 June 1963, which followed the world premiere by Pierre Pierlot and Jacques Fevrier at the Strasbourg Festival on 8 June in the same year. Janet studied with Pierlot at the Paris Conservatoire 1948-49.

¹³² *First Book of Oboe Solos*, ed. & arr. by Janet Craxton and Alan Richardson (London: Faber Music Ltd., 1971), *Second Book of Oboe Solos*, ed. & arr. by Janet Craxton and Alan Richardson (London: Faber Music Ltd., 1972).

¹³³ *The Art of Janet Craxton*, Janet Craxton/Various artist (BBC Enterprises Ltd., CD 635, 1987).

Alan Richardson (1904-1977)

Sonata for oboe and piano Op. 40

1. Vivace 2. Lento languido 3. Allegretto: ben misurato

The Sonata, dedicated to Léon, is in manuscript form. There is also no separate oboe part.¹³⁴ Although the composer often dated and timed his scores, even each movement in an extended work, the manuscript is undated, though it may have been a commission for the 1951 Festival of Britain.¹³⁵ There is no evidence to date of Léon having performed the work. A performance by oboist Dinah Demuth accompanied by Richardson, given as part of a concert of British works at the Purcell Room in London on 30 April 1967, was not advertised as a new work implying an earlier premiere was likely.¹³⁶

The compact construction of the first and third movements is unexpected. The shifting tempi and rhythmic patterns only allow for some subtle use of Léon's expressive style; for example in the first movement I was able to briefly linger on quaver Eb at the beginning of bar 11, ignoring the directed staccato and the tied crotchet A (fourth beat bar 14) to give greater shape to the phrase (Ex. 4.1, track 1, 0'18''- 0'34'').

Ex. 4.1. Alan Richardson, Sonata for oboe and piano Op. 40, movement 1, oboe part, bars 10-15¹³⁷



I also add a *ritenuto* from bar 45 to heighten the *molto legato* and momentary relaxation of rhythmic pulse re-establishing tempo at bar 52 (Ex. 4.2, 1'34''-1'48'')

¹³⁴ Royal Academy of Music Library, Alan Richardson Collection.

¹³⁵ Wilson, p. 334.

¹³⁶ S.W., 'Detecting a Concert', *The Times* 1 May 1967, p. 6, described the work as a 'brilliant oboe sonata'.

¹³⁷ Alan Richardson, *Sonata for Oboe and Piano Op.40* (n.p.: n.pub., 195?).

Ex. 4.2. Alan Richardson, Sonata for oboe and piano Op. 40, movement 1,
oboe part, bars 45-52.



At the coda (bar 130 to end) I play the directed ‘*a tempo*’, but add a *rituendo* at the end of bar 133 playing the last three bars as a flourish at tempo, articulating the last two notes to emphasise the finality of the movement (Ex.4.3, 4’12’’ - 4’30’’).

Ex. 4.3. Alan Richardson, Sonata for oboe and piano Op. 40, movement 1,
oboe part, bars 130-138.

The central rhapsody provides greater opportunity for a broader use of Léon’s performance ideals. Free use of *rubato* is evident throughout my performance. For example, in bar 9 I shape the phrase by briefly pausing on the tied quaver A before racing through the scale passage then easing into bar 10 (Ex.4.4, track 2, 0’58’’-1’09’’).

Ex. 4.4. Alan Richardson, Sonata for oboe and piano Op. 40, movement 2,
oboe part, bars 9-10.

In bars 12-16 I play slightly faster to move through the phrase before returning to my *tempo primo* at the upbeat to bar 17 (Ex.4.5, 1'22'' - 1'54'').

Ex. 4.5. Alan Richardson, Sonata for oboe and piano Op. 40, movement 2,
oboe part, bars 12-16.



to maintain the movement's sense of languor I alter the directed oboe articulation by slurring the ascending demisemiquavers in bar 26 (original staccato notation shown below) to imitate the piano phrase in the previous bar (Ex. 4.6, 2'53'' - 3'05'').

Ex. 4.6. Alan Richardson, Sonata for oboe and piano Op. 40, movement 2,
oboe part, bars 25-26.

In the final movement I play the rondo theme with a energetic articulation to emulate Léon's clarity of tonguing, featuring a *rituendo* in the lilting figure that precedes the first reiteration (Ex.4.7, track 3, 0'39''), as well as incorporating Léon's 'lingering' and 'scuttling down' trait in the scale passages for example in bars 28 to 30 (Ex.4.8, 0'45'' - 0'49'').

Ex. 4.7. Alan Richardson, Sonata for oboe and piano Op. 40, movement 3,
oboe part, bars24-25.



Ex. 4.8 .Alan Richardson, Sonata for oboe and piano Op. 40, movement 3,
oboe part bars28-30.



The passage preceding the final rondo I interpret as a cadenza rather than as directed, playing an extended *accelerando*, highlighting the ascending chromatic (bars117-118) over the five bar phrase (Ex. 4.9, 3'22'' - 3'31'').

Ex. 4.9. Alan Richardson, Sonata for oboe and piano Op. 40, movement 3,
oboe part bars117-121.

French Suite for Oboe and Piano

1. Rendezvous 2. Les Peupliers 3. Passepiéd 4. Causerie 5. Les Moulins

The work, written in 1946, is a pictorial description evoking characteristic aspects of French life. There are no reviews of the work's premiere; however its first Manchester

performance, by Léon and Alan at the Houldsworth Hall on 24 March 1953, was favourably received as a ‘graceful tribute to the early French masters’ written with ‘brevity, civility and polish.’¹³⁸

The French Suite was the first work that I recorded as well as the first of the two studio recordings. At this initial stage of my research I had started experimenting with narrow shaped and thinner gouged cane to help produce a sound reminiscent of Léon’s lighter and flexible timbre. An easier tonguing facility was a consequence. This helped me to play a very short clearly articulated *staccato*, for which Léon was known, unmistakable at the beginning of the ‘Rendezvous’ and also throughout the ‘Passepiéd’. The result produces a distinctive contrast to the slurred notation, creating a variety of tonal colour. It was also easier to maintain the momentum of these lively movements because the effort of tonguing was much less than on my wider shaped and thicker gouged reeds. Nevertheless the modern-day richness of tone remains at times such as the tied E flat at the *poco rit.* (Ex. 4.10, track 4, 2’42’’- 2’44’’) and the final top B natural at the end of the ‘Rendezvous’ (Ex. 4.11, 2’53’’- 2’56’’).

Ex. 4.10. Alan Richardson, French Suite, Rendezvous oboe part bars 87-88.



Ex. 4.11. Alan Richardson, French Suite, Rendezvous, oboe part, bars 93-95.



For much of the work I adhere to the composer’s directions. However I incorporate some subtle use of *rubato*, for example in bar 6 of ‘Les Peupliers’ (Ex. 4.12, track 5, 0’16’’- 0’22’’) and also free use throughout ‘Causerie’, where I shape each short

¹³⁸ Wilson, ‘Alan Richardson’, *Oxford Music online*.

phrase to reflect the title (a conversation) and also its plaintive character, for example bars 8 to 11 (Ex. 4.13, track 7, 0'34''- 0'52'').

Ex. 4.12. Alan Richardson, French Suite, Les Peupliers, oboe part, bars 5-6.



Ex. 4.13. Alan Richardson, French Suite, Causerie, oboe part, bars 8-11.



Three Pieces for oboe and piano

(An eightieth birthday tribute to Léon Goossens)

1. Retrospect 2. Memento 3. Quick Dance

The second of two birthday commemoration pieces Richardson had composed for Léon is clearly signed 'from' rather than 'by Alan Richardson' (see Fig. 2.1 p. 72). It was also the last work Richardson completed before his death. My performance was the first known of the work.

In contrast to the majority of works in this study my playing here is mostly understated to convey the work's simplicity. Although the spirited last movement is uncomplicated, the first two were more challenging; the elegiac character suggested by their respective titles and in particular the sustained rise and fall of phrasing requires seemingly effortless control. Despite its underlying melancholy I highlight the playful features in the first movement using crisp articulation and, for example shape the cadenza-like figure bars 19 and 20 (Ex.4.14, track 9, 0'35''- 0'39'') in Léon's characteristic style of lingering before moving through the descending scale figure. I also change the tonal colour at the *infatico* (bar 43) to a bright, edgy *forte* followed by a much softer timbre played *mezzo piano* in response (Ex. 4.15, 1'24''- 1'39'').

Ex. 4.14. Alan Richardson, Three Pieces for oboe and piano, Retrospect,
oboe part, bars 19-20.



Ex. 4.15. Alan Richardson, Three Pieces for oboe and piano, Retrospect,
oboe part, bars 43-51.



The opening of the second movement (Ex.4.16, track 10) I play like a recitative, shaping the music with notable use of *rubato* in bars 3 and 5 and also sustain the phrase in one breath to impart the sense of Leon's effortless continuity (0'-0'30''). I explore the movement's plaintive character by, for example playing *piano* and without any *vibrato* at the first *espressivo* section (from bar 8, 0'37''- 1'08''), contrasting this approach by adding warmth using a medium speed *vibrato* with a dynamic of *mezzo forte* at its reappearance in bar 28. I also quicken the vibrato on the top F and D dotted crotchets in bars 30 and 32 respectively to enhance the intensity of the phrase (Ex.4.17, 2'23''- 2'56'') reflecting Leon's variation in vibrato pulse.

Ex. 4.16. Alan Richardson, Three Pieces for oboe and piano, Memento,
oboe part, bars 1- 14.



Ex. 4.17. Alan Richardson, Three Pieces for oboe and piano, Memento,
oboe part, bars 28-33.



The *Quick Dance* is a marked contrast to the more reflective character of the previous movements. I adopt a lively dotted minim pulse of 69 beats per minute to exploit the melodic brilliance of Richardson's writing, relaxing the tempo (dotted minim = c.48) at the *piu grazioso* section (bars 57 to 80), a brief interlude before playing an *accelerando* from bar 82 returning to *tempo primo* bar 84 through to the work's conclusion (Ex.4.18, track 11, 0'52'' - 1'28'').

Ex. 4.18. Alan Richardson, Three Pieces for oboe and piano, Quick Dance,
oboe part, bars 57-87.

Roundelay for oboe and piano (1935)

Roundelay was written for and dedicated to the oboist Helen Gaskell (1906 - 2002), who studied with Léon and also taught Janet Craxton. There is also an edition for clarinet and piano; when performed by the clarinetist Gervase de Peyer it was

described as a ‘pastoral affair with soft melodic curves and an air of peacefulness.’¹³⁹ Of the chosen repertoire the featured scale patterns of the *Roundelay* provide a natural palette for overt rubato and dynamic variation. I use an almost constant ebb and flow throughout bringing into play a little less or more with each repetition of the rondo theme in particular (track 12, 0’2’’- 4’09’’).

4.4.2. CD 2: Selected dedicated repertoire

Arnold Cooke (1906-2005), Sonata for oboe and pianoforte

1. Andante-Allegro-Andante-Allegro vivace
2. Andante-Poco piu mosso-Andante
3. Allegro giocoso-andante

Cooke wrote four works for the oboe.¹⁴⁰ The Quartet for oboe and string trio (1948) Concerto for oboe and strings (1954), and Sonata for oboe and piano (1957) were written for, and dedicated to, Léon; the latter was premiered by Léon at the 1958 Cambridge Festival.¹⁴¹ A second sonata for oboe and harpsichord was completed in 1962 for Evelyn Rothwell (1911-2008) and Valda Aveling (1920-2007).¹⁴² My performance of the Sonata was the first known since 1981,¹⁴³ and was given as part of my first recital. Experimenting with a lighter timbre, as well as varying degrees of *rubato*, articulation and tempo variation, I produce a comparable thinner and edgier tone quality reminiscent of Léon’s soundworld. In the opening section of the first movement I play quite freely, extending the inherent lyricism of the writing (Ex. 4.19, track 1, 0’- 0’45’’); in contrast, the lively intervening episodes adhere to a mostly

¹³⁹ Harrison Morris, ‘Gervase de Peyer’, *The Times*, 13 May 1981, p. 11.

¹⁴⁰ According to Eric Wetherell, ‘Arnold Cooke: In celebration of the 90th birthday of Arnold Cooke 4 November 1996’. Monograph No. 3 (1996), 25, ‘Cooke acknowledged in a radio talk that his favourite instruments were the clarinet and oboe’.

¹⁴¹ Alan Poulter, *A Dictionary-Catalogue of Modern British Composers*, 3 vols. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000), i.528. First Broadcast on BBC radio with Léon Goossens and Clifton Helliwell (piano), 19 February 1959.

¹⁴² Aveling was considered ‘one of the most versatile keyboard players of her generation.’ See Pamela Nash, Obituaries: ‘Valda Aveling’, *The Guardian* 18 December, 2007, p. 34. Rothwell and Aveling also commissioned works for oboe and harpsichord from Arnold Cooke (Sonata, 1963); Stephen Dodgson (Suite in D, 1972) and Elizabeth Maconchy (Three Bagatelles, 1972).

¹⁴³ The 1981 performance was given by Léon and pianist Keith Swallow for the Serenade Arts Trust, Plymouth; see London, Royal College of Music, Centre for Performance History, Concert Programmes, Léon Goossens Collection.

strict tempo, for example from the first *Allegro vivace* at bar 21(Ex. 4.20, 1'52''-1'58'') giving a bounce-like quality and impetus to the phrase, reflecting Léon's clear and incisive style of tonguing.

Ex.4.19. Arnold Cooke, Sonata for oboe and piano, movement 1, oboe part, bars 1-10.

The musical score for Ex. 4.19 is in 4/4 time and marked *Andante*. It consists of two staves of music. The first staff begins with a whole rest, followed by a half note G4, then a triplet of eighth notes (A4, B4, C5), and continues with a melodic line. The second staff continues the melody with various articulations, including slurs and accents.

Ex.4.20. Arnold Cooke, Sonata for oboe and piano, movement 1, oboe part, bars 21-25.

The musical score for Ex. 4.20 is in 4/4 time and marked *Allegro vivace*. It consists of a single staff of music. The first measure has a *sub f* dynamic marking. The melody is characterized by a bouncy, rhythmic quality with various articulations, including slurs and accents.

For much of movement two I adopt a slow pace (mirroring Léon's adoption of slow tempi for expressive purposes) to highlight its elegiac character, maintaining a sense of continuity through long phrases with extended breath control; bars 67 to 77 are played in one breath (Ex.4.21, track 2, 3'43''- 4'30') with subtle use of *rubato*.

Ex.4.21. Arnold Cooke, Sonata for oboe and piano, movement 2,
oboe part, bars 67-77.

I play the final movement at a brisk tempo in keeping with the spirited writing, reflective of Léon's clear virtuosic playing. Varying the shape of phrasing using dynamic and tone variation as well as minimal use of *rubato*, I alter given articulation on occasion such as in bars 151 to 153 where I break the slurred phrase, tonguing the dotted crotchet G and D sharps to give greater emphasis to the top D sharp (Ex. 4.22, track 3, 3'07''-3'12'').

Ex.4.22. Arnold Cooke, Sonata for oboe and piano, movement 3,
oboe part, bars 151-153.

Gordon Jacob (1895-1984), Concerto No. 2 for oboe and orchestra.

1. *Allegro-Lento-Adagio molto-Allegro vivace* 2. *Andante* 3. *Allegro molto*

In addition to his two oboe concertos, Jacob wrote a further eight solo and chamber scores for the instrument including a number of works dedicated to Léon. These were the Concerto No.1 for Oboe and Strings (1935) (originally written for Léon's pupil, Evelyn Rothwell), the Quartet for Oboe and Strings (1938) and *A Birthday Card for Léon Goossens* (1977).

The Concerto was commissioned by Léon¹⁴⁴ on behalf of the British Council for a tour to Russia in April 1956.¹⁴⁵ The work was premiered by Léon at the Leningrad Philharmonic Hall on 25 April, with a repeat performance in Moscow on 7 May.¹⁴⁶ The first British performances were given by Léon in the same year; a BBC broadcast on 27 August with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra was followed by a public performance with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra on 15 November.¹⁴⁷ The Concerto is scored for a classical orchestra configuration of strings and double woodwind, horns and trumpets. Jacob omitted oboes as he felt that they would ‘obscure the solo part’.¹⁴⁸

A private recording of Léon’s radio broadcast enabled a comparison of my performance,¹⁴⁹ the first known of the work since the 1970s. I reflect Léon’s characteristic playing of rising and falling phrases via a *tempo rubato* throughout, most notably in the second movement as well as in both cadenzas from the outer two movements; these are idiosyncratically shaped and more contemplative and leisurely than Léon’s. My reading of the work captures the score’s overt lyrical narrative as well as conveying a sense of the work’s restless quality. At the start of the work (Ex.4.23, CD 2 track 4, 0’26’’- 1’40’’), I play a *rallentando* extended over the five bars as an introduction to the *adagio* at bar 21, contrasting with Léon’s recitative-like approach using rubato throughout to shape the musical line. However, my use of a Goossens-style rubato throughout this section is clear, particularly in the bar before the *Adagio Molto* and notably in the bar before letter A as well as in the final recapitulation of the theme following letter Q (Ex.4.24, 9’08’’- 9’46’’) at the end of the movement.

¹⁴⁴ Alan Poulton, *A Dictionary-Catalogue of Modern British Composers* 3 vols. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000), ii.909. In personal communication to the author, Margaret Hyatt (Jacob’s widow) stated that ‘I cannot swear that the British Council funded the project [the commissioned concerto], but they certainly funded other works of his [Jacob’s] so I imagine the same procedure was followed for this occasion. I very much doubt Léon having a hand in it’.

¹⁴⁵ Sir Arthur Bliss, composer and Master of the Queen’s Musick (1953-75), led a contingent of seven musicians (including Léon) on a three-week concert tour of the USSR. See London, National Archive, BW64/17.

¹⁴⁶ Poulton, p. 909.

¹⁴⁷ Geoffrey Ogram, *The Music of Gordon Jacob* (n.p.: n.pub., 2010). Birmingham, Birmingham City Symphony Orchestra Archive, Symphony Concert programme 15 November 1956.

¹⁴⁸ Birmingham, Birmingham City Symphony Orchestra Archive.

¹⁴⁹ Made available by Dr. Ogram following the concert.

Ex.4.23. Gordon Jacob Concerto No.2 for oboe and orchestra, movement 1,
oboe part, bars 16-28.

Ex.4.24. Gordon Jacob Concerto No.2 for oboe and orchestra, movement 1,
oboe part, bars 224-236.

In the second movement, I mirror Léon's restrained use of rubato and use of a medium vibrato speed to shape the phrase (Ex.4.25, track 5, 0'22''- 0'55'') from letter A through to the end of the phrase at bar 15, along with his increasing use of rubato as the movement progresses, notably with a little faster vibrato from letter J in particular (Ex.4.26, 6'19''- 7'00'').

Ex. 4.25. Gordon Jacob Concerto No.2 for oboe and orchestra, movement 2,
oboe part bars 6-12.

Ex. 4.26. Gordon Jacob Concerto No.2 for oboe and orchestra, movement 2,
oboe part, bars 106-113.

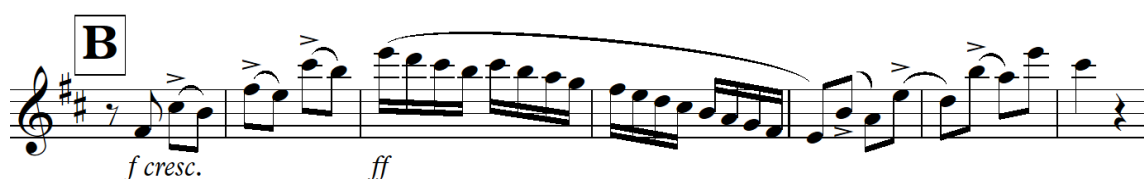
At the playful rondo theme of the final movement (Ex.4.27) I articulated the attack to mimic Léon's bright clarity of tonguing as at letters A and J (Ex.4. 27, 28, track 6, 0'10''-0'21'', k, 1'57''- 2'05'') using a little rubato 5-7 bars after J as well as presenting a sense of bravura such as the falling scale flourish at letter B (Ex.4.29, 0'24''- 0'28'').

Ex. 4.27. Gordon Jacob Concerto No.2 for oboe and orchestra, movement 3,
oboe part, bars 13-24.

Ex. 4.28. Gordon Jacob Concerto No.2 for oboe and orchestra, movement 3,
oboe part, bars 125-133.



Ex. 4.29. Gordon Jacob Concerto No.2 for oboe and orchestra, movement 3,
oboe part, bars 26-33.



4.4.3. CD3: Non-dedicated Repertoire

Lennox Berkeley, Sonatina for oboe and piano Op. 61

1. Molto moderato 2. Andante 3. Allegro

Berkeley wrote four works for the oboe; *Petite Suite* for oboe and cello (1927),¹⁵⁰ *Sonatina* for oboe and piano, *Quartet* for oboe and string trio Op.70 (1967) and *Sinfonia Concertante* for oboe and orchestra Op.84 (1973).¹⁵¹

The *Sonatina* was dedicated to Janet and John Craxton,¹⁵² and premiered by Janet Craxton and Alan Richardson at the Wigmore Hall on Monday 19 November 1962.¹⁵³ Critics characterised the work as ‘pleasant, slight in intention [and] prettily wrought, ‘eminently playable [and] flowing’ and even ‘wistful’.¹⁵⁴ Although written

¹⁵⁰ Probably written for Helen Gaskell (who later taught Janet Craxton) and John Barbirolli; they gave the first performance of the work in 1928.

¹⁵¹ The *Sonatina*, *Oboe Quartet* and *Sinfonia Concertante* were written for the oboist Janet Craxton.

¹⁵² John Leith Craxton (1922-2009) artist and fourth brother (of five) to Janet.

¹⁵³ Poulton, p. 242, incorrectly records the work being premiered by Janet and John Craxton; Stewart Craggs, *Lennox Berkeley: A Source Book* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2000), pp. 100-1, dates the premiere incorrectly as 1963.

¹⁵⁴ *The Times*, 25 November 1962, p. 25; Nial O’Loughlin, ‘Wind review’, *The Musical Times*, 107 (March 1966), 240; *The Guardian*, 22 March 1967, p. 7.

during Berkeley's experimentation with the twelve-note row, this technique is only partially evident in the first movement. Tightly constructed, the work allows little room for any excessive use of Léon's performance strategies of rubato, tempo or tonal variation. However, subtle use of these techniques was possible, especially in the middle movement, resulting in a more nuanced performance than first envisaged. For example, in the first movement holding on to the F and E crotchets a fraction longer in bar 8 (Ex. 4.30, track 1, 0'17''- 0'27'') heightens the languid quality of the phrase; I approached the G and E dotted quavers in bar 27 (Ex. 4.31, 1'01''-1'09'') in similar fashion, as well as extending a *piano* through the *tranquillo* section (bars 54 to 60), which I played in one breath (Ex. 4.32, 2'18''- 2'37'') reflecting Léon's extended phrasing.

Ex 4.30. Lennox Berkeley, Sonatina for oboe and piano Op. 61, movement 1,
oboe part, bars 7-10.



Ex 4.31. Lennox Berkeley, Sonatina for oboe and piano Op. 61, movement 1,
oboe part, bars 24-27.



Ex 4.32. Lennox Berkeley, Sonatina for oboe and piano Op. 61, movement 1,
oboe part, bars 54-60.



I employ a more obvious use of *rubato* in the second movement to emphasise its elegiac mood, for instance mirroring Léon's characteristic 'lingering' before 'scuttling down'¹⁵⁵ by holding the top C and B natural in bar 8 then rushing through the demisemiquavers, slowing the last two notes to ensure placing the G sharp in the following bar on the beat (Ex. 4.33, track 2, 0'35''- 0'43''). I also use a slow pulsating vibrato on the semibreve F sharp in bar 13 to create intensity, applying a faster pulse on the minim B flat in bar 14 (Ex. 4.34, 0'50''- 1'06'').

Ex 4.33. Lennox Berkeley, Sonatina for oboe and piano Op. 61, movement 2, oboe part, bars 8-9.



Ex 4.34. Lennox Berkeley, Sonatina for oboe and piano Op. 61, movement 2, oboe part, bars 12-15.



A more overt use of *rubato* is evident in bars 17 (*rallentando*), 20 to 21 (*accelerando*) and an extended *rallentando* from the upbeat to 24 through to 27 (Ex. 4.35, 1'15''- 1'26'', 4.36, 1'35''- 1'41'', 4.37, 1'42''- 2'12'').

Ex 4.35. Lennox Berkeley, Sonatina for oboe and piano Op. 61, movement 2, oboe part, bars 17-18.



¹⁵⁵Léon Goossens: A centenary tribute – part II, *Double Reed News* 39 (Summer 1997), pp. 11-2 (p.12).

Ex 4.36. Lennox Berkeley, Sonatina for oboe and piano Op. 61, movement 2,
oboe part, bars 20-21.

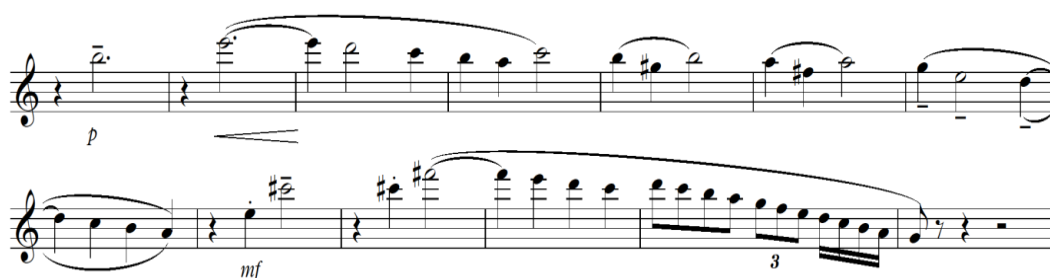


Ex 4.37. Lennox Berkeley, Sonatina for oboe and piano Op. 61, movement 2,
oboe part, bars 24-29.



In the final movement I ease the tempo from bar 24 to 36 to enhance the legato quality of the writing, modifying the articulation in bar 30 for a fleeting rhythmic emphasis and tonal texture (Ex. 4.38, track 3, 0'37''- 0'58'') reminiscent of Léon's tonal variation within a phrase.

Ex. 4.38. Lennox Berkeley, Sonatina for oboe and piano Op. 61, movement 3,
oboe part, bars 24-36.



Following the recapitulation I play a slight *rallentando* in bar 48 to briefly soften the unremitting percussive drive in the music (Ex.4.39, 1'16''- 1'21'').

Ex. 4.39. Lennox Berkeley, *Sonatina* for oboe and piano Op. 61, movement 3,
oboe part, bars 48-50.



Gordon Jacob (1895-1984), *Sonatina* for oboe and harpsichord (or piano)

1. Adagio 2. Allegro giocoso 3. Lento alla Sarabanda 4. Allegro molto vivace

Written in 1962 the *Sonatina* was commissioned by and dedicated to Evelyn Rothwell and Valda Aveling. They gave the first performance on 29 June 1962 as part of a BBC Radio broadcast and the first concert performance was on 11 January 1963 at the Fishmonger's Hall, London. A review of a performance of the work in 1965 by Rothwell and Aveling at the Houldsworth Hall in Manchester suggested that the 'tone colours' of the instruments produced an 'attractive eeriness, grotesqueness and tunefulness.'¹⁵⁶

As one of the works not dedicated to Léon, I wanted to experiment with different tempi and tonal colour (notably in the second and final movements), for example the piano was used instead of a harpsichord, which whilst softening the 'chilling' concept of the original work imparts a weightier and richer balance to the oboe. I set a slower tempo (in keeping with Léon's strategies) than is usually employed at the start of the work to highlight the stark and unsettling mood of the piece (Ex. 4.40, track 4, 0'01''-0'25''), slowing the tempo from the upbeat to A to characterise the brief Pavane-like interlude (Ex. 4.41, 1'02''- 1'16'') before returning to an underlying sense of anxiety towards the close of the movement.

¹⁵⁶ Gerald Larner, 'MICA Concert of American Music and Midday Concert in Manchester', *The Guardian*, 1 December 1965, p. 9.

Ex. 4.40. Gordon Jacob, Sonatina for oboe and harpsichord (or piano),
movement 1, oboe part, bars 1-5.



Ex. 4.41. Gordon Jacob, Sonatina for oboe and harpsichord (or piano),
movement 1, oboe part, bars 13-16.



I adopt a very fast tempo in the second (also final) movement - crotchet = c.169 in contrast to Jacob's direction of 138 - to emphasise the brittle and percussive driven energy of the writing. I also play the sixteen-bar legato section towards the end of the movement in one breath mirroring Léon's sense of an endless phrase (Ex. 4.42, track 5, 0'56''- 1'20'').

Ex. 4.42. Gordon Jacob, Sonatina for oboe and harpsichord (or piano),
movement 1, oboe part, bars 43 -58.



In the Sarabande, I establish a very relaxed tempo at the opening solo four bars to create a sense of calm (Ex.4.43, track 6, 0'01''- 0'19''), using occasional rubato throughout the movement to move the music on such as in bars 3 and 4 prior to the piano's entry.

Ex. 4.43. Gordon Jacob, Sonatina for oboe and harpsichord (or piano),
movement 3, oboe part, bars 1-4.

Lento alla Sarabanda

p espress.

The lively sections of the final movement frame a serenade, in which I use a significant amount of rubato throughout highlighting the jazz-infused elements reminiscent of Gershwin's idiomatic style (Ex.4.44, track 7, 0'53'' - 1'21'').

Ex. 4.44. Gordon Jacob, Sonatina for oboe and harpsichord (or piano),
movement 4, oboe part, bars 35-44.

p

poco rit. a tempo

2

4.4.4. CD 4: Case Study 1: Arnold Bax, Quintet for oboe and strings

1. *Tempo molto moderato*
2. *Lento espressivo*
3. *Allegro giocoso*

One of the most striking documents from the perspective of reassessing Léon's impact as a performer is his 1927 recording of the Arnold Bax Quintet for oboe and strings.¹⁵⁷ Popular until the 1960s, this extraordinary composition was then temporarily abandoned by oboists until a number of recordings from the 1980s. However, these readings are representative of an English 'pastoral' style of performance which has its genesis in Evelyn Rothwell's recording of the work. Léon's performance not only provides insight into his performance ideals, highlighting his use of *rubato*, phrase shaping and choice of tempi, but promotes the brooding and bucolic elements of the work in stark contrast to the more conventional modern-day interpretations. As such his performing strategies provide an opportunity to revise our perceptions of the work (particularly in relation to Bax's perceived 'Irishness') and how it might relate to the composer's reception more generally.

4.4.4.1. Background

The Quintet for Oboe and Strings (1922) is one of a number of chamber scores written by Bax between 1916 and 1934. The work was completed very quickly within a two-month period; Bax dated the first and third movements of his manuscript 'Nov 1st 1922' and 'Christmas 1922' respectively (see Exx. 4.45 and 4.46).¹⁵⁸ Edwin Evans divides Bax's output into three distinct periods;¹⁵⁹ the Oboe Quintet falls into the third phase which began with String Quartet No. 1 in G (1918). The work's simplicity reveals a more lyrical quality in contrast to the intensity of the Viola Sonata and the Piano Quartet that were also completed in 1923; Evans describes it as 'blithesome' with an 'even greater spontaneity' than the First String Quartet.¹⁶⁰

The Oboe Quintet is in three movements; a central lament-like movement is framed by an extended soliloquy and a lively dance. As the first substantial chamber work for the oboe by an English composer, it encouraged others to dedicate similar

¹⁵⁷ Arnold Bax, *Quintet for oboe and strings*, Léon Goossens/International Quartet (Oboe classics, CC2005, 2002).

¹⁵⁸ The second is undated. Graham Parlett, *A Catalogue of the Works of Sir Arnold Bax* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), p. 164. Cork, University College Cork Library, The Arnold Bax Collection [Quintet for Oboe and Strings] has Bax's original manuscript of the Quintet.

¹⁵⁹ Edwin Evans, *Arnold Bax* in W.W. Cobbett (ed.), *Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (London: OUP, 1963), i.67-78.

¹⁶⁰ Evans, p. 75.

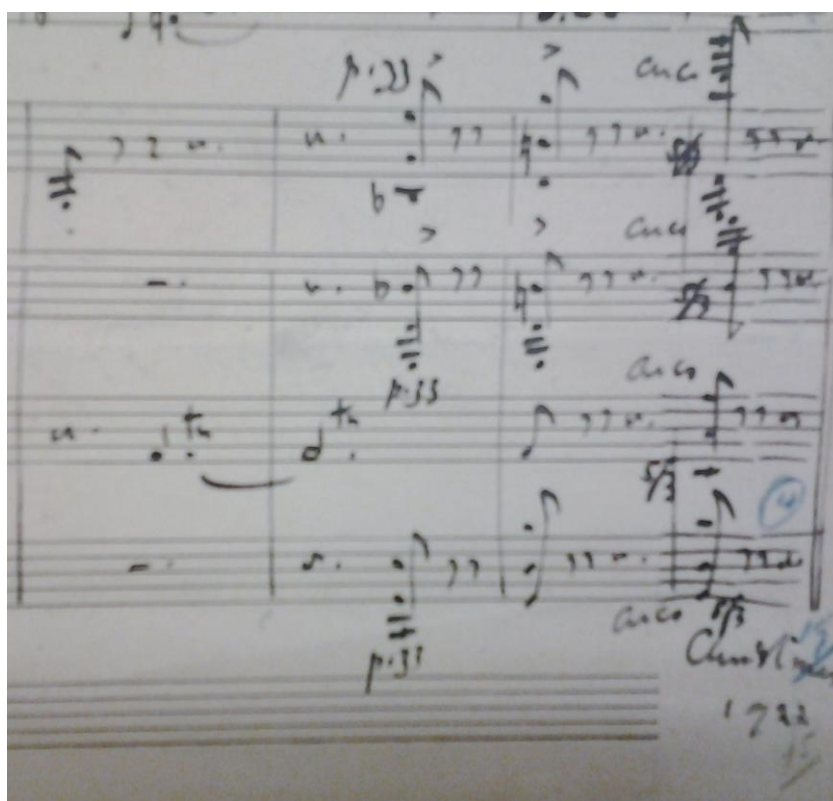
works to Léon, including Bliss's Oboe Quintet (1926), Finzi's *Interlude for oboe and strings* (1936), and the oboe quartets of Maconchy (1932), Britten (1933) and Jacob (1938). It is unclear whether or not the work was commissioned.

Ex 4.45. Arnold Bax, Oboe Quintet, movement 1, last 2 bars.¹⁶¹



¹⁶¹ University College Cork Library, The Arnold Bax Collection [Quintet for Oboe and Strings].

Ex. 4.46. Arnold Bax, Oboe Quintet, movement 3, last 4 bars.



4.4.4.2. Reception

The premiere of the Oboe Quintet was given on 11 May 1924 with Léon and the Kutcher String Quartet as part of a chamber concert sponsored by Mrs Adela Maddison at the Hyde Park Hotel in London.¹⁶² Published by Murdoch, Murdoch & Co. in 1925 and reprinted by Chappell & Co. Ltd. in 1963, the title of the work on the original publication was Quintet for Oboe and Strings, as shown on the first page of Bax's manuscript (Ex. 4.47); curiously this became Quintet for Oboe and Strings No.1 when reprinted by Chappell.

¹⁶² The Kutcher Quartet consisted of Samuel Kutcher and George Whitaker (violins), James Lockyer (viola) and Ambrose Gauntlett (cello).

Ex. 4.47. Arnold Bax, Oboe Quintet, movement 1, bars 1-7

Quintet for Oboe and Strings.
(To Tom Corneus) Arnold Bax 1.

Tempo molto moderato

ad lib.

p molto espressivo

con sord.

pp *mf* *pp*

pp *mf* *pp*

pp *mf* *pp*

pp *mf* *pp*

p *mf* *pp*

There are a number of 'cue' suggestions Bax had written on the manuscript that were incorporated in the printed edition; for example bars, 30-31 in the second movement note 'cue in 2 bars vln in oboe' (Ex. 4.48).

Ex. 4.48. Arnold Bax, Oboe Quintet, movement 2, bars 30-31.

Handwritten musical score for Oboe Quintet, movement 2, bars 30-31. The score is written on five staves. The top staff contains the handwritten text "Two in 2 bars in oboe". The music is written in a common time signature (C) and features various rhythmic values, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The notation includes slurs, ties, and dynamic markings such as *f* (forte). The score is written in a clear, legible hand.

Critics described the work as being ‘inspired by nature’ and ‘suavely contemplative’; there was even the suggestion of ‘an eastern atmosphere’ highlighting a degree of difficulty in placing the work within the Bax canon.¹⁶³ There is no evidence of any review of the Quintet’s premiere; this may well be due to it being a privately-funded concert. However an overview of the work’s second semi-public performance given at St John’s Institute in Westminster with the same performers was described in *The Times* as a ‘highly coloured work’, ‘unusually gracious and lucid [for Bax]’ and ‘something of a hotch-potch of styles.’¹⁶⁴

Discussions in the musicological literature are notable for their brevity, whether Scott-Sutherland’s references to ‘the perky quintet for Léon’, Julian Herbage’s description of a ‘charming and unpretentious work’, or Evans’ suggestion that the work is ‘of transparent clarity.’¹⁶⁵ Graham Parlett provides some useful general information including details of the original manuscript and a summary of the Barbirolli arrangement of the work,¹⁶⁶ and although Foreman’s discussion is more thorough, his commentary lacks the incisive analysis applied to the chamber works for strings and keyboard, and he dismisses the Quintet as being written ‘almost as a relaxation’.¹⁶⁷ In contrast to this lack of detailed discussion, there are a significant number of recordings of the Quintet highlighted in Table 4.2.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ ‘Arnold Bax: Concert of Chamber Works’, *Times*, 27 March 1930, p. 12. Edwin Evans, programme notes from The Beecham Sunday Concerts Series at The Queens Hall, London, Thursday 27 April 1939; Centre for Performance History, Léon Goossens Collection. ‘Three Chamber Concerts’, *Times*, 28 May 1924, p. 9.

¹⁶⁴ ‘Three Chamber Concerts’, p. 9. For further reviews see Robin Golding, programme notes from a performance on Sunday 18 July 1954, Centre for Performance History, Léon Goossens Collection; ‘Music By Arnold Bax’, *The Times*, 9 January 1956, p. 5; Edwin Evans, programme notes.

¹⁶⁵ Colin Scott-Sutherland, *Arnold Bax* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1973), pp. 98 and 141. Edwin Evans, pp. 74-5. Julian Herbage, ‘Sir Arnold Bax’, in *British Music of our Time*, ed. by A. L. Bacharach (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1946), p. 126.

¹⁶⁶ Parlett, *A Catalogue of the Works of Sir Arnold Bax*, pp. 164-5 and 115-7.

¹⁶⁷ Foreman, *Bax*, p. 212.

¹⁶⁸ The Oboe Quintet was part of an extraordinary recorded revival during the 1980s renaissance of interest in the Bax canon.

Table 4.2: Available recordings of Bax's Oboe Quintet¹⁶⁹

Oboist	String Ensemble	Compact Disc Label	Date
Goossens, Léon	International String Quartet	Oboe Classics, C2005	1927
Rothwell, Evelyn	Halle Orchestra/Sir John Barbirolli	BBC Legends, BBC4100-2	1968
Francis, Sarah	English String Quartet	Chandos Records, CHAN8392	1984
Pecha, Pamela	Audubon String Quartet	Telarc 80205	1989
Hulse, Gareth	Nash Ensemble	CDA66807	1996
Hunt, Gordon	Tale Quartet	BIS, BIS-CD 763	1997

It is instructive to listen to Evelyn Rothwell's recording of the Quintet. Although quirky, this reading has been influential in establishing a template for future generations – principally owing to her status as a well-regarded teacher.¹⁷⁰ Rothwell's recording of the Quintet is an arrangement for oboe and string orchestra by the conductor (and Rothwell's husband) Sir John Barbirolli.¹⁷¹ Carole Rosen suggested that Bax was approached to rework the Quintet into a concerto, but does not confirm the origins of this proposal or whether or not Léon made the initial suggestion.¹⁷² Parlett, on the other hand, asserted that Léon 'had previously asked Bax to arrange the Quintet as a concerto for himself, but nothing came of it.'¹⁷³ However, according to Rothwell, Bax was happy for Barbirolli to arrange the work.¹⁷⁴ Michael Kennedy noted that whilst critical of Bax's orchestration and approach to texture, Barbirolli nevertheless 'loved the work and thought that it represented the best of Bax, but was always disturbed by Bax's frequent use of double-stopping in the strings, which he

¹⁶⁹ In addition to the listed recordings there is a recording on the *YouTube* website by oboist Piotr Pyc, see 'Arnold Bax, Oboe Quintet', Piotr Pyc, Kwartet Smyczkowy, *e.youtube.com* <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vL0E55kon1E>>[accessed April 2011]. A further four unavailable recordings on LP are also listed in Foreman, p. 519.

¹⁷⁰ See 'Lady Barbirolli: The BDRS pays tribute', *Double Reed News*, 83 (Summer 2008), 35-54 (p. 43).

¹⁷¹ John Barbirolli joined the Kutcher Quartet in 1924 as cellist. The quartet performed the original work with Léon during the 1930s.

¹⁷² Carole Rosen, p. 127.

¹⁷³ Graham Parlett, p. 165 (incorrectly referenced to Rosen).

¹⁷⁴ Evelyn Barbirolli, *Life with Glorious John*, p. 148.

thought made the texture thick and ungainly.¹⁷⁵ Despite the fact that Harriet Cohen was ‘very bothered by the proposal,¹⁷⁶ Bax apparently ‘did not even wish to see the arrangement’ and was happy to leave it ‘entirely’ to Barbirolli.¹⁷⁷ Bax never heard the work performed as the realisation of the project took fourteen years.¹⁷⁸ The work also remains unpublished. Reworked for a small string chamber orchestra of fourteen players, the arrangement actually departs rarely from the original scoring apart from the fact that the strings play *divisi* (thus eliminating double-stopping) and the addition of a double bass part, which is a simplified version of the cello part (see Ex.4.49, (i), (ii)).¹⁷⁹

Ex. 4.49. (i) Arnold Bax, Oboe Quintet, movement 2, ‘cello part, bars 94-98.



(ii) Arnold Bax, Oboe Quintet arr. John Barbirolli, movement, 2, double bass part, bars 94-98.



Rothwell gave the first performance of this version of the work at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester on 21 April 1968 with Barbirolli conducting the Hallé orchestra.¹⁸⁰ Her recording, made in the same year, has been criticised for its

¹⁷⁵ Arnold Bax, *Oboe Quintet* (arr. Sir John Barbirolli), Evelyn Rothwell/ Hallé Orchestra (BBC Legends, BBC4100-2, 2002) (Oboe Classics, C2005, 2002).

¹⁷⁶ Parlett, p. 165.

¹⁷⁷ Evelyn Barbirolli, p.149.

¹⁷⁸ Bax died on 3 October 1953.

¹⁷⁹ According to Rothwell Bax was ‘genuinely delighted’ by the suggestion of the addition of a bass line; see Evelyn Barbirolli, p. 149. Diana McVeagh noted that ‘Barbirolli had scaled up to Albert Hall size by increasing the strings from four to 14.’ See ‘Exultant finale’, *The Times*, 10 August 1968, p. 18. The string parts, including an adapted handwritten score of the original work by are part of the Evelyn Rothwell (Lady Barbirolli) Archive at the Royal Northern College of Music.

¹⁸⁰ There is some confusion in literature sources as to the premiere of the work; Michael Kennedy simply suggests that it was performed during the 1967 promenade concert season, Carole Rosen offers an alternative date of 21 April 1969, and Diana McVeagh’s review in *The Times* is for 9 August 1968.

‘appalling recorded sound that makes [. . .] Evelyn Rothwell sound like she’s warming up for an alphorn competition’.¹⁸¹ However, this cannot hide the fact that Rothwell’s usual subtlety of musicianship and tonal warmth, apparent in the rest of her recorded canon, is absent. For much of the recording Rothwell is playing ‘out’ seemingly to project her sound above the bass-heavy intensity of the Halle strings. There is a loss of intimacy in this performance; the muddy texture and diluted character of each movement is at odds with Barbirolli’s criticism of the original score. In contrast, the re-mastered 1927 performance by Léon and the International String Quartet offers a singularly different interpretation to the more conventional readings promulgated by Rothwell and her pupils.

Léon’s recording provides an opportunity to reassess Bax’s work, and its Celtic identity in particular; to consider these implications, it is important to understand the fundamental impact of the Irish revival on Bax and his ‘translation’ of Irish mythology into the musical sphere.

4.4.4.3. The Celt within

Bax’s relationship with Ireland is a familiar topic in the literature. Although ‘scholars have long recognised Bax’s engagement with Ireland as central to his development as a composer,’ his status in terms of Irish music itself is a more contentious issue.¹⁸² Music in Ireland at the turn of the twentieth century was essentially either under the province of the Catholic Church or in traditional folk music from within rural communities; a lack of any entrepreneurial driving force during the nineteenth century produced a barren landscape in which music could not flourish. The cultural revival (1891-1916) created by W. B. Yeats was driven by literature, and music was not seen as an interdependent creative element in the revival. Bax acknowledged a great debt to Yeats whose inspiration had been the ‘key that opened the gate to the Celtic

¹⁸¹ David Hurwitz, Arnold Bax, Oboe Quintet (arr. Barbirolli). n.d., *e.classicstoday.com*, <<http://www.classicstoday.com/review.asp?ReviewNum=5468>> [accessed August 2009].

¹⁸² Harry White, *The Keeper’s Recital: Music and Cultural History in Ireland, 1770-1970* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1998), p.118. For a discussion of perceived ambivalence of Bax’s contribution to Irish music see Alex Klein, ‘Root and directions in twentieth-century Irish art music’ in *Irish Music in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Gareth Cox and Alex Klein (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), pp. 168-82 (p.173) and Hilary Bracefield, ‘The Northern Composer: Irish or European?’ in *The Maynooth International Musicological Conference 1995 Selected Proceedings: Part One* edited by Patrick F. Divine and Harry White (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), pp. 255-62 (p. 256).

wonderland [and significantly that] under this domination [of Irish culture] my musical style was strengthened.¹⁸³ Bax embraced the romanticised vision of a perceived lost pastoral age and was drawn to the fantastical and mystical legends central to the simplicity of the Irish arts ideals.¹⁸⁴

At the outset of his Irish visits Bax was little known in the country. In fact Bax was to become better known as a writer in the literary circles of Dublin writing under the pseudonym Dermot O'Byrne; his short stories and poetry enabled acceptance within those at the heart of the cultural revival.¹⁸⁵ There would appear to have been little chance of any significant musical development for Bax in a country that professed no collective resolve to support such action.¹⁸⁶ Harry White's comprehensive account of Bax's reception in Ireland is clear in suggesting that the Irish element is important by categorising Bax's relationship in Ireland into five creative divisions.¹⁸⁷ These are represented by the early tone poems, 1905-10; as the writer Dermot O'Byrne 1911-13; Bax's responses as both poet and composer to the Easter uprising of 1916 (notably expressed in *A Dublin Ballad and other poems*);¹⁸⁸ the transition from Irish to British allegiance through his late Romantic orchestral works (culminating in the *Garden of Fand* 1916); and a final withdrawal after 1916. Despite channelling his energies into writing White suggested that Bax would ultimately seek out affirmation as a composer because the music written 'in Ireland under its stimulus could not find a place there.'¹⁸⁹ Whilst Foreman is perhaps more categorical in stating that 'although Ireland fascinated Bax for the rest of his life, *St Patrick's Breastplate* [for choir and orchestra, 1923] is the last overt demonstration of emotional involvement with things Irish,'¹⁹⁰ White sees the continuing Irish elements in Bax's music as more of a reference rather than an integration.

¹⁸³ *Talk by Arnold Bax* (Symposium: 1336, 2003). See also Arnold Bax, *Farewell, My Youth*, ed. by Lewis Foreman (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1992), p. 41 and Clifford Bax, *Inland Far: A Book of Thoughts and Impressions* (London: Heineman Ltd., 1925), p. 126.

¹⁸⁴ See Foreman, Bax, p.p.285-6. Peter Latham in 'Arnold Bax: 1883-1953', *Music and Letters*, 35 (January 1954), 11, observed that 'there was a streak of the mystic' in Bax's psyche.

¹⁸⁵ See Mary Colum, *Life and the Dream* (Dublin: Dolmen Press Ltd., 1966), p. 90. See also Foreman, Bax, p. 116.

¹⁸⁶ See Harry White, *The Keeper's Recital*, p. 121.

¹⁸⁷ White, pp. 118-124.

¹⁸⁸ See Foreman, Bax, pp. 208, 420.

¹⁸⁹ White, p. 124

¹⁹⁰ Foreman, Bax, p. 220.

4.4.4.4. Reassessing the Oboe Quintet

A lack of consensus regarding the Quintet's identity has contributed to a negation of the work's primary Irish 'otherness.' Despite some acknowledgement of the third movement's overtly "Irish" feeling and jig-like finale,¹⁹¹ any implications for performance in musicological studies in relation to the Quintet have been ignored – explained partly by Bax's reticence to reveal any 'meaning' behind his scores beyond the suggestion that his tempo markings expressed mood more than speed.¹⁹² Léon's colourful description of the Quintet challenges the relative uniformity adopted in performance by modern-day oboists:

Bax wanted to convey a reflective and brooding feeling for most of the work, even a touch of keening in places and following all that lovely Irish melancholy, Bax changed mood and begged me to enjoy the liveliness of the third movement. And I did. His wild jig appealed to me, after all I had been in Dublin for some time and I knew the spirited dance well.¹⁹³

The 'jig-like' finale, for example (Ex. 4.50), presents the most immediate Irish facet of the work; Sarah Francis' performance is representative of the majority of recordings in adopting a relatively sedate approach (dotted crotchet = 126), although she challenges the homogeneity of sound with her distinctive bright French school of playing, displaying a variety of sound from an almost forgotten era.

¹⁹¹ See 'Recitals of the Week: Contemporary Music Centre', *Times*, 17 October 1936, p. 10. See also 'Music By Arnold Bax', p. 5. Evans in Cobbett, p. 75. Foreman, *Bax*, p. 205.

¹⁹² Dennis Andrews ed., *Cuchulan Among the Guns: Sir Arnold Bax's Letters to Christopher Whelen from 1949 to 1953 together with the latter's writings and broadcasts on Bax and his music* (Cumnor: Dennis Andrews, 1998), p.21; *The British Piano Sonata 1870-1945* (Woodridge: The Boydell Press, 2001), p. 84.

¹⁹³ Melvin Harris, *Rare Goossens: Léon Goossens*, Léon Goossens/Various artists (Oboe classics, CC2005, 2002).

Ex.4.50. Arnold Bax, Oboe Quintet, movement 3, bars 13-22

In terms of tempo (see Figure 4.3 for a comparison of modern-day recordings), Gordon Hunt and Gareth Hulse are the exception, adopting a livelier account in this movement. Yet any latent ‘otherness’ is reduced to nothing more than a beautifully executed charming tune than a lively example of an Irish jig.

Fig.4.3: Arnold Bax, Oboe Quintet.

Third Movement tempi comparison of modern-day recordings

Oboist	String Ensemble	Compact Disc Label	Date	Third Movement dotted crotchet tempo
Rothwell, Evelyn	Halle Orchestra/Sir John Barbirolli	BBC Legends, BBC4100-2	1968	126
Francis, Sarah	English String Quartet	Chandos Records, CHAN8392	1984	126
Pecha, Pamela	Audubon String Quartet	Telarc 80205	1989	126
Hulse, Gareth	Nash Ensemble	CDA66807	1996	140
Hunt, Gordon	Tale Quartet	BIS, BIS-CD 763	1997	138

In contrast, Léon brings out the dance quality combining a brisk tempo (138) with a light tone and, most significantly, driving through the phrases to evoke a sense of riotous Celtic revelry. In my own performance (CD4 track 3) I mirror Leon's distinctive approach underlining the dance quality by maintaining a similarly lively tempo and creating a sense of energy, pushing the tempo on at my entry at the beginning of the movement, for example; also in contrast to modern-day recordings I play the directed 'coarsely blown' phrase (from bar 210) accordingly with a brittle edged tone (Ex. 4.51, 4'06'').

Ex. 4.51. Arnold Bax, Oboe Quintet, movement 3, oboe part, bars 210-14.



The lack of variety within any tempo in the modern-day recordings is evident from the opening of the first movement (Ex. 4.52). Rothwell adopts a measured tempo (crotchet = c.50) using some rubato within each bar (and the American oboist Pamela Pecha is almost identical to Rothwell), whereas Léon's approach conveys a sense of reflective brooding through rhythmic and tonal flexibility and varied use of rubato, vibrato, tempi and inequality. Although my playing of this section overall is less flexible than Léon's (being more measured in bars 6 and 7, for example), my use of rubato and notable inequality (in bar 8) is comparable to Léon's phrasing (CD4, track 1, 0'9'' - 0'40'').

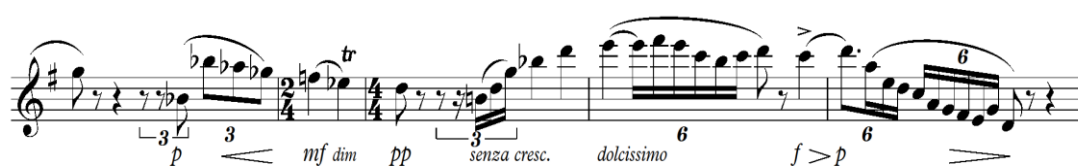
Ex. 4.52. Arnold Bax, Oboe Quintet, movement 1, oboe part bars 1-9.

This improvisatory mood is further expressed by Léon employing, rhythmic inequality (albeit sparingly) clearly heard in the same movement on the descending triplets in bars 15 and 16 (Ex. 4.53). He also extends the top D before rushing down the sextuplets in bar 76 (Ex. 4.54), and playing the preceding sextuplet as a flourish, highlighting one of his characteristic traits of ‘lingering for rest on top notes and then scuttling down the other side’¹⁹⁴ All contemporary recordings, exemplified by Gareth Hulse, adopt a strict tempo at the same reference points. I use a little inequality on the ascending triplet in bar 15 (0’52’’- 0’56’’) and descending triplet in bar 72, and some rubato thereafter (3’33’’- 3’38’’). Although I play a measured account of the sextuplet in bar 75 I race through the descending passage in bar 76 (3’48’’- 3’50’’), and in contrast to all other recordings I pause momentarily on the tied crotchet top G in bar 68 playing a *rituendo* in the following bar (Ex. 4.55, 3’16’’- 3’20’’) in the spirit of Léon’s approach.

Ex. 4.53. Arnold Bax, Oboe Quintet, movement 1, oboe part bars 14-17.



Ex. 4.54. Arnold Bax, Oboe Quintet, movement 1, oboe part bars 72-76.



Ex. 4.55. Arnold Bax, Oboe Quintet, movement 1, oboe part bars, 68 -69.

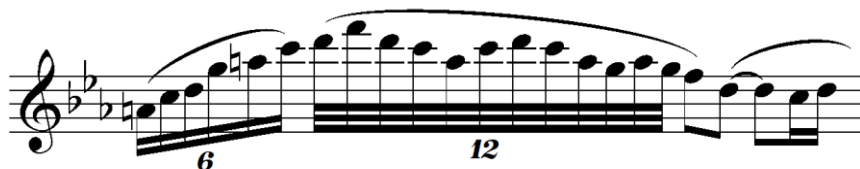


¹⁹⁴ ‘Léon Goossens: A Centenary Tribute – part II, p.12.

In the second movement modern-day recordings rarely deviate from a consistent tempo (quaver = c.105) and although Hulse employs a tentative use of rubato and vibrato, the effect is more a depiction of an English rural idyll than the ‘otherness’ of Ireland. Léon’s performance highlights the sense of keening - a form of improvised vocal lamentation characterised by outbursts of anguish – with a wailing rhetoric in the opening sequence (Ex. 4.56), which I adopt in a frenzied manner (track 2, 4’19’’-4’25’’). Furthermore Léon’s use of a slow vibrato on the sustained D and scurrying through the sextuplet and quintuplet (Ex. 4.57,) and his pushing the tempo on through the rising and falling triplet figures (Ex. 4.58) emphasises the plaintive character of the lament.

In my performance I use a faster vibrato than Léon from bar 63, but nevertheless rush through the sextuplet and also play the quintuplet with a little rubato (4’25’’-4’44’’). My shaping of the rising and falling phrase in bars 81 to 84 is more measured, but I relax the tempo and soften my timbre from bar 85 to heighten the sombre mood (5’08’’- 5’25’’).

Ex. 4.56. Arnold Bax, Oboe Quintet, movement 2, oboe part, bar 62.



Ex. 4.57. Arnold Bax, Oboe Quintet, movement 2, oboe part, bars 63-70.



Ex. 4.58. Arnold Bax, Oboe Quintet, movement 2 oboe part, bars 81-87.



4.4.4.5. Conclusion

As much as Léon's performance can be considered one of several interpretative possibilities, a letter from Bax to Philip Heseltine suggests that Bax was pleased with the recording of the Quintet: 'I will send you the record of my oboe quintet. It comes out rather well as mechanical reproduction goes.'¹⁹⁵ This significant endorsement of Léon's reading of the work is pivotal to reassessing the original concept of the work; the overt Irish fluency in Léon's performance stands out against the singularly reserved approach of contemporary performers where the Irish element has effectively been purged from the work. In a radio interview Léon also hinted at collaboration with the composer over the Quintet; Bax discussed 'ideas he [Léon] nurtured',¹⁹⁶ thus Léon's realisation can be seen as contributing to Bax's concept. Bax stated that he had 'no interest whatever for sound for its own sake,'¹⁹⁷ yet modern-day performances, reflecting Evelyn Rothwell's interpretation, dilute any Irish narrative to an unassuming, albeit beautifully projected, pleasant sound. The adherence to a steady and strictly observed rhythmic pulse as well as a much reduced level of dynamic range is the product of players steeped in late twentieth-century performance practices where rigidity of structure and an even quality of tone override any nuance of narrative within the music. However it is possible to adapt the historical within modern-day performance practices as demonstrated in my reading of the work. By observing the tenets of Léon's interpretative ideals such as overt use of rubato and rhythmic inequality, a greater sense of the Irish element in the work can be communicated. A leap of faith is required in relinquishing the comfort of modern-day practices for a more flexible approach in playing that places greater emphasis on the narrative of the music.

¹⁹⁵ *GB-Lb1* Add.57772, f.148, dated 20 July [no year].

¹⁹⁶ Harris, *Rare Goossens*.

¹⁹⁷ Arnold Bax, 'I am a Brazen Romantic', *Musical America*, 7 July 1928, p. 9.

4.4.5. CD 5: Case Study 2: Benjamin Britten (1913-1976),

Six Metamorphoses after Ovid Op. 49 for solo oboe.

4.4.5.1 Background

Britten's *Six Metamorphoses for Solo Oboe* was written for the fourth Aldeburgh Festival. It was premiered on 14 June 1951 by the work's dedicatee Joyance (Joy) Boughton (1913-63), and performed in the open-air on the Meare at Thorpeness in Suffolk. The premiere of the work is described in some sources as being given 'in a punt on a boating lake.'¹⁹⁸ However according to Sarah Francis who studied with Boughton, Britten did want Boughton to perform the work standing in a punt, but she refused and instead played from an island on the lake – an account borne out by reviews of the premiere in *The Times* and *Musical Times*.¹⁹⁹ Francis also reported that Britten was 'very disappointed' with Boughton's decision, although Boughton 'did play the piece standing on a barge two years later'.²⁰⁰ The *Metamorphoses* was the fourth and final work Britten wrote for the oboe; the other three works are the *Phantasy Quartet* (1932) written for and dedicated to Léon, *Two Insect Pieces* (1935) for oboe and piano dedicated to Sylvia Spencer, and the *Temporal Variations* (1936) also for oboe and piano written for Natalie Caine; Spencer and Caine were pupils of Léon. Britten's *Metamorphoses* explores aspects of six Greek mythical characters taken from Ovid's epic poem of the same name. It is the most enduring solo work in the oboe repertoire; Eric Roseberry defines the work's universal appeal as 'these perfect miniatures [that] catch the spirit of ancient Greece with playfulness, humour, compassion and tenderness'.²⁰¹ Britten wrote a brief summary for each of the six movements:

¹⁹⁸ Michael Kennedy, *Britten* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1981), p.60; Poulton, i.366; George Caird, *Britten: Six Metamorphoses after Ovid: Anatomy of a Masterpiece* (London: Oboe Classics, 2007), p. 4.

¹⁹⁹ 'Festival Music': Aldeburgh', *Times*, 16 June 1951, p. 8; John Amis, 'The Aldeburgh Festival', *Musical Times*, 92 (August 1951), 368-9.

²⁰⁰ Philip Reed, Mervyn Cooke and Donald Mitchell, eds., *Letters from a Life: The Selected Letters of Benjamin Britten 1913-1976*, vol.4 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), p. 546.

²⁰¹ Eric Roseberry, Liner Notes, *Britten: Music for Oboe, Music for Piano*, Sarah Francis (Hyperion CDH 55154, 1995), p. 3.

1. Pan *who played upon the reed pipe which was Syrinx his beloved.*
2. Phaeton *who rode upon the chariot of the sun for one day and hurled into the river Padus by a thunderbolt.*
3. Niobe *who, lamenting the death of her fourteen children, was turned into a mountain.*
4. Bacchus *at whose feasts is heard the noise of giggling women's tattling tongues and shouting out of boys.*
5. Narcissus *who fell in love with his own image and became a flower.*
6. Arethusa *who, flying from the love of Alpheus the river god, was turned into a fountain.*

The depiction of joviality of *Bacchus* provides respite from the betrayal, downfall and unrequited love (or lust) central to the other five movements.

4.4.5.2 Performance tradition

After the initial edition, published in 1952 by Boosey & Hawkes, the work was reprinted in 1968 to include suggested metronome markings made by Britten (Fig. 4.4). According to Evelyn Rothwell, the catalyst for the inclusion of these tempo indications was Heinz Holliger, whose interpretation (one radically different to Boughton's) had apparently appalled the composer: 'Ben was so horrified by his [Holliger's] performance and his tempi that Ben thought it would be helpful to put tempi he wanted'.²⁰²

²⁰² Vincent Mark Biggam, 'Benjamin Britten's Four Chamber Works for Oboe', (n.p.: n. Pub.,2001), p.115.

Fig. 4.4. Benjamin Britten, *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid Op. 49 for solo oboe*, metronome markings taken from the 1968 edition.

Pan	quaver = 138
Phaeton	dotted crotchet = 152
Niobe	crotchet = 60
Bacchus	crotchet = 112
Narcissus	quaver = 84
Arethusa	quaver = 152

However, a letter written by Britten to the oboist Freidrich Krebs suggests that the composer had assigned metronome markings to the score much earlier in 1957;²⁰³ sadly this list is lost. Rather than a reactive response to Holliger, therefore, Britten's approach might be better explained as part of a quest for precision in performance; as Caird has suggested, 'Britten was always keen for his music to be played accurately'.²⁰⁴ Given Britten's 'disciplined approach and adherence to detail',²⁰⁵ along with the pedagogical tradition established by Boughton, performance decisions relating to the work might seem straightforward. However, as Britten's original intention for the work to be performed on a punt was unsuccessful (with the exception of Boughton's performance 'on a barge' in 1953), the work remains becalmed on the concert hall platform, thus raising the possibility of two performance traditions co-existing; a steadier tempo would have been necessary in any open-air performance to communicate the full effect of the music. Britten's 1968 metronome suggestions would have been for the concert hall; for example his marking of dotted crotchet of 152 for *Phaeton* does not correlate with Boughton's tempo (126) for the same movement in a live BBC broadcast on 3 October 1952, which probably reflected her

²⁰³ Philip Reed, Mervyn Cooke and Donald Mitchell, eds., *Letters from a Life: The Selected Letters of Benjamin Britten 1913-1976, vol. 4 1952-1957* (Woodridge, The Boydell Press, 2008), pp. 545-6.

²⁰⁴ Caird, p. 6.

²⁰⁵ Caird, p. 19.

original outdoor performance. These two performance traditions, therefore, might offer alternatives for the performer and further scope for variety in performance.

In recordings of the *Metamorphoses* once a tempo is established it tends to remain relatively rigid, limiting any flexibility in terms of the work's characterisation. Yet in the tempi adopted for *Phaeton* no performers actually adopt Britten's tempo marking (see Fig. 4.5); the closest is Holliger and Gernot Schmalfus at c.145, with Dutka's performance as slow as 108.²⁰⁶ There is a similar disparity in the other five movements of the work.

Fig.4.5. Benjamin Britten, *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid Op. 49*

for solo oboe, variations of tempo for Phaeton

<u>Oboist</u>	<u>Dotted crotchet</u> <u>tempo</u>	<u>Date</u>
Joy Boughton	126	1952
John Mack	126	1990
Jeremy Polmear	138	1991
Heinz Holliger	145	1994
Alfred Dutka	108	1995
Sarah Francis	126	1995
Gernot Schmalfus	145	1999
Nicholas Daniel	132	2007
George Caird	126	2007
David Cowley	126	2010

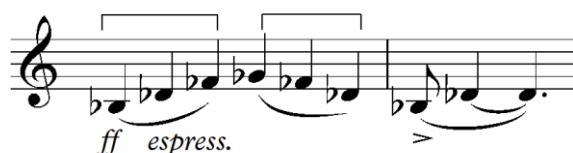
²⁰⁶ See Discography for recordings of Britten's *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid Op.49*

In addition to this myriad of tempo differences, there is also Alfred Dutka's reading on a Viennese oboe. This is not only remarkable for its leisurely tempo throughout, but also the fact that Dutka alters the notation in *Phaeton* as the Viennese instrument (which has changed very little since the late nineteenth century) cannot play below B natural. Dutka therefore changes the bottom B flats to a C natural (Ex.4.59i,ii).

Ex. 4.59. Benjamin Britten, *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid Op. 49 for solo oboe*,

Phaeton, bars 35-36.

(i) original notation



(ii) Dutka's modification.



As there has been some attempt by performers to depart from Britten's 'vision' and the performance tradition established by Joy Boughton with their particular choice of basic tempo, more radical interventions can be considered. In my performance I endeavoured to emphasise the quintessential narrative of each story through a more overt use of rubato and tonal colour, for example in *Pan* underlining the reflective character of the piece by taking a more leisurely approach than is generally adopted (reflecting Léon's tempo strategy) as well as using the simplicity of Léon's approach to phrasing to highlight typical features of pan pipes such as accentuating the five scale figure that mimics the pipes (Ex. 4.60, track 1, 2'17''-2'20''); I adopt a deliberate rubato to accentuate the implied drunken revelry where previously not considered, for instance in the first section of *Bacchus* (Ex. 4.61, track 4, 0'22''-0'31''), and tempo variation, including a unique use of an *accelerando* in

Arethesa to represent her flight from *Padus* (Ex. 4.62, track 6, 2'04''- 2'10'') and within the context of mirroring Léon's use of the expressive legato.

Ex. 4.60. Benjamin Britten, *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid Op. 49* for solo oboe, *Pan*, section of bar 13.



Ex. 4.61. Benjamin Britten, *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid Op. 49* for solo oboe, *Bacchus*, bars 10-14.



Ex. 4.62. Benjamin Britten, *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid Op. 49* for solo oboe, *Arethesa*, bars 62-68.



4.4.5.3. Phaeton: an alternative view

Of the six movements *Phaeton* is perhaps the most difficult to perform successfully as it can easily sound like a technical exercise. In the opening of the work Britten creates an immediate sense of a chariot in motion (ex. 4.63)

Ex. 4.63. Benjamin Britten, *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid Op. 49 for solo oboe*,
Phaeton, bars 1-6, final and published articulation.

However, to avoid being overwhelmed by the speed of tonguing to such an extent that musical text governed performance rather than the music; I introduced a few slurs to release me from the demands of pure technique. In fact Britten initially experimented with a different articulation, but accordingly to Caird this was ‘not biting or energetic enough’ for him’ (Ex.4.64).²⁰⁷ Yet by reducing Britten’s number of slurs the energy of the work is maintained and significantly with a metronome marking in line with Britten’s direction enabled me to sustain the restless quality (Ex. 4.65, track 2, 0’02’’-0’12’’).

Ex. 4.64. Benjamin Britten, *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid Op. 49 for solo oboe*,
Phaeton, bars 1-6, Britten’s first draft.

²⁰⁷ Caird, p. 34.

Ex. 4.65. Benjamin Britten, *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid Op. 49 for solo oboe*,
Phaeton, bars 1-6, my added slurs.

To accentuate *Phaeton* losing control of the chariot I extended a few rests, such as in bar 28 and incorporated extra slurs to heighten the intensity of the drama (Ex.4.66, 0'47''- 0'53''; my articulation is shown under the notation, the above slurs are in the published edition) reflecting Léon's idea of clearly articulating and shaping the phrase.

Ex. 4.66. Benjamin Britten, *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid Op. 49 for solo oboe*,
Phaeton bars 28-30.

My playing of *Phaeton's* fall from the chariot characterised by a chromatic scale, is perhaps controversial as I disregard the stated articulation (indicated above the notation in the extract) which I think slows the action down, whereas adopting Léon's approach to expressive legato and simplicity of phrasing, I play a *rallentando* prior to the 'fall' and slur the scale to emphasise the drama. I also slurred the ascending phrase at the end of the section to highlight *Phaeton's* demise (Ex. 4.67, 0'58''- 1'05'').

Ex .4.67. Benjamin Britten, *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid Op. 49 for solo oboe, Phaeton*, bars 34-37.

4.4.5.4 . Conclusion

The relationship between Britten's musical text and performance of the *Metamorphoses* is not as straightforward as it appears. Despite the enduring characterisation of each movement there has been some experimentation by performers within the performance tradition, and in the context of a greater freedom, there is scope to make the narrative more overt. Adapting Léon's performance ideals can expand artistic choices, and in the process can make links between narrative and musical gesture more compelling.

4.4.6. DVD: Filmed performances

York Bowen (1884-1961), Sonata for oboe and piano Op. 85

1. *Allegretto grazioso* 2. *Andantino espressivo* 3. Finale: *Allegro giocoso*

Bowen's Oboe Sonata, the first substantial composition for the instrument and piano by a British composer, has been one of the most frequently performed works in Bowen's canon. The premiere was given by Léon and pianist Kathleen Markwell on 28 October 1930 at Cardiff High School for Girls for the Cardiff Chamber Music Society.²⁰⁸

In contrast to the three modern-day recordings of the work (there is no known recording by Léon),²⁰⁹ of which only Melinda Maxwell plays with occasional subtle *rubato* and some tempo variation, my performance exploits the full range of Léon's ideals in exploring the musical boundaries without reducing shape and structure. To heighten the flowing sonorities of the first movement, for example, on the second repeat of the opening section, having paused on the top B minim I follow through with Léon's characteristic 'lingering' and 'scuttling',²¹⁰ and similarly in bars 28 to 30 (Ex.4.68, 1'46''- 2'03'' and 4.69, 2'49''- 2'56''); I use much less *rubato* at the recapitulation at bar 77 (4'48''- 5'04''). I also slur the tongued descending sextuplet in bar 46 to shape the phrase and maintain momentum (Ex. 4.70, 3'27''- 3'34'') and in bars 71-74 and 90-93 I play with an *accelerando* to enhance the rhythmic buoyancy of the music (Ex. 4.71, 4'31''- 4'41'' and 4.72, 5'20''-5'30'').

Ex. 4.68. York Bowen, Sonata for oboe and piano Op. 85, movement 1,

oboe part, bars 1-7.



²⁰⁸ Centre for Performance History, Léon Goossens Collection.

²⁰⁹ See discography.

²¹⁰ 'Léon Goossens: A Centenary Tribute – part II, p. 12.

Ex. 4.69. York Bowen, Sonata for oboe and piano Op. 85, movement 1,
oboe part, bars 28-30.



Ex. 4.70. York Bowen, Sonata for oboe and piano Op. 85, movement 1,
oboe part, bars 45-47.



Ex. 4.71. York Bowen, Sonata for oboe and piano Op. 85, movement 1,
oboe part, bars 71-74.



Ex. 4.72. York Bowen, Sonata for oboe and piano Op. 85, movement 1,
oboe part, bars 90-93.



The romanticism of the second movement embodies Léon's ability to sustain an extended phrase. I vary use of *rubato* and dynamic variation throughout, moderate at the beginning (bars 1-12, 7'30''- 8'08'') with notable exaggeration of *rubato* during the return of the main theme (bars 52-64, 10'08''- 10'48''). I add tonal colour by playing an *accelerando* through the *appassionato* section bars 30 to 35 (Ex.7.73, 9'03''- 9'18'') to intensify the immediacy of the *subito piano* in bar 36 (Ex.4.74); I also alter some of the given articulation, such as playing the semiquaver figures in

bars 72 and 73 *staccato* for musical interest, and presenting bars 76 and 77 as a cadenza, returning to tempo at bar 78 (Ex 4.75, 11'07'' - 11'29'')

Ex. 4.73. York Bowen, Sonata for oboe and piano Op. 85, movement 2,
oboe part, bars 30-36.



Ex. 4.74. York Bowen, Sonata for oboe and piano Op. 85, movement 2,
oboe part, bars 71-77.



In the 'Finale' I heighten the playful celtic dance-like character with use of *rubato* and varying degrees of tonal variation such as steadying the tempo from bar 24 (Ex.4.75, 13'57'' - 13'57'') to shape the constant undulating notation. At the *poco rubato* (bar 78) I linger on the top D sharp following through the descending figure including an *accelerando* then a *ritenuto* in bar 81 together with a *diminuendo* to the top G instead of the dictated *crescendo* to soften the phrase (Ex.4.76, 16'04'' - 16'16'').

Ex. 4.75. York Bowen, Sonata for oboe and piano Op. 85, movement 3,
oboe part, bars 24-27.



Ex. 4.76. York Bowen, Sonata for oboe and piano Op. 85, movement 3,
oboe part, bars 78-82.



I play the the coda (bars 107 to the end) *prestissimo* rather than continue the established *tempo primo* imparting bravura and finality (Ex. 4.77, 17'18''-17'33'').

Ex. 4.77. York Bowen, Sonata for oboe and piano Op. 85, movement 3,
oboe part, bars 107-115.

Concert of Goossens' programming

As short pieces were a popular feature of Léon's programming, it was essential for me to embrace the idea of performing a recital of miniature works. Despite my concerns that a modern-day audience would consider such a venture trite and at best a mere curiosity, response to the format was surprisingly enthusiastic as evident from my filmed performance. Rather than reproduce one of Léon's programmes, I decided to compile a recital of predominantly British compositions from Léon's repertoire that I would be comfortable playing to a live audience as well as reflecting his approach to programming in presenting a variety of works. Furthermore it gave me the opportunity to include the first known performance of the final movement from *Goossens Birthday Pieces* by Alan Richardson and his *A Reverie for oboe and piano* Op.23 No. 1 for an encore. The Loeillet Sonata for oboe and piano was selected from one of Léon's favoured Baroque pieces as a counterbalance to the chosen British

repertoire. It was also a work edited by one of his foremost pupils Evelyn Rothwell. The recital embodies Léon's ideals within a modern-day performance context; I play with extensive use of *rubato*, expressive legato, tonal colour and clear articulation. The Reizenstein Sonatina is, however the exception. Tightly structured, only occasional subtle use of *rubato* was possible, but I maintain a rich and varied tone throughout and articulate phrases clearly to give direction and clarity to the music. Conversely my performance of the Loeillet is contrary to Léon's ideals in one aspect, his dislike of 'embellishment.'²¹¹ For personal preference I use ornamentation freely on the repeated sections in each of the four movements. This is also an acknowledgement of modern-day performance practice in playing Baroque music. The pieces are listed below according to the order of my programme.

Franz Reizenstein (1911-1968), Sonatina for oboe and piano Op.11 (0'27''-13'31'')

1. Allegretto
2. Cantilène
3. Con moto

Completed in 1939 the Sonatina was the second of two works Reizenstein wrote for oboe.²¹² The premiere was given by oboist Peter Graeme and Reizenstein in London, 1942. There are no further details of that performance, though following publication in 1943 was described as 'dexterous and polished', 'no more than a *pièce d'occasion*', lacking 'warmth' and 'emotional effect' and of 'bakerlitish texture.'²¹³ In stark contrast, a later review praised the work as 'courteous' and 'engaging' in its 'rhythmic wit' and 'melodic charm.'²¹⁴

Alec Rowley (1892-1958), Pavan and Dance for oboe and piano (14'05''- 19'34'')

²¹¹ Léon Goossens: 'A centenary tribute - part III', *Double Reed News*, 40 (Autumn 1997), 6.

²¹² Three Concert Pieces for oboe and piano was written in 1937. Peter Graeme and Shulamith Shafir gave the first performance at Wigmore Hall, March 1941. For biographical overview see Hugo Cole and Malcolm Miller, 'Reizenstein, Franz', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. by Stanley Sadie, 2nd ed., 29 vols. (London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 2001), xxi, 172-3; Paul Griffiths, 'Reizenstein, Franz', *Oxford Music Online* *e.oxfordmusiconline.com*, <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.html>> [8 September 2015]; John S. Weismann, 'The Music of Franz Reizenstein', *The Listener* 47 (January 1952), 977.

²¹³ E.R., 'Review', *Music & Letters*, 24 (July 1943), 188.

²¹⁴ Paul Griffiths, 'Review', *Musical Times*, 116 (December 1975), 1071.

Although dedicated to Léon, it is not known whether he commissioned the work. According to Beryl Kington, a lost oboe concerto was also written for Léon for his first American tour in 1928 and Philip Scowcroft notes an *English Dance Suite* for oboe and strings as well as two trios for flute, oboe and piano. The two miniature pieces, *Pavan*, written in the style of Gabriel Fauré, and *Dance*, in the style of Giles Farnaby, are the only works Rowley wrote for the oboe that are in print.

Alan Richardson (1904-1978), *Vivace from Goossens' Birthday Pieces for oboe and piano* (1967) (20'03''- 22'24'')

The fifth of six works Richardson wrote for Léon. It is the first of two unpublished birthday commemoration pieces from the composer.

J.B. Loeillet (1685-1748), *Sonata in C major for oboe and piano* (23'58''- 32'59'')

1. Largo cantabile
2. Allegro
3. Largo espressivo
4. Allegro

Credited with introducing the traverse flute to Britain Jean Baptiste Loeillet was also an oboist and a member of the Drury Lane Theatre orchestra and the 'Opera band at the Haymarket [Theatre].'²¹⁵ The sonata, edited by the oboist Evelyn Rothwell with figured bass realised by pianist Alfonso Gibilaro (1910-75), is an arrangement of selected movements from Loeillet's Opus 111 nos. 1, 4 and 10 of 'XII, Six for Common Flute and Six for a German Flute with a Thorough Bass for Harpsichord or Bass Violin.'²¹⁶

²¹⁵ Alec Skempton, 'The Instrumental Sonatas of the Loeillets', *Music and Letters*, 43 (July 1962), 207-17 (pp. 209, 214-6).

²¹⁶ Skempton, pp. 215 -6.

Alan Richardson (1904-1978), Scherzino for oboe and piano Op.23 (33'28''-35'31'').

A short light-hearted piece written for Léon in 1952.

Alec Templeton (1909-1963), Scherzo Caprice for oboe and piano (35'53''-38'01'').

The *Scherzo Caprice* is a short lively work Templeton wrote for Léon in the early 1960s.

Thomas Pitfield (1903-1999), Rondo Lirico for oboe and piano (38'35''-41'34'').

Pitfield's canon of works for the oboe include Polka for oboe and piano (1947), Sonata for oboe and piano (1948), written for Evelyn Rothwell, and Divertimento for oboe quartet (1967). Described as a 'charming feather-weight' work with some 'ingenious grafting,' *Rondo Lirico* was written for Léon in 1946.²¹⁷

Alan Richardson (1904-1978), A Reverie for oboe and piano Op. 23 No.1 (2'35''- 44'28'').

The final work of my recital this wistful piece was written for Léon in 1960

²¹⁷ Ivor Keys, 'Review', *Music and Letters*, 28 (October 1947), 405.

Conclusion

The principle aim of this project in reassessing the British oboist Léon Goossens' performing strategies was to explore, through a series of recordings and contextual commentary, how it is possible to adapt his interpretative ideals within the framework of modern-day practices. The re-mastered release in 2002 of Léon's 1927 recording of the Quintet for oboe and strings by Arnold Bax proved to be portentous for this study. Léon's distinctive reading is so radically different in character to modern-day recordings; his evocation of Ireland, reflecting Bax's relationship with Celtic traditions, challenges the uniformity of an English pastoral style of playing presented by contemporary oboists. The subsequent outcome of my study of this work and its lost performance tradition revealed Léon's status and influence in the renaissance of the oboe in this country. Placing Léon's practice in a historical context invites not only an understanding of his impact, but crucially his soundworld.

Léon's rise from principal oboe at the Queen's Hall Orchestra aged seventeen to internationally celebrated soloist was meteoric. Unique for an oboist, he had a loyal national and international public following; no other oboist before or since has enjoyed such acclaim outside the classical music world. As well as his impact and influence on generations of oboists, his contribution to the twentieth-century renaissance of British music is considerable; a significant legacy of forty-nine works by British composers was created for him. Léon's playing was described as the antithesis of the 'plaintive' and 'straight' style that defined the British oboe sound of thumb-plate oboe and tapered 'U' scraped narrow-shaped reed that had little resistance which facilitated his adroit technique, fluidity of tone, clear articulation and a wide range of dynamics underpinned by a musicianship characterised by his breath control, phrasing, use of rubato and vibrato as well as tempi¹ – elements that collectively defined his soundworld.. I adapted the richer tone qualities of my playing by making reeds of a thinner gouge and a narrower shape than my standard style; a brighter sound reflective of Leon's timbre is evident in my early recorded material. I also purchased an original early twentieth-century Lorée model that, despite providing some insight from a mechanical perspective, ultimately proved unreliable in performance. There was little discernible difference in timbre between the Lorée and

¹ 'Leon Goossens: A centenary tribute – part III', *Double Reed*, 40 (Autumn, 1997), 5-6 (p. 6).

my modern-day oboe, and as the project progressed I reverted to my present-day reeds as it was more important to explore a modern-day approach within the context of Léon's general practice.

The choice of recorded repertoire for this project, primarily of works written for Léon, is reflective of the eclectic material (some as dedicatee, some not) that Léon performed for much of his solo career. My documented practice of primarily live performances spans works from 1923 to 1977, and showcases rare performances of forgotten compositions including the Sonata for Oboe and Piano (1951) by Alan Richardson, as well as the first known performances of two unknown celebration works Richardson wrote for Léon's seventieth and eightieth birthdays. Two in-depth case studies have illustrated the potential of adopting Léon's interpretative ideals: a reinterpretation of the Bax Oboe Quintet demonstrates how these strategies might affect a work's potential 'meaning', whilst a rereading of Benjamin Britten's familiar *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid for Solo Oboe* offers new insights in terms of the communication of the work's character. The final recording of the project, a concert of selected miniatures illustrates Léon's approach to programming. The favourable reception of the latter suggests that the inclusion of short works in modern-day programming strategies; connections can be explored through juxtapositions of standard and miniature repertoire.

Continuing advances in the mechanisation of the oboe, necessary to support the conceptual mechanisms of evolving musical language, have contributed towards the development of a universal tone colouring and notably less flexibility than earlier styles of playing;² Léon, for example, judged the weightier oboes resulting from these developments as 'too heavy for the delicacy [of] his own artistry'.³ However, my documented practice via this series of recordings clearly demonstrates that reconciling Léon's interpretative strategies within the context of modern-day performance practice is attainable. Adapting Léon's particular idiomatic use of rubato, vibrato, phrase shaping, tempi fluctuation and tone colour, offers an alternative expressive platform and challenges entrenched ideas of performance. My performances do not

² Andrea Ridilla, 'An Indissoluble Marriage: Italian Oboe playing and the human voice', *Double Reed News* 92 (Autumn 2010), 26.

³ 'Leon Goossens: A centenary tribute – part III', 5.

represent a more 'authentic' realisation, but an alternative vision as part of a number of interpretative possibilities for performers to explore.

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The Oboe 1903-1953: Various artists (Oboe Classics, C2012, 2005).

Appendix 1
Works Premiered by Léon Goossens

Dedicated repertoire

Composer	Work	Year
Arnold, Malcolm	Sonatina for oboe & piano Op .28	1951
	Concerto for oboe & strings	1953
	Quartet for oboe & strings	1957
	Op.61(originally Serenade for Oboe Quartet)	
Bach, J S trans. & arr. Donald Tovey	Concerto for oboe d'amore & strings	1937
Bax, Arnold	Quintet for oboe & strings	1922
Boughton, Rutland	Concerto No. 2 in G minor for oboe strings	1937
Bowen, York	Sonata for oboe & piano Op. 85	1929
Britten, Benjamin	Phantasy Quartet	1932
Chandler, Mary	Concerto for oboe d'amore & strings	1953
Cocks, Somers	Three Sketches for oboe & piano	?
Cooke, Arnold	Quartet for oboe & strings	1949
	Concerto for oboe & strings	1954
	Sonata for oboe & piano	1957
Elgar, Edward arr. Gordon Jacob	Soliloquy for oboe & orchestra	1930
Elliot, Michael	Three Pieces for oboe	1954
Evans, Peter	Sonata for oboe & piano	19??
Foster, Ivor R.	Sonatina for oboe & piano	c.1960

Composer	Work	Year
Finzi, Gerald	Interlude for oboe & strings	1936
Gibbs, Armstrong	Concerto for oboe & orchestra	1927
Goossens, Eugene	<i>Pastorale et Arlequinade</i> for flute, oboe & piano	1924
	Concerto for oboe & orchestra Op.45	1929
	Concert Piece for oboe/cor anglais & two harps Op. 65	1957
Gow, Dorothy	Quintet for oboe & strings in one movement	1936
Howells, Herbert	Sonata for oboe & piano	1947
Jacob, Gordon	Concerto No. 1 for oboe & strings	1934
	Quartet for oboe & strings	1938
	Concerto No. 2 for oboe & orchestra	1956
	An 80 th Birthday Card for Léon Goossens	1977
Josephs, Wilfred	Concerto for oboe & percussion Op. 58	1967
	Prelude for Léon Goossens' 90 th Birthday	1987
Maconchy, Elizabeth	Quintet for oboe & strings	1933
MacMahon, Desmond	Concerto for oboe & strings	1956
Moeran, E J	Fantasy Quartet	1946
Pitfield, Thomas	Rondo Lirico for oboe & piano	c.1950

Composer	Work	Year
Richardson, Alan	French Suite for oboe & piano	1946
	Sonata for oboe & piano Op. 40	1950
	Scherzino for oboe & piano Op.23	1952
	Reverie for oboe & piano Op.32, No. 1	1959
	Goossens' Birthday Pieces	1967
	Three Pieces for oboe and piano	1977
Rowley, Alec	Oboe Concerto	1928
	Pavane and Dance	c. 1954
Roxburgh, Edwin	Silent Strings for oboe & piano	1977
	<i>Antares</i> for oboe & piano	1987
Scarlatti, Domenico, arr. Gordon Bryan	Concerto in G minor for oboe & strings	1944
Scott, Cyril	Concerto for oboe & strings	1955
Stainer, John	Quartet for oboe & strings	1949
Templeton, Alec	Scherzo Caprice for oboe & piano	1965
Vaughan Williams, Ralph	Concerto for oboe & strings	1944
Woolridge, John	Concerto for oboe & strings	1950
Wordsworth, William	Quartet for oboe & strings	1950

Non-dedicated Repertoire

Composer	Work	Year
Andrae, Volkmar	Concertino for oboe & strings Op. 42	1948
Bach, J. S. arr Norman Cavell	Concerto in C minor for oboe & strings	1950
Bliss, Arthur	Quintet for oboe & strings	1927
Bush, Geoffrey	Dialogue for oboe & piano	1960
Douglas, Roy	Quartet for oboe & strings	1947
Dunhill, Thomas	Suite for oboe & piano	1942
Hindemith, Paul	Sonata for oboe & piano	1939
Holst, Gustav	Flugal Concerto for flute, oboe & strings	1923
Howell, Dorothy	Air, variations & finale for violin, oboe & piano	1949
Ibert, Jacques	Symphonie Concertante for oboe & strings	1959
Jacob, Gordon	Diversions for ten instruments	1958
Kalliwoda, Johann	Concerto in F for oboe & strings	1977
Marcello, Benedetto, arr. Hyam Greenbaum	Concerto in C minor for oboe & strings	1936
Muligan, Denis	Suite for oboe & strings	1950
Nicholson, Ralph	Concertino for oboe & strings	1957
Randerson, Horace E.	Trio for oboe, violin & viola, 'Field Smell Sweet'	1926
Saunders, Max	Cotswold Pastoral for oboe & strings	1967

Composer	Work	Year
Searle, Humphrey	Variations & finale for ten instruments op. 34	1958
Somers-cocks, John	Three sketches for oboe & piano	1932
Stanta, W. K.	Phantasy Quartet for oboe & strings	1949
Strauss, Richard	Concerto for oboe & orchestra	1946
Tucker, ?	Quartet for oboe & strings	1948
Warlock, Peter	Four songs for baritone, violin, oboe & piano	1932

APPENDIX 2

CD and DVD Recordings

CD 1

The Alan Richardson Collection**Alan Richardson (1904-1977)**

Sonata for oboe and piano Op. 40 [14'57'']

Recorded 1 March 2013

1. Vivace [4'30'']

2. Lento languido [5'54'']

3. Allegretto: ben misurato [4'34'']

French Suite for Oboe and Piano [16'11'']

Recorded 11 July 2010

4. Rendezvous [2'57'']

5. Les Peupliers [3'54'']

6. Passepied [3'33'']

7. Causerie [3'21'']

8. Les Moulins [3'29'']

Three Pieces for oboe and piano (An eightieth birthday tribute to Léon
Goossens) [8'40'']

Recorded 1 March 2013

9. Retrospect [2'18'']

10. Memento [4'36'']

11. Quick Dance [1'46'']

12. *Roundelay* for oboe and piano (1935) [4'09'']

Recorded 18 November 2011

Total timing: 43'47''

Jonathan Tobutt, Oboe

Daniel Gordon, Piano

These pieces were recorded in the Clothworkers Centenary Concert Hall,
School of Music, University of Leeds.

CD 2

Selected dedicated repertoire

Arnold Cooke (1906-2005), Sonata for oboe and pianoforte [19'18'']

Recorded 22 October 2010

- | | |
|---|----------|
| 1. Andante-Allegro-Andante-Allegro vivace | [6'22''] |
| 2. Andante-Poco piu mosso-Andante | [6'41''] |
| 3. Allegro giocoso-andante | [6'15''] |

Jonathan Tobutt, Oboe

Daniel Gordon, Piano

This piece was recorded in the Clothworkers Centenary Concert Hall,
School of Music University of Leeds.

Gordon Jacob (1895-1984), Concerto No. 2 for oboe and orchestra [25'03'']

Recorded 14 March 2010

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 4. Allegro-Lento-Adagio molto-Allegro vivace | [10'10''] |
| 5. Andante | [7'05''] |
| 6. Allegro molto | [7'48''] |

Jonathan Tobutt, Oboe

School of Music Philharmonia, Leeds University

Eno Koco, Conductor

This piece was recorded in the Great Hall, University of Leeds.

Total timing: 44' 21''

CD 3

Non-dedicated repertoire

Lennox Berkeley (1903-1989), Sonatina for oboe and piano Op. 61 [9'46'']

Recorded 18 November 2011

- | | |
|-------------------|----------|
| 1. Molto moderato | [4'34''] |
| 2. Andante | [3'03''] |
| 3. Allegro | [2'09''] |

Gordon Jacob (1895-1984), Sonatina for oboe and harpsichord (or piano)
[10'22'']

Recorded 1 March 2013

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------|
| 1. Adagio | [3'03''] |
| 2. Allegro giocoso | [1'33''] |
| 3. Lento alla Sarabanda | [3'02''] |
| 4. Allegro molto vivace | [2'44''] |

Total timing: 20'08''

Jonathan Tobutt, Oboe

Daniel Gordon, Piano

These pieces were recorded in the Clothworkers Centenary Concert Hall,
School of Music University of Leeds.

CD 4

Case Study 1

Arnold Bax (1883-1953), Quintet for oboe and strings [18'01'']

Recorded 26 April 2012

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------|
| 1. Tempo molto moderato | [5'20''] |
| 2. Lento espressivo | [8'08''] |
| 3. Allegro giocoso | [4'33''] |

Total timing: 18'01''

Jonathan Tobutt,	Oboe
Ilias Devetzoglou,	Violin 1
Clive Brown,	Violin 2
Duncan Druce,	Viola
George Kennaway,	Violoncello

For this recording I used my 1926 Lorée oboe

This piece was recorded in the Clothworkers Centenary Concert Hall, School of Music University of Leeds.

CD 5

Case Study 2

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)*Six Metamorphoses after Ovid Op. 49 for solo oboe. [14'47'']*

Recorded 11 July 2012

1.	Pan	[2'47'']
2.	Phaeton	[1'20'']
3.	Niobe	[2'43'']
4.	Bacchus	[1'56'']
5.	Narcissus	[3'30'']
6.	Arethusa	[2'31'']

Total timing: 14'47''

Jonathan Tobutt, Oboe

This piece was recorded in the Clothworkers Centenary Concert Hall,
School of Music University of Leeds.

DVD

Filmed performances

York Bowen (1884-1961), Sonata for oboe and piano Op. 85 [17'28''].

Filmed in June 2011, DVD transfer 9 June 2016.

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------|
| 1. Allegretto grazioso | [7'19''] |
| 2. Andantino espressivo | [5'17''] |
| 3. Finale: Allegro giocoso | [4'52''] |

This piece was filmed at the Howard Assembly Rooms, Grand Theatre, Leeds

Goossens style programme concert [39'23''].

Filmed 16 October 2015, DVD transfer 13 June 2016.

Franz Reizenstein (1911-1968), Sonatina for oboe and piano Op.11
[12'37'']

- | | |
|---------------|----------|
| 1. Allegretto | [4'00''] |
| 2. Cantilène | [4'55''] |
| 3. Con moto | [3'42''] |

Alec Rowley (1892-1958), Pavan and Dance for oboe and piano [5'06'']

- | | |
|-----------|----------|
| 1. Pavane | [2'27''] |
| 2. Dance | [2'39''] |

Alan Richardson (1904-1978), *Vivace* from Goossens' Birthday Pieces
for oboe and piano (1967) [2'20'']

J.B. Loeillet (1685-1748), Sonata in C major for oboe and piano [9'12'']

1. Largo cantabile [3'12'']
2. Allegro [1'30'']
3. Largo espressivo [2'17'']
4. Allegro [2'13'']

Alan Richardson (1904-1978), Scherzino for oboe and piano Op.23 [2'02'']

Alec Templeton (1909-1963), Scherzo Caprice for oboe and piano [2'07'']

Thomas Pitfield (1903-1999), Rondo Lirico for oboe and piano [3'00'']

Alan Richardson (1904-1978), A Reverie for oboe and piano Op. 23 No.1
[2'59'']

Total timing: 56'51''

Jonathan Tobutt, Oboe

Daniel Gordon, Piano

These pieces were recorded in the Clothworkers Centenary Concert Hall,
School of Music University of Leeds.