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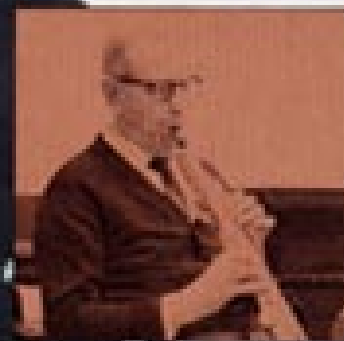
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Saxophone

JOURNAL



Marcel Mule



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Marcel Mule

His Life And The Saxophone

Perhaps more than any other person, Marcel Mule has pioneered the development of the saxophone as a classical medium. As a young man he saw the classical potential of the instrument, but at the time there was no mentor to guide him. He was to be the one who would lead the way for others.

When he began, the saxophone was firmly established as a band instrument. As he played in the Paris of the 1920s, his fame as an artist quickly spread. He learned much from various media, including jazz, and applied it successfully to his classical art. At the end of the decade, he and three friends established the first saxophone quartet. They built a reputation and a repertory; making transcriptions, and inspiring other composers to write for them.

In 1942, Marcel Mule became the second professor of saxophone in the history of the Paris Conservatory; the first had been Adolphe Sax himself, seventy-two years before. When Maitre Mule retired from his dual career as an artist and professor in 1968, there was virtually no performer or teacher of the classical saxophone in the world who had not in some way been influenced by him

THE EARLY YEARS

Marcel Mule was born on June 24, 1901, in Aube, Normandy. Five years later, his family moved to another part of Normandy, Beaumont-le-Roger, where his father worked as an accountant in a lace factory. The elder Mule also led a busy life as an amateur musician who conducted the small-town band, played the saxophone, and gave music lessons. When his son was seven, he introduced him to the saxophone. Mule remembers, "I worked on the saxophone with him, and at the end of a few months I played in the band."

Marcel showed his talent by making rapid progress, mastering difficult passages when he was only eight. Soon his father was finding it necessary to admonish his son against becoming

a professional musician. Mule observes, "Basically, he was right. He had lived in Paris a long time himself before serving in the army, and at the age of twenty or twenty-one, he left because he realized that he could not succeed by pursuing a career as a musician there."

With such plans in mind, the elder Mule saw to it that Marcel began to study the violin when he was nine. Three years later, the boy added another instrument, almost by accident. His father, then thirty-two years old, decided to study the piano himself. His crowded schedule, however, did not allow much time to practice, and his twelve-year-old son thought that papa was not doing as well as he ought. Although expressly forbidden to do so, Marcel took it upon himself to practice the exercises assigned to his father. At first, the elder Mule was angry at his son for, as he supposed, neglecting the violin for the piano, but finally he had to admit that the youngster could play the exercises better than he could. Marcel was allowed to pursue the piano in addition to his violin lessons.

All the while, Marcel was making good academic progress. His father was happy, for the boy seemed well along the road to a career as a classroom teacher with enough proficiency in music to supplement his income with private lessons.

For the next several years, academic work took precedence over music. "There was the eclipse," says Mule. "From the age of thirteen, I no longer studied music seriously because of my regular school work. I still played, but only occasionally, on the piano, the violin, and the saxophone. I played the saxophone only during the vacation times, especially in the bands of the regions where I lived." He did, however, play the soprano saxophone rather well and was invited to play various solos with the band.

PLAYING IN BANDS

In 1917, Marcel Mule enrolled in the *Ecole Normale* of Evreux, where he completed a three-year course that prepared him for teaching. But after six months as a teacher in his alma mater at Beaumont-le-Roger, where his former teacher had become principal, he departed in April 1921 for Paris to serve in the Fifth Infantry Regiment.

Once in the military, he became a member of the band. Always self-effacing, he expected no special treatment. But soon, he recalls, "I observed that my level in music was not at all inferior to

Eugene Rousseau

that of my fellow soldiers. The leader of the band was impressed by me. Encouraged by the minor successes that I had obtained as a soloist, I worked more seriously than before." Before long Mule was the talk of military bands in the Paris regions for his prowess as a saxophonist.

At about this time, Mule began to study with Gabriel Willaume, a violinist, who was to have an enormous influence on his musical development. Willaume performed often with the very demanding Saint-Seans, who considered him an outstanding musician. Willaume worked with Mule on his phrasing and style, but, equally important, he urged the young man to develop his musical taste by attending countless concerts in Paris. For five or six years he also studied musical literature with a remarkable teacher at the Paris National Conservatory, George Caussade, who gave him a foundation for musical interpretation that he used throughout his career.

Mule also attended the night clubs where, in the Paris of the 1920s, American jazz musicians were becoming increasingly popular. The tone of the saxophone, as they played it, was surprisingly different from that familiar to Mule. At first he was not impressed, for the jazz vibrato at that time was experimental and often consisted of a rapid quavering that Mule thought was dreadful. Nevertheless, it inspired him to develop his own vibrato; one that was to become a distinctive and famous trait of his classical playing.

The immediate result of his exposure to jazz was extra income, as he found that he could play with the new groups. "I knew them all. It didn't do me any harm. On the contrary, it gave me a certain amount of ease in the profession afterward." Indeed, his early use of the vibrato earned him quite a name among the players in jazz and dance bands.

Although Marcel Mule was not greatly taken with nonclassical music, he derived enormous benefits from his experience of playing jazz. He became increasingly aware of the saxophone's potential power and versatility, and he experimented with vibrato. At that time, he used vibrato only during his after-hours jobs, never with the *Guard* band.

Nineteen-twenty-three was a pivotal year in the career of the young saxophonist. At the urging of Francois Combelle, Mule undertook the competitive entrance auditions for *La musique de la Garde Republicaine*, and won first place among the twelve auditionees. Combelle was, at this time, a solo saxophonist in the *Guard* for whom Mule had a high regard. Little did Mule know that he would soon be Combelle's successor. Marcel Mule entered the *Guard* in August, when he was twenty-one, and six months later succeeded Combelle, a position he was to hold for thirteen years.

La musique de la Garde Republicaine proved an excellent environment for Mule. He had the oppor-

tunity to play solos frequently throughout France. What he called, "the expressive atmosphere of the *Guard*," helped him to develop his tone quality. He also learned much from string players and singers outside the organization: "It is undeniable that the musicians and singers whom I heard and liked had such an enormous influence on the way I played. I sorted them out, trying to retain only what was good. That is what one must always do." He felt that what he was seeking for the saxophone sonority could be found 'all around him. He strove to develop a tone that had a natural quality, one that would be universally accepted.

He continued to play jazz and dance music for several years after entering the *Guard*, but it was for financial reasons. He had a growing family to support. On August 12, 1925 he had married Polette Bourdon who, like him, was from Beaumont-le-Roger. Their son, Pol, was born in July 1926 and their second son, Jacques, in July 1929. The marriage proved an exceptionally happy one, as the constant rehearsals and performances that strain some musical families were taken by the Mules as occasions for mutual love and support.



From The Collection Of: Eugene Rousseau

SAXOPHONE QUARTET OF GARDE REPUBLICAINE, 1932
left to right- Fernand Lhomme, tenor; Paul Romby, alto;
Marcel Mule, soprano; Georges Chauvet, baritone

Finally, however, there was a breakthrough. His first orchestral engagement was with the *Opera Comique*, for which he played the alto saxophone part in Jules Massenet's *Werther*. After he had played this part for several years, he was engaged during the 1928-29 season to perform in *Evolution*, a ballet by Edouard L'Enfant that had a blues melody for the alto saxophone. The composer's instruction was, "very brilliant!"

At the first rehearsal, the composer asked Mule to play the solo with vibrato, as he had heard him do in jazz. Mule was reluctant, but L'Enfant insisted. Mule remembers:

"I agreed to do as he wished, although I played it with more restraint than I did in the jazz bands. To my great surprise it was a huge success among the members of the orchestra. In particular, there was a horn player from the *Guard* sitting next to me who said, 'You should play like that in the *Guard*.' And that is what I did from that day for-

ward, but always with great caution, sometimes using the vibrato only on one note from time to time while observing the reactions of my colleagues. As their reactions were favorable, I became bolder until, relating the vibrato to the needs of the symphony orchestra, I arrived at a sort of compromise between the complete freedom of jazz and the rigidity of my previous approach.”

Thus, Mule points out, the evolution of the vibrato in classical saxophone performance was truly a capital evolution because of L’Enfant’s *Evolution!*

THE SAXOPHONE QUARTET

The musical environment and camaraderie of the *Guard* led to the formation of the first saxophone quartet. From time to time, Marcel Mule and three of his colleagues had played together informally. By 1928, they had firmly established the soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone saxophone instrumentation. Finally, they began regular rehearsals that would result in the world premiere of the saxophone quartet on December 2, 1928, in La Rochelle. The members of *Le quatuor de la musique de la Garde Republicaine*, in addition to Marcel Mule on soprano saxophone, were Rene Chaligne, alto; Hippolyte Poimboeuf, tenor; and

Georges Chauvet, baritone.

It is difficult now to recapture the significance of this event. Never before had there been a saxophone quartet; there was no repertory. So swift has been the development of this medium and so abundant is its present repertory that it hardly seems possible it is only a half century old.

Chauvet contributed greatly to the early great success of the Quartet. Believing firmly in the medium, he spent countless hours copying parts for the various transcriptions that made up the bulk of the early quartet repertory. In addition, he used his energy and organizational ability to book numerous concerts for the Quartet.

Since the striking new ensemble was founded at the time Mule was experimenting with the use of vibrato in classical music, *Le quatuor de la musique de la Garde Republicaine* performed for several years without vibrato. It was only in 1932 that they added vibrato to their already expressive tone quality. The Quartet rapidly took its place among the best chamber groups.

As the Quartet became widely known, it was in demand for concert performances and radio broadcasts. The original personnel remained intact until 1932, when Paul Romby became the alto player and Fernand Lhomme occupied the tenor chair.

In 1936, Mule, Chauvet, and Romby left the *Guard* and the name of the quartet was changed to *Le quatuor de saxophones de Paris*. Fernand Lhomme remained in the *Guard* and was replaced on tenor by George Charron. The group flourished, giving many concerts in their native country and in Italy, as well as in Switzerland, Belgium and other countries in Europe.

From The Collection Of: Eugene Rousseau



THE PARIS SAXOPHONE QUARTET, 1946
left to right- George Charron, tenor; Marcel Mule, soprano
Marcel Josse, alto; Georges Chauvet, baritone

Marcel Mule is one of those rare names, as a saxophonist, that can be placed in the twentieth century next to those of the greatest American jazzmen in the history of music. In an era when the saxophone was played almost exclusively by military musicians, jazz performers, dance orchestras and in cabarets, and even in circuses, Marcel Mule pointed out that the saxophone had a "classical" vocation to fulfill.

By his natural brilliance and exceptional musical ability he was an incomparable virtuoso. He made a mark on the history of the saxophone, perhaps even more by his personal and original dazzling manner of playing, than by the many works that were written and dedicated to him. Marcel Mule has profoundly marked the literature of his time, despite not having succeeded with doing away with certain so-called hardening academism. He is and was an important ambassador of a concept that represented French artistry, which consisted of a clarity and virtuosity in ability while at the same time a modesty in interpretation combined with elegance and naturalness based on his personal eloquence.

Marcel acquired considerable notoriety as a teacher, and it is he who formed the quasi totality of French and foreign saxophone teachers of the generations between 1942 and 1968. In this role saxophonists everywhere owe him a debt of gratitude and it pleases me to offer that in this letter of tribute. The heritage that Marcel Mule leaves us is remarkable in more than one sense. It's up to today's generation of saxophonists to make it bear fruit and make it live on without ever diminishing his intentions. Despite a unique and exceptional talent, Marcel Mule did not succeed in changing the course of history, but he did manage to introduce the saxophone definitively into the Kingdom of great music.

Jean-Marie Londeix
Bordeaux Conservatory



THE MARCEL MULE SAXOPHONE QUARTET, 1951
 left to right- George Gourdet, tenor; Andre Bauchy, alto;
 Marcel Mule, soprano; Marcel Josse, baritone

DEVELOPMENT OF THE REPERTORY

Among the transcriptions used by the early Quartet was the *Andante* from Tschaiakowsky's first string quartet, arranged by Marcel Mule, a published arrangement that today remains popular among saxophone quartets. The first piece actually written for the Quartet was also derived from music for other media. Around 1930, Pierre Vellones, a medical doctor and a composer well-known among saxophonists, took several pieces he had written and arranged them for the Quartet, titling his potpourri: *Au Jardin des Betes Sauvages*. Another early contributor to the repertory was Robert Clerisse.

Soon the Quartet was inspiring a large number of original works. In 1932, Alexander Glazounov com-

I first began to know Marcel Mule in college, through his marvelous transcriptions and recordings on Musical Heritage Society, the Ibert and Selmer records, and later the fantastic Prades Festival recording with Casals of the "2nd Brandenburg Concerto" on soprano saxophone. What immediately struck me about Mule was the universal quality of his music making, stated thus: "every note had meaning; he had the strength or gentleness to reach out, but nothing was forced or deliberately overstated. He had the ability to play very loud or very soft and as fast as anyone could want, but as soft and as loud and as fast as he played, one could imagine that with the sheer ease of the result there was still more in reserve, when needed."

Marcel Mule played with great style; his own. But, the music always came first. No false bravura in his playing, but merely the same ease in virtuosity that one hears when listening to Casals, Heifetz, and Perlman. I can remember sitting with young violinists watching movies of Heifetz and Feuermann playing and on several occasions hearing giggles, not because of mistakes, but because what the performers were doing seemed to them to be impossible. What I too learned from Marcel Mule was that nothing was impossible in making music, and in choosing music, and the saxophone was and is the most important thing in my musical life.

By the time I entered graduate school I became more interested in knowing the personality of the man, and read a number of articles in music magazines from the 1950s Mule had written after his triumphant US tour with the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Charles Munch. Again, there was an ease in writing, a gentle, self-effacing quality which allowed him to retain his humility rather than proclaim his greatness.

When I first began playing the occasional saxophone parts for the Boston Symphony I used to pass the time talking to some of the players who had toured with Mule in that memorable 1958 concert tour. All had fallen in love with him as a person and as an artist. All first remarks were of what a gentleman he was and is.

In an era when some saxophonists remained concerned over schools of playing, who was the first and who was/is the best, I still find myself looking towards the magnificent and grand example set by the cosmopolitan Marcel Mule on how I might achieve and retain my own musical values. And, hopefully share my musical and personal feelings with others.

Kenneth Radnofsky
 Professor Of Saxophone
 New England Conservatory
 Hartt College Of Music
 Boston University



Radio & Television Francaise Taped Broadcast (1964)

left to right- Marcel Mule, soprano saxophone; Guy Lacour, tenor saxophone; George Gourdet, alto saxophone; & Marcel Josse, baritone

posed his *Opus 109*, dedicating it, "Aux artistes des saxophones de la Garde Republicaine." Among the most notable of the later compositions were *Andante et Scherzo* by Eugene Bozza (1938) and *Introduction et Variations sur une Ronde Populaire* (1936) by Gabriel Pierne. The saxophone Quartet's 1937 recording of Pierne's composition earned them "Le grand prix du disque!"

LATER YEARS OF THE QUARTET

Throughout its life of forty years, the Quartet, in which Marcel Mule always played the soprano saxophone, had remarkably few changes of personnel. In 1945, Paul Romby left and was replaced on alto by Marcel Josse. Three years later Andre Bauchy replaced Josse on alto, and Josse filled the baritone chair vacated by Georges Chauvet. Josse was

Photo Courtesy Marshall Taylor



left to right- Marcel Mule & Guy Lacour

to earn a reputation as an extraordinary player and an excellent teacher as well.

In 1951, Georges Charron died suddenly. To fill the position of tenor saxophonist, Mule called on one of his former pupils, George Gourdet. Gourdet holds the distinction of having won three first prizes at the National Conservatory; in saxophone, chamber music, and musicology.

Shortly after joining the Quartet, Gourdet proposed that the name of the ensemble be changed to the Marcel Mule Quartet. The purpose was to emphasize that Mule was no longer in the quartet of the *Guard* and to distinguish that group from the other "Paris Quartets" that were emerging. Whatever the practical reasons, the new name was exceedingly appropriate, for it honored an artist who was already a living legend in his field.

George Gourdet also proved a skilled spokesman for the Quartet. Able to speak knowledgeably and effectively to audiences of all levels, his talks about the music before the Quartet's performances were very popular. Mule was pleased with the understanding that Gourdet conveyed to the public and declared that it would have been impossible to find anyone better qualified for the role.

During the past thirty years that I have known Marcel Mule, first as a student, then as a colleague and a friend, I have never ceased to admire him as a consummate musician and a warm and concerned human being. 'Le Maitre' has provided a profound influence upon the entire world of saxophone pedagogy and performance; an influence which transcends nationalism and personality. Marcel Mule is a wonderful, sensitive personality who, fortunately for all of us, has been able to utilize the saxophone to express his wonderful musical ideas with intelligence and emotion in a manner which commanded mutual musicianly respect. This he did in the context of a performer who knew well how to communicate his intimate knowledge of a practical, logical, and musical pedagogy. His legacy will continue long beyond the teaching and performances of his many students.

Dr. Frederick L. Hemke
Professor of Saxophone
School of Music
Northwestern University

When I was beginning my musical studies at the University of Michigan in 1952, I heard a recording with Marcel Mule performing the Ibert "Concertino da Camera," and Debussy's "Rhapsody." I was so amazed by his artistic wizardry on the saxophone, that I decided right at that moment to go to France and study with him.

The time that I spent with him as a student in 1958, was the greatest musical experience I have ever encountered. He made a profound impression on me, not only as an artist, but as a human being and a gentleman. To me, he is still the greatest saxophonist and teacher there ever has been, with a talent comparable to the greatest musical artist of the present and past.

Paul Brodie
Founder Of
The World Saxophone Congress

I was very happy to learn that the next issue of "Saxophone Journal" will be dedicated in part to Mr. Marcel Mule. It's a pleasure to answer favorably to your request.

What are the feelings I have for Mr. Mule? It's very simple; great affection and limitless admiration. I say great affection! How could I not have that for a man that I have known for almost fifty years (47½ years exactly).

Who guided my first steps as a saxophonist and musician.

Who was responsible for my debut at the Opera and at the Comic Opera of Paris since 1940, and on the French radio since 1945.

Who encouraged me to pursue my study of the violin and to enter the Paris Conservatory in 1941, when the saxophone class didn't yet exist.

Who always followed with interest my various musical activities.

Who put his class in my care when he traveled to the USA and Canada.

Who never stopped advising me in any circumstances.

Who was glad to see me succeed him at the National Music Conservatory of Paris in 1968.

To a man to whom I owe everything, I have an unlimited admiration!

For one of the greatest soloists of the 20th century, equal to Kreislers, Menuhins, Rubenstein, etc....

For an exceptional teacher and performer of the classical saxophone, who also dominates as its 'classical' voice.

For authoring pedagogical works which have never been equalled and which are the authority for the whole world.

For founding the famous Saxophone Quartet, which also gives this instrument access to the chamber music and has given birth to true masterpieces by well known composers.

Finally, for a man who his whole life long has had nothing but friends!

To conclude I will allow myself to remind all classical saxophonists to never forget what they owe to this incomparable artist, who for his former students of the first years of his saxophone class at the Paris Conservatory, will always remain 'The Master!'

Daniel Deffayet
Professeur Au Conservatoire
National Supérieur
De Musique De Paris

The final shift in personnel within the Marcel Mule Quartet took place in 1960 when Andre Bauchy departed. A second pupil of Mule, Guy Lacour; also a winner of the first prize in saxophone at the National Conservatory, took the tenor chair and Gourdet moved to the alto chair.

The Quartet disbanded in 1967, the final year of Mule's tenure at the National Conservatory.

MULE AS A SOLOIST

As early as 1925 Marcel Mule was active as a solo performer. He fulfilled many engagements in the decade following in Luxembourg, Belgium, Switzerland, England, Germany, and the Netherlands, as well as in his native France. But in 1935, a year before he left *La musique de la Garde Republicaine* he began his career as a soloist. In

November, 1935, he performed in the first concerto for saxophone and orchestra with the Padeloup Orchestra, Albert Wolff conducting. The piece had been recently completed by Pierre Vellones, the physician-composer.

The beginning of the repertory for solo saxophone and orchestra was firmly established with the creation in 1935 by Jacques Ibert of his *Concerto da Camera*, written for Sigurd Rascher. However, the first movement of the Ibert *Concertino* had been performed several times before Mule appeared in Vellone's *Concerto*. The Vellones was the first complete presentation for solo saxophone and orchestra in France, according to Marcel Mule. The Ibert will always have great significance because no previous work for saxophone had such a far-reaching and profound impact on the course of the repertory for solo saxophone.

Photo Courtesy: The Selmer Company



MARCEL MULE, 1958
Visiting The Selmer Factory At Elkhart Indiana

While studying with Marcel Mule at the Paris Conservatory from 1959 to 1961, I was only about eighteen years old and since that time it has been nearly a quarter of a century ago. Even though I was awarded the first prize in 1961, my memories are sometimes a bit foggy, but there are some facts I will always clearly remember. The first was the enormous respect we all had for the "master." Then there was his kindness and indulgence. Sometimes I even thought he was too much of that. And, of course his marvelous playing and teaching, which made me go home after every lesson, unpack my instrument and try to put into practice the exciting new things he showed me.

Marcel Mule was the creator of the "French saxophone school," but it seems to me that I hear his influence in the playing of saxophonists throughout the world and even with some jazz players, since some of the great jazz teachers were also his students. His contribution to the world of saxophone performance is immense and we all should be very grateful to him for that.

Iwan Roth
Basel, Switzerland

"Papa ou ou!"

Marcel Mule was not only the voice of the saxophone for his saxophone children and grand-children, but the voice for all players to come. He was really the Daddy!

"Papa go 'ou ou' on the saxophone....."

Joseph E. Viola
Berklee College of Music

Photo Courtesy Marshall Taylor



Marcel Mule rehearsing at Marcel Josse's Apartment

It is interesting to note that, during his entire career as a soloist and during his forty years with the Quartet, Mule performed almost exclusively on the alto and soprano saxophones. He had no aversion to the other members of the saxophone family, but at the time, little music had been written for them. Only in recent years are the tenor and baritone saxophones being given their due as solo instruments. The few isolated early uses of the tenor saxophone in a solo role; most notably by Ravel in the orchestration of his *Bolero* in 1927-1928, were unusual.

Mule's preference in mouthpieces changed over the years. Until about 1930, he had played on

a hard rubber mouthpiece. He then changed to one made of metal by the Selmer Company and continued to use it until around 1958. At that time, he reverted to the hard rubber type because, he believed, "The sonority was more round." But because Marcel Mule had used the metal mouthpiece over more than twenty years, virtually all his pupils performed on the metal mouthpiece. In turn, their pupils did also, and many still do today.

Marcel Mule's career as a soloist culminated in 1958 when he was invited by Charles Munch, Musical Director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, to be featured soloist in a twelve-concert tour of the United States. This was indeed high recognition for the classical saxophone, coming just twenty-three years after Ibert's *Concertino da Camera*. For this historic occasion Mule

chose the Ibert *Concertino* and the *Ballade (1938)* by Henri Tomasi as his performance works.

Audiences on the tour were enthusiastic. Wind players, especially saxophonists, were exhilarated. For saxophonists, the highlight of Mule's 1958 visit to the United States was a recital given in Elkhart, Indiana, with Marion Hall at the piano. The program included the Ibert *Concertino* and the Tomasi *Ballade*, the *Caprice en Forme de Valse* by Paul Bonneau, the *Canzonetta* by Gabriel Pierne (transcribed by Marcel Mule), the third movement of Eugene Bozza's *Concertino*, Alexander Tcherepnine's *Sonatine Sportive*, Claude Pascal's *Sonatine*, and the *Sonata (S. 1035)* by J.S. Bach (transcribed by Mule).

Marcel Mule received many offers for future tours, and his immense talent and virtuosity cer-

Photo Courtesy Marshall Taylor



Rehearsing at Marcel Josse's Apartment in Paris
-left to right- Guy Lacour, tenor saxophone
& Marcel Mule, soprano saxophone

Photo Courtesy Marshall Taylor



Rehearsing at Marcel Josse's Apartment in Paris
-left to right- Marcel Josse, baritone saxophone;
Georges Gourdet, alto saxophone

Since my earliest childhood I have been a great admirer of my father. This admiration has never stopped increasing with the years and concerns not only the artist but also the man.

It was under his direction that I began to learn music theory and I remember the hours that he spent at the piano having me practice despite his busy schedule which included teaching at the Paris Conservatory, The Opera, The Comic Opera, all the Parisian Concert Associations, his personal concerts as a soloist with piano and orchestras in and around Paris and also abroad, all at a time when trips took longer and were more tiring than they are now. Despite all these activities he always found time for my brother Pol and me, teaching us music theory, piano and the flute. But it was with his instrument, the saxophone, that I was happiest to work with under his direction. No one has ever known how to make an instrument sing like he did. I will always remember what he managed to express, and has expressed, in Operas that I have often had the chance to participate in my career. And since then, to have my own students work at the Conservatory of Nancy and be inspired by his advice. Each time I teach or perform the works of composers like Bach, Mendelssohn, Couperin, Haydn, Mozart and many others, I think about the years of preparation under my father.

In my youth I used to attend his concerts often, to my great pride, and I turned the pages for his pianist on many occasions. When he played with an orchestra my eyes never left him, ...nor my ears! I remember one reflection of Charles Munch's, when some musicians had asked him if he wasn't sad to be so far from France and he answered, "when that happens I listen to a Marcel Mule record." Could one ever dream of a nicer compliment.

When we lived in Paris I can still see the goings and comings of students who became friends of my brother and me. In fact, after their lessons they often stayed for lunch!! During these meals the conversations often turned to the saxophone, a subject on which my father was always inexhaustible and always very enthused. These discussions

were only interrupted by the numerous phone calls he used to receive.

I can also remember at the house the many composers who showed him their scores of works written for him; J. Rivier, E. Bozza, A. Tcherepnine, P. Bonneau, Tomasi, etc. There were also the rehearsals of his quartet. I could hear them through the door of my room and I always wanted to play the saxophone and participate in it.

There was, as in his personal work, an incomparable concern for perfection and exactitude in musical interpretation. He also had an extraordinary concern for perfection in the technique, notwithstanding the placement of, the most noble musical phrases within a composition all without useless effects.

In life; his generosity, his indulgence for others, his limitless patience with his grandchildren, his house is always open. And how many of his former students, who have become famous, often stopped by to talk about the saxophone and glean some advice! And of course, my mother (for how can I talk about one without talking about the other?) who receives them affectionately and is happy to participate in these conversations. I think that she has brought him in his life as a man, and as an artist, the most helpful support and encouragement. She was his inspiration! They have just celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary and love was lighting up their faces. It's the most beautiful union that I know of. This is so true that when I meet his former students they never talk about one without talking about the other.

One of my greatest sources of pride is when someone says to me, 'you are like him.' How I would like this to be so and to transmit, like him, the passion of the music around me.

I am very proud, I repeat it, 'very proud' of my father, and for me he is a great, very great man. I thank 'Saxophone Journal' for giving me the chance to say so.!

Jacques Mule
Professeur Au Conservatoire
Nancy France

tainly could have won him countless future appearances in the United States. Unfortunately, during the long and strenuous tour, he suffered a shortness of breath and occasional thoracic pain; a condition brought on, he felt, by the strain of solo performance. Moreover, he did not look forward to traveling, preferring his home and family and familiar surroundings. Wishing to end his solo career with his abilities at their height, he abandoned his appearances as a soloist about two years later.

MULE ON RECORD

Marcel Mule made a number of recordings,

Photo Courtesy, Marshall Taylor



Saxophone Class (1964-65)
National Supérieur De Musique De Paris
Marcel Mule listening to a student play

I first ran across the name and recordings of Marcel Mule in the mid-fifties in a high school band program. Other saxophonists have described the effects on them of hearing Charlie Parker; the shock and revelation and the shaping of a life-long musical direction. For me, those London-Decca discs, with their red, yellow and blue jackets and photos of Marcel and his quartet in formal concert dress, as well as the overwhelming sounds of Creston, Glazounov, Bach, and Scarlatti, were a shock and shaping for me! Effortless virtuosity; yes, but more than that was the elegance of nobility, cleanness of articulation, energy, and control in abundance and in balance.

I looked for and found teachers who were working in that direction and literature. I remember one day near the end of my four years as a saxophone major at Wheaton College browsing through the concert saxophone music at Carl Fischer in Chicago. A large and intelligent looking young man asked me if I played saxophone and from that we got into a conversation. He asked if I had heard of Marcel Mule. I spoke excitedly of his recordings and of a recent article I'd read by an American saxophonist who'd just returned from a year of study with Mule. "That's me," he said! And it was Fred Hemke who I was talking to. He told me he was going to be teaching at Northwestern University that Fall and invited me to come and study with him there if I didn't go to Paris. So I did.

While at Northwestern working on my master's degree I applied for a Fulbright Grant to France and in doing so wrote directly to Marcel Mule about studying with him. I recall the elation when both he and the Fulbright people said yes! I also recall meeting Mule and some of his students in a large, dimly lit classroom on one of the upper floors of the Paris Conservatory. The French students were preparing to audition for the few places in the class of twelve. As I was too old, by a few months, for the regular class and the competition for first prize, I was assigned a different entrance piece than the others. Following a few weeks of lessons after the regular class, I arrived for my audition for the special section for foreigners, and I was ready to play the first movement of the Ibert. I walked into a large classroom filled with French saxophonists all practicing their audition piece, which they all

primarily using the solo and quartet media. He also played in some orchestral recordings in Bizet's *L'Arlesienne Suites*. It is difficult today to recapture the impact of Mule's very early 78rpm recordings, made without benefit of sophisticated technology. When they appeared, beginning about 1930, they were truly extraordinary in furthering awareness of the classical saxophone. If the classical saxophone is today not so well known as it deserves to be, it is still far ahead of where it was a half-century ago, when Marcel Mule and a small handful of other pioneers first began to create the classical saxophone medium

MARCEL MULE AS A TEACHER

In 1942, Claude Delvincourt, newly appointed Director of the National Conservatory of Music in Paris, decided to establish a class in saxophone. Then forty-one, Marcel Mule was appointed Professor of Saxophone, the second in the history of that historic institution. The saxophone was first included in the curriculum of the Conservatory in 1857 when Adolphe Sax, inventor of the instrument, was the professor. He had no successor when he left in 1870.

By the time of his appointment to the Conservatory faculty, Mule's reputation as a saxophone virtuoso was well established. His success as a teacher was to match his achievements on the concert stage. During his twenty-six year tenure at the Conservatory, no fewer than 87 of his pupils attained the first prize. But even the many first

knew inside and out. But when I began practicing Ibert in a corner they all stopped playing and came over. I was a "new boy" in town and it was a different piece. But as things turned out the actual audition, with piano and before a jury that included Marcel Mule and some members of his quartet, was relatively easy compared to the scrutiny I had received from the other French students.

Later I remember being invited to a rehearsal of Mule's quartet at Marcel Josse's apartment. From the moment I stepped out of the elevator and heard those sounds, it was like magic. Mule, who left his soprano at the apartment between rehearsals, tried out some new reeds and I kept thinking, "here's a player who has all the audacity and experience of an old man, yet all the fire and energy of a young man!"

When I arrived in Paris I spoke very little French so our lessons were conducted in English. Mule said, "I am an old man and it is tiring me to speak English, so hurry and learn French." I was studying the language four or five hours a day in classes and one day I came to Mule's apartment for a saxophone lesson. I had two or three-hour lessons once every two weeks and we covered an enormous amount of material; including all the scales, arpeggios, open-end assignments in Ferling and another etude book. Mule played a lot in the lessons and his tone and phrasing would linger in my ears, always guiding me until the next lesson. I remember the first time I finished one of the slow Ferling etudes and he merely said "parfait" and initialed it with his scrambled 'M,' and we went on.

But on that day, by some misunderstanding, I arrived early for my lesson. Marcel Mule was just finishing lunch and was having a cigar with his coffee. I was invited in for a cup and we began to chat. I noticed that Mme. Mule didn't join in the conversation so I asked, "Est-ce que vous parlez Anglais, Mme. Mule?" She said no, so I offered to try my French. It must have been intelligible because when we began my lesson Marcel and I kept to French and indeed spoke that language from then on.

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prizes do not convey the true measure of Mule's influence on his pupils. His profound kindness, dedication, and wisdom as a teacher, inspired his pupils personally as well as musically.

As a pioneer in teaching the saxophone, Mule faced a dearth of music and teaching materials. To remedy the situation, he embarked on an ambitious project of arranging and transcribing more than a hundred classical pieces for the instrument. At the same time, he set about creating a number of etude books for the saxophone, for which he selected classic studies composed for other instruments. These included etudes by Berbiguier and Terschak for the flute, Rode for the violin, and Ferling for the oboe. Many of these are used today in courses of study wherever the saxophone is taught throughout the world.

The solo repertory for the saxophone was further enlarged by the piece required for the Conservatory contest each year. In addition, there are also the many pieces written for and dedicated to Marcel Mule. By the time he retired in 1968, there were so many of them that it was impossible for him to give them a respectable reading, much less perform them all. One of the most notable from this category dedicated to Mule is the *Fantasia* (1948) for soprano saxophone, strings, and three horns, by the great Brazilian composer, Heitor Villa-Lobos. This unique work, unfortunately never

performed by Mule, exemplifies the inspiration he provided for many composers.

When Marcel Mule retired as Professor of Saxophone from the National Conservatory on January 1, 1968, he was succeeded by his brilliant pupil, Daniel Deffayet.

CODA

In 1958, in recognition of his outstanding contributions to his country, Marcel Mule was made *Chevalier de la legion d'honneur*, the highest distinction awarded to a French citizen. He had been nominated for this prestigious Legion of Honor award by both the Director of the National Conservatory and the Director of the Republican Guard. Happily, Marcel Mule's father, who had counselled him against music as a career, lived to see his son's many successes and honors.

Upon his retirement, Marcel and Pollete Mule moved to Sanary, a small town in the south of France. They had been captivated by the area since his frequent travels to Italy after the Second World War had introduced him to the *cote d'azur* and its climate. They found the contrast with the dark and somber Parisian winters very agreeable. There, still sharing their strong common bonds and great love for each other, they continue to receive the homage of the world of the classical saxophone.

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