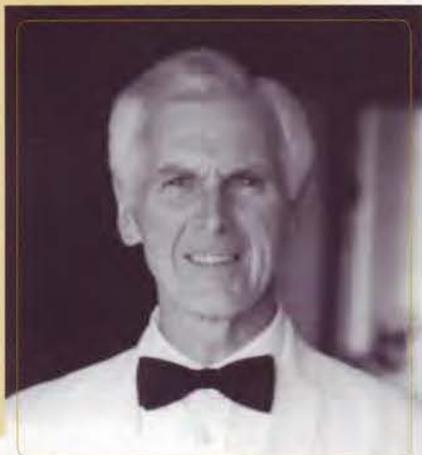


# Robert Oades: The Trumpet Shall Sound!



When someone has been around a music department for as long as **BOB OADES** has been at the University of Ottawa, it is easy to take that person for granted. But every generation of musicians has to learn the same lesson. The world is full of young hotshots; but where does their wizardry come from? Most do not emerge, fully developed, from the head of Zeus. Musical talent is important, but without good teaching, hard work and the right kind of playing experience, it counts for little. Every form of musical art has its own traditions. Students and teachers alike form a continuum so that standards are maintained, improved and modified. There can be no stasis in the arts if they are to develop and survive. Bob Oades has been teaching, nurturing young talent and passing on the benefits of his own musical inheritance practically since the doors of the old houses on Waller Street opened. Where did he come from?

Bob was born in England quite a long time ago. He began playing the trumpet at the age of nine and while still a teenager served during the Second World War with the bands of the Green Howards and the Irish Guards. After the war he spent time at the Royal Military School of Music at Kneller Hall and later went on to the Royal Academy of Music in London. His teachers included Ernest Hall and George Eskdale. Eskdale was the first trumpet player to record Bach's Second Brandenburg Concerto with its fiendishly high tessitura. Then, as now, the London orchestras were very busy and always on the lookout for new talent. Bob paid his dues in all of them, primarily at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, where he worked with such famous conductors as John Barbirolli, Erich Kleiber and Otto Klemperer.

In 1954 Bob came to Canada to join the band of the Royal Canadian Air Force in Toronto. At that time there was a tremendous amount of work for musicians. Almost all music for radio and TV was live and both the Toronto Symphony and the CBC Toronto Orchestra were very busy with concerts and broadcasts. In 1959 Bob won a scholarship from the Bach Society, an organisation whose members included Glenn Gould, Lois Marshall and Maureen Forester. They thought that there was

a serious shortage of trumpet players either willing or able to tackle the Baroque repertoire. So Bob left the Air Force and went down to study with Armando Ghitalla of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Upon his return he began freelancing around the Toronto area and performed Bach Cantatas with Lois Marshall, worked in the Stratford Festival Orchestra and even came up to Ottawa to play with a CBC Orchestra conducted by Fred Karam, another founding father of the University of Ottawa Department of Music. Bob also spent time working on the natural trumpet (no valves!—that's natural?) with Edward Tarr in Switzerland and made some recordings with him. Even now, many orchestral trumpet players stay away from the Second Brandenburg Concerto. Bob has performed it about two dozen times.

Amidst all of his freelance trumpet playing Bob worked for four years with Oxford University Press, where he became particularly involved with the education department and the publication of educational works. The Stratford Festival Orchestra also borrowed his administrative talents and he worked closely with Leonard Rose, Oscar Shumsky and Mario Bernardi in the organisation of orchestral and chamber music.

When the National Arts Centre Orchestra was founded in 1969, Jean-Marie Beaudet invited Bob to join. He did double duty again, playing trumpet with Fred Mills (later with the Canadian Brass) and acting as the orchestra's personnel manager.

Not long afterwards, François Bernier invited him to join the fledgling music department at the University of Ottawa as a "consultant." Bob worked closely with Fred Karam to build the department, especially the education sector, from scratch. He started the University band and assembled its first library. When he arrived there was only one piece in the library, the Hindemith Symphony for Band! Bob's experience and contacts at the Oxford University Press education department turned out to be invaluable as he gradually took charge of the music education sector.

It soon became obvious that he would have to choose between the orchestra and full-time

teaching; so he came to the music department permanently, while continuing to play from time to time in the orchestra. It is difficult to imagine now what the music department pioneers had to do before the age of computers. Everything had to be written, typed and filed. Bob, as co-ordinator of education, was responsible for counselling, teaching and timetables and, as anyone who has filled such a position knows, much else besides. If you were a student or a teacher during the years of Bob's tenure, you could always rely on him for advice and information and even though he has been officially retired for ten years he still seems to know a lot more than most people about how the department works.

Many people may wonder at Bob's longevity and evident good health. For many years he was a keen (some would say fanatical) cyclist. He was president of the Ottawa Bicycle Club for a time and was instrumental in mapping out the route of the Rideau Lakes Tour that takes place every spring. A former colleague (25 years Bob's junior) once went around the Gatineau Hills with him. At the bottom, as he was gratefully turning for home, Bob said to him: "Shall we go round again?" His young friend's reply has unfortunately been lost in the mists of time.

Bob still teaches trumpet at the university and has private students as well. His students over the years have become teachers themselves – two generations of them now – and the Toronto Symphony, The New Zealand National Orchestra and several orchestras in Europe boast former students of his.

The music business is always changing. Bob says that it's never been easy and nowadays it seems to be harder than ever. There are fewer opportunities for young players to get vital professional experience and more and more good players competing for work. The message is always the same: practice, practice and more practice. Robert Oades has paid his dues through a variety of musical endeavours. He has enriched the musical life of Canada for almost 50 years. A tough act to follow. ♪

Nick Atkinson

