

## Louis Bleuzet

by André Raoult

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The translation is by Ehsan Ahmed*



*A great artist, a great professor, a man with a heart whose memory is alive for many oboists, Louis Bleuzet, chevalier of the Legion of Honor, succeeded Georges Gillet at the Paris Conservatory, after having received the first prize in the class of 1893 (at the same time as Arthur-Léon Bridet). His teaching was impeccable.*

**G**ilbert Flory, emeritus professor of the CNR of Tours, has said of him: "He was like a father to us all in his class ... and his death has made us all grieve. Moreover, we have lost an extraordinary teacher who was living only for his students."

### A GREAT ARTIST DISAPPEARS!

Louis Bleuzet, professor at the Conservatory, solo oboist of the Opera and the Society of Concerts, has died. His life as an artist was noble and beautiful—a tireless life, whose artistic conscience and integrity were the predominant qualities.

Born in Hazebrouck, April 26, 1874, Louis Bleuzet garnered a brilliant first prize for oboe at the Paris Conservatory around 1894. Principal soloist at the Opéra-Comique and the Concerts Colonne in 1896, and a few years later, in 1901, solo oboist at the Society of Concerts of the Conservatory. He joined the Opera orchestra on July 1, 1904. He was named professor at the Conservatory in 1919 and was decorated with the Cross of the Legion of Honor in 1927 on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of Beethoven's death.

As president of the society of former soldiers from the national lyric theaters, he gave proof of indefatigable engagement and devotion.

Louis Bleuzet lived for music as a conscientious artist, as an innate musician; a great and noble figure has disappeared.

To this dear and great friend whom fate has just stolen from our affection but whose memory we piously hold, we bid a sad farewell.

*The Orchestra of the  
National Theater of the Opera.*

### LOUIS BLEUZET

*A statement by André Raoult  
who was his pupil from 1937 to 1940.*

I met Louis Bleuzet for the first time more than sixty years ago. We would call him Master with deference or—between us—sometimes, but always with respect and affection, father Bleuzet.

I was received with my professor, who was himself his student in the class of 1923-26, in the apartment on the rue Andrieux, which was furnished with a lot of taste and a light touch of old France.

In the living-room adjacent to the room where we would have our private lessons reigned a grand piano which Master Bleuzet's granddaughter used to play. She was a charming and dark young girl who was herself a pupil in the piano class. And I must confess that during private lessons it was sometimes difficult to concentrate, not because of Bernadette (that was her name) but because of the piano which she did not treat gently.

Her mother, Madame Yvotine Treizenem, Monsieur Bleuzet's daughter, was a remarkable pianist. She would accompany auditions and competitions. Her kindness was exceptional, and we would feel perfectly supported by her. She has left all of us with a shining memory.

Auditions would take place in Monsieur Bleuzet's home, rue Andrieux. Each of us would play, before the composer, Magüé's *Pastorale*, Grovlez's *Sarabande et Allegro*, Philippe Gaubert's *Intermède Champêtre*, etc.

It was in this apartment that I would come for three years, to receive advice and to enjoy the affectionate friendship of an incomparable master.

Master Bleuzet would ally kind-heartedness and a thoughtful generosity with human warmth which manifested itself particularly in June 1940 when many of us—because of the German invasion—were separated from our families. I have to add that at that time, the majority of pupils in the oboe class (two-thirds in any case) came from the North — Pas de Calais.

Louis Bleuzet was always dressed impeccably: black dress jacket and striped pants in winter, gray suit in summer. He never used a careless or imprecise word. His authority was such that an absolute calm reigned throughout the entire lesson.

There was one pupil among our friends—son of a police chief of a large city—who would often go to Monmartre looking for a quarrel and would come to class bearing traces of blows that he had received to the face. It would happen that he would give some but also receive some. One day his demeanor in class had been particularly wretched; Monsieur Bleuzet took him aside, put his hand on his shoulder, and reprimanded him in a low voice. We did not hear anything, but suddenly the problem child dissolved into tears, weeping like a youngster in elementary school.

We would listen to each other, learning about the études that we would have to play later and taking advantage of the Master's observations. Only the senior students had the privilege of being able to go out in the hallway to warm up for a couple of minutes.

Each of us was always supposed to play a scale with articulations, then rhythms, and finally the chromatic scale from high F sharp to low B flat and back again to F sharp, first in eighth notes, then in triplets, in sixteenth notes and to finish in sextuplets. The études came next. It was an unchanging ritual which hardly bothered us; we had all been trained at the same school before entering the Conservatory.

The class took place three times a week:

Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday from 2 to 4PM, which in fact often ended at 5PM. One half of the class (six students) would come on Tuesday, the other half on Thursday, and all would gather on Saturday. With the private lesson, each would have three meetings a week with our professor, and I remember the feeling of enrichment that would overcome me as I left my lesson.

I must confess that on entering the Paris Conservatory I did not know how to scrape a reed. My first professor had said to my father: "I would like to take your son as a pupil, but I do not want to worry about reeds." My father would order them from a sympathetic and eccentric oboist, named Delacroix, who formed a partnership with Albert Debondue to make reeds for hundreds, of which the largest part was shipped to the USA.

My scrapings were quite whimsically done. Sheepishly I would say to Monsieur Bleuzet: "Master, I have made some reeds...", and this sweet-natured Monsieur Bleuzet would say with a big smile: "We'll take a look at that.... Turn around," and to save time, he would attack the scraping as one sharpens a pencil. In a few minutes, the reeds were scraped and very well scraped indeed.

I used to say to myself: "Why do I exhaust myself only to obtain such miserable results, when he does it faster and better."

When Monsieur Bleuzet died, a period of "reed famine" began for me, and it was only ten years later that I met Maurice Le Jolif and his marvelous reeds.

Monsieur Bleuzet took on very heavy responsibilities: solo oboist with the Opera and professor at the Conservatory, plus private lessons for each of us and for other pupils coming from the provinces and from abroad.

During the class which took place in the afternoon, it would happen (with the help of digestion) that Monsieur Bleuzet would quietly fall asleep, leaning on the piano, lulled by scales, and in order not to rouse him and to cause him embarrassment, the pupil would play two or three times the same scale until the Master came back ... to the class.

The younger pupils would begin with Sellner's duets and then would come the études of Barret, Luft, Singer, Gillet, Prestini.

In the private lesson, the routine was essentially the same: scales, articulations, rhythms, staccato, then Sellner or Ferling. It was then that we would play sonatas and solos for the concours.

Our repertory was at that time limited. We knew the two sonatas by Handel, the concerto

attributed to Haydn, and the Kallidowa. The concerto by Mozart had not yet been discovered and the baroque pieces were played without ornamentation.

The competition of 1940 took place on October 1, because the arrival of the Germans in June had changed the whole schedule. For the first time in a long while, Monsieur Bleuzet had been present for the verdict (one year he had become so irritated after the awarding of prizes, because it was for him inexplicable), and I remember that we met each other in the court of the rue de Madrid with an emotional embrace.

Three first prizes in the order of Raoult, Shann, and Hollande. Pierlot who won second prize had the sole disadvantage of being in his first year. I can still hear Jules Mazellier, composer of one of the pieces, say to Master Bleuzet while pointing to Pierlot: "that one has only one fault, it's his first competition!"

Pierre proved by what followed that we would be able to have confidence in him...even in his first year.

At the beginning of the war in 1939-40 the oboists of the Opera, Bajoux and Baudo were called to duty, and Gromer broke his wrist by falling from a train. Monsieur Bleuzet found himself alone and had me come to the Opera. First performance, without rehearsal: *Thaïs* with a prominent duet for oboes in the ballet. Then came other surprises: ballets with Serge Lifar, *Le Festin de l'araignée*, *Cydalise et le Chèvrepiéd*, the premiere of *Médée* by Darius Milhaud with Charles Dullin as assistant director and the very promising beginnings of a young singer, Jeanine Michaud. After the performances, we would travel back to Villiers, which would give us the opportunity to talk about a variety of subjects: music, politics, personal interests.

Monsieur Bleuzet stood for an ideal on the human level and on the professional level, and I remember that others would hold him in high regard, both colleagues at the Opera and the conductors of that time: Louis Fourestier, Philippe Gaubert, Francois Ruhlmann, Henri Rabaud.

I then left Paris and did not return until January 1941. I saw Monsieur Bleuzet only one time, when the class visited him when he was sick. He was staying with his daughter, Madame Chopin, who was living in the Eschig building, rue de

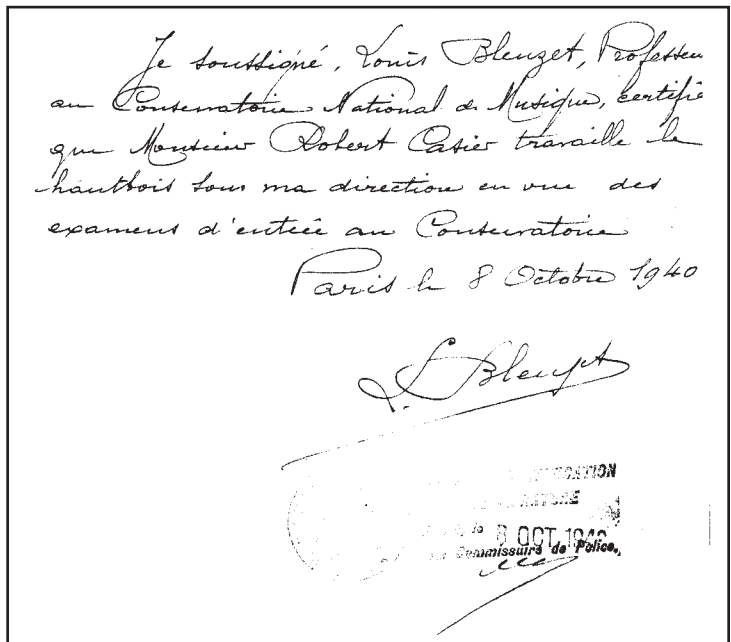
Rome.

A few days later on a gray morning in January, we were all in attendance at the funeral mass in the church of Saint Augustine. His colleagues from the Opera had prepared an article paying homage to him. The title read: A great artist disappears!

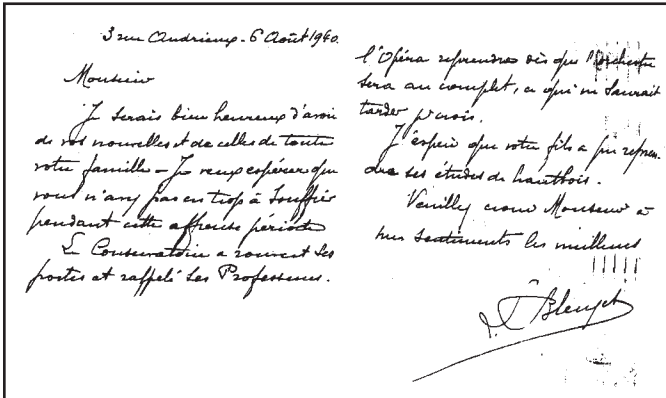
"His life as an artist was noble and beautiful (...) (WDRL: January 27, 1941 in Paris, 48 rue de Rome, at the age of 66). Louis Bleuzet lived for music as a conscientious artist, as an innate musician; a great and noble figure has disappeared."

**André Raoult**, solo oboist of the Tonhalle Orchestra of Zurich from 1956 to 1985 and professor of oboe and chamber music at the Zurich Conservatory from 1967 to 1991.

## TRANSCRIPTIONS OF TEXTS BY LOUIS BLEUZET



1. I, the undersigned, Louis Bleuzet, Professor at the National Conservatory of Music, certify that Mr. Robert Casier is studying the oboe under my direction in preparation for the entrance exams to the Conservatory. Paris, October 8, 1940.  
L. Bleuzet



**2. Postcard from Louis Bleuzet to Robert G. Casier**

3 rue Andrieux, August 6, 1940.

Monsieur,

It would make me quite happy to have news of you and your entire family. I am hoping that you have not had to suffer during this frightful period.

The Conservatory has reopened its doors and called back its Professors. The Opera will take up again, as soon as the Orchestra is complete, which will not be long I believe.

I hope that your son has been able to start his oboe lessons again.

Please accept, Monsieur, my best regards.

L. Bleuzet

**3. 3 rue Andrieux, 3.2.40**

Monsieur Le Jolif

I am terribly sorry for having delayed so much to come to thank you for your very kind letter and for your good wishes. I however wanted to answer first of all my servicemen and I am not able to keep up with it. I have had the joy of receiving nearly 40 letters at New Year's. And with all the tasks that I had to do since my return from Rennes where I had gone to celebrate the New Year with my family I have little time for me. I hope that my pupils do not begrudge me too much and now I am going to be able to answer nearly (sic) by mail.

Thanks for your good wishes my dear Jolif and please accept those that I send

to you and to your dear wife. Good health above all. Take good care of yourself because when you return, you will have to begin studying the instrument again and hence good health is necessary in order to do it!

However don't be frightened too much because when you are able to begin again taking care not to throw yourself for whole hours without interruption into your oboe you will see how it will quickly come back: two weeks of boredom and after ..... progress is quickly made.

L. Bleuzet

