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An Exploration of the French and American Schools of Classical Saxophone

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An Exploration of the French and American
Schools of Classical Saxophone
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Abstract

This project is an exploration of the relatively short history of the classical saxophone genre. It will focus mainly on the styles created by Marcel Mule, the second professor of saxophone at the Paris Conservatory, and Larry Teal, the first full-time professor of saxophone in America. Mule and Teal's contrasting ideas of playing and teaching created distinct French and American schools of classical saxophone playing. This project explores the similarities and differences between these two schools of thought, and places them each in historical and cultural contexts. In addition, it traces the subsequent lineage of prominent saxophone performers and pedagogues, and looks for evidence that the French and American schools can still be detected in today's prominent saxophonists.

The Life and Legacy of Marcel Mule

The world of classical saxophone as we know it today cannot be separated from the legacy of its founding father, Marcel Mule. From developing a characteristic tone quality and the use of classical vibrato, to establishing the standard saxophone quartet and much of the saxophone solo repertoire, Mule had a tremendous impact on the growth of the saxophone as a respected classical instrument. In addition, his warmth and integrity as a person, coupled with his consummate artistry and meticulous pedagogical methods, allowed him to have a profound impact on countless saxophonists around the world. In the words of one of his students, Daniel Deffayet, “Let all classical saxophonists never forget that, thanks to Marcel Mule, they are today considered true musicians” (Rousseau, viii).

Mule was born on June 24, 1901 in a small town in Normandy. His father was the conductor of a small community band, and encouraged young Mule to begin learning saxophone, violin, and piano at age seven. Although his father supported his musical studies and was impressed by his rapid improvement, he strongly discouraged Mule from the dangerous and unstable reality of a career in music, setting him up instead for a future as a schoolteacher. As a result, Mule attended an advanced elementary school and took his studies very seriously. At age 16, he enrolled in the *Ecole Normale* of Evreux, where he completed a three-year course preparing him to be a teacher. He excelled and got a teaching job at his old elementary school, but after only 6 months, he joined the Fifth Infantry Regiment band and began his life as a professional musician.

Mule was immediately successful in this military band, and he became inspired to practice more seriously than before. He began studying with Gabriel Willaume, a violinist who had an enormous influence on his musical interpretation. In 1923, he auditioned for an elite, ceremonial military band based in Paris called *La musique de la Garde Républicaine* (the *Guard Band*), and came in first place of the 12 that auditioned. He continued playing in the *Guard Band* until 1936, when his solo career took off in earnest. Mule’s time with the *Guard Band* provided him with the environment that he needed to launch his virtuosic solo career, as well as his creation of the saxophone quartet.

Near the beginning of Mule’s performing career, he also earned extra income by performing at the *Opéra Comique* jazz and dance bands, ballet performances, among other places. This initial experimentation allowed him to be exposed to many different kinds of music,

and he began to realize the incredibly versatile potential of the saxophone. Although Mule never considered himself much of a jazz musician, he was intrigued by the vibrato that jazz saxophonists were using. At the time, classical saxophone was played similarly to a clarinet and vibrato was never used in a classical setting. Mule began experimenting with vibrato on his own, but never in the *Guard Band* or other classical performances. Eventually, the conductor of the *Opéra Comique* asked him to use vibrato on a blues melody in the saxophone part, and he reluctantly agreed. In his own words:

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 forward, 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 (Rousseau 15).

Consequently, due to this singular coincidence in 1928, classical saxophone began evolving into an instrument that is expected to use vibrato.

Another significant occurrence that came from Mule’s career in the *Guard Band* was the development of the saxophone quartet. Mule and three other saxophonists from the *Guard Band* began playing together for enjoyment, and by 1928 they had decided on the arrangement of soprano, alto, tenor and baritone saxophones. They eventually began to rehearse regularly and performed for the first time on December 2, 1928 in La Rochelle, calling themselves *Le Quatour de la musique de la Garde Républicaine*. At the time, there was no repertoire for the saxophone quartet, so they primarily transcribed string quartet chamber music for themselves. It did not take long for their quartet to become one of the most respected chamber groups in France, and soon composers began writing specifically for saxophone quartet. One of these composers was Florent Schmitt, who wrote his *Saxophone Quartet* for Mule’s quartet in 1948.

Throughout the relatively infrequent changes of personnel within this ensemble, Mule always played soprano saxophone, and in 1951 they officially changed their name to the Marcel Mule Quartet. By this time, numerous other saxophone quartets were already emerging around Paris, and the genre of the saxophone quartet was growing rapidly. Mule himself grew to enjoy performing with the quartet more than as a soloist because he appreciated the added complexity

that resulted from four different voices combining into one. The Marcel Mule Quartet eventually disbanded in 1967, just before Mule retired altogether.

In addition to the many ensembles that he performed with, Mule was already becoming an active soloist by the mid 1920s. He became Paris's premiere saxophonist, and was invited to play with orchestras all around Europe whenever they played pieces that required saxophone. For example, in 1928, Mule played the soprano saxophone part in the premiere of *Bolero*, with the composer, Ravel, conducting. This piece was originally written to have three saxophone parts: sopranino, soprano, and tenor, but Mule decided that the sopranino part was unnecessary and that he could cover both parts on soprano. In 1935, he performed the first concerto for saxophone and orchestra, written by Pierre Vellones, with the Padeloup Orchestra. From this point forward, the saxophone repertoire began to grow rapidly, and Mule was undeniably at the center of this growth.

Later that year, Mule played the unofficial premiere of Ibert's *Concertino de Camera*. This event took place just before Sigurd Rascher, who had actually commissioned the piece to be written, officially premiered it. Rascher is also credited for the premiere of the Glazunov *Concerto* for alto saxophone and orchestra, but Mule (who was friends with Glazunov) actually performed this piece before Rascher as well. Over the next 30 years, many other significant pieces of saxophone repertoire were written for Mule, including Tomasi's *Ballade* and *Concerto*, Bozza's *Aria*, Bonneau's *Caprice en forme de valse*, and Villa-Lobos' *Fantasia*. He also worked closely with and influenced other works by Poulenc, Rivier, Messiaen, Desenclos, Dubois, and Boulanger. In 1950, Mule's influence spread even further when he covered the trumpet part of Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No. 2* at the Casals festival on soprano saxophone. On this occasion, he surprised and impressed the audience, conductor, and fellow musicians alike, and it went so well that he was even asked to do it again years later. It is clear that Marcel Mule had a major influence on not only the development of saxophone and its literature, but also the entire Western music scene of the 20th century.

In 1958, Mule's performing career reached its peak when he was asked to go on a 12-concert tour of the United States with the Boston Symphony. Mule chose to perform Ibert's *Concertino* and Tomasi's *Ballade* for this occasion and was extremely well received by audiences all across America. This tour was vital not only in establishing Mule's international reputation as a virtuosic performer, but more importantly because it exposed Americans to the

new phenomenon of classical saxophone. During this tour, he stopped in Elkhart, Indiana to give a recital and clinic that was sponsored by Selmer. The program included Ibert and Tomasi, but he also played *Caprice en forme de valse* by Paul Bonneau, *Canzonetta* by Gabriel Pierné (transcribed by Mule), Bozza's *Concertino*, Tcherepnine's *Sonatine Sportive*, Pascal's *Sonatine*, and the *Sonata* (S. 1035) by J.S. Bach (transcribed by Mule). Mule remembers this recital as being particularly special because the audience was comprised almost entirely of saxophonists who were very enthusiastic about his performance. Throughout his visit to America, Mule stayed after each performance to answer the numerous questions from members of the audience. In his own words, "I am always happy to provide some information that may enhance the appreciation and understanding of those who truly want to learn more about our instrument, its repertory, etc" (Rousseau 62). It is clear that his generous and open attitude when it came to teaching enabled him to have an even larger impact than his artistic and technical playing alone ever could have.

Mule's success as a teacher was at least as vast and important as his tremendous success as a performer. He began maintaining a private teaching studio early on in his career, and at some points had as many as 70 students at a time. He was so passionate about the potential of the saxophone that he never wanted to turn away someone who wanted to learn, whether they were just interested beginners, professional jazz performers passing through Paris, or other wind musicians. However, the sheer number of students often overwhelmed him, so he happily accepted when the National Conservatory of Music in Paris decided to establish a saxophone class in 1942 and asked him to be the professor. By this time, he was already viewed as a living legend and saxophone virtuoso around the world, but his reputation as a teacher was just getting started. During his twenty-six year tenure at the Conservatory, he maintained a studio class of around 12 students per year, and 87 of his pupils won the prestigious first prize. One of his most renowned students, Eugene Rousseau, remembers, "But even the many first 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" (Rousseau 30). Many of his students went on to have prestigious performing and teaching careers of their own, including Jean-Marie Londeix, Eugene Rousseau, Frederick Hemke, Daniel Deffayet (who succeeded Mule at the Conservatory), Guy Lacour, and George Gourdet.

Mule retired from solo performances in 1960, and from teaching in 1967. He felt that his body was getting too tired for continued performing and wanted to step away before his inevitable decline so that the public would remember him favorably. At the time of his retirement, he had already seen dramatic growth in the saxophone repertoire as well as in the skill level of young saxophonists, so he knew that the future of the classical saxophone would be in good hands. He retired to a house on the sea in the South of France with his wife, Polette, and never played saxophone again before his death in 2001. He remained humble and wise through his retirement, stating in 1981, “In truth, I succeeded because I was in the right place at the right time. It could have been someone else, but I was there. It was chance” (Rousseau, 39). Although it has been many years since the world has heard his virtuosic saxophone technique, Marcel Mule’s legacy will forever live on through his innumerable contributions to the world of classical saxophone (Rousseau).

The Life and Legacy of Larry Teal

Larry Teal was born into a very musical family on March 26th, 1905 in Midland, Michigan. His father was a talented violinist who turned down an invitation to be a member of the Chicago Symphony because he thought that being a professional musician was not an honorable career. Instead, he opened his own barbershop and led a dance band on the side. He intended for Larry to become a dentist, but encouraged him to play saxophone because he saw the growing popularity of the instrument in popular music and thought that it could be a great source of profit. He encouraged Larry to become proficient enough to pay his own way through dental school, but this plan backfired and Larry’s music gradually became his main focus in college. After spending a year in Paris performing with his college jazz combo, The Collegiate Six, he gave up dental school to pursue being a professional musician full-time in 1927.

Teal’s first regular gig was with the “Orange Blossoms” on a ferry in Toronto. After playing dance music on this boat for a year, he decided to stay in Detroit so that he could spend more

time with his wife. He joined the pit orchestra at the Capitol Theater, playing woodwind doubles. Teal credits his time in the pit orchestra for greatly developing his musicianship because it was here that he first grew accustomed to playing in many different keys and shifting musical styles rapidly. The pit orchestra also played the music for silent movies, so it was a full-time job that allowed him to have a permanent life style in Detroit with his family. During this time, Teal was also exposed to some serious music for the first time, playing music by composers such as Mussorgsky and Tchaikovsky. Teal mostly played clarinet in the pit orchestra, but also played saxophone in the side stage band.

At this time, Teal began seriously studying clarinet for the first time with the renowned performer and teacher, Albert Luconi. Teal claims that his musical knowledge and artistry was greatly enriched through his studies with Luconi, and that these skills eventually transferred to his saxophone playing. After playing in the Capitol and Fisher Theater for 3 years, he left and took a job as a house musician at the Detroit WJR radio station. The house musicians at the radio station spent most of their day in the studio playing orchestral, jazz, and popular music, as well as background music for plays, accompaniment for singers, and music for commercials. As the years went on, Teal began performing frequent solos on air as well, and the exposure he got during this time made him a household name and the topic of frequent newspaper articles. Working at WJR had many perks for Teal, such as much more vacation time than when he was in the pit orchestra, as well as more varied work.

One of the numerous WJR shows that Teal was regularly a part of was called the “Ford Sunday Evening Hour Radio Show.” On this very popular show, part of the Detroit Symphony performed various orchestral works every week. It aired from 1934-1946, only taking a yearlong break during WWII. Teal’s connections on this radio show led to him being invited to play with

the full Detroit symphony whenever they needed a saxophonist. In the early 1930s, he performed Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Fibich's *At Twilight*, and numerous other orchestral works. By the mid 1930s, Teal began a regular tenure with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, initially as the bass clarinetist. Upon first joining, he was extremely overwhelmed by the high musical standard in place and the possibility of being fired for one mistake. He gradually became accustomed to this environment though, and continued to play with the Detroit Symphony for 20 years. In 1951, Teal switched from the clarinet section to the flute section, although he continued to play the saxophone parts when needed.

By the mid 1930s, Teal was an established and successful performing musician, but still had no formal musical training. To rectify this situation, he decided to spend some time studying with the two men who were considered to be the most influential saxophone teachers of the era. First, he spent the summer of 1934 in Boston studying with Andrew Jacobson, who played with the Sousa Band. The following summer, he had the opportunity to study with New York's leading saxophone teacher, Merle Johnston as well. At the time, Teal was already teaching numerous private students in the Detroit area, and the time he spent studying with these early saxophone teachers helped him begin to establish his own pedagogical ideas.

In the summer 1936, Teal was appointed to teach the first saxophone course at the Chautauqua Music School of New York. He continued to play at WJR, perform, and teach around Detroit most of the time, but spent his summers teaching in Chautauqua for numerous years. During his time in Chautauqua, Teal also took the opportunity to study with his flute colleague, George Barrere, who was one of the foremost American flute performers and teachers of the time.

In 1937, Teal's reputation as one of the first serious classical saxophonists began to take off in earnest. On April 4th, 1937, Teal made his solo debut, playing Ibert's *Concertino da Camera* at a Detroit Music Guild concert at the Detroit Art Museum. Although this was two years after Marcel Mule premiered the piece in Paris, this was the first time that Midwestern America had heard the saxophone played as a classical solo instrument. Although some critics had a hard time accepting the saxophone as a serious instrument, Teal's performance was largely met with pleasant surprise and high acclaim due to his virtuosic technical abilities. One Detroit reviewer, Russell McLaughlin, said:

Teal, the saxophonist, is a man who frequently plays that instrument with the symphony when modern scoring demands it. The work is a little chamber-concerto, in two movements, and is by Ibert, who brilliantly combines modernity and scholarship and a sense of humor. It was a lofty piece of saxing, which the audience heard; everything from high tones as pure as a fiddle's, to pizzicato that seemed to be done with a valve. There was pandemonium when Teal finished (M. Teal 101).

In 1937, the German composer Bernard Heiden composed a *Sonata* for saxophone and piano for Teal. This sonata, premiered in 1938, was not the first saxophone sonata written, but was the first to become a legitimate standard that is still widely used today. This was one of the first attempts at making the saxophone a legitimate concert instrument. After this premiere, Teal continued his efforts to promote the saxophone by performing on the radio and around Detroit as much as possible. One of the most notable of these performances occurred in 1938, when Teal played the Glazunov concerto with the Association Symphony Orchestra of the YMCA. The audience received Teal's solo performances favorably, but some critics still continued to show their prejudice to this new concert instrument. One such critic, Charles Gentry, wrote, "since we are allergic to concert saxophones, we can't dwell on the subject without prejudice." (M. Teal 106). Another harsh critic, Cecil Betron, wrote in 1937:

Mr. Teal is a courageous man to adopt the saxophone as a solo instrument. It has definite limitations, many of which he overcomes, but it is likely to be many musical moons before Larry Teal succeeds in storming the formidable walls before him and establishes permanently his chosen instrument within the proud circle of aristocratic music makers (M Teal 95).

Unfortunately, these words proved to be somewhat prophetic, for it did turn out to be many years before Teal was able to overcome this negative stigma surrounding the concept of classical saxophone.

Throughout the 1930s, Teal was also becoming a very well known teacher in the Detroit Area. In 1932, he opened The Teal Music Studios to provide training for all orchestral instruments. He acquired many of his colleagues from the Detroit Symphony to teach the other instruments and created an atmosphere in which students could work in close contact with their teacher. It was also important to him that his students would be able to study at his studio for reasonable rates and perform in regular recitals. The Teal Music Studios thrived for 35 years and set the standard for excellent music instruction in the Midwest. It was in the early years of his studio that he began to establish himself not only as a renowned performer, but an outstanding pedagogue as well. He developed such a large saxophone class that he brought in Earle Perkins to teach the beginning and intermediate students, while Teal himself focused mainly on the advanced students.

In the 1940s, Teal was still playing jazz and popular music as well as serious classical music around Detroit, and had established himself as an accomplished woodwind doubler. In addition to his own studio, he also began teaching students from the local Wayne State University and at the Detroit Institute of Musical Arts. He was given credit for a Bachelors Degree in music because of his vast professional experience and began pursuing a Masters degree in music at the Detroit Institute. When he received this graduate degree, he immediately began working on a Doctorate at the same institution.

As Teal began focusing more on teaching rather than only performing, he also began his substantial writing career. Beginning in 1941, he wrote an article for every issue of Walter

Jacobs' *Orchestra Monthly*, a leading music magazine published by the Walter Jacobs popular music firm of Boston. In these articles, he covered many topics about playing and teaching saxophone, as well as doubling on other woodwind instruments. His goal with this endeavor was to continue promoting saxophone as a serious classical instrument and to spread the pedagogical methods that he was developing. To further this mission, he became an active clinician at music conferences around the country, and also became a saxophone adjudicator for the Michigan School Band and Orchestra Association. At the time, many band directors as well as orchestral musicians still did not value the saxophone as a serious instrument, and had no idea how to teach it effectively. Many people across the country had still never even heard a saxophone in a classical setting. Although his efforts had already had an enormous impact on changing the general population's view of classical saxophone, there was still much work to be done.

Throughout the 1940s, Teal continued to be a prolific performer around the country. In 1942, he was asked to play as a soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra when they performed Rachmaninoff's *Symphonic Dances*. In 1947, he performed the Ibert *Concertino* with the Detroit Symphony, marking the first time he was featured as a soloist with his own orchestra. In 1949, he performed the Creston *Sonata* for the first time at Wayne State University. In 1951, although many critics had high praise for Teal's virtuosic and exciting saxophone playing, some were still showing their prejudice against saxophone as a classical instrument. Harvey Taylor said, "Teal plays his instrument just about as impeccably as it can be played... It's not his fault that to our ears, the sax has little urgency in its hoarse voice and is a rather monotonous solo instrument" (M. Teal 130). However, negative reviews like this were far from the majority, and Teal continued to press on in his mission to establish the saxophone as an accepted classical instrument.

In 1953, Teal hit a major milestone not only in his career, but also in the world of classical saxophone, when he was appointed professor of the new saxophone class at the University of Michigan. This appointment, coming 11 years after Marcel Mule established the first lasting saxophone studio at the Paris Conservatory, made Teal the first full-time saxophone professor in America. At this time, the saxophone was 115 years old, but after going nearly extinct in the late 1800s, it was finally developing into the serious instrument that Adolphe Sax intended it to be. During his 20-year tenure at the University of Michigan, Teal maintained a large saxophone class and developed countless influential performers and teachers of the next generation. He also established the first Doctoral Degree in saxophone and continued to develop the genre of the saxophone quartet.

In 1955, Teal accomplished another milestone, this time in his writing career, when he published his first book, entitled *Studies in Time Division, A practical Approach to Accurate Rhythm Perception*. In this book, he detailed his theory that an accurate sense of rhythm is built from the sixteenth-note time value up. In 1958, he published another book entitled *The Saxophonist's Workbook, A Handbook of Basic Fundamentals*. His most influential book, *The Art of Saxophone Playing*, was not published until 1963. This book was the culmination of his teaching career and is still the most common reference book for saxophonists today. In 1967, he compiled many of the classical works he had transcribed for his students throughout his career and published them in the form of *Solos for the Alto Saxophone Player* and *Solos for the Tenor Saxophone Player*. Teal also continued writing numerous articles about saxophone for music magazines and journals, spreading his saxophone expertise and pedagogical tips across the country.

Larry Teal retired from the University of Michigan in 1974, but continued writing, arranging, and teaching a small number of students. In addition, he continued to spread his saxophone philosophies by traveling and speaking in other countries and attending saxophone conferences. He died suddenly from an aneurysm on July 11, 1984, just three days before he was scheduled to conduct a one-day workshop in Chicago (M. Teal).

The French and American Schools:

Performance and Pedagogical Similarities and Differences

Marcel Mule and Larry Teal were extraordinarily influential in the development of the classical saxophone, both in regards to performing and teaching. Only four years apart in age, they developed their individual styles of classical saxophone in similar time periods, but on opposite sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Although many of their ideas were similar, they were both inevitably impacted by the cultural differences between Paris and Detroit in the early 1900s. Their contrasting ideas of playing and teaching created distinct French and American schools of classical saxophone playing.

Interestingly, neither Mule nor Teal formally studied music in their early careers. Both men had diligently set out to fulfill the plans that their fathers made for them, but both were eventually pulled into the life of a musician. In Teal's own words, "That my life would be spent as a musician was never logical; it happened because I could not help myself" (M. Teal 55). Of course, part of the reason that neither attained a music degree in the early stages of their career was because they could not study saxophone in college at the time. Instead, both studied with esteemed performers and teachers of other instruments, but they were on their own when it came to developing specific saxophone techniques and pedagogical methods. As time went on however, Teal did go the academic route and eventually earned a doctorate degree in music from The Detroit Institute of Musical Art. The formal music education that Teal received later in his career surely influenced the way he taught at the University of Michigan and helped to define the American School of classical saxophone. As a professor at a major American University, Teal was expected to hold postgraduate degrees, adhere to a clear curriculum, and even become a

published author. In this way, it seems that Teal's role in the world of academia also had an influence on his prolific writing career and the organized curriculum that he developed. Mule was by no means an unscholarly man, but the Parisian culture clearly did not hold him to these same academic standards, so he did not obtain degrees or write nearly as many articles and books as Teal. This emphasis on scholarly pursuits can still be seen in the American School today.

Another difference between Mule and Teal is that Teal spent much more time learning and performing on woodwind doubles than Mule. Teal spent over 20 years as a professional clarinetist and flutist, whereas Mule was mostly able to focus on saxophone development. In addition, Teal spent much more time playing saxophone in the jazz genre than Mule, both in dance bands and on the WJR radio station. It is interesting to note that although jazz certainly existed in Paris in the early 1900s, it was much more interwoven into the fabric of American culture than French culture, and Teal reflected this by embracing that side of the saxophone much more than Mule. Mule started out performing with dance and jazz bands very early in his career as well, but admits to never having liked the jazz sonority very much. In his words, "I had no real desire to play jazz more seriously. I was not a real jazzman because I did not enjoy that music so deeply as I did the classical repertory" (Rousseau 84). Nevertheless, the jazz vibrato that saxophonists were developing was highly influential in Mule's development of classical vibrato, so jazz still played a very important role in his development. However, he spent much of his career striving to develop a different sonority on the saxophone, one that would better fit into the world of serious classical music. The characteristic French sound that he eventually developed was full, bright, and pure with fast and rigid vibrato, whereas the American school that Teal developed preferred a darker, jazz influenced tone with slower vibrato and a wider range.

The fact that Mule spent much less time performing in the jazz world and doubling on flute and clarinet than Teal meant that he was more able to develop his classical saxophone abilities and philosophies early in his career. This, coupled with the fact that he was located in the thriving cultural area of Paris alongside many renowned composers, resulted in him premiering considerably more new works for saxophone than Teal was able to. The impact that Mule had on the literature for saxophone was unprecedented.

When Mule began teaching at the Paris Conservatory, there was very little existing repertoire, method books, or etudes specifically for the saxophone. During these first years, he

relied heavily on the works of Bozza, Jean Rivier, Henri Tomasi, Paul Bonneau, Ibert, and Glazunov that already existed. He also believed that it was important to be proficient at all scales and arpeggios, as long as it does not become so much of a concern that practicing becomes tedious and unenjoyable. He considered writing his own etudes to supplement his students' materials, but instead decided it would be more productive to transcribe some of the masterful etudes that had already been written. He transcribed flute etudes by Soussman, Terschak, Boehm, and Berbiguier, and later violin etudes by Campagnoli, Kreutzer, Mazas, Paganini, and Rode. He then discovered the Ferling etudes for oboe, published in 1946, and was impressed with the way Ferling had approached phrasing, breathing, tone projection, dynamic contrasts, vibrato, articulation, and tempo while systematically working through various tonalities. So, he transcribed these etudes for saxophone and added 12 enharmonic etudes of his own that he believed would be useful for saxophonists. He tried to imitate the harmonic structure that Ferling had used, adding the complete range of the saxophone and focusing on awkward fingering issues throughout these etudes. Mule believed that transcriptions were of vital importance to the developing saxophonist because they help to build an understanding of different musical styles that were prominent before the saxophone was invented. For this reason, he transcribed a series of previously written classics for other instruments and published it as *Les Classiques du Saxophone* (Rousseau 87).

Mule believed that the results of teaching directly correspond to the sensitivity and ability of the student, and that it is the job of the teacher to find a way to reach each individual student. In his words, "The teacher must not only respect the personality of the student, but must use it to good advantage. It is impossible to treat all students in the same manner, and it is a grave mistake when a teacher attempts to do so" (Rousseau 95).

Over his years of teaching, Mule developed one of the first clear methods of teaching saxophone. Tone production was his primary concern, and he taught his students that both tone and vibrato should model that of the female voice. He discovered that this could be achieved with a combination of good air support and an embouchure that does not crush or pinch the reed, and should be accomplished with relative ease. He enjoyed the challenge of finding a way to teach these difficult and abstract concepts.

Mule also felt strongly about his unique concept of vibrato that is so characteristic of the French School. He believed that creating undulations in sound was a way to make a saxophone

tone sound natural because similar undulations and waves exist organically in the world around us. He encouraged his students to use a metronome to gain control and evenness in their speed of undulation. He preferred a rigid, fast vibrato at the speed of 300 undulations per minute, which can be achieved by setting a metronome at 76 bpm and undulating 4 times per beat. He also encouraged his students to practice scales and etudes with a metronome, despite the criticism that practicing with a metronome causes one to sound mechanical. Instead, Mule's philosophy was that one must first learn to play with discipline before being able to play with freedom and expression. He considered the technical aspect of performing to be a secondary concern that was less difficult to teach than tone, vibrato, musical expression, or confidence and calmness in performance (Rousseau 85).

Mule began teaching formally at the Paris Conservatory in 1942, so there was already some precedent set for the teaching of classical saxophone, as well as considerably more literature written, by the time Teal became the first full-time American saxophone professor in 1953. However, it was still a very difficult task for Teal to begin trying to change the negative stigma surrounding serious saxophone playing in America. He explains this dilemma and his solution:

It must be admitted that the saxophone as a concert instrument has lagged in its performance level...No composer or arranger is going to write an important part for an instrument if he doubts that he will get a good performance...The saxophone is one of the most difficult instruments to play well...The situation seems to be improving, thanks to the efforts of interested music educators and teachers who appreciate the sound of a good saxophonist. When this improved sound and facility become the expected thing, it is reasonable to assume that composers and arrangers will assign it a more important role. The formula for producing a good saxophonist is the same as for any other instrumentalist: a sincere student with musical talent, a knowledgeable saxophone teacher, an adequate instrument and mouthpiece reed set-up, plus lots of hard work. It is unfair to the saxophone to settle for less (M. Teal, 179).

Similarly to Mule, Teal required scaled and etudes at all levels to ensure that his students met a higher standard of playing saxophone than most other teachers of the time deemed necessary. He advocated for the Rubank and Arnold solo books for his beginning students, as well as Klose's Daily studies. For his advanced students, he utilized Voxman's Etudes, Rudy Wiedoeft solos, and optional swing studies, as well as the Ibert and Heiden solo works. In addition, he placed his students in trios, quartets, and larger saxophone ensembles to work on intonation, blend, and musical cooperation. By this time, the Marcel Mule Quartet in Paris had

already established that the saxophone quartet arrangement of soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone could play much of the string quartet repertoire, so Teal began to place importance on quartets whenever possible (M. Teal 111).

Although Mule was already teaching similar techniques in Paris, Teal was the first to clearly and specifically write about standards for saxophone fundamentals. In *The Art of Saxophone Playing*, he goes into great detail on all issues concerning the saxophone, including proper breathing techniques, playing position, embouchure, vibrato, tone quality, and reed adjustments. He establishes that students should set the upper teeth on top of the mouthpiece in order to anchor the embouchure and ensure that the pitch and tone color of the sound are stable. He also explains that breathing should take place without removing the top teeth from the mouthpiece, while the throat is “opened to its fullest” (*The Art* 35). About articulation, he states, “the primary purpose of the tongue can be thought of as a device to stop reed vibration rather than to stop air...It is a definite and clean start of the reed vibration that we are seeking.” He also discourages moving the jaw when tonguing to prevent distorted pitch and tone (*The Art* 79).

The differences in the French and American concepts of sound production can easily be discerned by listening to recordings of Marcel Mule and Larry Teal. Mule’s sound is considerably more bright than Teal’s, sounding in moments much like a violin, while Teal tone is more dark and mellow, at times sounding like a clarinet. These preferences might have been influenced by the fact that one of Mule’s most influential teachers, Gabriel Willaume, was a violinist, and that Teal spent much of his professional career doubling as an orchestral clarinetist. However, the most notable difference in their sounds is in their vibrato. Mule maintained an extremely fast, rigid vibrato, for he believed that there was a proper speed of undulation that should always be observed. Teal, on the other hand, believed that if vibrato was always used in exactly the same way it would become monotonous, and that the vibrato should be flexible and used as a form of expression (*Workbook* 3). This preference can be heard in recordings of Teal, as he often utilizes a slightly slower vibrato when playing at slow tempos or quiet dynamics, and a faster vibrato when playing at faster tempos and louder dynamics. Most modern saxophonists have adopted this philosophy and pushed it to an even more noticeable degree, but this tendency seems to have originally come from Teal rather than Mule.

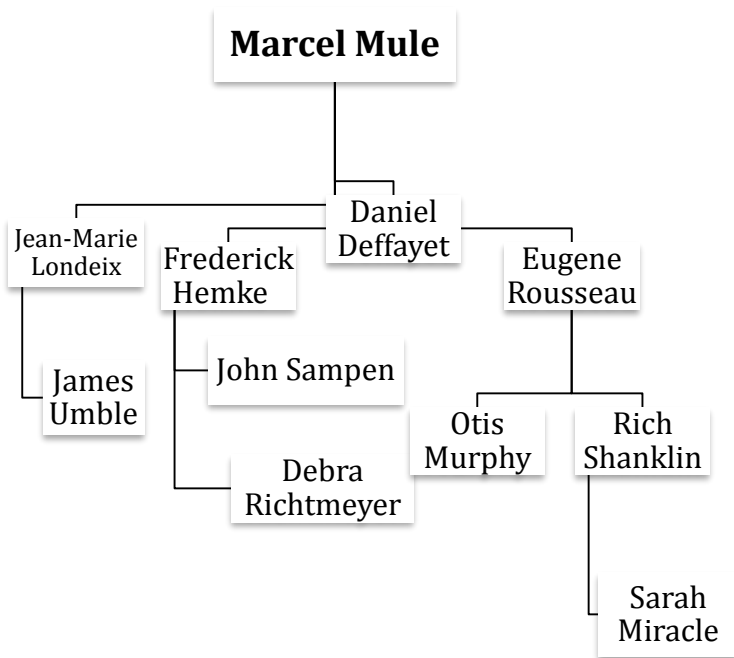
The Next Generations

Both Mule and Teal taught hundreds of students throughout their teaching careers, and many of those students have in turn taught countless other students over the last hundred years. In this way, the pedagogical methods of both of these renowned teachers have been passed down through the generations of saxophone players. One of Mule's most prominent students, Eugene Rousseau, and one of Teal's most prominent students, Donald Sinta, both recorded their own versions of Paul Creston's *Sonata for Saxophone*. In these recordings, elements of Mule's signature pure tone and rigid vibrato can be heard in Rousseau's sound, whereas Sinta's vibrato is more flexible, similar to Teal's. Although these similarities are present, they are more understated than in recordings of Mule and Teal themselves.

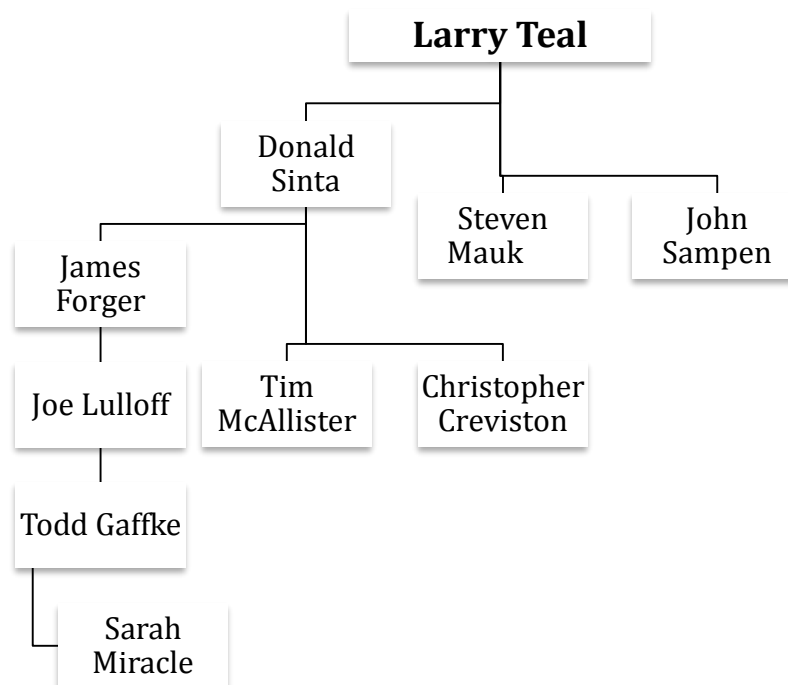
Throughout the next generation of saxophonists, these performance traits have become more and more diluted, and the distinction between the French and American Schools has become less obvious. This is partially because many current saxophonists have studied with multiple teachers, sometimes crossing lines between the French and American Schools. For example, John Sampen, the professor of Saxophone at Bowling Green State University, studied both with Larry Teal and Frederick Hemke, a student of Mule's. For this reason, Sampen and many other prominent saxophonists today have been influenced by both schools of pedagogy and performance, and their students have been influenced by a mixture of both schools as well. The entire history of classical saxophone is still relatively young, and most modern day saxophonists are still only in the third or fourth generation from Mule or Teal. It can be assumed that the differences between the French and American Schools will continue to become less clear as time passes, but the tremendous impact that both Larry Teal and Marcel Mule had on the development of classical saxophone will be felt and remembered forever.

*This diagram traces the lineage of the saxophonists mention in this paper, as well as numerous other prominent players in both the French and American Schools of classical saxophone playing.

French School



American School



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