

Betty S. Glover

**Dr. Nathan Siler,
Associate Professor of Trombone, Eastern Kentucky University**

Early years:

Betty Semple was born in 1923 in the small town of Hudson, Illinois. Early in her life, however, her family moved to the equally small community of Mechanicsburg, Illinois, where she began piano lessons. In the fifth grade, her parents bought her a trumpet from the Sears and Roebuck Company and she began lessons on this instrument, in addition to continuing her studies on piano. Trumpet proved to be very frustrating for the young student, as she was taught nothing about embouchure and struggled with range: "I could read music already, and the fingerings came quickly, but no one gave me any help on the embouchure. As a result, top space G was as high as I could play and it was very frustrating."

As a sixth grader she received a brand new Conn baritone to play in the community band. She picked up the horn and her problems of range instantly vanished. She had a natural embouchure and instincts for this new instrument and her enthusiasm flourished. The only minor problem, which was very soon conquered, was learning to read in bass clef at concert pitch.

About a year later, she began taking baritone lessons in Springfield, IL, alongside her piano lessons. Her teacher, Karl Fischer, was a former trumpet soloist with the United States Navy Band. He was a strict disciplinarian, as one might expect an ex-military man to be, but this was very good for his young student. He laid down the foundations and stressed the importance of self-discipline.

Mr. Fischer suggested that she begin to perform in solo and ensemble contests, which were the top state and regional competitions for young musicians at the time. Students began in district competitions. Those receiving a superior rating were advanced to state solo and ensemble contests. A superior rating at the state competition earned the student the right to perform in the highest contest of all, the regional competition, which was comprised of students from Illinois, Indiana and Michigan. It should be noted that the competition in these contests was very fierce, and she received a superior rating at all three contests on baritone in her sophomore year of high school. She also sang in a female quartet that received top honors in state competitions.

This success led her to be recruited by Herbert Petry, a bandsman who held a five-week summer band camp in Winona Lake, Indiana. Semple attended the festival from 1937-1940. During this time, she studied baritone with Gus Edwards, a staff musician at WGN Radio in Chicago. Guest conductors at the festival were a veritable "who's who" of well-known band musicians, including conductors Glenn Cliff Bainum, William Revelli, A.A. Harding and Frank Simon from the Armco Band. Composer Howard Hanson also conducted the band during her time there.

During her senior year of high school, she was advised that if she wanted to continue studying music in college, she should consider playing the trombone, as one could not major in baritone at that time. She began studying trombone during the summer of 1938 at Winona Lake with Walter Freedman, trombone professor at Illinois Wesleyan University. As a result of her outstanding performances in state contests, she was awarded a piano scholarship to attend Indiana Wesleyan University. She decided to continue with Mr. Freedman and enrolled there in the fall of 1939. This, however, was not necessarily the best decision for the budding young musician. She did not make much progress on trombone at all, spending much of her time studying and practicing baritone and piano.

College and Orchestra years:

The summer of 1940 at Winona Lake proved to be very fortuitous for Semple. After a band rehearsal on baritone, she was approached by Frank Simon, who was impressed by her playing. He asked her where she was studying and about her relationship with her teacher. She told him of her current situation at Illinois Wesleyan University. He offered her a full scholarship to CCM, where he told her she would be able to study with Ernest Glover on trombone and that a piano teacher would be arranged for her. Though very flattered and interested, she informed him that even with full tuition, CCM and living in Cincinnati would be impossible for her family to afford. Arrangements, however, were made and she began study at CCM in the fall of 1940.

In 1941, Ernest Glover recommended that Semple join the musicians union in Cincinnati, American Federation of Musicians, Local No. 1. However, the \$100 initiation fee seemed another insurmountable financial hurdle. Mr. Glover agreed to loan her the money, as he expected her to be able to easily pay him back in short order. As it happened, he was proven right when Semple began working in Cincinnati soon after.

The following summer, Semple was contacted by bandmaster George "Smitty" Smith as a last minute substitute for his group and she had her first union job. Other opportunities followed and she was soon playing in theatre pits, substituting on occasion with the WLW Radio Orchestra and working with travelling shows coming through the city. Another early opportunity was performing with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra on Shostakovich's Symphony No. 7 with Eugene Goossens conducting. Though she was often absent from her classes at CCM, her teachers were sympathetic to her busy schedule and she graduated with a B.M. in trombone in 1944.

Soon after, she was in Chicago auditioning for conductor Efrem Kurtz to become the principal trombonist of the Kansas City Symphony. The date was June 6, 1944: D-Day. She was offered the job and served in that capacity from 1944-48. Her most memorable highlight from this period was a concert with legendary conductor Bruno Walter conducting Brahms' Symphony No. 1 and music of Wagner.

While in Kansas City, Semple lived in the same rooming house as Janet Remington, daughter of Eastman School of Music trombone professor Emory Remington. When the bass trombone position opened in Kansas City during her time there, Semple suggested that Lewis van Haney, a student of Remington's, be hired for the job. But as fate would have it, a position in the New York Philharmonic opened up and the rest is history. Although Mr. Haney did not accept the job with Kansas City, he appreciated her help and said that he "will always be grateful to Betty for helping him get his first job."

Since Kansas City had only a twenty-week season, which ran from October through May, Semple still spent her summers in Cincinnati. Ernest Glover was very busy with a large number of students because of people returning to college on the G.I. Bill after World War II, and he gave Semple the responsibility of teaching some younger and less developed players. This proved to be a blessing for her, as she was charged with diagnosing the problems of these students. At first, this was a challenge to her because of her natural talents on the instrument. During these summers, she was also continuing her education with graduate courses at CCM, and she earned an M.M. in 1949. It was in this same year that Ernest Glover and Betty Semple were married, though they eventually divorced in 1958.

In an effort to move closer to Cincinnati, she left Kansas City to become the principal trombonist with the Columbus Symphony Orchestra, beginning in the 1948-49 season. Maestro Izler Solomon was the music director who gave her the newfound opportunity. In the summer of 1949, at the end of her first

year in the job, she received a letter informing her that the orchestra was ceasing operations and closing its doors. This was incredibly distressing and hurtful news to the young trombonist. She relocated back to Cincinnati, where she continued her routines of teaching and freelancing.

Move to Cincinnati:

One afternoon in 1950, she was in the office of Ernest Glover at CCM. While she was there, Ernest received a phone call from William Cramer, who was the second trombonist in Columbus during Ms. Glover's brief tenure. He informed Mr. Glover that he was leaving his duties as trombone instructor at Otterbein College to pursue D.M.A. work at Florida State University. He asked Glover if he knew of a qualified candidate for the position. He turned around in his chair and asked his wife if she would be interested. She acknowledged that she would. Mr. Glover asked Cramer if the university would hire a woman, and Cramer said that he would give his sincere recommendation. This proved successful, and she began work there in 1950. Her responsibilities included teaching all brass instruments and conducting both the band and the brass choir. She also oversaw an annual brass choir tour that was planned by the students themselves.

In 1952, Ms. Glover received a call that Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra bass trombonist Bill Wilkins had become very ill and was hospitalized. As a result, he was unable to play the upcoming May Festival, and she was invited to play with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra again, this time for several weeks in a row. She approached the dean at Otterbein and informed him of her opportunity. He was very excited that an Otterbein faculty member was going to be performing with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and told her that if she could make up her lessons at the school, she was welcome to pursue the concerts.

Ms. Glover had never performed on bass trombone and was nervous about her new responsibilities. Mr. Wilkins allowed her to borrow his trombone, a Conn 60H, and she adapted quickly to the change. Midway through the festival, Wilkins died. By virtue of her outstanding work while substituting with the orchestra throughout the years, she was invited to become a permanent member by Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra Music Director Thor Johnson. With that appointment she gained her distinction of being the first female brass player in a major symphony, and there was no caveat about it being a "war years" appointment. She opened the door for many others. She enjoyed a fruitful thirty-three year career in the orchestra, retiring in 1985.

Symphony and University years:

A particularly exciting event in her playing career during the 1950's and 60's was the opportunity to work with the C.G. Conn Company in the development of a new model of the 60H bass trombone. This particular model was produced prior to World War II, but was discontinued as Conn was required to cease making brass instruments and took to making ammunition and armaments for the war. As they began to get back into the flow of instrument production in the 1950's, the engineers at Conn found that the specifications for the 60H had been lost. In an effort to rectify this mistake, they began contacting orchestral bass trombonists who performed on this horn, of which Glover was one.

Ms. Glover took to this opportunity with her trademark professionalism. She approached then music director Max Rudolf and informed him of the nature of her new relationship with the C.G. Conn Company. She asked him if he would listen carefully to her playing in the orchestra and comment on the sound and timbre of the instrument. Maestro Rudolf was extremely pleased with all aspects of the production of the 60H, and Glover performed on this horn for the rest of her career.

During her 33 years with the CSO, from 1952 to 1985, she performed under dozens of famous conductors, recorded many highly acclaimed LPs and CDs and travel around the world. She even toured with a trio of women performing music of the renaissance and Baroque as the keyboardist.

Along with her position in the symphony in 1952, she became an official faculty member at CCM, teaching trombone, euphonium, and brass methods classes. Another important facet of Glover's brass pedagogy at CCM was the formation of the Brass Repertoire class, a class focusing on brass orchestral playing. The genesis of this class was in 1949 or 1950, while she was teaching as an adjunct instructor. Three trombonists and CCM tubist Louis Rivetti approached her and asked about her willingness to work with them as a section to coach passages from orchestral excerpts that may arise in a professional audition. CCM provided a modest stipend and she procured parts, being sure only to order specific editions that the players would encounter in a professional setting.

The next year, Glover was asked by horn and trumpet players at the school, who wished to be included as well, about joining. She advised the students to approach the dean and ask for the course to be officially offered at the college, which soon happened. Once she was a permanent member of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra in 1952, the class revolved around whatever the orchestra was playing and she was able to get parts from the orchestra librarian from concerts that had been played or would be performed soon after. This course was a favorite of brass musicians at the school during her tenure and still continues to this day. Even with the university position, professional musicians struggled to make ends meet. Ms. Glover began studies in medicine and was considering a career change. Fortunately, pay conditions for symphony players improved to provide a living wage and she shelved her medical studies.

The CCM Brass Choir was founded in 1946 by Ernest Glover and was the first brass ensemble in the United States based on the model of the symphony orchestra brass section, rather than that of a British brass band. It was used as a training ground for the budding symphonic musician. It received universal praise as the most refined group of its kind, performing at national and international events throughout his 23 year tenure. The choir sponsored and hosted the annual *Thor Johnson Brass Ensemble Compositions Contest* during the 1950's which spawned many brilliant original compositions for brass that became the beginnings of the Robert King catalogue.

Brass Choir years:

It was in 1969 that she began her twenty-three year association with the CCM Brass Choir. During the 1968-69 school year, she let it be known that she was interested in taking over the tradition established by Ernest Glover during his tenure. She was notified during the summer of 1969 that she had been awarded the position. At that time, she was still an adjunct professor, though she would later rise through the ranks to become a full professor by the time she retired.

The ensemble picked up where it left off with the death of Ernest Glover, both in terms of quality and notoriety. Ms. Glover knew of the group's legacy and took these newfound responsibilities to heart. She continually worked with composers, premiering new works for the medium, including unique works involving oboe, harp and piano solo. Works from the *Thor Johnson Brass Ensemble Compositions Contest* were also frequently performed alongside traditional works for brass, ranging from Gabrieli to twentieth-century standards.

The choir continued to enjoy guest appearances at top brass and educational conferences, both in Cincinnati and around the United States. The group gave featured performances at the 1975 and 1987

Ohio Music Educators Association (O.M.E.A.) Conference in Cincinnati and in 1977 at the Southern Ohio Regional Brass Conference, sponsored by the O.M.E.A. and the Salvation Army. In 1978, the group performed on a series of concerts at CCM celebrating the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Corbett Center for the Performing Arts. In 1984, the choir performed at the annual Music Educators National Conference.

A particular honor bestowed upon the group was the opportunity to perform on the first digital transatlantic broadcast from the United States to Europe in 1983. This concert, which was sponsored by radio station WGUC, was shared with the CCM Chamber Choir and the Cincinnati Percussion Group and included a world premiere written for the CCM Brass Choir by composer and Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra bassist Frank Proto. Twice, in 1988 and 1990, the group performed on the CCM Visiting Composers Series, performing music of Samuel Adler and Sir Michael Tippett for the composers themselves. The group was also active at the annual Feast of Carols at CCM and at annual commencement ceremonies throughout her entire career.

Glover gave her final concert with the CCM Brass Choir on May 2, 1992 at Hyde Park Community Methodist Church, with organist Mark Schaffer.

Retirement years:

She retired from CCM after forty years of service. She saw many of her students go on to hold positions in orchestras, universities, and music studios. She influenced thousands of students and instilled in them a love and music and a commitment to high standards for effort and integrity. She moved to the small village of Ménerbes, département du Vaucluse in Provence, France, where she lives to this day. In her retirement, she continues her lifelong passions of reading and listening to music. She is also passionate about good food and good wine, another lifelong pursuit. In addition, she enjoys maintaining contact with former students and colleagues.

The concert organized by Bob Coil in April 2020 is a tribute to a remarkable pioneer, teacher, mentor, and friend. On April 2, 2020 will be honored by the UC alumni association as an outstanding alumni of the College-Conservatory of music, and it only took 76 years. At the University Convocation on May 1, 2020 the dean of CCM will award her the Dean's Medal. In her absence, her former student and CSO colleague, Paul Piller, will accept the honors on her behalf.