

### **The Betty Glover Years: 1969-1992**

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. Her father was a postal carrier and was also an accomplished amateur musician, despite no formal training. Early in his life, a well-intentioned teacher taught him to read music, and this was a pastime that he enjoyed thoroughly. He had a lovely baritone voice and was often asked to sing for various private and community functions.

Mechanicsburg was one of three small villages (the others being Buffalo and Dawson, Illinois) that often combined for civic functions, one of the most important of which was a community band. This was a band that met mostly in the summer and gave concerts that were often followed by an ice cream social or other community social function. Semple's father taught himself to play the sousaphone with an instrument that was borrowed from a school in the area, and he played this instrument for many years in the band. Despite all of her father's talent, her mother "could not carry a tune in a bushel basket!"<sup>28</sup>

Semple began to play the piano at age six. Along with reading, this was a childhood activity that she enjoyed greatly. She was taken eighteen miles to Springfield, Illinois every week for piano lessons.<sup>29</sup> In the fifth grade, her parents bought her a trumpet from the Sears and Roebuck Company. She began instruction with the local bandmaster, John Ben Edwards, who played all the band instruments, but none well. He gave her a method book and left her to her own devices. 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

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<sup>28</sup> Betty S. Glover, Ménerbes, département du Vaucluse, Provence, France, interview by the author, 17 October 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Elicia Hill, "A Tribute to Betty Glover," *International Trombone Association Journal* 14/6 (1986): 13.

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.”<sup>30</sup>

In about the sixth grade, Mr. Edwards offered to buy her 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 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.<sup>31</sup>

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.

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.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 13.

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 that she should consider playing the trombone, as one could not major in baritone at this time. She began studying trombone during the summer of 1938 at Winona Lake with Walter Freedman, trombone professor at Illinois Wesleyan University. Upon graduation from high school, she decided to continue study at Illinois Wesleyan with Mr. Freedman and enrolled there in the fall of 1939. This was a decision that Semple made with her parents, as Illinois Wesleyan was close to home and in the family’s budget. 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.

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.

Because of her gender, it was recommended that she enter the music education program. At this time, it was simply unheard of for a female trombonist to find employment in the field of brass performance. Though she eventually agreed, this decision did not last long, and she informed the school and her parents that she would be dropping the education designation after one semester. This was a tough pill for her family to swallow, but they eventually relented, and her full-time performance study commenced.

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.

One week later, 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."<sup>32</sup>

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

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 14.

the young trombonist. She relocated back to Cincinnati, where she continued her routines of teaching and freelancing.

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. It was in this same year that she became an official faculty member at CCM.

In her first few years in the orchestra, the season was only twenty-eight to thirty-two weeks in length. The pay was average at best and the benefits were infinitesimal. There seemed to be not much of a glimmer of hope for the future in terms of job stability. With this in mind, Ms. Glover considered changing professions. Her only other academic interest as a student had been medical research. She had friends at Christ Hospital in Cincinnati who made arrangements with their superiors to help her get a job there. She worked as an assistant in the hematology department and was eager to learn at her new job. Though she was not certified in this field, she was still a hard-working and valued member of the team. This particular job also afforded her a flexible schedule so that she could continue her musical endeavors in the city. During this time, she also took classes at the University of Cincinnati in chemistry and microbiology.

In the early 1960's, the New York Philharmonic lobbied legally for a fifty-two week season and benefits for their musicians. Their efforts were successful, and their endeavors allowed other organizations in larger United States cities to follow suit. It was in this decade that the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra saw its greatest growth in musician sustainability. Betty Glover was instrumental in the newfound success of the orchestra as a member of the player's committee from 1961-70. The orchestra eventually gained a fifty-two week contract, with musicians' pensions rivaling the best in any industry. In 1966, the orchestra went on a ten-week world tour and in 1969 the group enjoyed a thirty-five day European tour. With a newfound security in her musical career, Glover decided to quit her job at Christ Hospital.

Glover was also very active as a member of Sigma Alpha Iota (S.A.I.), an international fraternity for professional women musicians. From 1956-59, she served as the province vice president. She performed as a featured soloist at the S.A.I. National Convention in 1959 and performed with a quartet at the Chicago convention in 1965. Glover was awarded the highest honor possible, the *Ring of Excellence*, given only to those who have achieved superior musicianship.<sup>33</sup>

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.

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. She enjoyed a fruitful thirty-three year career in the orchestra, retiring in 1985.

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

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 14.

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.

Though she was officially the new “boss,” it was not the first time that she had worked with the choir. In the late 1940’s and early 1950’s, she was recruited by Ernest Glover to help out with the “C” and “D” choirs. The instrumentation for these groups was spotty at best and often incomplete. This severely limited the possibilities of the groups, especially in terms of repertoire.

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 (see Appendix 3), 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.

Under Glover's leadership, the choir enjoyed a rich relationship with the choral department at CCM. In 1981, the CCM Brass Choir performed with Elmer Thomas and the Renaissance Choir at the Cathedral of St. Peter in Chains in downtown Cincinnati. In this same year, she began a professional relationship that she was extraordinarily proud of: concerts at St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption in Covington, Kentucky, with Earl Rivers and the CCM Motet Choir. Over a period of eleven years (1981-1992), Glover and Rivers planned no fewer than thirteen concerts for these collective forces. Though the choirs did not always perform at the same time, efforts were made to combine forces at times, performing such works as John Rutter's *Gloria*, Hindemith's *Apparebit Repentina Dies* and Schütz's *Psalms of David*, as well as antiphonal works by Gabrieli and others. The two ensembles also performed together at the 1986 American Choral Directors Association Central Division Convention in Indianapolis, IN.

Glover and Rivers had profound respect for each other's talents. She considered Dr. Rivers a man of outstanding musicianship who had a natural ability for programming. She also believed he had an outstanding sense of theatre which was perfect for the large space of the cathedral. He achieved a great audience appeal without sacrificing quality from the ensemble. The balconies and space of the cathedral were perfect for the multiple choir works of composers of the Renaissance. Glover also enjoyed combining a large palette of works from both sacred and secular genres. This concert series became one of the most popular and well-attended at the Basilica during these years.



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 CCM, 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.

Glover's teaching philosophy was simple, and she frequently communicated her motto to students: "Shape up or ship out!" She was a firm believer that one must teach the whole student and not just develop instrumental technique. It was the teacher's responsibility to assess personality traits such as intelligence, diligence, drive and consistency and work with the individual to invent a course of action to maximize the potential of each student. It was incumbent on the instructor as well to advise the student about suitable equipment, i.e trombones, mouthpieces, etc. In addition, the teacher must lead by example to show the student acceptable professional ethics, an area she felt was sorely lacking in young professionals.

Glover gave her final concert with the CCM Brass Choir on May 2, 1992 at Hyde Park Community Methodist Church, with organist Mark Schaffer. She retired from CCM after forty years of service. After taking a year to organize her life and possessions, 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 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.

In the 1992-93 academic year, the CCM Brass Choir was led by Daniel Schmidt, a doctoral student of Eugene Corporon at CCM in wind conducting. Schmidt led several programs with very challenging and satisfying works for brass. He later spent a twenty year career in the United States Air Force as a cornet soloist and band commander. He currently performs with the Evergreen Brass Quintet and serves as the associate conductor of the Northwest Wind Symphony in Chehalis, Washington. There are no programs available from the 1993-94 academic year and the brass choir lay dormant. The next year, however, the CCM Brass Choir found a champion in its new director, Timothy Northcut.