

## Jane Taylor of the Dorian Wind Quintet: An Interview

Susan Shaw  
Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania

**O**n Sunday, October 28, 2001, members of the Dorian Wind Quintet performed their 40th anniversary concert at the Kosciuszko Foundation House in New York City. The concert was recorded, and was broadcast on WQXR the following Saturday. June LeBell, WQXR announcer and host for the evening, led a discussion among the quintet players and composers during and after the performance. It was at this time that Jane Taylor, bassoonist and the only remaining founding member of the quintet, announced her retirement from the Dorian Quintet at the end of this season (2001-2002). What follows is an interview preceding the Dorian's anniversary concert with **Jane Taylor**, as a quintet member, as a bassoonist, as a musician.



*Jane Taylor*

**JT:** It might happen that way, but my guess is the variations will not be revised much. We're perfectly happy with how they are. If the composer sees something wrong, then he'll revise it, but we're perfectly content with the variations.

**SS:** This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Dorian Quintet. Could you tell me how the Dorian Quintet originally formed?

**JT:** Although I'm considered a founding member, I'm not literally the founder. In a way the founder is the guy who was the original flute player, John Perras. In 1960 John called me. We had been classmates at Queens College and he called me to say that there was an interesting job opportunity at Tanglewood, and that was to play in the composition department. They needed wood-

wind players. They had a string quartet, the Lenox Quartet, and they also had two singers and a pianist. So we applied and were accepted and went up to Tanglewood at the appropriate time. We formed a wind quintet made up of the people who were hired for this job: a horn player from Pittsburgh, an oboe player from New York City, whom I didn't know, and a clarinetist from California. For the time that we were up there we performed the works of the composition department (young students who were students of Aaron Copland who ran the composition department); it took us quite a while to get into any kind of a groove because we didn't know one another. About midway into the summer we felt that we had gotten to know each other enough and by the end of the summer John suggested we form a regular woodwind quintet, just like the Lenox String Quartet. That way we would start the next summer, if we would get the job again, with a group ready to go. John and I invited the horn player from Pittsburgh, Bill Brown, oboe player **David Perkett**, and clarinetist Art Bloom, whom we knew from New York City, and we went as the Dorian Wind Quintet.

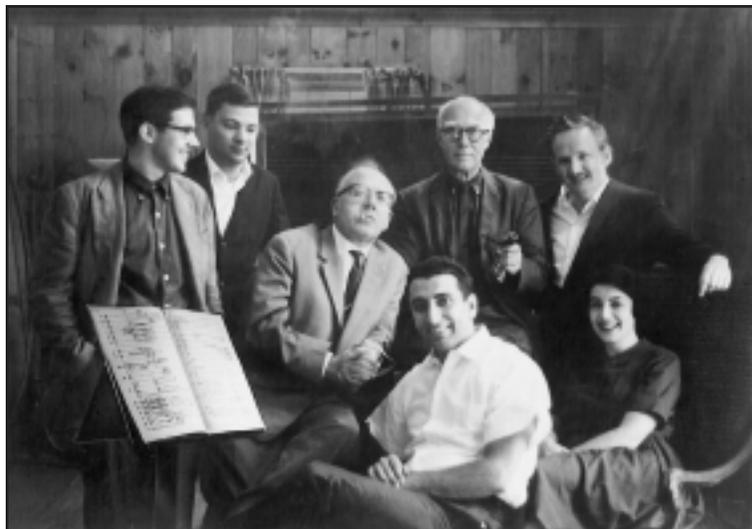
**SS:** Could you speak about this anniversary concert and how it is special.

**JT:** Well, I can't believe I made it to 40 years! For our 20th anniversary we gave a concert in Carnegie Hall, the "big hall." As far as I know, no wind quintet had ever played in Carnegie Hall before. For our 40th anniversary we wanted to do something very special. Jerry Kirkbride, our clarinetist, came up with the idea of taking a theme that would be known to everybody, like the Reicha Eb, Opus 88, No. 2, slow movement theme, and having five composers write variations on it.

So we commissioned five composers who had previously written pieces for us: Richard Rodney Bennett, George Perle, Billy Childs, Bruce Adolphe, and Lee Hoiby. We asked them each to write a short variation so that the piece would not be endlessly long. I'm very excited about this piece.

**SS:** Did you work side-by-side with the composers? For example, did the quintet play for each composer to allow for revisions as it was being written?

**SS:** How did the name come about?



*The Dorian Quintet, Tanglewood 1961. back Row: David Perckett, William Brown, Wolfgang Fortner, Roberto Gerhard, Arthur Bloom. Sitting: John Perras, Jane Taylor*

**SS:** What about the New York Residency?

**JT:** That was part of what we did, but we did not get the residency right away. **Charlie Kuskin** and **Fritz Kraber**, our oboe and flute players, who succeeded John and David, were very ingenious and they would have sessions where they would get together and think up stuff, something I was not good at. They thought up this wonderful residency. The State University of New York is a huge network. We would get money from New York State's Central Administration and from the schools and we would go from campus to campus all over the state. We also did Young Audiences, which at that time had a considerable

**JT:** Now, the name is another story. We knew the Greek Dorian musical mode, and also Doric architecture: a simple unfluted column with a simple top. Dorian seemed to say what we wanted to say. I say we, but John was really the guiding force behind the quintet. He had very big plans. He wanted this to be the group that would set a style for wind quintets in the future, that would lift the level of wind playing.

**SS:** Was the intent to publicize the traditional repertoire or to expand the already existing woodwind quintet literature?

**JT:** I don't think we especially set out to expand the literature, although it is something that we eventually did. I remember that the general plan was to take the wind quintet really seriously. Little by little it turned out that we commissioned works, we rehearsed very hard, and we really tried to improve our own playing to make the ensemble something that was above and beyond what our own individual skills were. John was very good in this area. He really knew how to get us to play to the top of our skill. John was in the quintet for about four years. For all intents and purposes, he ran the quintet for these first four years.

When we started, in 1961, we rehearsed twice a day, every day-- I can't remember if this included weekends, but we put in many hours of rehearsal. We were all unmarried, and we were all trying to find work. Actually it cost us money to be in the quintet. We had to invest in publicity and putting on concerts. We did not make much money. In a way, we invented what we did, put in the money to make it happen, and little by little we got reviews until people began to know our name and we created an interest in the group.

amount of work. It meant getting up early in the morning to do children's concerts, but that made us learn our repertoire the hard way. If you could play it at 8:00 in the morning, you could play it at 8:00 at night. And we would try out new repertoire. We learned new pieces and tried them out on the job and then this began to pay for itself. But it took a while to get to that point. The first couple of years were really very expensive.

**SS:** Did you take over the leadership after John left?

**JT:** No, not at all. I'm really a follower, not a leader type. Tell me what to do and I'll do it. That's more my style. It didn't turn out that way in the end.

**SS:** I think that when most people look at the Dorian Quintet today they look at you as the leader.

**JT:** It's an illusion because I really am not the leader type. But I was left with a lot of responsibilities at a certain point so then I had to, but I really am not an initiator. I'm willing to do a lot of the necessary work that helped to keep the continuity. I'm a peacemaker. I try to keep things on a very positive path and I think that is what helped to keep the group together more than anything. The reason I say that is: one of the difficulties with most chamber ensembles is a personality difference. If one person is out of line, for example, in a string quartet, it's very hard to function. If you can't find ways to solve this problem, you have several choices. One is to get rid of that person and the other is to try and iron it out and go through a type of group therapy to try to solve it. Sometimes this works and sometimes it doesn't.

**SS:** Well, along with personality differences, there are also problems of scheduling. You all do various types of performing, with other chamber groups, orchestras, and opera companies. This also involves traveling. Do you have a secret as to how the Dorian Quintet has worked around this?

**JT:** The secret is that the person who does the scheduling should not scream too loud.

**SS:** What other groups are you associated with today?

**JT:** Lake George Opera, American Symphony, Long Island Philharmonic, and the New York Bassoon Quartet, which meets infrequently. The quartet is in the process of having our second recording, which is now a CD, edited. It happens to be a very poky process right now.

**SS:** Who is in the Bassoon Quartet?

**JT:** It's the same group but I'm the replacement for **Alice Black**. The other bassoonists are **Julie Feves**, **Laurie Goldstein**, and **Bernadette Zirkuli**.

**SS:** Where has the Dorian Quintet toured?

**JT:** We've been around the world. We've been to Europe about 13 or 14 times. We've been to Central America and one country in South America, Nicara-

gua. We've been to Asia, Taiwan, India, and Pakistan, when it was safe. We were in West Africa and we've been to Hawaii. We've been to India twice. We've been literally around the world.

**SS:** Keeping instruments (and reeds!) in good playing condition while on tour can be quite challenging. Has this ever been a problem in the quintet?

**JT:** Actually I'm the repair person. If we have any instrument problems in the group, probably I can fix it. I keep a minimum of tools on hand. I've never had anything go radically wrong that I wasn't able to fix. Reeds are a perennial problem that can never be solved. I can remember our first tour. We went to Paris. I was staying in a little place, which overlooked the Eiffel Tower. I never got to actually go to the Eiffel Tower, because I was busy in my place working on my reeds. Not too much of a tourist, I was usually busy practicing and playing, and getting my reeds going.

**SS:** Do you feel that you were received differently out of the country?

**JT:** Well, playing in the States is one thing. The States are not the most appreciative of chamber music. Abroad they don't draw the distinction quite so much. Any event is an event. And they're happy to receive it. In Europe we had a wonderful response. In India, definitely, we were something really unusual. The first State Department tour was especially unusual. We



**2001-2002  
Chamber Music Series**

**THE  
DORIAN  
WIND QUINTET**  
*Fortieth Anniversary Concert*

**Sunday,  
October 28, 2001  
3 P.M.**

Kosciuszko Foundation House  
15 East 65th Street  
New York City

**DORIAN WIND QUINTET**  
Gretchen Pusch, flute Jerry Kirkbride, clarinet  
Gerard Reuter, oboe Jane Taylor, bassoon  
Nancy Billmann, horn

**PROGRAM**

Diversions for Wind Quintet, Opus 10 (1953; rev. 1989)	Lee Hoiby (born 1926)
Greeting	
Waltz	
Promenade	
Gambol	
Night Journey (1987)	Bruce Adolphie (born 1955)
Quintet for Winds No. 1, Opus 37 (1959) (in three movements)	George Pele (born 1915)

**INTERMISSION**

Wind Quintet (1954)	Antoni Szalowski (1907-1973)
Allegro	
Andantino	
Allegro	
Concerto for Wind Quintet (1983) Capriccio (Vivo e ritmico)	Richard Rodney Bennett (born 1936)

Anniversary Variations (2001)	Richard Rodney Bennett
Variation I - Con eleganza	George Pele
Variation II - Four Variations	Billy Childs (born 1957)
Variation III - Variations on a Reicha Theme	Bruce Adolphie
Variation IV - Draisina Variation	Lee Hoiby
Variation V - Finale: Andante - Lento - Allegro	

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The Chamber Music Series is co-produced by the Kosciuszko Foundation and WQXR. This afternoon's concert will be broadcast over WQXR 96.3 FM on Saturday, November 3 at 9 P.M.; the radio broadcast is made possible by LOT Polish Airlines.

Members of the audience are requested to remain seated until the intermission.

went with a piece by Morton Subotnick, which consisted of an hour's worth of staged production. It had film, video, lights, and taped music, and we had to walk on and off and do things that made it quite an event. But it was such an event that nobody in the group was comfortable. The players felt it was an insult. Subotnick felt that what we did for a living was out of date and walking out on stage and playing a concert was a dinosaur. So we insisted that wherever we did this piece, we also did a traditional concert. That made us feel a little better. We did what we believed in. We did two nights, one of the event, and one of walking out on stage and playing a concert.

**SS:** Has the Dorian ever played for any of the International Double Reed Society (IDRS) conventions?

**JT:** No, we've never played for a convention. One of the problems was that we usually were not particularly available in the summers. People usually had work that got in the way. Now we make ourselves a little more available but there was a time when we simply were not. We couldn't get together in the summers because everybody went in separate directions.

**SS:** When I first joined the IDRS there were about 30 names listed and now there are about two pages of names of people who belong. To what would you attribute this?

**JT:** There are several answers. One answer is that every college now has a woodwind department. That was not always so. Music departments are cranking out woodwind players right and left. At one time there were ten oboe players in the United States and now there are probably 5,000 oboe players; I'm guessing numbers. The idea is that there is a much greater profusion of wind players. So as a consequence, when the Double Reed Society originally started (it was originally *Woodwind World*, way back in the olden days), I imagine their subscription was about 20 people. In many college music departments, in the past, there wasn't necessarily a teacher for each instrument. Now there is a huge groundswell of interest in woodwinds since there are so many instrumentalists and instrument teachers.

**SS:** Originally you were the only female member of the group. How did this affect you and/or the audience?

**JT:** How it really was and how it affected the audience were really two different things. In actuality, the guys were the guys and they liked to do guy things, which never particularly interested me. However, as it was viewed from the audience--I think they all thought it looked quite interesting to see four men and a woman and I think that was good. That was a plus. I think it

was an attractive concept. I'm sure many of them were wondering what was going on, which is great. It gives a little extra something to the atmosphere. Nothing was going on, but nobody knew that.

**SS:** Why do you think audiences accept string quartets more than wind quintets?

**JT:** It's not a simple question to answer, but I'll try. The string quartet by nature has an extremely homogenous sound. The violin and the cello, the two opposite ends, sound a lot alike. Sometimes you can't tell when you're going from one instrument to another. Harmonically you get the most beautiful chords that are balanced and homogenous. The string sound reaches a certain place that the wind sound doesn't. It might have to do with the fact that string instruments reverberate within themselves. In other words, when you lift the bow off the string, the string keeps ringing. In a wind instrument, you stop blowing air--dead. It's not going to keep echoing unless you're in a very live room. So I think there is something there, plus, there may be something to do with the overtones.

When strings play a note, there are those resonant notes that happen simultaneously that you can't really hear, but they make the notes have more depth. Wind instruments are not as rich in the kind of overtones that string instruments are. The other answer to this question is that string quartets have the most fabulous repertoire imaginable. You name a great composer and very likely, he wrote for a string quartet. Even Verdi wrote for a string quartet. And he wrote no other chamber music but that one string quartet. All the best--Beethoven didn't write a wind quintet, Mozart didn't write a wind quintet, Tchaikovsky--you name it, the list is gigantic.

**SS:** If Beethoven were alive today, how would you convince him to write a wind quintet?

**JT:** Well, Beethoven might have been fascinated by the fact that the winds have a variety of timbres. The wind quintet has great variety. Each instrument has separates registers. The flute high and the flute low are very different sounding. Oboe high and oboe low, clarinet, bassoon and horn, so that you have a lot of variety to work with. Plus, each instrument has its own different style of attack. The dynamics, simply loud and soft, have different qualities. There is a lot of variety in the sound. Sometimes this provides too many options and some composers are completely intimidated by the quantity of voices in the wind quintet. For wind quintets, vertical and horizontal are quite separated. It's much harder to blend it and to make it work together. Some people did a wonderful job, like Hindemith. There are a few great masterworks for wind quintet, a few. Also, most of our repertoire is

in the 20th century. You have Hindemith and Barber and Irving Fine, all marvelous pieces, wonderfully written for quintet, interesting balances and interesting colors.

**SS:** Do you think it's because the playing wasn't as refined or was this just part of the natural development of music?

**JT:** It's hard to say. I really don't know if there's an answer to that. My first thought is that Bach wrote for the oboe in the most wonderful way and he wrote for the bassoon and for the horn and the flute, but not the clarinet. He knew those instruments well and he wrote for them well, but he never thought of them together in a wind quartet or quintet situation. It's not that the playing wasn't good. They had great players, although they may not have been as prevalent. He may have had one good oboe player in Vienna and one good bassoon player in Berlin and they weren't in the same place at the same time. It's hard to know. I don't know if it worked that way with strings. It's easier to find a string quartet within an orchestra of 20 or 30 players whereas in a wind section you have eight woodwinds and two to four brass. I don't know if you can find five individuals who are willing to work together. The solo winds are more like solo instruments and you have solo personalities to worry about. Strings don't think along the same lines.

**SS:** Do you think of yourself as a pioneer in some ways, as one of the first female bassoonists, or as a quintet member?

**JT:** Well I certainly am not a pioneer in that sense. Not many, but several women preceded me and every now and then people would ask me if I was **Tina DiDario**. She was, I think, the first female bassoonist to tour and to travel abroad in a quintet situation. I don't think I was the second one, so I'm a bit down the line. Considering that there were not that many in the beginning, many people look to me as a kind of pioneer. I don't feel that I wasn't a pioneer, but I certainly was not first. Many women had preceded me. Mel Kaplan was a pioneer, if anyone was, of the first touring quintet, The New Art Woodwind Quintet. For my first symphony job, which was before the Dorian Quintet started, I used to listen to the Oklahoma City Symphony on the radio where **Betty Johnson** played First bassoon--a great bassoon player. For all I know, she

may have been the first serious great female bassoon player. I loved her playing before I knew she was a female.

**SS:** What, or who, got you interested in playing the bassoon?

**JT:** I can't identify one thing in particular. I've always been interested in wind instruments, from when I was a kid. I was brought up in a musical family. My first instrument was the flute, which I started in elementary school. I played the flute until I got into high school. **Sylvia Deutscher Kushner** was recruiting in the high school. She was a bassoon player. I loved the way she sounded. She was a wonderful player and that sold me on it. My mother regretted that I gave up the flute and took up the bassoon because of the size of it, but I don't. I think I had many more opportunities as a bassoonist than I would have had as a flute player. I might not have been as good a flute player as I was a bassoon player.

**SS:** You also perform with opera companies and other chamber music ensembles and orchestras and you teach. Do you identify with the Dorian Quintet as the main focus of your career?

**JT:** In the beginning it certainly was. At one point in my career, way back when, we were on the faculty of Brooklyn College and that paid my yearly wage. In addition, I did some freelance work, but I actually earned enough money from that one job. The quintet was in residence. When the City University cutbacks came, we were forced to go to our own devices.



*The Dorian Wind Quintet. Back Row: Art Bloom, Wolfgang Fortner, Roberto Gerhard, Jane Taylor, William G. Brown. Front Row: David Perrett, John Perras*

This was much better for us. We really got back to doing that thing which we do best: rehearsing and performing. So I'm glad that we were forced to invent the part of life that we wanted: rehearsing, touring, and performing. That was my focus then. As time went on, my life sort of divided into three parts: the Quintet, non-quintet performing, and teaching. That seemed to be the perfect balance. Each helps the other immeasurably. What I learned coaching other quintets helped my quintet playing.

**SS:** Some students come out of college auditioning for orchestras. They are sure that they want an orchestra job. Other musicians know they want to be chamber music players, or soloists. Did you have a feeling that you wanted to be a chamber music player or did it happen and then you followed through?

**JT:** I came out of college pretty clueless as to what I wanted to do with my life. It probably had to do with how my mother brought me up, that I would be a success at whatever I did. I didn't think I would fail at anything. Isn't that nice? I mean I could have failed so terribly, but she made me believe I had something special and so I believed it too. It might have been art; I was also artistically talented. I could have done something in commercial art. Who knows? But I went into music. I majored in music in college but I had no major plan. I was not really going to take auditions but then I got a call from someone I knew, who knew that the Florida Symphony needed a bassoon player. So I went down and auditioned for their conductor, Frank Miller. Fortunately, it was one of those situations--he was so happy that someone showed up. He didn't even have bassoon music. He gave me a double bass part and I played it rather badly but it was better than what he expected from nobody. So although he didn't know what he was getting, he got me as the second bassoon player in his orchestra there. And that was the beginning of it. I really had no plans to go into orchestra or anything.

**SS:** How long did you stay down there?

**JT:** Four seasons; two seasons as second bassoon, two seasons as first bassoon. And it really was very good. I had two seasons with a wonderful first bassoonist who really broke me into the business properly. He was a patient, funny, wonderful man.

**SS:** Who was this bassoonist?

**JT:** **Emil Hebert**, and I think he had played in the Radio City Music Hall at some point. He was a wonderful bassoon player. Sitting next to him was a very good experience. He was very professional and he was also a wonderful colleague. When he left, I moved

up to first bassoon. I auditioned for the first chair and got that and then got another set of life experiences with a second player who was nothing like I had been. Frank Miller, at that time, was the principal cellist of the Chicago Symphony. He was very interested in conducting and took time off from the symphony to build a conducting career. He was very professional and my initiation couldn't have been better--someone who was skilled, capable, not in the least bit petty. He was just a marvelous guy. My beginnings showed very clearly what a symphony job should be like.

**SS:** Didn't you also play oboe at some point?

**JT:** I played bassoon in high school. When I graduated I didn't own a bassoon. I went to college where they did have bassoons but somebody was playing on them. They actually had three bassoon players at Queens College when I went there. Can you imagine? And I wasn't one of them. But they had no oboe players. My friend, Danny the doctor, who was also an oboe player, loaned me his oboe and a book of fingerings. He gave me a lesson on how to make reeds and I was ready to go. I was pretty bad, I understand, but I knew how to find my way around.

**SS:** Who gave you bassoon lessons?

**JT:** In high school, Abe Klotzman, the regular woodwind teacher, got all the bassoon players started. I took to it like a duck to water. I knew immediately what to do with the bassoon. It was not in any way a foreign thing to me. Then he got me a scholarship, while I was in high school, to study with **Bernie Garfield**, which I did for about a year. He was still playing with the Little Orchestra Society and the New York City Ballet. **Sylvia Deutscher** was his second bassoonist in the orchestra. In my senior year I got a scholarship with **Harold Goltzer**. So I studied with them when I was in high school. Then I went to college and didn't study the bassoon at all, but when something came up I took lessons. I took some lessons with **William Polisi**, principal of the New York Philharmonic, to prepare for my audition to be a student at Tanglewood. I also took some lessons with **Eli Carmen**. I had such a funny experience with **Sol Schoenbach**. He was the guy who I understood would be the one pedagogue among all the players. Most of the others never called themselves teachers, but he, I understood, was a teacher and so I thought it would be wonderful to study with him. When I asked him if I could study with him, he said he had no time. He wouldn't make an appointment with me. However, he said he came to New York frequently to see his mother who was ailing and who lived very near to where I lived. One day the doorbell rang and he came upstairs. I described my problem, which at that time was playing too sharp, and

he looked at my reed, squeezed it practically flat, and said, "You're playing on a reed that is way too stiff. Try this." Well it was a lot easier to play on a reed that was squeezed that flat. So I worked on this for a while on my own and finally I set up a lesson with him. I went to his house in Philadelphia. That day I had the world's best reed. But I mean the world's best reed. I couldn't play wrong. I couldn't play out of tune, I couldn't do anything wrong and he said, "I don't know what your problem is." Here I went to study what to do. I should have had the wisdom to switch to another reed but it just didn't occur to me. I really needed lessons! But, you know those-once-in-a-lifetime reeds?

**SS:** Attracting an audience is a challenge for any chamber ensemble. To what do you attribute this?

**JT:** Usually the audience is created by someone like a professor in the school who contacts other local schools, local newspapers. If there is no such person, we'll probably have a small audience and if there is somebody who likes to get everybody involved, we'll have a better audience. Though a lot of that depends on how the concert presenters do their job. It's nice when we're playing on a college campus and we see some college students, but that's not always the case. Often we have a lot of older adults. On some college campuses, even though there may be a big music department, students don't always turn out. This is such a shame. But it all depends on the leadership from the top. In some colleges, there are students who are really interested and they want to know everything about what we're doing. We always try to do some kind of master class or something when we're there.

**SS:** And you do this in the summer at Round Top.

**JT:** Yes, the International Festival Institute at Round Top, TX. The Dorian's major residency was at Round Top, but this summer we also did the Boston University Tanglewood Institute. That was a new residency. We were there for two weeks and coached chamber music and performed our own concerts. We also did a smaller residency at Oneonta, NY, for three days. That was a lovely mini-residency. We do residencies during the winter but this was the first time we've done it in the summer, besides Round Top. Everybody in the quintet likes to coach and likes to play, and they are very personable.

**SS:** Do you feel that chamber music is flourishing?

**JT:** I think so. I think chamber music is flourishing. There's no question about it. There are more and more chamber music organizations for amateurs going on and the situations are getting better. Each amateur chamber music program is becoming more solid so they have better players and better coaches. Many professionals like doctors and lawyers are getting very involved in playing chamber music. They find it very rewarding. I say this for winds although it has always been the case for strings. So that part of it is good.

**SS:** Do you really feel like you could have done anything else besides playing the bassoon?

**JT:** Well, what makes me think that I could have possibly done something else? When I first got out of college I got a job in a printing house helping them prepare college yearbooks. I was able to manage that. I'm resourceful. I think I fell into music by default. My family was very musical. My dad was a painter and my mother was a singer and my mother's sisters were very musically talented. A life in music has been most satisfying.

**SS:** Do you have anything you would like to add--what you would like the world to know about the Dorian Quintet, or advice to younger musicians?

**JT:** There is one thing I have noticed. In the course of 40 years, I think we did set a standard. I do chamber music coaching and I hear other people play and I find that the level of woodwind quintet playing has really improved. I can't take personal responsibility for it but I can say I wasn't totally excluded from making this happen. I'm hoping that people look to us through our recordings and our performances to say, "Gee I'd like to do that." I hear wind quintets sounding really good. This is amateur and professional. Many amateurs really get into it. They really want to play well and they really want to know how to do it and how to make it work. And there are certainly many professional quintets around that are just superb. Whether they have our special something, that's a question someone else will have to answer, I can't. I feel we have something special but I don't know: maybe it's just that we managed to beat each other into submission--I don't know.

(Susan Shaw, bassoonist, is a former student of Jane Taylor. Ms. Shaw performs and teaches in Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania, and in the New York metropolitan area.)