



JOURNAL OF THE

# COBBETT ASSOCIATION

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601 Timber Trail - Riverwoods, Illinois 60015 - USA  
☎ (708) 374-1800

## ROBERT MAAS, OUR FOUNDER, IN MEMORIAM

We are indebted to Alice Earnheart Maas for the following article, a sketch of Robert Maas' life, which she wrote at our request. It is entitled *Bob Maas and His Chamber Music Adventures*.

Robert H. Maas was born on his grandparents' homestead in Saskatchewan, Canada, on January 21, 1919. His father, John, was a piano tuner who owned a music store in Weyburn. Bob always said he got his musical start in that store. He remembered crawling under the player pianos to play them with his hands.

When he was five, his family moved to Minneapolis and later to Watertown, Wisconsin where John had a chicken hatchery and later a gasoline station. Bob had an idyllic small town childhood with his brother and two sisters. His days were filled with ice skating, kite flying, baseball, bow and arrow making, bird-watching, hiking, pigeon raising, and Boy Scouting. Music ranked near the top of his interests, and his mother faithfully set aside 50 cents every week to pay for his violin lesson. How proud she was when he played in his high school orchestra and later performed a solo at his graduation! It was probably this terrifying experience that convinced Bob that he could never be a soloist, Who cared? Chamber music was a lot more fun.

At the University of Wisconsin at Madison, Bob majored in economics, but he played in the orchestra and took all the music courses he could. Chamber music lover that he was, he soon fell under the influence of the Pro-Arte Quartet from Belgium which had become Artists in Residence. He quickly introduced himself to the cellist who shared his name. (The "other" Robert Maas later played with the Paganini Quartet and died of a heart attack during the intermission of a concert.)

Though Bob never missed a Pro-Arte Concert, he was particularly excited by one in which the group played unfamiliar quartets by Stenhammar, Reger and Lekeu, and a piano sonata by Joseph Jongen. Wondering what other beautiful music he was missing while concentrating on the "greats", Bob went to the university Library where he discovered W, W, Cobbett's *Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music* in two volumes.

## THE FUTURE OF THE COBBETT ASSOCIATION

*By Raymond Silvertrust*

On February 24, 1994, the founder of The Cobbett Association, Robert Maas passed away. The greater part of this issue is dedicated to him as a tribute. However, in this article, I shall try and bring the membership and other readers of this newsletter up to date on what is happening with The Association.

The first and most important thing to note is that The Cobbett Association has not ceased exist. To the contrary, efforts are now underway to insure its continuation and existence on a permanent basis. During these next few months, it will be in transition, metamorphosing from a solo operation, a labor of love by one man, to a Not For Profit Corporation. To this end, work has begun to incorporate it in Illinois and apply for tax exempt status with the Internal Revenue Service. Initial directors of the International Cobbett Association are Dr. Ronald Goldman of Bonita, California, Mr. David Canfield of Bloomington, Indiana, and R.H.R. Silvertrust of Riverwoods, Illinois. All written or phone inquiries should be made to the above listed address and phone number.

As most of you know, Bob Maas founded The Cobbett Association in 1990. At that time, Bob stated that the purpose of The Association was to "study, evaluate and preserve rare and neglected chamber music of special merit and to share information and encourage the performance of such music."

Although Bob created an Advisory Council, on which I was privileged to serve, to help him with these tasks, it would be fair to say that The Cobbett Association continued to exist because of the work of one man, Robert Maas. Many advisors, myself included, submitted articles and did research for Bob, but the bulk of the work as evidenced by the newsletters and day to day business of keeping the Association going was done exclusively by Bob with the help of his wife, Alice.

Bob was able to keep the Association going by himself, in my opinion, for two reasons: he had extraordinary dedication and love for this undertaking, and, being retired, he had the time to pursue it. Additionally, the Association was (and is) quite small in size.

In Memoriam (*continued*)

Though only 20, Bob was already hooked on "rare music". Someday, he thought, he'd build up a chamber music library of his own which would include "non-standard" music in addition to the familiar works. This ambition would have to wait a while since his ushering job in a theater barely supported him,

After three years of college, Bob found himself drafted for a one year term in The U.S. "peacetime army" -- a term that was extended "for the duration" after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Not caring to be a foot soldier, Bob arranged a transfer to the Air Force where he did personnel work -- moving frequently from one base to another, but never getting out of the country. Wherever he went, Bob took his violin, and through U.S.O., Centers, churches, and community orchestras, he always found people to play music with. After the war, just before his discharge, he had the opportunity to visit New York City where he haunted the used music stores spending his meager savings on chamber music as he began to fulfill his dream.

Back at the University, Bob finished his senior year, graduated, and moved to Kansas City where he found a position in the personnel department of Bendix Aviation Corporation. (He later did personnel work for Douglas Aircraft and Lockheed.) Among other duties at Bendix, Bob was editor of the employee newspaper.

One morning at a Singles Sunday School Class, Bob met a young woman, Alice Earnheart, who was editor of a hospital magazine. The two found they had much in common, and of course, Bob introduced Alice to chamber music. At first he was disappointed to find that she was only a mediocre pianist, but he married her anyway. After all, someone has to make the coffee!

The wedding was held on July 16, 1954, and for the next 39 years Alice found herself playing hostess to an endless procession of chamber music players who found their way to the Maas homes, first in Kansas City, and later in Charlotte, N.C., Marietta, Georgia; and Sarasota, Florida. Wherever they lived, Bob always found instant friends through the Amateur Chamber Music Players, Inc.

Bob was a man of many interests: raising pigeons, gardening, camping, hiking, traveling, collecting LP records, playing chamber music, and studying tropical trees. He was devoted to his wife and daughter, and loved traveling with them by auto, visiting the National Parks and scenic areas of the country.

After retiring in 1969 to Sarasota, Florida, Bob found many more opportunities to play chamber music. He began attending chamber music workshops. Continuing to study Cobbett and Groves music encyclopaedias, he was often frustrated because he could not buy some of the music they recommended. It was out-of-print.

Cobbett Association's Future (*con't*)

In early 1992, some time after Bob had been told by doctors that he was ill, he asked me if I would be prepared to undertake the continuation of the Association were he unable to do so himself. Hoping that this would not be necessary for many years, if at all, I reluctantly agreed, knowing as I did so that Bob was, in a way, committing "his child" to my care.

When Alice telephoned me with the news of Bob's death, I was shocked having talked to Bob not too long before. He never let on how sick he really had been. Though I had agreed to "take over the leadership" as Bob put it, I had certainly given no thought to it.

On the other hand, Bob and I had talked on numerous occasions about the directions in which both he and I thought the Association should go as it matured.

We both felt that the Association's focus, while not entirely shifting from research, would nonetheless move onto the task of trying to bring fine unknown chamber music works back to the attention of amateurs and professionals and to encourage both live and recorded performances of these works. To this end, we felt that the Association should obtain a core library which could be built upon.

Bob, who was aware of my on-going project of producing a listeners' and performers' guide to this literature, was keen to have the Association publish the results of its research in a more compact form than just the newsletters. There are several ways that this can be done and the Association certainly will be seeking to eventually publish lists if not some kind of reference work in this area.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, he wanted to see the Association play a role in getting this music performed, without which, there is no discovery and revival. To promote this goal, the Association will be dedicated to providing players with copies of desired works they may wish to perform. It will also undertake to encourage professional chamber music ensembles to give performances and make recordings of deserving works. Again in the future, it is hoped that the Association will sponsor special concerts to this end and perhaps work to finance recordings.

Naturally, all of this is going to require money. Furthermore, to realize these goals, the Association must grow in size. By its very nature, it is not likely to become a large organization, but its currently miniscule membership is indicative of the fact that it has not reached out to tap the interest which exists among chamber music enthusiasts, both players and listeners.

In thinking about these things, it became instantly clear to me that the Association could not continue on as a "One Man Show". I doubt that even Bob, had he been able, could have brought the Association much farther alone than he had. Additionally, Bob's death points out how fragile the existence of an association which depends upon only one individual is.

In Memoriam (*continued*)

Then came copy machines! It would seem the problem was solved. One could copy that old music in university libraries! Bob did add some works to his library this way, but he soon found that even university libraries had mostly standard works. The really rare music was crumbling away in private libraries. When Bob gained access to some of these private collections, he was overjoyed. Though in poor health and nearing 70, he became almost obsessed with the need to copy the best of this music before it disappeared altogether.

Though some of Bob's chamber music friends showed little interest in rare music, the members of his own ensemble, the Palm Strings Quartet, were delighted to try Bob's discoveries. And with other groups, especially at chamber music workshops, Bob won many converts to rare music by tactfully bringing out "something different" to conclude a musical evening.

On the way home from the Chamber Music Conference at Interlochen in 1990, Bob and Alice discussed the need for an organization which would allow rare music lovers to exchange information and encourage one another. Bob had already researched, acquired, played, and made notes on a large amount of "forgotten" music. If anyone was qualified to begin such an organization, certainly Bob was that person.

Before they reached Florida, Bob had named The Cobbett Association, outlined its purpose and method of operation, and even made a list of potential members and advisors. He wanted to keep the organization simple. As he would be working largely alone, he did not want to be bothered with a constitution, by-laws, memberships, grants, dues, officers, etc. All he wanted to do was share what he was learning in chamber music research. Alice had writing and editing experience, so he enlisted her help for a newsletter. The Palm Strings Quartet had spent most of its time for the last two years playing and evaluating rare music which Bob was supplying. Those quartet members could form the nucleus of an advisor council with representatives from other parts of the country.

Everything went as planned, and The Cobbett Association was beginning to flourish when in December, 1991, Bob became very ill with multiple myeloma, a form of blood cancer. The doctor did not paint a very optimistic picture, and one of Bob's first concerns was The Cobbett Association.

After much soul-searching, he and Alice decided to keep it going as long as God gave Bob the strength. Instead of writing the evaluation reports on his typewriter, Bob dictated them to Alice from his notes. He took real delight in the personal letters and telephone calls he received, and went out of his way to answer inquiries and help people locate rare music. During his better periods, between chemo treatments, he took short trips to acquire more music, And between naps -- he took a lot of those -- he studied his precious reference books.

Cobbett Association's Future (*con't*)

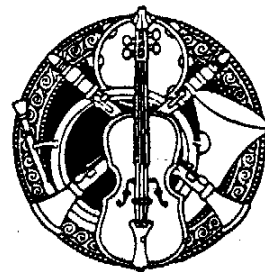
Therefore, though I promised Bob that I would take over if he could not continue it, I do so as "midwife" at what I hope will be the birth of a more permanent organization.

This is why the first task at hand is to incorporate the Association. Although the Association will not be existing to make a profit, it will, nonetheless, need to attract contributions, which obviously makes applying for tax exempt status important. Once this is done, (we hope it will be accomplished before the end of the year) we can deal with the task of raising money toward the goals outlined above, the first of which is the purchase of a core library of non-standard chamber music. We are, in fact, hoping to purchase Bob's library from Alice Maas. Toward this end, David Canfield and I will be travelling to Florida to appraise Bob's chamber music library and make arrangements to purchase it from Mrs. Maas.

We expect to raise the money for this purchase through contributions from individual members (not dues) and hopefully from a matching contribution from Amateur Chamber Music Players, Inc. (ACMP).

As things evolve, further newsletters will be sent to keep you abreast of developments. Bob, because of the uncertainty of his situation, did not collect membership dues for 1994. Therefore, whatever expenses of operation there are at present are being born, on a temporary basis, by the directors. We will be sending out a request for your dues later this year. A new advisory council will eventually be formed and hopefully take an active role in the Association. Members who served on the previous council, among others, will be invited to serve.

Finally, we would like to publish a newsletter exclusively about chamber music sometime later this year, if time permits. However, unlike Bob, neither Ronald Goldman, David Canfield nor I are retired and none of us have the wherewithal to produce an entire newsletter during this busy and difficult transition. Therefore, I would like to invite any member who has an interest in a specific composer or subject and who would like to submit an article for publication to write or call me. We will be soliciting the membership on a regular basis in the future for articles. Furthermore, if you wish to send a "Letter to the Editor" for publication, please do so. I expect the Newsletter, itself, to evolve and to provide a forum, among other things, for members to discuss subjects.



In Memoriam, Conclusion

When back pain made it impossible for him to play his violin, the Palm Strings Quartet played trios or brought in a substitute violinist to try those chamber works he supplied, It was Bob's interest in The Cobbett Association which kept him going those last two difficult years.

Bob's fight with cancer ended on February 24th, 1994, after the chemotherapy had lost its effectiveness and he was further weakened by pneumonia.

During his illness, Bob had been an enthusiastic, though inactive, participant in his church's building program.

As his strength diminished, the church neared completion, and several times Bob expressed regret that he might not live to worship there. His fears were realized, but the first service in the new sanctuary was Bob's memorial! His church family, and many other friends and relatives gathered in his memory, and the Palm Strings Quartet (with a friend substituting on second violin) provided the music.

Robert H, Maas was laid to rest at the Florida National Military Cemetery at Bushnell, Florida. A stone tablet marks his grave, but The Cobbett Association is his finest memorial.



### A Reminiscence of Bob Maas

*By David Canfield*

When I first met Bob Maas around 1982, I was struck by his resemblance to Bela Bartok. While Bob never composed any music, as far as I know, he surely shared a love of it with the great Hungarian master. After a very short time, I developed a close friendship with Bob and his wife Alice and eagerly looked forward to seeing both of them on their annual visit to Bloomington. Bob would attend the chamber music festival at Interlochen, Michigan, where he would participate in a solid week of glorious chamber music-making and visit us shortly thereafter. Like most musicians, Bob considered playing chamber music the pinnacle of personal music expression, and his enthusiasm on the subject encouraged greatly my own interest in becoming involved in it.

As long as I knew him, Bob had a great interest in exploring unknown chamber music. His curiosity led him to many great discoveries. I can well remember how excited he was when he first discovered the Taneyev chamber music, for instance. He was immediately after me to try to find for him as many recordings of it as I could. He also spent many hours browsing through my record stock looking for interesting records of chamber music by composers he was not familiar with. Once he discovered a composer he liked, he made every effort to obtain as many recordings of that composer's music as he could and of course to obtain copies of printed music by the composer as well. His outstanding library of chamber music is a silent testimony to his enthusiasm for the chamber music medium and evidence of the hundreds of hours he spent in front of photocopy machines making himself copies from rare originals wherever he encountered them.

The Cobbett Association is another such testimony to Bob's enthusiasm. Several years into our friendship, he approached me and asked if I would be interested in serving on the board of directors of a chamber music society he was interested in founding for the purpose of promoting little known chamber music. Of course, I immediately said yes. As it turned out, Bob and Alice did all the work in running The Cobbett Chamber Music Association but I was flattered that he asked me to be involved.

Anyone who knew Bob could not help be touched by not only his enthusiasm for chamber music, but also his meek and gentle spirit, his love for his wife and his deep and abiding religious faith. The memory of his generous and giving spirit will remain with all who knew him until their dying days, and the continued existence of The Cobbett Association will be a reminder as well of the special qualities that drew all of us, one way or another, into Bob's circle of friends. My biggest regret is that Bob left us before I could make him aware that I had dedicated a work, *String Quartet in a minor*, to him. Now it is dedicated in his memory, and a score and set of parts are offered gratis to any member of the Association interested in obtaining them.

Thanks, Bob, for being a part of our lives and enriching us through all you did!