# North American Saxophone Alliance March/April 2002

## Marcel Mule: 1901-2001

#### by Eugene Rousseau

Born in Aube, Normandy in 1901, Marcel Mule died peacefully in his sleep on December 19, 2001. He is survived by two sons, Pol and Jacques. His wife, Pollete his equal as a person, and a constant in their long and devoted marriage — preceded him in death.

It was in the spring of 1947 that I heard, for the first time, Marcel Mule's recording of Jacques Ibert's *Concertino da Camera*. I was 14 years old. That hearing was a defining moment in my life, for I had never before heard the saxophone played so artistically, and with such a marvelous tone. It was stunning. From the time I heard that recording I nurtured what seemed to be an impossible a dream — to study with *le Maitre*. Thirteen years later, in 1960, my vision became a reality. It was an unforgettable experience that changed my life.

As a young man Mule saw the classical potential of the saxophone, and was truly a pioneer in the development of the instrument as a classical medium. In 1942 he was appointed Professor of Saxophone at the Paris Conservatory, a position first held during 1857-1870 by the instrument's inventor, Adolphe Sax. Many of his students went on to develop influential careers. Mule remained Professor at the Paris Conservatory until his retirement in 1968. His classes were notable, quite apart from the knowledge and insights he shared, due to his gentle manner, clarity, and quiet way of expressing his valuable opinions. He set an impeccable example as both artist and human being; he was a magnificent role model.

In 1917 he enrolled in the Ecole Normale, pursuing a course that would enable him to teach in the public schools. In 1921, after teaching for only six months, he was called to military service and became a member of the Fifth Infantry Regiment Band. Following his discharge from the army, he played frequently in dance bands, and had occasion to hear many Americans playing jazz in the night clubs of Paris. This exposed him not only to a different tonal concept, but also to the use of vibrato, inspiring him to experiment with and to develop the vibrato for use in classical performance. In 1923 he won a place in la Musique de la Garde Republicaine, France's most prestigious military band, where he formed a quartet that soon became famous, and was to continue in its fame for some 40 years. In 1951, at the urging of Georges Gourdet, the ensemble became the Marcel Mule Saxophone Quartet.

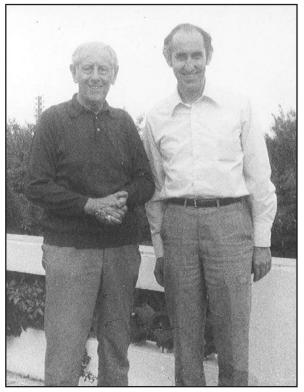
At the time of his appointment to the Conservatory in 1942, it was indeed one of the most difficult periods in the history of France, for Paris was occupied by the Germans. Mule, while serving in the French military in 1939, became a prisoner of war. It is difficult to imagine, but the artistic life in Paris continued to thrive throughout the German occupation, and Mule was an active participant.

Mule was active as a soloist throughout Europe during the 1920s and '30s. His long career

as a soloist is perhaps most notable by his performances of Jacques Ibert's *Concertino da Camera*, a work that he first recorded in the 1930s for RCA Victor, Philippe Gaubert conducting.

Marcel Mule's career culminated in 1958 when he was invited by Charles Munch, Musical Director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, to be featured soloist in a twelveconcert tour of the United States. This was indeed high recognition for the classical saxophone, and for this historic occasion Mule chose the Ibert *Concertino*, which had been composed only twenty three years earlier, and Henri Tomasi's *Ballade*. While in the U.S., Mule visited the Selmer factory in Elkhart, Indiana, where he presented a recital with the collaboration of pianist Marion Hall that was for most saxophonists the highlight of his American tour.

It was also in 1958 that, in recognition of his outstanding contributions to his country, Marcel Mule was made a Chevalier de la legion d'honneur, the highest



Marcel Mule, left, with Eugene Rousseau

distinction awarded to a French citizen. On June 24, 2001, the day of his 100th birthday, former students and friends paid homage to him with a visit and a commemorative collection of memorabilia.

It is a simple matter to list the accomplishments, honors, and awards that Marcel Mule earned in his lifetime, but those facts by themselves do not depict the enduring qualities of warmth, enthusiasm, and encouragement that were always evident in his performances and pedagogy. He had great depth of character. Le Maitre justly earned the profound respect and affection of his colleagues and students while making inestimable contributions in establishing the saxophone as a viable voice for musical expression. It remains for all those whose lives he touched — directly and indirectly, to uphold the principles for which he stood. Le Maitre est mort, mais le saxophone vive. — The full text of this article will appear in an upcoming issue of the Saxophone Journal. Used by permission.

## **Another pioneer passes on**

On December 19, 2001, Marcel Mule passed away in his sleep. And with his passing, it is appropriate to pause and reflect about this remarkable musician who has been an inspiration to several generations of saxophonists as a performer, arranger, and pedagogue. He has touched so many lives through his musicianship that I feel very fortunate to have been able to share in the celebration at his 100th birthday party this past June in Hyere, France.

This issue of the NASA Update contains tributes from Frederick Hemke, Jean-Marie Londeix, and Eugene Rousseau, all of whom graciously agreed to share their thoughts about a man who was their teacher and a great influence in their lives. My gratitude goes to them and to Thomas Smialek, editor of the Saxophone Symposium, who is organizing a special in-depth tribute to Marcel Mule for the next issue of our journal in December. I would like to invite our membership and any other individuals who were close to Mr. Mule to participate in this

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

#### Paul Bro

tribute, whether in the form of scholarly articles, tributes, or personal remembrances. If you are interested, please contact Dr. Smialek directly at tws4@psu.edu.

In January, the Navy Band held its 25th Annual Navy Saxophone Symposium, where I was fortunate to have the opportunity to perform with the Navy Band and to present a solo recital. Although this is not a NASAsponsored event, the Navy Saxophone Symposium has always had a close relationship with NASA. Our classical performance competition finals were for many years held at the Symposium. Dale Underwood, past-president of NASA, was honored in January as the founder and organizer of the event for 20 years. Timothy Roberts, current Symposium organizer and secretary of NASA, is also to be congratulated for hosting an outstanding conference that truly reaches out to the community and presents the saxophone equally well in both its roles as a classical and jazz instrument.

March is almost upon us and with it will come NASA's Biennial Conference. The current schedule of events can be found on the NASA website at: http://saxalliance.org/biennial02/programo verview.html. This year's Conference will begin on Wednesday afternoon, March 6th, at 4:00 p.m. The Classical Saxophone Performance Competition has a record 57 applicants this year, and the audition tapes indicate that the level of performance we will see at the Jazz Saxophone Competition will be very high. It looks like we will have two wonderful competitions at the

Conference.

I look forward to seeing everyone in March!

## Mule inspired performers, teachers

#### by Claude Delangle

The first time that I met you, Monsieur Mule, was in June 1967. I was then ten years old and enrolled at the Conservatory of Lyon where I had begun to study the saxophone in October 1966. My professor explained to me that on a certain day at a certain time I would have to play in the beautiful Witkowski concert hall for the parents and other people who would come to hear us. I remember that, while playing my piece (le Menuet des Pages by Eugene Bozza), I had the distinct impression that the people dressed in suits and ties in the first row of the auditorium were taking notes. After all of the students had performed their pieces and the results had been announced, we were all invited to meet the jury and pay our respects. It was then that one of them, who seemed huge and really old (in my child's eyes) shook my hand while saying, "My dear boy, you have a beautiful tone quality!" I must have been told the man's name, but it was much later that I came to realize the identity of the man whose physical appearance and attitude became engraved in my memory.

I made arrangements to see you again ten years later, in order to take a few private lessons at your home in Sanary and at the apartment of friends who were hosting you and Madame Mule on the occasion of your rare return visits to Paris. I remember the attentive way that you listened and gave your always very practical and useful advice, essentially oriented towards expressing the clarity of the musical text through the ease of tone production, mastery of technique and precise rhythm. My parents-in-law owned a villa in le Pradet, located about twenty minutes from Sanary. My wife and I visited there for our summer vacations beginning in the 1980s, which afforded us the opportunity to get to know you better and to appreciate your broad musical experience. We spoke of a thousand other things, but we always came back to the topic of music, your true passion. I very much appreciated those long afternoons with you in the peacefulness and coolness of your little paradise "Da Capo". I felt as if I absorbed a little of your experience and wisdom, which I could pass on to my students at the Conservatory, and about whom you always inquired. We always took a few photos and sometimes I would tape-record a part of our conversation, which I later shared with the magazine of the Association (of saxophonists); I believe that it was on one of these visits that I had the idea to ask Gilles Martin, a student in the class of pedagogy at the Conservatoire, to direct, as his final class project, an interview with you in the form of a documentary video. It is thanks to this document that many of today's saxophonists recognize your face and know about your musical journey

Besides affording me the pleasure of getting to know you better, learning each time a little more about you, these visits helped me to understand and concretely measure the importance of communication in the act of teaching. Your talent and your insight into pedagogy have created the solid basis that has defined the history of the saxophone. Musical techniques and repertory have exploded in the most original and unpredictable directions, but we can still see today that you are a beacon whose light continues to shine and to inspire the imagination of countless numbers of saxophonists.

Thank you, Monsieur Mule!

— Claude Delangle is Professor of Saxophone at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris. Translated by Anna Street, Concordia University College of Alberta and William H Street, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta Canada

# Mule left his mark on history of sax

#### by Jean-Marie Londeix

My memories of Marcel Mule go back a long way. I took my first saxophone lesson with him on April 24, 1948 at 43 rue Bézout, in the 14th arrondissement in Paris. My father took me to the lesson. Since that time I have never been out of touch with the maestro. I have been fortunate enough to continue my conversations with him, especially towards the end of his life, when he came to live with his son Jacques in the village of Cadarsac, near Bordeaux.

Over the years, Marcel Mule has been to me, each in its turn: an idol, a model, a spiritual father, a privileged witness to an era, and a representative of a particular conception of art. For forty-five very productive years, from 1923-1968 he carried out his triple musical career as saxophone soloist, quartet leader and professor. If his influence has been significant among the saxophonists of the world (and this is still evident today in more than one place) it has, unfortunately, only rarely influenced composers or concert organizers.

Although he studied in his youth to become an elementary school teacher, it was due to his extraordinary natural talent that Marcel Mule was able to enter into the Garde Républicaine, and thus exercise this talent in the musical domain. It was through this engagement that he was able to develop into an exceptional soloist, a distinguished chamber musician and an incomparable professor. To a certain degree self-taught as a saxophonist, his lack of a thorough musical education was evident throughout his career. In fact, although he was extremely accomplished in his own manner of playing, Marcel Mule was, throughout his life, very reluctant to acknowledge any technical evolution. Rather, he remained aloof from all aesthetic innovation.

Completely absorbed by "the profession" and the academic life of the Paris Conservatory, he refused, except for the use of vibrato, most of the technical advances of his time: altissimo, various modes or styles of playing and the varieties of timbre or the use of micro tonality, etc. In Mule's own words, the music of Jacques Ibert was for him, in 1935, "full of wrong notes", the music of Pierné, in 1968, the fruit of "one of the greatest composers of the twentieth century", and his final statement on the matter was that "modern" music could only be loved by those who were "sick in mind". He and I continued to quarrel affectionately about these difficult and diverse matters up until virtually his last day.

I liked Marcel Mule very much, even if I suffered from knowing that the maestro was not as artistically irreproachable as he seemed, because of his narrow-mindedness, and this saddened me: for example his refusal to acknowledge that a difference exists between vibrato and musical expression, or by his denial that there could be anything of interest in any music other than neo-classical music, while continuously citing composers whose works would prove to be of shortlived popularity and merit.

We had many a verbal jousting contest about these subjects, which always ended with Mule flatly refusing to continue discussing the debate.

Marcel Mule gave many concerts as a member of his saxophone quartets, however he actually gave very few concerts as a soloist with orchestra (all between 1934 and 1958), and in fact he played very few recitals (the general concept of instrumental recitals with piano appeared only after 1960). Mule lived to 100 years of age, and his long career bears witness to the life of a certain type of artist of a bygone era, where it was still possible to concentrate one's artistic efforts in one area alone, where it was possible to create a career while actually producing few works and all of the same aesthetic nature.

Today, the virtuosity of the maestro seems to have been equaled, if not surpassed, by a number of young performers, who have successfully combined artistry with culture. Mule, however, as with all true artists, remains unique and his influence remains considerable. In some respects this is perhaps regrettable: Mule's undisputed charisma led some of his more easily influenced peers to merely copy what had already been done, rather than to strive to develop their own creativity. They became bogged down in an aesthetic impasse, which did nothing to further the saxophone's development.

Now that I have retired, I no longer play the saxophone. I have been released from endless hours of daily instrumental practice and am also free from the restrictive routine of a teaching schedule. I am now better placed to appreciate the position that the saxophone occupies in the world of today's "classical" music. Thus, I am able to see that this instrument, "discovered" by the great American jazzmen, has found itself fifty years later, thanks notably to the most creative of today's young composers, an enviable place within the domain of written music.



Marcel Mule

The intrinsic possibilities of this family of instruments, their idiomatic qualities wisely and remarkably exploited, have resulted in a most pleasing family of monodic instruments. It is these fine qualities that are encouraging composers to write extraordinary music for saxophone, just as Chopin was inspired to write extraordinary music for the piano. It is perhaps a pity that Marcel Mule didn't recognize this. Although he lamented "the lack of repertory available to our instrument", he yet felt that modern composers could do nothing to remedy this insufficiency. The works of today's composers are certainly a testimony to the contrary. As for the numerous substantial works that have appeared in the past twenty years, we must also credit the young performers who perceive and who brilliantly exploit the original beauty found in these new pages. I am personally very confident about the future of the instrument that I love so much.

The saxophone has not yet found the place that we would wish it to have in western art music. We must therefore continue Marcel Mule's good work, always seeking to reveal the saxophone in its best light. As well we must never forget that the maestro was indeed a unique and indomitable personality of the second third of the twentieth century, who, along with his contemporary Sigurd Rascher, has forever left a mark upon the history of our now universally recognized instrument

Translated by Anna Street, Concordia University College of Alberta and William H Street, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta Canada.

## Le Maitre: Memories of Marcel Mule

#### by Frederick L. Hemke

Almost 50 years ago, when I was a high-school student in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, my saxophone teacher, Eddie Schmitt, introduced me to a recording of Marcel Mule performing Jacques Ibert's *Concertino da Camera* for alto saxophone and orchestra. The sound of his instrument was like nothing I had ever heard coming from a saxophonist. His control and technique were impeccable, and he performed with a degree of sensitivity I was not accustomed to hearing from a performing saxophonist.

At the time, I was a young dance-band leader. The record jacket said that Marcel Mule taught at the Paris Conservatory of Music, and on a whim I wrote to him. Much to my amazement, he answered my letter and, in the warmest and kindest manner, suggested it might be possible for me to study with him in Paris. No one in my family had ever ventured much past the borders of Wisconsin. I started dreaming about traveling to Paris and studying with Marcel Mule at the Paris Conservatory of Music. In the fall of 1955, during my junior year in

college, I left for France. Marcel Mule was beginning his 13th year of teaching at the Paris

Conservatoire National de Musique et de Declamation when I met him. I had arrived in Paris without a place to stay, but in the space of a few days, Mule found me temporary living quarters, heard me play and invited me to join his class of 12 students. The man changed me both as a person and as a musician. Marcel was a caring person, a man with a huge and giving heart who Marcel was a caring person, a man with a huge and giving heart who loved teaching and took great joy from making music.

loved teaching and took great joy from making music. At a time in my life when I was naive, uncertain of myself and lonely, the Mules made me feel like a member of the family – a second son. The Mules were quiet people whose fierce loyalty to each other, along with their shared love for music and students, aroused a sense of awe. As students, we always referred to him as Le Maitre – the Master – and this applied to him both as person and as a musician.

After his retirement, Mule invited me and my family to often visit him at his retirement home in the south of France. By that time I had come to know him as Papahou and his wife as Papette. I recall with pleasure the many lunches and dinners with the two of them. We talked about the conservatory, the state of contemporary music and life in general. When Mule retired, he put his saxophone in the closet and did not take it out again. It was a time, said Mule, for the younger performers and teachers to have their chance. It was time for him and Papette to bask in the mild breezes from off the Mediterranean and simply enjoy life. This sensitive, accomplished and forceful artist had reached a wise conclusion that often eludes many great performers and teachers.

In 1979 Northwestern University hosted the sixth World Saxophone Congress. Marcel Mule was the honored guest, and during their stay, the Mules lived at our home. I remember him as a simple, genuine and humble man who commanded respect not by pompous and outrageous behavior, or boasting, or arrogance, but rather by expressing his love and passion for music, his saxophone and for life itself.

Marcel Mule had studied clarinet and saxophone with his father as a child. As a young man of 22 he became a member of France's most illustrative wind, brass and percussion ensemble, the band of the Garde Republicaine. He served as a member of this ensemble for 13 years. It was here that he formed his outstanding Quatuor de Saxophones de Paris and gained renown as a soloist and ensemble performer.

I vividly recall attending rehearsals of the Mule saxophone quartet and attending a quartet concert as his guest. That evening, his quartet performed the Quatuor of the French composer Florent Schmitt, who was in attendance. Mule took the time to introduce me to Schmitt after the concert. We spoke together about the music he had written and about his appreciation for Marcel Mule and the saxophone. That was in 1956. Schmitt was already an aged man at that time and he passed away two years later. Those are memories that linger for a lifetime.

Mule was born on June 24,1901, just 74 years after the death of Beethoven, 63 years after the birth of the invention of the saxophone, and 32 years after the death of Hector Berlioz, the first and principal supporter of Adolphe Sax and his new instrument.

Adolphe Sax, the inventor of the saxophone, had been the first professor of his new instrument at the Paris Conservatory of Music. In 1870 the class was eliminated, along with several other instruments, on the basis of financial constraint. Not until 1942 was the saxophone class reinstated at the Conservatoire by Claude Delvincourt, and Marcel Mule, by then an esteemed saxophonist and teacher, was selected to succeed Adolphe Sax.

The recordings of Marcel Mule remain a standard for all saxophonists who take up the instrument. While Mule's use of vibrato reflects the character style of other French wind instruments of his day, none can deny that his interpretation of the musical phrase, the musicianly conception of his melodic line and the sheer beauty of his sound have yet to meet a serious challenger.

The pedagogy, writings and arrangements of Mule, by now translated into dozens of languages, have served as a basic framework of instruction for generations of teachers and performers. His impact continues to influence the musical lives of a countless number of saxophonists and other musicians throughout the world.

The Master of the Saxophone has departed from us after 100 wonderful years of enjoying life and making music. Rather than lament the passing of Marcel Mule, we must celebrate and enjoy his life; a life dedicated to the making of great music, a life of commitment to our instrument, and to a life centered on the close relationships of family, friends and students. Those of us that have had the honor and privilege of knowing and studying with Le Maitre, recall a man who was warm, personal and always caring. If each of us could every day put into practice even a small portion of the goodness and compassion that Marcel Mule projected in his teaching and in his interactions with people, all of us as teachers and persons would be ennobled.

I personally am so very proud to have been a student of Marcel Mule. It is not only because of the inspiration that the French School of Saxophone performance and pedagogy provided to me and which is his legacy to us all, but the magnitude and depth of his humanity as a person. Marcel Mule was a masterful music maker who possessed neither guile nor arrogance, who happened to select the saxophone to make music and who could both perform and teach with excitement, precision and knowledge. Let us rejoice and celebrate in the good fortune that he did this all so very well indeed and that he was able to pass his virtues, talents and pedagogy to so many aspiring musicians in the United States and around the world. In the intimate world of the Saxophone, the name and accomplishments of Marcel Mule will transcend us all. While he has passed from our now seeing and knowing him, he was and remains Le Maitre of the saxophone. *Vive Le Maitre! Vive Marcel Mule!* 

— Dr. Hemke is the senior associate dean for academic affairs at the School of Music, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.

# World Sax Congress set for July '03

The World Saxophone Congress XIII is set for July 9 - 13, 2003 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Congress will be hosted by the School of Music, University of Minnesota. As the world's largest gathering of professional, amateur and student saxophonists, WSC XIII will feature a full schedule of concerts and presentations, and will include many displays of instruments and accessories by manufacturers and retailers from many countries. The University of Minnesota is one of America's outstanding educational institutions, having a total enrollment in excess of 40,000 students. The Twin Cities of Minneapolis-St. Paul boast a thriving cultural scene with internationally recognized orchestras, theater, and visual arts institutions. From major concert halls to small private galleries, the Twin Cities possess dynamic cultural and artistic diversity with a welcoming atmosphere. Tour guide Arthur Frommer named Minneapolis as one of his five favorite places in the world to visit, and Money magazine ranked it as the best large Midwestern city in the United States.

www.worldsax.com e-mail: mail@worldsax.com telephone (612) 624-0596 fax (612) 626-2200

### MEMBER UPDATE

#### **Osland Quartet welcomes Paul Haar**

The Osland Saxophone Quartet is pleased to announce the addition of Mr. Paul Haar (Professor of Saxophone & Jazz Studies - University of Tennessee) on the alto saxophone chair. Mr. Haar's chameleonlike approach to the saxophone is a perfect fit for the OSQ's motto and personality: "dedicated to diversity, leaving no muiscal stone unturned".

The debut recording by OSQ, *Kentucky Roastup*, received both public and critical acclaim, being featured nationwide on NPR's *Performance Today* and one reviewer stating: "This isn't just for saxophonists. Indeed, the versatile Osland Saxophone Quartet provides a savory smorgasbord with something to please just about every taste...a superb outing by one of the genre's truly great ensembles". Their sophomore effort, titled *In the Land of Ephesus*, will be released this summer and will feature premiere recordings of Bob Mintzer's *Saxophone Quartet #2*, Walt Weiskopf's *1000 Bars of Blue* (both written for OSQ), Marcel Poot's *Concertino*, and music by Daniel Dorff, Joe Lovano, and many others.

#### **UT to host Saxophone Week**

The University of Tennessee Saxophone Studio, Paul Haardirector is pleased to announce their 1st Annual Saxophone Week, held April 3-6-2002 on the campus of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. This week of concerts, clinic and master classes is designed to bring the beauty of the saxophone to the listening public.

This years events will feature woodwind artist Gary Foster in performance with the UT Jazz Ensemble, UT Jazz-Saxophone Ensemble and UT Jazz Faculty. The week will conclude with Saxophone Day on Saturday, April 6, 2002. This day of clinics, workshops and master classes will feature, Gary Foster, Dr. Jack Cooper-Univ. of Memphis, Dr. William Graves-Clayton College and State University, Jay Clark-Saxmouthpiece.com and Paul Haar-University of Tenn.

The event is free and open to the public. For more information log onto **www.music.utk.edu/sax** or contact Paul Haar-Asst. Prof. of Saxophone at (865) 974-7087.

#### Tse announces new sonatas and recordings

Kenneth Tse announces the publication of two new sonatas written for him: Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano by David DeBoor Canfield. Contact: Ars Antiqua, Inc. at dave@arsantiqua.com. Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano by John Cheetham Contact: BoonesLick Press, Inc. at cheethamj@missouri.edu

The above sonatas will be featured on Tse's upcoming compact disc recording *An American Exhibition* on Crystal Records CD657. (June/July, 2002)



#### **Kenneth Tse: In Memory**

Enharmonic Records ENCD00-014. Music by Bach, Canteloube,Reed, Husa, Bozza, Naulais, and Barber. Contact: Ars Antiqua, Inc. at order@arsantiqua.com

## **Call for article submissions**

The Saxophone Symposium announces a call for articles for Volume 27 (2002). Submissions in the areas of saxophone history, pedagogy, jazz studies, and articles dealing with literature and repertoire are encouraged. Manuscripts received by April 30, 2002 will receive first consideration for publication in the 2002 volume.

Please submit four copies of the double-spaced, typed manuscript with end notes to:

Thomas Smialek, editor The Saxophone Symposium Penn State University, Hazleton 76 University Drive Hazleton, PA 18202-1291 (570) 450-3058 tws4@psu.edu Full submission guidelines can be found on pp. vi-vii of The Saxophone Symposium, vol. 26, or on the NASA home page at: **www.saxalliance.org/submitarticles.html**. New guidelines for reviews are also included. Reviews should be submitted to:

Dr. Frank Bongiorno The University of North Carolina at Wilmington Department of Music 601 South College Road Wilmington, NC 28403-5975

**NASA update** Send your feature articles and news briefs to: Ellen Horner, 5491 SW 5th St., Plantation, FL 33317. **NEW** Email: ehorner@telocity.com. Deadline for the next issue is March 20.

# North American Saxophone Alliance

## www.saxalliance.org

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