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## **Keith Winking – *The Legacy of Ernest S. Williams* (Jan00/34)**

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Ernest S. Williams

# The Legacy of Ernest S. Williams

KEITH WINKING

In selecting the most influential performers and educators in the history of the trumpet, one should grant Ernest Williams major consideration. As a performer, Williams exhibited rare versatility. While serving as principal trumpet of the Philadelphia Orchestra, he was also a featured cornet soloist with the Goldman Band in New York City. William's influence as a teacher is apparent more than fifty years after his death. His method books *Method of Transposition*, *The Secret of Technique Preservation*, and *Method of Scales* are used extensively by many of the world's major trumpet teachers. As an educator, Williams exhibited great proficiency. While employed simultaneously as the trumpet teacher at the Juilliard School of Music and conductor of the New York University Band, he founded the Ernest Williams School of Music in Brooklyn.

The profound influence of Williams' school has had a lasting effect on brass pedagogy worldwide.

## Biography - Performing Career

Ernest S. Williams was born on September 27, 1881, in New Richmond, Indiana.<sup>1</sup> At the time of his birth, his father Samuel was studying violin, piano, and harmony at the Cincinnati Conservatory. In addition, he was studying cornet with one of the outstanding cornetists of the time, Herman Bellstedt.<sup>2</sup>

Ernest quickly fell under his father's influence. It has been reported that by the age of five Ernest stated his intention "to play a cornet, like his papa." He could "play in several keys and pick out melodies his mother [Emma] would sing to him."<sup>3</sup>

After completing his studies in Cincinnati, the elder Williams was appointed music teacher in the public schools of Winchester, Indiana, where Ernest lived until age sixteen. As a youngster, Ernest exhib-

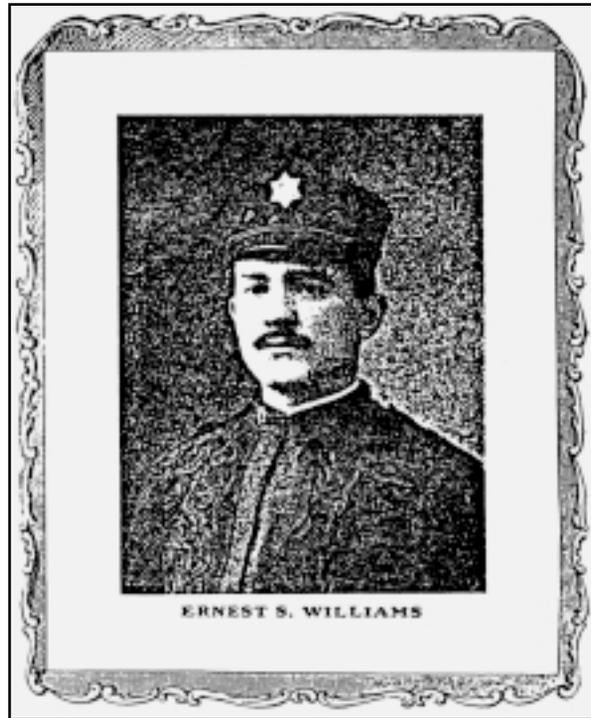
ited the same versatility that manifested itself in later life. When he lost his baby teeth, and accordingly his ability to play the cornet, he continued his musical interests by learning to "play the tin fife with

his nose and at the same time whistle an alto [part] in sixths and thirds to Yankee Doodle and other tunes."<sup>4</sup> By age seven, with the emergence of his permanent teeth, Ernest resumed playing the cornet under his father's tutelage.<sup>5</sup>

Samuel Williams, an eminent musician in Winchester, founded the Williams' Family Orchestra, which performed throughout Eastern Indiana and Western Ohio, and featured ten-year-old Ernest as cornet soloist. Ernest also established a reputation as an outstanding cornet soloist through his appearances with the Winchester Town Band. His musical maturation was rapid; by the age of fourteen, he was appointed director of the Winchester High School Orchestra.<sup>6</sup>

Ernest's professional career began with his appointment to the When Band, an organization sponsored by the When Clothing Company of Indianapolis. He believed the When association offered an opportunity for musical growth.<sup>7</sup> This relationship, however, was brief. With the onset of the Spanish-American War, Ernest volunteered to serve in the military and became a member of the 158th Indiana Volunteer Regiment Band and eventually its conductor. When a second regiment, the 161st, was formed, Ernest was chosen to lead that group. Due to his reputation as a bandmaster, he received several appointments in the military, including the 2nd U.S. Artillery, the 7th Cavalry, and the 10th Infantry.<sup>8</sup> Williams, however, elected to leave the service in Indianapolis in May of 1899. He hoped to study and pursue a career as a civilian cornetist and bandmaster.<sup>9</sup>

Accordingly, Williams moved to Boston to study with two prominent cornet teachers, Henry C. Brown



Ernest Williams' portrait from the front cover of *The Metronome* (January 1906)

and Gustave Strube. Brown subsequently advised Williams to move to New York because he felt that “there was nothing more for the young student to learn except from experience.”<sup>10</sup> Arriving in New York, he joined the M.M.P.U. with the support of the renowned cornetists Paris Chambers and Herbert L. Clarke, with whom he studied in 1910 (Note: Exhaustive research has not confirmed the meaning of the letters M.M.P.U. Several sources suggest it refers to the Manhattan Musicians Performance Union, Local 802, in New York, as it is now known). Clarke and Chambers agreed to sponsor Williams, which led to a solo assignment with the Gilmore Band, one of the outstanding concert bands in the metropolitan New York area.<sup>11</sup>

In the fall of 1901, John Phillip Sousa chose Williams to tour England with the Sousa Band, a relationship that continued following their return to the United States.<sup>12</sup> That same year, Williams became soloist and first cornetist with the 13th Regiment Band at Ontario Beach and performed in the same capacity with the 69th Regiment Band at various locations throughout New York City.<sup>13</sup>

From 1903 to 1907, after considerable success in New York, Williams returned to Boston, where he performed each summer as soloist with the Mace Gay Band at Nantasket Beach. During the winter season, he served as bandmaster with the Boston Cadet Band, a representative band for the City of Boston that performed regularly at Revere Beach. Between 1903 and 1910, Williams served as bandmaster and soloist for the group. He reportedly performed four or five encores after his initial solo and as many as nine encores during Sunday performances.<sup>14</sup>

Reporting Williams’ popularity, the *Boston Herald* on August 12, 1905, stated:

The first Corps Cadet Band rendered a pleasing programme in a most artistic manner

last evening. The endeavor of mercury to climb out of the tops of all thermometers was in a measure responsible for the enormous crowd of people who sought the open air and incidentally attended the concert. And a pleasing entertainment it was – popular pieces for the masses and classical for the artistic, while the cornet solos by Mr. Ernest S. Williams were worth going miles to hear. Had the man-

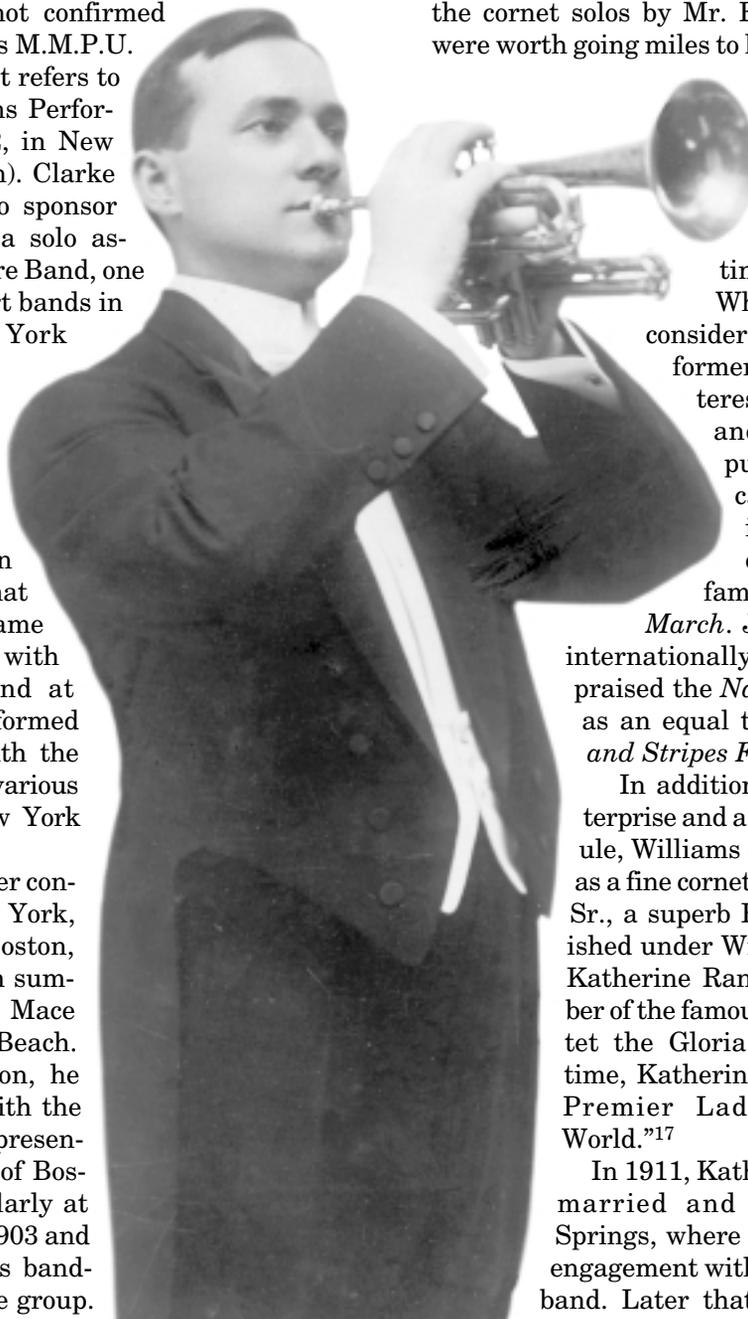
agement permitted the audience to rule, Mr. Williams would still be playing encores at this time.<sup>15</sup>

While Williams enjoyed considerable success as a performer, he developed an interest in music publishing and in 1904 founded a publishing business. His catalog contained many important works, including E.E. Bagley’s famous *National Emblem*

*March*. John Philip Sousa, the internationally known March King, praised the *National Emblem March* as an equal to his celebrated *Stars and Stripes Forever*.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to his publishing enterprise and a busy performing schedule, Williams developed a reputation as a fine cornet teacher. Walter Smith, Sr., a superb Boston cornetist, flourished under Williams’ tutelage as did Katherine Rankin, a founding member of the famous female trumpet quartet the Gloria Trumpeters. At that time, Katherine was considered “The Premier Lady Cornetist of the World.”<sup>17</sup>

In 1911, Katherine and Ernest were married and moved to Colorado Springs, where he accepted a summer engagement with the Herman Bellstedt band. Later that year he founded his own band in Denver. His conducting and joint solo performances with his wife attracted the attention of Hugh MacIntosh, “The Australian Impresario,” who engaged both of them for a year-long tour of Australia in 1913.<sup>18</sup> This exposure led to a world tour under the management of Maurice Bandmon, “The Far Eastern Impresario,” with per-



(Photo Ernest S. Williams Collection, University of Maryland)



Hand written on back of photo: "Ernest Williams and Kathrine Rankin, world renowned cornetists, in a stirring musical specialty" (Ernest S. Williams Collection, University of Maryland)

formances in India, Egypt, Malta, Italy, France, and England.<sup>19</sup> Press reports documented the success of the tour. According to the *Sydney Sun* (Australia), "Mr. Williams has a tone quality which may well be coveted by the majority of players of this popular instrument." *The Briton* (Bombay) noted that "Mr. Williams brought the program to a climax and called forth enthusiastic cheers from all parts of the house."<sup>20</sup>

Upon his return to the United States, Williams received innumerable offers to perform. Based on existing documents, it appears that in 1915 Ernest and Katherine performed in various vaudeville theatres following their world tour. In 1916, he became the first trumpeter under Pierre Monteux on a coast-to-coast tour with the Ballet Russe Orchestra. The following year, he appeared as soloist with the Patrick Conway band and became first trumpet in Victor Herbert's orchestra. Subsequently, he joined the Russian Symphony Orchestra during a fall tour in New York.<sup>21</sup> After this engagement, Williams earned and

accepted the first trumpet position with the Philadelphia Orchestra.<sup>22</sup>

Williams was a member of the Philadelphia Orchestra from 1917 to 1923. However, the first program to actually list his name is dated January 4-5, 1918. Presumably, he began rehearsing with the orchestra in December of 1917 in anticipation of the January performance. He appeared as a soloist only once, performing the Bach *Brandenburg Concerto No. 2* on February 25-26, 1921.<sup>23</sup> The *Philadelphia Public Ledger* cited his performance:

In the *Brandenburg Concerto*, Mr. Williams played the enormously difficult solo trumpet part which is written at the extreme top of the register of the instrument throughout and abounds with trills and runs quite unknown in modern compositions.<sup>24</sup>

As a member of the Philadelphia Orchestra, Williams had the privilege of playing under many of the world's leading conductors, including Leopold Stokowski, Richard Strauss, Georges Enesco, Ossip

## Famous Bandmasters in Brief

By FRANK R. SELTZER

NO. 58 — ERNEST S. WILLIAMS

**O**UR fifty-eighth subject of this series was born at New Richmond in Wayne County, Ind., on September 27, 1881, thus placing that burg on the map. He took up the study of music when only seven years old, and being unusually wise and sedate for one at that unripe age chose the cornet as his instrument of music and selected his father as instructor. That he chose well in both instances has been abundantly proved. When but ten years old he appeared as a soloist for the first time at Winchester, Ind., and at the age of fourteen was director of the high school orchestra. His early life was made up of the usual successes and disappointments, through which he struggled manfully for a brilliant future.

In 1898 the young man was made bandmaster of the 161st Indiana Volunteer Infantry Regiment, served throughout the Spanish-American War at Chickamauga Park, Knoxville, Savannah, and Havana (Cuba), and was mustered out of service at Indianapolis in May, 1899. During the following summer he studied cornet with Leslie Peck, and at his advice removed to Boston, Mass., to study with the late Henry Brown, than whom there never was a more successful instructor. At the latter's advice Ernest went to New York City, joining the M. M. P. U. upon his arrival there, with Paris Chambers and Herbert L. Clarke acting as his sponsors, for he was still a minor. His first engagement there, was with the reorganized Gilmore Band (Al Couturier, bandmaster), which engagement, if the writer remembers correctly, lasted just one week or seven consecutive days.

In 1901 he went to Ontario Beach as soloist and first-chair occupant with the 13th Regiment Band of New York, Dr. G. E. Conterno, director. In 1901 he accepted an engagement with Bayne's famous 69th Regiment Band of New York, playing at Glen Island as soloist and first-chair man, besides filling numerous engagements in parks and on the recreation piers. In the fall of that year (1901) he went to England with the Sousa Band, and after his return he made a second trip with the same organization on a tour of the United States.

During the summer seasons of from 1903 to 1907 inclusive, Williams was at Nantasket Beach in Massachusetts with the Mace Gay Band. From 1907 to 1910 he was director of the Boston Cadet Band, and during his seven years residence in Boston he filled in at the Colonial Theatre of that city for five years and with the Municipal Orchestra for two years. He also did considerable work with Stewart's Band and

Festival Orchestra, Emil Mollenhauer, director.

It was at this point of his career that our friend played a scurvy trick on Miss Katherine Rankin, a most estimable young woman of Boston and an accomplished cornetist. In 1911 he persuaded the lady to marry him, and as a bridal tour he accepted a summer engagement with Herman Bellstedt at Colorado Springs.

During a later season he had his own organization at Lakeside Park in Denver, Colorado, with Mrs. Williams and himself as soloists.



ERNEST S. WILLIAMS

Their solos and duets attracted the attention of Hugh MacIntosh, the Australian impresario, who booked the Williams combination for a year in Australia. Maurice Bandmon, the far-eastern impresario, next booked them for India, Egypt, Malta, Italy, France and London, and they were playing the music halls of England when the World War started. Returning to America the musical couple then played vaudeville engagements until 1916, when Ernest was engaged as first trumpeter for a tour with the Ballet Russe under the directorship of Pierre Monteux, now conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. This tour embraced a coast to coast trip.

The summer and fall of 1917 found him acting

as soloist with the Conway and Victor Herbert Bands, and with the Russian Symphony Orchestra. He then was offered first chair with the Philadelphia Orchestra, and held same until the close of the 1923 season, when he tendered his resignation in order to attend to his personal interests in New York. During the summer seasons of 1918-1922 he was soloist with Goldman's Band at Columbia University; also playing solos in Central Park with Mygrant's 7th Regiment Band, the Band of the 69th under Ridgeley, D'Aquin's aggregation of players, Nathan Franko, Tom Ward, Dick Halle and others. Williams was made bandmaster of the Kismet Temple Shrine Band in January, 1920, which position he still holds, the band making a fine showing at the Imperial Session of the Shriners held at Washington in June last. During the past summer of 1923 Ernest Williams has been soloist and first-chair man at every evening concert given by the Plaza Band in Philadelphia, while filling in his daily routine at the Victor Talking Machine studios.

It scarcely would be doing justice to the Williams family if we forgot to make mention of the "better fellow" of the team, the former "Kitty Rankin." Without a doubt Mrs. Williams is the première lady cornetist of the world, and made a wonderful name for herself while on tour around the world with her husband. She is now first trumpet of the Gloria Trumpeters, a well-known trumpet quartet of ladies in New York City, and during the past five summer seasons has been soloist with the Park Band of Rochester, N. Y., under the baton of Theodore Dossenbach. Her

repertoire includes all the most difficult solos of Hartmann, Levy, Bert Clarke, and many more written specially for her.

Many years ago the writer played at Nantasket Beach with Ellis Brooks and was amazed to see a little lass step out on the platform and play the Russian Fantasia, considered at that time a very showy piece of work for cornetists. It often has been said of girl performers, "She plays well for a girl," but in her case such qualification was not necessary for she played *excellently* and could be compared with any of the noted soloists of the day. Her tone was of the finest, her technic was perfect, her phras-



Mrs. Katherine Rankin Williams

ing left nothing to be desired, and we were safe in predicting at that time a grand future for her. She has fulfilled her early promise, is musicianly in every respect, and today stands without a peer.

Mr. and Mrs. Ernest S. Williams may well be proud of each other. They not only are a talented couple who perform well, but have a splendid appearance and make friends wherever they are booked. There is no doubt about their future. Both have been an immense success socially as well as musically, and as both have reached the top of the ladder of fame and fortune there is nothing lacking as regards their happiness. I am sure it is the wish of my many readers that their career may be long and ever successful, so let us wish them long and happy lives.

Gabrilowitsch, and Vincent d'Indy.<sup>25</sup> Recordings of Williams as first trumpet with the Philadelphia Orchestra appear on the RCA Victor label.<sup>26</sup>

During the first quarter of the twentieth century, bands were the musical vehicles that brought music to communities throughout the United States. Bands performed at parades, concerts, fairs, expositions, and were oftentimes the only music available. Boston, New York, Chicago, and San Francisco were the only American cities with full-time orchestras since a penchant for orchestral music had not developed in this country. Many musicians at this time acquired the majority of their income performing in bands.<sup>27</sup>

Due to the Philadelphia Orchestra's short winter concert season during the summers of 1918-22, Williams supported himself performing as soloist with the Goldman Band in its concert series at Columbia University. He also appeared with several other bands in New York during this time, including Mygrant's 7th Regiment Band, the 69th Regiment Band, and Nathan Franko's Band<sup>28</sup>

As one of the premier cornet and trumpet players in the country, Williams was in great demand for instrument endorsements. He worked with the C.G. Conn Company and endorsed the Conn Victor cornet, which he also helped design. Advertisements featuring Williams proclaimed him to be "One of the World's Greatest Cornetists and Trumpeters."<sup>29</sup> Williams also endorsed a trumpet manufactured by the Brua C. Keefer Company of Williamsport, Pennsylvania, which ran an advertisement pronouncing him "The Greatest Trumpeter in the World."<sup>30</sup>

Throughout his dual employment in Philadelphia and New York, Williams maintained a residence in Brooklyn, commuting by train between the two cities. He used the time in transit to study the scores of compositions for forthcoming performances and reportedly knew them as well as the conductors. Williams was a meticulous musician who took pride in the fact that he was never absent or late for a rehearsal and never erred in a musical entrance during his tenure with the Philadelphia Orchestra. Leopold

THE Ithaca Conservatory and Affiliated Schools announce ERNEST S. WILLIAMS successor to the late Patrick Conway as Dean of the Conway Band School, associated with the Ithaca Conservatory of Music, Ithaca, New York

## ERNEST S. WILLIAMS

**Conductor** ERNEST WILLIAMS is known throughout the country as one of the leading Bandmasters of the day. For the past decade he has trained and conducted organizations which have attained to prominence in the field of Band Music. In connection with this he has been for a number of years conductor of the well-known Kismet Shrine Band, which last year was accorded first place in the New York State Band contest; for three years he was Bandmaster of the Boston Cadet Band and has for a number of years directed his own Lakeside Band in Denver, Colo.

Mr. Williams is commanding in appearance, possessing a most attractive, genial, yet dignified manner. Dr. S. Parkes Cadman speaks of him as "The Dan Godfrey of America," others have designated him "a born leader of men," the late Patrick Conway held him in the highest esteem, while John Philip Sousa, Arthur Pryor and other prominent leaders are unanimous in their hearty endorsement of this new Dean of the Conway Band School.

**Soloist** ERNEST WILLIAMS is also famous as a soloist. His experience along this line includes engagements with the most outstanding organizations, among which are the following:

- Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra* under Leopold Stokowski as trumpet soloist . . . . . 6 years
- Goldman Band* in Columbia University Series, under Edwin Franko Goldman, as cornet soloist . . . . . 5 years
- Conway Concert Band* under Patrick Conway, as cornet soloist . . . . . several seasons
- Souza Concert Band*, under John Philip Sousa, as cornet soloist . . . . . several seasons

He also played engagements under the following well known conductors

- |                 |                    |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Richard Strauss | Ossip Gabelowitsch |
| Georges Enesco  | Victor Herbert     |

In a concert tour around the world he filled engagements in practically every country.

**Teacher** ERNEST WILLIAMS numbers among his students many noted musicians. Included in the list are: Walter Smith, prominent Boston soloist; Harold Rebig, trumpeter with the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra; Leslie D'Arcy, associate conductor of the United States Army Band; Mrs. Ernest S. Williams, leader of the famous "Gloria Trumpeters." "The Gloria Trumpeters" have also been trained by Ernest Williams.

### Bulletin about Williams move to Ithaca, New York

Stokowski, principal conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra, described Williams as one of the greatest trumpeters of all time.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to his busy performing schedule, in January of 1920, Williams was appointed bandmaster of the Kismet Temple Shrine Band (Brooklyn). Considered the premier Shrine Band at the time, this band was featured at the "Imperial Session of the Shriners" held in Washington, June 1923.<sup>32</sup> During the same year, Williams decided to leave the Philadelphia Orchestra. Before he left the orchestra, he began coaching his successor, Sol Caston.<sup>33</sup> Caston joined the Philadelphia Orchestra during the 1918-

19 season at the age of 16, playing second trumpet to Williams.<sup>34</sup> The younger man's abilities inspired Williams, who thought there were probably many more young musicians with similar potential who merely needed good teaching to develop their skills.<sup>35</sup> This inspiration resulted in his decision to start his own music school.

During the summer of 1923, Williams recorded daily for the Victor Talking Machine Studios. During that period, he served as first chair and soloist at every evening concert presented by the Plaza Band of Philadelphia.<sup>36</sup> After his summer employment in Philadelphia, he returned to his Brooklyn residence and supported himself by teaching, conducting, and appearing as a soloist with several concert bands, including the Rochester New York Town Band.<sup>37</sup> His success as a soloist was reported by the *Rochester Times-Union*: "Mr. Williams is recognized as one of the most accomplished performers upon his chosen instrument in America."<sup>38</sup>

### Ithaca College - Ernest Williams School of Music

After the death of Patrick Conway in June of 1929, Williams was appointed Dean of the Conway Military Band School in Ithaca, New York, which was affiliated with the Ithaca Conservatory of Music. In his first year at the school, he renamed the school the Ithaca Band and Orchestra School. Up until that time, the orchestra was a separate entity from the band school and a component of the Ithaca Conservatory and Affiliated Schools. The Conservatory and Affiliated Schools eventually became Ithaca College.<sup>39</sup>

At the Ithaca school, he found a core of able performers who were members of Patrick Conway's Professional Band. Members included Walter Beeler, the well-known euphonium player who later succeeded Williams as conductor at Ithaca; George Howard, clarinetist and Conductor/Commandant of the United States Air Force Music; Les Brown, who became leader of his own "Band of Renown"; Paul Lester, virtuoso trombone soloist; and Craig McHenry, cornet soloist who later became Dean at Ithaca. Williams' responsibilities were to administer the band school, direct the

band, teach cornet, trumpet, and lower brass, and conduct the orchestra.<sup>40</sup>

Ernest was an insomniac and during his Monday evening commutes from Brooklyn during the 1929-1930 school year, he started work on plans to erect a large building on land that he owned in the foothills of the Catskill Mountains near Saugerties, New York. Williams financed the construction of a three-story building to serve as a rehearsal and performance hall. Originally conceived as a summer music camp, this structure provided housing for students, along with a kitchen and dining hall. Williams was such an astute planner that there was only one keg of nails and several pieces of lumber remaining upon completion of construction.<sup>41</sup>

The tract of land already included several cottages, tennis courts, a swimming pool, and a small store. Woodstock, the well-known artist colony, was only five miles from the camp, and several prominent musicians such as flautist Georges Barrere and violinist Pierre Henrotte had summer homes in the area and agreed to teach at the camp.<sup>42</sup>

While the original camp brochure indicates affiliation with the Ithaca Military Band School and Ithaca Conservatory and Affiliated Schools, the camp was actually owned and financed by Williams. It was nationally advertised as a college camp and was well-received by Williams' colleagues and contemporaries. Despite the school's lack of history, Del Staigers, a celebrated cornet player of the time, had no hesitation in recommending Williams and his newly formed camp to young cornet players interested in furthering their studies.<sup>43</sup> Most of the campers in the first year were students at Ithaca College, augmented by high school students.<sup>44</sup>

Following a disagreement with the president of the college in 1931, Williams left Ithaca. Although specifics regarding the dispute are not known, the conflict allegedly concerned the ownership of proceeds from camp tuition. Following his departure, the affiliation with Ithaca was terminated.<sup>45</sup>

### **The Ernest Williams School of Music**

Williams returned to his Brooklyn residence in the fall of 1931 and founded "The Ernest Williams School of Music." He apparently had not intended to pursue a teaching career at Ithaca and had expressed an interest in starting his own music school for some time. Since leaving the Philadelphia Orchestra, he had been developing plans to establish his own year-round school, with the camp as the genesis of this plan that came to fruition in 1931.<sup>46</sup>

Although the Ernest Williams School is proclaimed in its own literature as having been established in



1922, the school at that time consisted of private students taught at Williams' residence at 153 Ocean Avenue, Brooklyn, New York. A complete school curriculum and faculty was not instituted until Williams left Ithaca in 1931.<sup>47</sup> In 1926, Leonard Smith, well-known cornetist and conductor, began studying under Williams at the age of eleven. The lessons took place at the Ocean Avenue residence, which at the time consisted of a soundproof studio constructed in the basement.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to the main building on Ocean Avenue (which housed students), there were two additional dormitories located elsewhere in the city. These buildings also served as practice rooms and dining halls. Rehearsals, meals, and classes were held at the Ocean Avenue residence. The Bedford YMCA in Brooklyn was a multi-use facility for the school, serving as additional housing for the boys, or as needed, a classroom and recreational facility. Many concerts were presented in its auditorium.<sup>49</sup>



(Courtesy Ernest Williams Archive, University of Maryland)

Admission criteria at the school was based on a student's musical talent and potential. High school graduation was not required, and all students were placed on a one-year probationary status. Williams made arrangements for the transfer of credits earned at his school to be applied towards a Baccalaureate degree at New York University (NYU), although the degree program at NYU did require graduation from high school.<sup>50</sup>

The Ernest Williams School of Music was a reflection of the great American concert bands of the era and became the basis for present day university, civic, and military bands.<sup>51</sup> The school was patterned after Kneller Hall, the great military band school in England. Kneller Hall was the pre-eminent band school of the world during the early 1900's, and it produced exceptional bandmasters who enjoyed worldwide respect. It is not known when or if Williams ever visited Kneller Hall, but it is quite clear from his

brochures that he held it in high esteem and patterned his own school after it.<sup>52</sup>

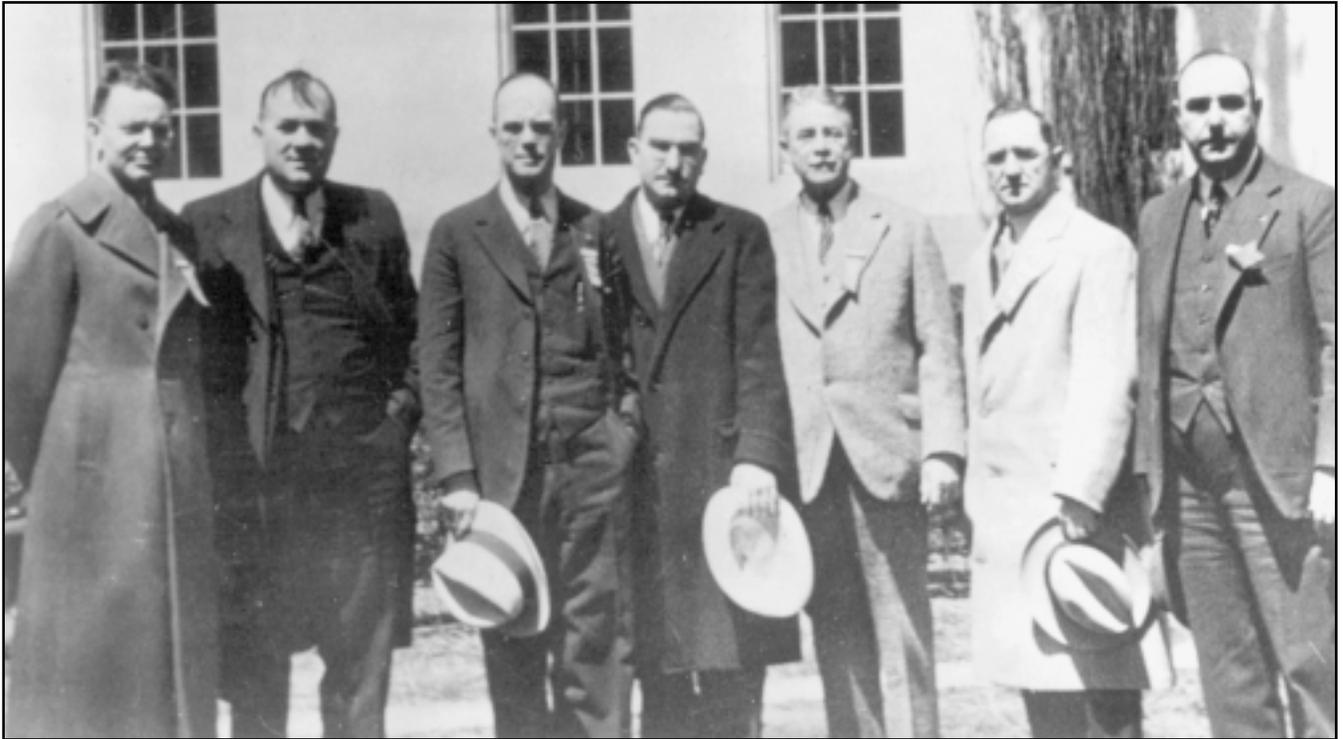
The following paragraph, presented in the school bulletin outlines the Ernest Williams School Philosophy:

The ideal of the Ernest Williams Band and Orchestra School is that it should be to America what the famous Kneller Hall School is to Great Britain, namely a school that gives a comprehensive training to instrumentalists, embracing the entire field of ensemble work, both theoretical and practical. This includes a complete course of musical study, emphasizing artistry, as well as technical proficiency. Like Kneller Hall, it is an all-year round institution with winter sessions in Brooklyn, N.Y. The school equally stresses Band, Orchestral, and Choral training, including a thorough musical background, correct interpretation of all concert, symphonic and operatic literature and gives that which is most essential – thorough and intensive routine. Professional contact is one of the features of the Ernest Williams Band and Orchestra School, which is only made possible through its distinguished faculty of renowned musicians.<sup>53</sup>

Williams borrowed the basic curriculum plan of Kneller Hall. Students were provided a three-year course of study, requiring proficiency on one instrument and knowledge of strings and keyboard.<sup>54</sup> Although it was described as a year-round institution, the Williams School did not require students to attend classes year-round, unlike Kneller Hall. Many students who attended the winter school in Brooklyn also participated in the summer camp in Saugerties; however, the two were considered separate entities.<sup>55</sup>

In addition to directing his own school, Williams was conductor of the New York University Symphonic Band from 1936 to 1943.<sup>56</sup> The NYU Bulletin also listed Williams as the clarinet teacher, although it was commonly known that Robert Hoffman, Williams School Graduate and Goldman Band member, actually taught the class. Williams' position at NYU allowed him to arrange for students at his school to transfer credits to NYU.<sup>57</sup> Strong ties were maintained as the 1939-40 Williams School Bulletin illustrates:

All first year students are required to enroll at New York University for Sight-Reading, Dictation, and Harmony. Refer to page 211 of the bulletin of the School of Education, New York University, for further information on the introductory course in music, hours given, and fee required.<sup>58</sup>



Frank Simon, unidentified, Herbert L. Clarke, Del Staigers, unidentified, Ernest Williams, Capt. Tom Darcy  
(Courtesy Ernest Williams Archive, University of Maryland)

From 1937 through 1946, Williams was also listed on the brass faculty at The Institute of Musical Art (then the undergraduate division of The Juilliard School), succeeding Max Schlossberg, a member of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra who also enjoyed a reputation as a fine trumpet teacher.<sup>59</sup>

Williams was fortunate that he was able to build a school with an outstanding faculty. His success in attracting world-class musicians was due to the respect and admiration he had earned from colleagues throughout his performing career. These colleagues were eager to start an American version of Kneller Hall and were confident in Williams' ability to carry out the program. In addition to a prominent faculty, Williams assembled a distinguished advisory board for the school that included Edwin Franko Goldman, Herbert L. Clarke, Percy Grainger, Ferde Grofé, and Arthur Pryor.<sup>60</sup> Williams was also able to enlist the talents of many leading composers as faculty at his school, including Grainger and Grofé.

The Williams School Band distinguished itself by premiering a number of important compositions. On May 29, 1937, at Town Hall, the band performed the New York premieres of Percy Grainger's *A Lincolnshire Posy* and Eric Leidzen's *Storm King*.<sup>61</sup> Donald Jacoby, who became one of Ernest Williams' most successful students, played Williams' *First Concerto for Trumpet* on the same program. Jacoby recalled that when Grainger brought the band the parts

of *A Lincolnshire Posy*, they were written on blue paper with white notation and had the appearance of a blueprint.<sup>62</sup> On another occasion, Williams' students premiered Percy Grainger's well-known band composition *Molly on the Shore*.<sup>63</sup> These composers taught for Williams out of respect for him and the quality of students he attracted.<sup>64</sup>

Private lessons were a priority at the school, and it was not unusual for a student to have more than one lesson a week with the "Chief," as Williams was affectionately referred to by his students. Since most of the students lived at Ocean Avenue, lessons could occur at unusual hours. In fact, it was not uncommon for him to suggest a lesson very late at night. Williams' philosophy for the students was as follows: This is the way it is going to be, these are the things that you are going to have to do, and finally all things will be finished satisfactorily. He encouraged and inspired his students through example and, when necessary, persuasive vocabulary.<sup>65</sup>

Williams felt strongly that students should experience performing as a soloist with the band as part of their education and provided students the opportunity in both rehearsal and concert. On occasion, Williams would select an unsuspecting student to perform a solo piece during a rehearsal. In addition to providing experience as soloists, this method was also used to humble students Williams felt were becoming unrealistic concerning their importance.<sup>66</sup>



**Goldman Band Members. Rear: LeRoy Hoyt, Bobb Hoffman, Otto Monnard, and Roger Smith.  
Front: Frank Elsass, Ned Mahoney, and Leonard Smith. (Ernest S. Williams Collection, University of Maryland)**

Due to Williams' extensive background as both a soloist and bandmaster, a great deal of emphasis in teaching centered around the band. The band of the Williams School presented concerts as a guest band at various schools and communities throughout the eastern United States. In November of 1937, as part of a multi-state concert tour, the band visited and performed in his hometown of Winchester, Indiana. On this occasion, the band premiered Williams' *Symphony in C Minor* (the first symphony written for band), written as a tribute to his father, Samuel E. Williams.<sup>67</sup>

Williams maintained his own music publishing enterprise at the school and in addition to publishing his own works, he published selected works of the cornet repertoire. Several numbers from his catalog were on the required list of the National School Band Associations Committee on Brass Training and Program Material for Cornet.<sup>68</sup> The publishing house was a mail-order operation serving anyone desiring his materials.<sup>69</sup>

Although the Ernest Williams School was a professional school, it was not as well known as the

Juilliard School or other prominent music schools. Nevertheless, people familiar with the school had the utmost respect for it due to the number of successful graduates. Although the school gave emphasis to the band, students were prepared for all aspects of the music business. Graduates from the Williams School held prominent positions in many major musical organizations, including The Goldman Band (Ned Mahoney, Frank Elsass, Leonard Smith, Robert Hoffman, and James Burke), The Metropolitan Opera House Orchestra (Roger Smith, Raymond Crisara, and Arthur Sussman), various service bands (John Yesualitis, Frank Scimonelli, Gilbert Mitchell, and Robert Lewis), Detroit Symphony (Leonard Smith) and other leading orchestras. Graduates also enjoyed careers as studio musicians (Raymond Crisara), commercial musicians (Don Jacoby and Ray Wetzel), and many held prestigious teaching positions.<sup>70</sup>

Eminent bandmaster Edwin Franko Goldman, in discussing the Williams School indicated:

There is no college or School of Music in the World that has a man equal to Ernest Williams in his ability to impart knowledge to

young musicians and to give them training and routine that they need. I say this because it is a fact.<sup>71</sup>

Dr. Hollis Dann, former Chief of Music Education in Pennsylvania, stated the following in Carnegie Hall in May 1935:

No university, college, or school of music can in any way compete with the music school and camp, which this man Ernest Williams has founded. It is head and shoulders above any other institution of applied music in this country.<sup>72</sup>

World War II devastated the Brooklyn winter school due to the draft and enlistments in the service. Most of the students had transferred over to Juilliard or looked for employment.<sup>73</sup> In a letter dated January 2, 1945, to Mr. William Perrett, an alumnus of the school, Williams stated, "The Winter School has suffered owing to all the able young men from 17 up [who] are in the armed services."<sup>74</sup> At the time he wrote this, he had closed the Brooklyn School and moved his library to the summer camp at Saugerties. Regarding the camp at this time, he wrote, "[I] have quite a number of students but not like it used to be in Brooklyn."<sup>75</sup>

In addition to losing current and prospective students to the draft, he no longer enjoyed the luxury of having alumni visit to perform for students. Most students regarded Williams as a father figure and the war, in effect, had taken away his "family." He commented to Leonard Smith that he was quite lonely not having his students around.<sup>76</sup>

Although the winter school in Brooklyn was in existence for only a relatively short time (1931-1943), Williams' teaching produced many fine musicians. Williams set high standards for students, and they worked diligently to measure up to them. He constantly challenged students to do their best and made it quite clear that musical education was their primary business. Students left the school with the confidence that they knew what would be expected of them in the professional world.

Williams created an atmosphere in which the most difficult tasks became easy, due to the affection students had for him as well as for one another. Students lived, practiced, attended classes, and performed together, giving the school a family atmosphere.

### **The Ernest Williams Music Camp**

Although the Ernest Williams School of Music was patterned after Kneller Hall as a year-round school, the summer camp in Saugerties was actually a separate entity. While many students from the winter school attended the camp, the majority of the camp-

ers were summer students.<sup>77</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the Ernest Williams Summer Camp was established in June of 1930, and the original camp in the summer of 1930 was ten weeks in length (June 16th to August 23rd). Available records from 1934 indicate that tuition for the camp was \$200, which included private and class instruction, and room and board.<sup>78</sup> Surprisingly, the cost to attend the camp was still \$200 ten years later.<sup>79</sup> Williams was responsible for the musical activities at the camp and maintained a camp administration to help run the day-to-day activities.

The camp was designed to provide both a high level of musical instruction with leading performer/educators and recreational activities. Recreation included swimming, tennis, badminton, hiking, golf, horseback riding, and ballet (taught by Elvira Henrotte, formerly premiere danseuse at both La Scala and the Metropolitan Opera Houses).<sup>80</sup>

Most of the activity at the camp was centered in one large building. It functioned as a rehearsal and performance hall, dining hall, and housing for male campers. Students slept, dormitory style, in two separate sleeping wings, and each was assigned a room for study.<sup>81</sup>

Students had the opportunity to study with notable artists while gaining valuable performing experience under the batons of Pierre Henrotte and Williams. One of the highlights of the summer camp was the presence of distinguished conductors, composers, and performers who appeared as guest lecturers. Musicians such as Ferde Grofé, Percy Grainger, Morton Gould, Edwin Franko Goldman, Henry Cowell, and Eric Leidzen interacted with the students on a regular basis. At the time, the available literature for band was limited. Students had the unique privilege of performing new arrangements and original compositions written by these influential musicians.<sup>82</sup> A typical occurrence of this sort was in the summer of 1942, when Morton Gould conducted his compositions in a concert with the symphonic band.<sup>83</sup> Two of the leading band arrangers of the time, Eric Leidzen and Mayhew Lake, premiered many of their works in a similar fashion.<sup>84</sup>

In addition, many notable performers of the day presented master classes at the camp, including the celebrated artists Walter Rogers, Walter Smith, Herbert L. Clarke, and Arthur Pryor.<sup>85</sup> Walter Rogers, acclaimed bandmaster and cornetist, visited the camp in 1936 and presented his newly composed cornet trio *Echoes of the Catskills*, which was dedicated to the students at the camp. The premier performance of this work was held that summer and was performed by Williams students Madeline Bogle, Don Jacoby, and Leonard Meretta as soloists.<sup>86</sup>



Photo from 1946 Ernest S. Williams Summer Music Camp brochure

In addition to providing students the opportunity to perform in large ensembles, one evening a week was devoted to student recitals.<sup>87</sup> Williams regarded these recitals as very serious performances. Gilbert Mitchell, an alumnus of the school and retired solo cornetist and bandmaster of the United States Army Band, offered a personal experience as an example of the seriousness of these events. Mitchell was scheduled to perform a trumpet solo at the Thursday evening weekly student recital but had been confined to bed two days prior with influenza. Before the recital was to begin, Mitchell commented to Williams how sorry he was that he would miss his performance that evening. Williams matter of factly told him that since he was scheduled that evening, he was required to play, and helped him dress and walked him to the performance. Naturally, the other students, knowing of Mitchell's illness, were surprised that he performed. Williams placed these high demands on Mitchell, knowing his desire to be a professional trumpet player. He obviously felt that Mitchell had the ability to become successful and made sure that he understood the responsibilities of performance.<sup>88</sup>

Besides performing on the Thursday evening recital, students were given the opportunity to play a solo with the band either in rehearsal or in performance. Having experienced this several times, students would be less nervous and, consequently, better able to perform under pressure. Faculty members were often present, lending an importance to the occasion.<sup>89</sup>

During a lesson, it was common for Williams to present a solo to students and suggest that at some time in the summer he would call upon them to perform as soloist with the band. During Don Jacoby's Sunday morning lesson at his first camp, Williams assigned him Walter Rogers' solo *The Harp of Tara* and mentioned that there was a possibility that he could perform this work with the band at some point in the summer. The following day at band rehearsal Williams asked Jacoby if he had prepared the solo. Jacoby was prepared, having spent all of Sunday learning and memorizing the composition, and he reportedly performed flawlessly. Williams was so impressed that he featured him as a soloist with the band on many occasions at both the camp and the winter school.<sup>90</sup>

The camp was not conceived as a money-making endeavor and was run on a "shoestring" budget. George Howard, director of the camp from 1932-36, noted:

When the grocery man presented his weekly bill, I would take it and suggest that he wait until I went to Dr. Williams' cottage for a signature, knowing full well that we did not have enough money in the bank to pay for it. I would disappear for a few minutes, then return to the collector, saying that Dr. Williams was in one of his artistic moods and could not be interrupted while composing. I asked the collector to please return the following week when I would have a check for him. Later I would explain to Dr. Williams what I had done and he would say, "You did exactly right. Let's find some money to tide us over."<sup>91</sup>

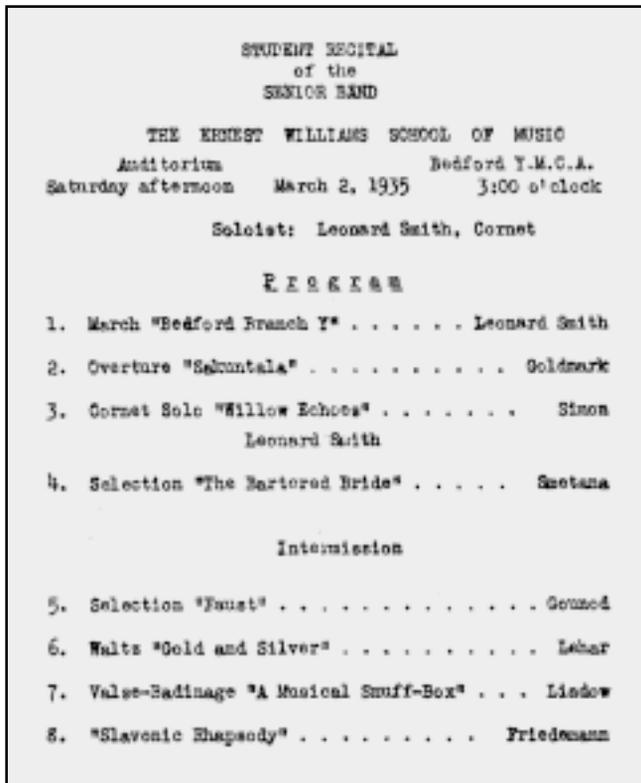
Ernest Williams died on February 10, 1947, in Saugerties, New York. He was buried at the Fountain Park Cemetery in his hometown of Winchester, Indiana.<sup>92</sup> Jan Williams, Ernest's brother, who also taught clarinet at both the camp and winter school, assumed the responsibilities of the camp the following summer.<sup>93</sup>

While plans were being made to continue the camp for the summer of 1948, the main building was destroyed by fire on May 1, 1948. Williams kept his publications in this building, but fortunately the bulk of Williams' library survived because many of his books and scores were on loan to various individuals.<sup>94</sup> In 1952, Philip Lang, a former student of Williams, representing the Edwin H. Morris Company, New York City, purchased the library that survived.<sup>95</sup>

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*continued on page 53*



Leonard Smith program (1934)

instrument to my lips and play a few tones. I start in the middle register and play a little louder, little softer, little higher, and a little lower. I allow the lips to respond. If they don't, I take a little longer. I never really had any real problems warming up.

**DW:** How long does the warm-up take?

**LS:** The warm-up is variable. It's a question of your lips responding to what you want to do. Your lips do not feel the same every day, so you have to accommodate the circumstances by the time you take in preparing to play music. I have taught this approach to my students and have not changed it.

**DW:** What was it like to be in Williams' band?

**LS:** Williams was quite a taskmaster. He had a very fine band and made it sound remarkable. As players, we did what we were told. After you played a concert with him, you knew you had done something special.

**DW:** Would you talk about your experience at the Ernest S. Williams School of Music?

**LS:** It was a very interesting school. At the school we had a three-year program and received credit at New York University. You could take one additional year there and receive a degree. It was quite a remarkable situation because we had a very fine band at the school. He would treat everybody as though they were the finest player there and it made you want to live up to his expectations. Everyone that

knew or worked with Williams respected him.

**DW:** What did you study at the Williams School?

**LS:** I took arranging with Mayhew Lake, the foremost American arranger at that time. Everybody had a copy of his book, *The American Band Arranger*, although he didn't ask you to get one. Eric Leidzen also taught there. Pierre Henrotte, who was concertmaster of the Metropolitan Opera, taught us solfeggio and conducting.

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**Legacy of E. Williams** *continued from page 47*

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