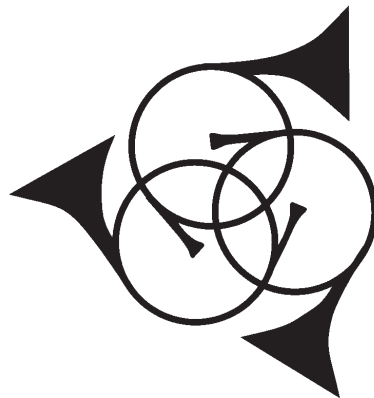


The Horn Call

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William Scharnberg, Editor

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**On the cover: photograph by Li Zhi Yeoh – his horn on the University of Nebraska campus
where he is the School of Music's head piano tuner**

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2012 Nancy Jordan Fako
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Alfred Edwin Brain Jnr (1885-1966)

Prince of Horn Players

The Forgotten British Horn Virtuoso

Part III

by Leighton Jones

It seems to be a commonly held belief among the surviving horn players of that era that, prior to Alfred (Alf/ Al) Brain's arrival in Los Angeles, studio musicians were thought of as "band" musicians – there merely to follow the beat. Indeed, Vincent DeRosa recalled that the generation of horn players that preceded him were very bad. Probably the notable exception was Vincent DeRubertis. From his arrival in LA in 1923, Alf met many horn players, some of who were struggling at the beginning of their careers, and he did his best to give them opportunities to play in orchestras and theaters.

When Alf first came to LA, he was playing on a Clay horn (according to Vince DeRosa). This could well be the horn seen on page 82 with the Philharmonic Wind Quintet. It was a silver horn and, by its outline, there is a very strong possibility that it was a compensating B^b/F double horn. It was when the studio work began that Alf changed to an Alexander 5-valved horn. The main reason for this, according to DeRosa, was that the composers had begun writing more timbral effects for the horn. They required more stopped horn and also some of the parts had some very tricky cross fingerings, so it made sense to use a horn with an A/ stopping valve.¹

Alf's faithful second horn was Vincent DeRubertis, a superb player himself, and the uncle of the legendary Vince DeRosa. DeRubertis was known as the 'Sheik' due to his good looks and the resemblance he bore to his good friend, Rudolph Valentino. DeRubertis had been asked to go for screen tests but, as other horn players said, "Great player, great looks, but no actor." Once DeRubertis bumped into Arthur Frantz, who asked DeRubertis for lessons. He replied, "Doggone, I have just heard the greatest horn player I have ever heard in my life." He told Art to go and have lessons with Alf. Apparently Alf did not like giving lessons – he just did not have the patience. But he did give a few of what we would now call "consultation lessons."

One of those he helped was Arthur Frantz (died in 2004), who had recently graduated from high school and had some lessons from Alf. Besides giving Arthur Frantz lessons, Alf also helped him get work in the theatres – playing the rehearsals while Alf played the concerts.

During some of the few lessons he gave (as Art later recalled in conversations with James Decker), Alf never took his horn out of the case to demonstrate.² He listened to Art play for an hour or two, and then made helpful comments on his breathing, embouchure, and playing generally. Alf always concentrated on power, dynamics, and breath control.

Alf's teaching approach was contrary to that used by both his brother Aubrey and, much later, by his nephew Dennis. This is not to say that Alf did not achieve results with his pupils by not playing. Through his teaching, Alf had a gift for seeing how one budding horn-player's tone would benefit from blending with another player. Later generations of his students have remarked that they gained more from Alf by playing alongside him in the orchestra. James Decker told me, "Al started me out in my professional life. I never studied with him, but played second horn alongside him for five years. I guess that's even better than lessons. My teacher was Jimmy Stagliano."³

Vince DeRosa recalls when he went to Alf for lessons, he (Vince) played a little and then Alf said, "Just keep doing what you're doing laddie," and that was it. Vince thought that Alf did not like him, but a little later some gigs were offered to Vince, and he subsequently learned that it was Alf who was responsible for the booking! Alf had always liked Vince, and when Vince was home on leave from the US army, Alf would lend him one of his cars to drive around Los Angeles.

It is interesting to note that all the horn players who "sat alongside" Alf, be it in the LAPO or the studios, saw the experience as a great learning experience. DeRosa sums it up perfectly, "My lessons with Alf were – I played with him in the studio – it was like a lesson there because he was under fire." Another trick of Alf's was to suggest that students should team up together and play duets – he did this with Jack Cave and Art Frantz. In this way, he helped them to establish themselves in the various Los Angeles horn sections.

Richard Perissi recalled in an article by Paul Neuffer,

I'd go to Al Brain's house to go with him to a Fox studio job. He'd be out back pushing a plough on his property. He was a very strong man. Then he would come in from the field and clean up before going to work. I'd play for him while he was getting ready and he would just say, "That's fine laddie" – everyone was always laddie to him – "If you play that way laddie you'll be fine." He was a very strong player. He never wanted, or needed an assistant. Sometimes he would carry the load. He had a sound that could really carry and sitting out in the audience, listening to him – every note was a pearl. He always had very clear entrances, even when playing soft.⁴

Before leaving the subject of Alf's teaching, it is nice to recall an occurrence that happened to an aspiring young horn player in LA A gentleman approached me in a concert at which



I had played; it was following his reading of my article on Alf in the *British Horn Society Magazine*. He sought me out after the show because he wanted to tell me his experience with Alf "first hand" when he went to ask "the great Al Brain for a lesson." What he told me just made me laugh and, in a way, it shows the kind, warm, and jovial side of Alf.

The young horn player had heard so much about Alf that he was determined to ask him for lessons. One day he summoned up enough courage, went to Alf's address, and knocked on the front door. Alf eventually appeared, looking rather the worse for wear after a long hard night celebrating. "I have come for lessons with you," said the young horn player. "Oh that's Ok," said Alf; "Do come in, and let me go and find my teeth." This happened about six months prior to Alf's death.

It is worth recording here an interview Alf gave to *The Musical Leader* in Chicago, published on October 20th 1923, under the heading "English Player Joins Los Angeles Orchestra."

I was born in London and like most youngsters, went through school and what is equivalent to your American High School, and then topped off with four years in the Royal Academy of Music, London and was fortunate enough to graduate from that Institution with a bronze medal, a silver medal, and a certificate of merit to show for my labours. I don't play any other instruments for the horn is my first and only love instrumentally and has been for some twenty-two years, though come to think about it, if it hadn't been for the Great War, this might have not been so, for just prior to the outbreak of hostilities, Sir Thomas Beecham had about persuaded me to devote all my efforts to bringing out the latent possibilities of my voice, The War brushed that ambition aside, for of course I went in with the outbreak of hostilities and stayed for the end of the show – including four months with the Army of Occupation. I don't think I will readily forget the tremendous crashes of sound or the deep diapason of the siege artillery with which I served for four years, one year and eight months of which was active service in France, until some shrapnel played havoc with my right hand and I thought for a while that my playing days were over. But I came round alright and they transferred me when the show was over to the Coast-guard Band and once more I was following the peaceful vocation of blowing the horn in Cologne till my welcome discharge came along and permitted me to resume my activities in London once more.

My professional engagements prior to joining the Philharmonic cover a period of some twenty years. My first engagement of magnitude was with the Scottish Orchestra of Glasgow. I played for that organisation for four years under Sir Frank Cowen; then with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra of London as first horn. This orchestra has only guest conductors but they have the greatest of them as the names of Nikisch, Richter, Savanoff, Mengelberg, Weingartner, Steinbach, Sir Thomas Beecham, Sir Henry Wood, Sir Landon Ronald Hamilton Harty, and Albert Coates will amply bear me out. For fifteen years I have been Principal Horn with

the Queen's Hall Orchestra of London, at the same time filling engagements in the capacity of the London Symphony Orchestra. This Queen's Hall Orchestra is a most interesting institution. You see, none of the chaps are paid for their performances for it is a co-operative organisation of one hundred members, each holding ten shares of stock. They give their own concerts and have only guest conductors, the concerts being used for advertising purposes principally, for most of us are instructors as well as performers. I am still Principal Horn with them and still hold my stock (which by the way has greatly increased in value); they granted me a furlough to come to this country but I have taken out my first papers and am still well satisfied in Los Angeles that I am rather afraid they are going to have a long wait for my return. Then, too, I played some time with the Covent Garden Opera Orchestra and had the opportunity of playing under some great conductors – Mancinelli, Campanini, Panizza, Emile Cooper, and Bruno Walter conducting *The Ring*.

Since coming to this country a year ago I have filled the first chair with the New York Symphony with Walter Damrosch. Then came the offer from Los Angeles to join the Philharmonic and decided to make my over-land journey by automobile and it was a liberal education as to the vastness of this country, and, taken all in all a most delightful trip.



Los Angeles Philharmonic horn section: Alf Brain, Jimmy Decker, Vince DeRosa, Odalindo Perissi



Musical America, founded in 1898 is the oldest American magazine devoted to classical music. Here and on the next page are clippings from that magazine.



Always an Englishman. With his faithful friend and second horn, Vincent DeRubertis

LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA	
DR. ARTUR RODZINSKI, Conductor	
JOSEF BORISSOFF Assistant Conductors HENRY SVEDROFSKY	
Personnel	
FIRST VIOLINS	CELLO
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Alexander Roman	Nicolas Ocki-Albi
David Croco	F. S. Gutterson
Pasquale De Nubila	Joseph Di Tullio
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Hans Wippler	Stephan Mala
Harry Zagon	Josef Satzky
Thomas Mancini	Arthur Pabst
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	ORGANIST
	Ray Hastings

FRED W. KUPHAL - Librarian

Alf played first horn for the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra from 1922 until very late in his career. He officially retired from the Los Angeles Philharmonic when he was sixty years old, and then was full time in the studios. This would make 1945 as his retirement year from the Hollywood Bowl. The Orchestra's records of the horn sections confirm this long association.

ALFRED BRAIN WILL BE BOWL SEASON CHIEF

Orchestra Assembles for
Discussion of Plans
For Concerts

By RICHARD D. SANDERS
The new member of the Hollywood Bowl for the forthcoming season will be Alfred Brain, first horn player of the Philharmonic Orchestra, and a resident of Hollywood. Brain, who has been officially named as the new season's chief of the Hollywood Bowl orchestra.

The orchestra men are disappointed that Mr. Brain, who will be able to appear, because of his previous contracts for the season, but several other possibilities are mentioned, including Leopold Stokowski.

A number of popular Bowl favorites are expected to be on the roster of music, though no one has been officially engaged.

The orchestra was in session at 1 p. m. today to outline definite plans for the Bowl season.

It is certain that no better management could be found than the members of the orchestra themselves, for they are not only interested in making the coming season a financially successful one, but their individual and collective talents as artists promise a series of programs of the finest and most momentous type.

For a time, in 1934, he was also the orchestra's manager and ensured its continued success in future years. Despite his enjoyment in playing jokes on people and writing, as Vince DeRosa said, "Alf could come up with the dirtiest limericks, but then he was very well educated" Being well educated, Alf possessed a very sharp and astute business mind. When the "Bowl" was without a manager, Alf stepped up to the post and became its manager for a season or so. Vince further recalled to me that when Alf was in charge of the Bowl "it was one of the few times they ever made money."⁵

Alf also had opportunities to rekindle some old orchestral friendships and associations from his time in England. Among these was Sir Henry Wood, who visited the Hollywood Bowl on July 14th, 1926, and gave the following vivid recollection of the occasion:

Hollywood Bowl is unique. It is a natural amphitheater seating twenty thousand people, with a park for about ten thousand cars. A splendid shell has been built to accommodate a large orchestra and the acoustic properties are perfect because there are no air currents and a sound is directed towards the audience... I for my part, had the pleasure of seeing old faces in the orchestra. Brain, my first horn (brother of Aubrey Brain); Ferri the viola-player; de Busscher the oboist; Kassner the harpist; Conrad the bassoonist.⁶

Alf threw himself into the manager's work, sending out *The Manager's Weekly Letter*. In this clip the gives the source and date *Hollywood Bowl Magazine*, first week, July 10-14, 1934.

ESDAY LOS ANGELES E

E WORKERS T

Mrs. Irish Is Honored by Bowl Symphony Orchestra

ALFRED BRAIN AND MRS. LEILAND ATHERTON IRISH
Hollywood Bowl Orchestra Present Watch to 1934 Chairman

Mrs. Leland Atherton Irish was honored by the Bowl Symphony Orchestra today in a special ceremony. She was presented with a watch by Alfred Brain, executive manager of the Hollywood Bowl, which has been the symbol of the Bowl since 1922.

The Bowl Symphony Orchestra, which will appear in four concerts during the season, which begins July 10.

Mrs. Irish was drafted by the Bowl Symphony Orchestra to be its general chairman for the season of 1934-1935. She is a native of Los Angeles and has been associated with the Bowl since 1922.

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August 4 the distinguished Russian conductor, Omp Gabrilowitsch, came to the Bowl as the gift of Mr. and Mrs. E. L. Doherty for two nights and two extra rehearsals. He was greeted with enthusiasm. The overture to Mendelssohn's *Rey Blas* was the first offering, which was rendered with an exotic warmth that established his way over his hearers. The two-selson heard Brahms Symphony No. 1, op. 68 was then played. Alfred Brain, of the orchestra, played the beautiful horn solo exceptionally well and prolonged cheers and applause followed its close. Chausson's symphonic poem, *Viviane*, op. 5, which was played for the first time in Los Angeles, was the second work of that composer to be produced within the week. It was a work of great charm and interest but occasionally became reminiscent. The final number, Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2*, was played with fire and dash—the pianist in the conductor showed plainly in this.

"An appreciation from Ossip Gabrilowitsch: To Alfred Brain, in remembrance of the splendid Hollywood Bowl season 1934, which he so successfully managed."

Mrs. Judy Barnhardt, Alf's grand-daughter has an inscribed cigarette case that was presented to Alf by the Hollywood Bowl.

Judy goes onto say, "I don't know why the King of Italy gave the gift but I

The Manager's Weekly Letter

Members of the Hollywood Bowl and Philharmonic orchestras have been before the public from 12 to 15 years. We cherish the friendships that have been formed in these years.

This season we are greeting you in an official capacity. Early this spring the members of the Philharmonic Orchestra organized SYMPHONY SOCIETY, INC., a non-profit corporation. We were prompted by a sincere desire to contribute to the well being of music in Southern California by assuring the continuance of summer concerts in the Bowl in the 1934 season.

From the inception of this organization we have met with support and friendly cooperation from musicians, music lovers, civic leaders and the public at large. It is impossible for me personally to acknowledge this help. Through the pages of the Bowl Program may I express thanks to all who have given us encouragement and material support.

SYMPHONY SOCIETY, INC., is administered by a committee of seven members of the orchestra. This executive committee is as follows: Alfred Brain, H. F. Walter, Charles White, Arthur Pabst, Frederick W. Kuphal, Frederick Moritz and Fred S. Gutterson. This committee represents all of the members of the orchestra.

Immediately upon the formation of our organization early last spring, we invited Mrs. Leland Atherton Irish to join us as General Chairman. She served in this capacity with rare distinction for the Bowl during its most successful season.

At great personal sacrifice, Mrs. Irish accepted our invitation and is rendering invaluable aid for which she receives no remuneration. Her dynamic energy and unselfish service not only have endeared her to us but have inspired us with renewed desire to make 1934 the Bowl's finest season.

With rare tact and diplomacy she has ironed out difficulties that beset our path in the early stages of pre-season work. Her zeal and determination have inspired all around her to redouble their efforts. We are happy to be offered this opportunity to express to her our profound appreciation.

Alfred Brain
President SYMPHONY SOCIETY, INC.
and Manager Bowl Season

Mrs. Irish Chosen General Chairman for Bowl Season

Mrs. Leland Atherton Irish will serve as general chairman for the Bowl season of 1934-1935. She was chosen by the Bowl Symphony Orchestra, which will appear in four concerts during the season, which begins July 10.

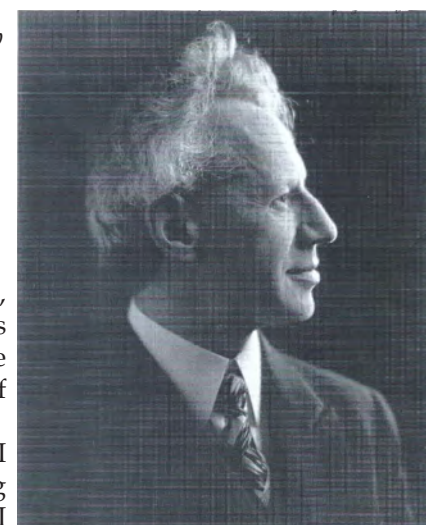
Mrs. Irish was drafted by the Bowl Symphony Orchestra to be its general chairman for the season of 1934-1935. She is a native of Los Angeles and has been associated with the Bowl since 1922.

The Bowl Symphony Orchestra, which will appear in four concerts during the season, which begins July 10.

Mrs. Irish was drafted by the Bowl Symphony Orchestra to be its general chairman for the season of 1934-1935. She is a native of Los Angeles and has been associated with the Bowl since 1922.

Newspaper clippings concerning Mrs. Iris, the General Chairman for the Bowl Season

Clipping from The Musical Courier, August 25, 1927 praising Brain's performance in Brahms's Symphony No. 1





do know that grandpa played in the orchestra that wore the big black hats (my mother's cat had kittens in his hat) and red suits.

To Alfred E Brain
From The Staff in F
Hollywood Bowl 1934

Alf's Performance of Strauss's Horn Concerto

Alf always had a great affinity for the first Strauss Horn Concerto, as can be seen from the adulations he had for his playing of it in London. His debut as a soloist was with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, at the Hollywood Bowl, 22 August 1931, conducted by Artur Rodzinski. This concert was also broadcast and Alf received (and kept) letters from several admiring listeners to the radio broadcast, as well as at least one letter from a colleague who had attended the concert. Here is perhaps the most enthusiastic – one he received from Betram Colville, August 24th, 1931:

My dear friend Brain!

I, like many other thousands of folk, listened in over the radio last Saturday evening, and greatly enjoyed your wondrous exposition of French horn playing. Each and every note standing out as plain as a bell, and I

was not alone before that radio. Mrs. Colville and a friend also listened in, drinking in every note as it flew through the air into the room we were seated in.

Well, may Bruno David Ussher call you a superb artist! Also, that it is hard to understand why the Philharmonic has not seen fit to feature you ere this.

I sincerely congratulate you my friend most heartily on your beautiful rendition of that trying work by Strauss, and hope in the near future to be again able to hear another rendition, -- if not of that number, another of like caliber

As I came from that radio, I sure felt proud, that as an Englishman born, it was one of my countrymen that enabled those thousands of American listeners, enjoy the fine interpretative playing, of that number, thereby letting them know the pure noble quality of the French horn. An instrument that is still strange to the majority of music lovers, the width and length of America.

Congratulations, my dear Brain, and may you be in the same fettle as you were last Saturday evening, for many years to come, to demonstrate so beautifully, the possibilities of that noble instrument – the French horn. This communication is sent in all sincerity, and from the heart, from a brother French horn player, but not an artist in any sense of the word, according to the extreme heights to which you personally have ascended in your great accomplishments.

Kindly accept the above lines in the spirit they were written, and believe me my friend when I again say, I sure appreciated your grand exposition of French horn playing, which was certainly a revelation to all who listened in, both at the Hollywood Bowl, as well as over radio. Wishing your future a happy and prosperous one, I remain your sincere friend

Bertram Colville

1144 West Edgeware Road, Bellevue Avenue,
Los Angeles, California

The following appreciation came from the *Pacific Coast Musician*, August 29 1931:

Hollywood Bowl Concerts – Record Bowl Attendance

Richard Strauss is said to have written his Concerto for *Waldhorn* for his father, who was a noted performer on that difficult instrument. The work was given a superb rendition by Alfred Brain Saturday night. To play the horn well in the ordinary course of orchestra work is a skillful achievement, but to play a difficult work for the horn well – as Brain did – is akin to being genius.

Here is another he received from the Business Manager of the Hollywood Bowl Symphony, dated September 17th 1931:

Mr. Alfred E Brain
801 SO Gramercy Drive
Los Angeles
Dear Mr. Brain,

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate you upon the splendid performance, which you gave as soloist of the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra on the evening of August 22nd. May I express the appreciation of the management as well as the board of directors of the Hollywood Bowl Association and thank you for your splendid spirit of cooperation in making this appearance?

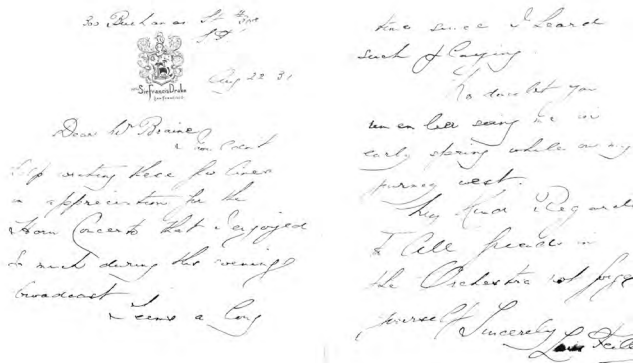
Sincerely yours,
Hollywood Bowl Association Inc.
Business Manager
Glen B Tindall





All the horn players present at Alf's performance of the Strauss No. 1 recalled that he played it beautifully. DeRosa recalls that the one thing that was very noticeable came at the end of the first movement. Instead of going down to the lower c", Alf went up to the high c". "Amazing, but it really sounded beautiful."

Alf also received congratulations for the famous conductor Louis Kleiber, who had emigrated to America.



An historic broadcast took place in 1939 for Columbia Radio, and Alfred received the following letter, dated May 16th 1939, from the Secretary of the Vice President of the Southern California Symphony Orchestra, concerning his part in the broadcast:

Dear Al,

On behalf of the Southern California Symphony Association may I take this opportunity to thank you for your graciousness in consenting to play in the First Chair for our first broadcast over Columbia a week ago Sunday night. Mr. Mudd has been in Bermuda and our executive committee meeting has been delayed, but I assure you that I am taking the next opportunity to tell the board members of your gift and the willing way in which you made it.

Your talent, which is outstanding, certainly was noticeable in your playing. The gratitude of the men in the orchestra will surely manifest itself, and I personally wish to express my thanks.

With kindest personal regards to you and dear Mrs. Brain,

I remain sincerely yours,

Mrs. Leiland Atherton Irish.

Executive Vice President, Secretary⁷

Apart from his regular work in the orchestras and for the movie industry, Alfred also took part in chamber music. From 1931, he was the principal horn in the Henri De Busscher Ensemble, also called the Los Angeles Philharmonic Woodwind Ensemble, that featured wind principals from the orchestra.

Alfred had known Henri De Busscher some years before in the Queen's Hall Orchestra. De Busscher, speaking to Lady Barbirolli many years later, remembered the beauty and virtuosity of Alfred's playing in his Queen's Hall days. "It was a big sound," he said.

The Manager of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra for forty-one years was Fred Kuphal, and writing to Stephen Pettitt, December 20th 1970, he recalled:

I held that position [of Manager of the LAPO] for 41 years and am happy to inform you of my high regard of Alfred Brain who was undoubtedly one of the World's outstanding Hornists.

While I knew him personally, you will shortly receive a letter from one of his intimate fellow Hornists who will narrate his long association in our Orchestra with Alfred E Brain, and in the Picture and Recording World. His name and address, Laurence Sansone Jr, 3128 Club Drive Los Angeles, California 90064.⁸

Laurence Sansone Jnr (son of the very famous Lorenzo Sansone, the horn player and designer who settled in New York City), also wrote to Stephen Pettitt on 15 November 1971, about his association with Alfred Brain.⁹ From the letter, we learn that he had "the pleasure of knowing and playing the French Horn with Alfred since 1929." Sansone's position from 1929 was fourth horn and he described Alfred as "a close friend." They played together in the LAPO from that year until Alfred left to join the studios where Sansone became his second horn.

Referring to Alfred's year in New York, Sansone mentioned that Alfred did not like New York or Damrosch and, according to this letter, Alfred played in the Los Angeles Philharmonic until 1945, with the exception of "three seasons" when he was with the Cleveland orchestra. All other accounts indicate that Brain played only two seasons in Cleveland.

Sansone referred to Al Brain as horn soloist with Twentieth Century Fox Studios, and the film scores gave Alfred ample opportunity to shine in horn solos; the microphone was a little closer to him than to the other players. The reason for this was due to both the type of sound and instrument that Alf played. His was a sound that projected to the back of any hall. He once asked, "Who do we play for, the mike or the people out there?" The narrower bore of the Alexander ensured that Alf's sound carried. The Conn 8D, with its wider flared bell, was much easier for the mikes to pick up. Jack Cave sums it up well:

I worked with him (Alf) in all his pictures – *The Adventures of Marco Polo* – I sat there and could not believe the volume that was coming out of that single horn. They had eight horns on the opening theme and he had two or three players on the stand that he recommended. Despite aiming to help the younger guys, in the unisons two or three of them just absolutely weren't making it. You had somebody putting those clams in there on the high notes all the time – well!

Brain said, "that's all right, I'll just cover it." And boy, I was sitting next to him and he picked up his horn and, wow, I was swallowing the notes. I could hardly play. You couldn't hear anybody else. His sound just cut through like a knife. When they played the music back to us, it was precise and perfect. If anyone had missed any notes, you couldn't hear them. He had such an enormous chest, his volume of air – I had a note one time at MGM. He was playing second horn to me because he had just come back from the East playing in the symphony. I was established as first horn, so he played second horn at MGM for a long time just to have money. So I am playing this long note, this big long thing with four slow bars and I'm holding this



note and I kept running out on the third bar, so I said, "just let me see if I can make the whole thing." So I would really suck up the rug and then just let out as little air as possible, and still run out. He picks up his horn and said "just let me play the next one." So we rehearsed again and he gets a hold of that note and plays it all the way out to the end and then goes "puff" and lets out a chest full of air to show me what a chest he had. That's why the guy never got tired. He worked out in his garden. He had a hand plough that he used, and he stayed strong.

Gale Robinson summed up this projection point admirably,

I remember talking to Decker about this, and he said, "My God, now a person's fundamental sound is going to be more important (now the closer they come into us)." Because Brain used to rely upon a thrust and projection, his sound would ricochet around and you could put the mike way back there and you could still hear him. And when you were sitting next to him you could hear very little. It was crazy. And with the Conn 8D you could send out a sound that was around you. You could hear it, and that was why they liked the 8D, because the first horn could hear the second, the second could hear the third, and the fourth could hear the first. But sometimes with the slender sound, the sound would go up instead of coagulating around here, and people would have trouble hearing each other. We would sit next to Brain, and it would sound as if he was barely playing, but he was projecting like crazy. So they used to talk about that whole thing. Do you want to feel good? Mr. Feel Good? Hey, you are sitting around and you can hear everybody well. Or do you want to go for the audience? Who are you playing for, your colleagues or the audience? Make your decision. I remember that we used to talk about the psychology of that.¹⁰

Needless to say, we know what Alf's thoughts were on this point, as stated he believed your sound should go out to the back of the hall – there are the people who want to hear. You play for them and not yourself. It is interesting to think that this position on the concept of projection came from his huge orchestral experience, whilst the other horn players in the studios, not having this experience or knowledge, and playing their Conn's were not aware of the situation.

Gale Robinson, himself a much respected horn player in LA, went on to say about Alf, "he was an incredible horn player, an incredible soloist."

With the introduction of Alf and other key wind players, the LAPO became a force with which to be reckoned. Alf always made sure that he had a great section under him for he felt that he was only one of the orchestra, the rest of the section had to be great players. So naturally Alf had some very distinguished horn players in his section. Alf was on first, Vince DeRubertis on second, Vince DeRosa on third, and Laurence Sansone Jnr on fourth. Naturally sections change, and Richard Perissi and James Decker (five years Alf's second horn) also played in the section at different times.

The quality of Alf's quartet was such they were often asked to do special work. A famous American orchestra was involved in recording the original Disney *Fantasia*. When it came to the "Peter and the Wolf" theme, the horns were not strong enough – Stokowski wanted more. So he sent for Alf and Co., and they recorded the theme for the film – Alf (1st), Vincent DeRubertis (2nd), Vince DeRosa (3rd), and Odalindo Perissi (4th)

To highlight how Alf helped young horn players at the outset of their careers: during a performance of Mahler's Symphony No. 3 (under Franz Waxman), Alf turned to Decker at the end of the first movement and said, "Hey, I can't play anymore, you play the first part, and I'll do second." So it happened that way, Decker is convinced that there was nothing wrong with Alf at all; he just wanted to show off Decker's talents to Waxman. Well it paid off and, from that point on, Waxman used Decker as his first horn for all his shows. Decker said Alf was generous to a fault and would always help out young horn players. He had started the habit in London of accepting all the work given to him, then he would put other players in to the rehearsals or shows. He would keep three or four players busy. It was nothing for Alf to ask the orchestrators in the film studios to write for eight horns or more, so that guys could get work. Alf was never afraid of young talent; other players were a little fearful, but Alf reckoned "the better the horn players, the more they will write for the instrument."

Opportunities for performing in chamber music during these early years were perhaps greater than they were much later on in Alfred's career when the film studio contracts system began to restrict what players could do outside of the studios

The Little Symphony Orchestra

The Little Symphony Orchestra was an orchestra founded by Adolph Tandler, which had been the Los Angeles Symphony until its demise in about 1915. Tandler hired his musicians from the Los Angeles Philharmonic. There was excited air of anticipation regarding the concerts. This article appeared in *Music and Musician*:

Patrons of Adolf Tandler's Little Symphony may anticipate a rare and unusual pleasure for tomorrow morning, because Alfred Brain, the eminent French Horn soloist of the Philharmonic Orchestra will then be heard in the Mozart concerto in E-flat major No. 447.

Horn playing and superlative playing at that seems a family trait with the Brains, who have given to England several of the finest Hornists. Both the Father and brother of Mr. Alfred Brain rank foremost in London as masters of the mellow-toned and difficult instrument. Altogether Tandler has chosen an attractive programme for his second of his eleven o'clock Biltmore musicales, as it contains also Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll* and the *Crown of India* suite by Elgar.¹¹

The review in the *Music and Musicians* was titled: "Alfred Brain excels in rare Mozart horn work with the Little Symphony."

Alfred Brain's performance of the Concerto for French Horn solo by Mozart came as the artistic climax of the program. Mr. Brain needs no introduction to lovers of orchestral music in this City. His soli with the



Philharmonic Orchestra (where he leads the horn section) have been eminently enjoyable, so was his playing in this somewhat tricky, if somewhat light work, by Mozart.

There is a sunny radiance and mellowness, beautifully sustained legato and again an astoundingly feathery staccato in Mr. Brain's command of this difficult instrument, which truly mark him as a master of his art. It has been surprising that Director Rothwell, not long before has taken advantage of featuring him as a soloist, for instance, in the concerto by Franz Strauss, the father of Richard.

Needless to say at length that in such a major work Mr. Brain's remarkable tone quality and musicianship would be revealed to still greater advantage (and general pleasures) as it was in his fine regard for Mozartian simplicity added gratification to the concerto, of which the closing rondo with its imaginary hunting scene is the most interesting of the three movements.

As there seems to be a difference in marking of the Mozart Horn Concertos (of these are four, all in E-flat major), I will add that it is marked on the music used Saturday as "Concerto No. 2, Op 105" which probably corresponds to No. 495 in Köchel's catalogue of Mozart's works, Incidentally the accompaniment is quite simple. It sounds as if Mozart had dashed off the work quickly, dwelling only in lighter moods.¹²

While this reviewer was a great fan of Alf's playing, he is wrong in his information on the concerto played. The second concerto of Mozart is K.417, and the K.495 is the fourth concerto

*Cutting from The Evening Express
February 5, 1926*

*The photo below was sent to Alf by the conductor and founder of the "Little Symphony,"
Adolf Tandler.*

It reads, "To Alfred Brain, horn player par excellence to recollect the Little Symphony and its founder"

achievement.
FEATURE HORN CONCERTO
Patrons of Adolf Tandler's Little Symphony may anticipate rare and unusual pleasure for "summer morning" by hearing cause Alfred Brain, the eminent French horn soloist of the Philharmonic Orchestra will then be heard in the Mozart concerto in E-flat major No. 447.
Horn playing and superlative playing of that foremost in London as masters of the mellow-toned and difficult instrument.
Adolf Tandler has chosen an attractive program for this second of his seven o'clock Billmore musicals, as it contains also Wagner's "Rheingried Idyll" and "The Crown of India" suite by Liszt.
WILL IMPROVE STUDIO
Improvements aggregating \$100,000 are planned for the Fine Arts Studio, 4200 Sunset boulevard, it was learned today.



ALFRED BRAIN
Both the father and brother of Mr. Alfred Brain rank foremost in London as masters of the mellow-toned and difficult instrument.



BEVERLY HILLS FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA FRANZ WAXMAN, MUSICAL DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR Philip Kahgan, Orchestra Personnel Manager

VIOLINS Harold Ayres, Solo Gilbert Rait David Berman Martin Black Anthony Braglia, Solo John Bruno Joachim Chastanon Ralph Chazin John Corbin James Gettelf Helmo Hatto William Hoffmann Arnold Jursky Isadore Karon Conner Kertson Martin Linconick Arthur Maabe Leonard Malarsky Purcell Meyer Ralph Schoenkel Joseph Stetzel Paul Starn Lester Steiner Michele Spiegel Maurice Warner Oscar Wasserberger	BASSES Larry Goldson Simon Green, Solo Aron Guterson Harold Linconick Alexander Walden Leon Ziporkin	CONTRA BASSOON Art Fleming
FLUTES Robert Bladet Arthur Rubenstein Harold Lewis, Solo	PICCOLO Robert Bladet	HORNS Alfred Brain, Solo Huntington Burdick James Decker Stclair Lott Lara Sidi
OBOES Alexander DuVair, Solo Arnold Koblentz William Kostsky	ENGLISH HORN William Kostsky	TRUMPETS Vladimir Drucker, Solo Max Gershinoff Sidney Lazar
CLARINETS Kelman Bloch, Solo Joseph Kreschler Hugo Raimondi Martin Zwick	BASS CLARINET Martin Zwick	TROMBONES Melville Perry David Rubin Lara Steinberger, Solo
E FLAT CLARINET Hugo Raimondi	BASSOONS Art Fleming Kenneth Lowman Jules Seder, Solo	TUBA L. W. Kotter
CELLOS Maurice Amsterdam Paul Bergstrom Joseph Coggan Joseph Di Tullio		HARP Aida Muller
		PIANO Edward Rebrer
		TYMPANI Nancy Moyer
		PERCUSSION Frank Horacoff Lee Percin Harold Rees Jack Watson
		Librarian Jaro Churkin
		Stage Manager J. Swepe

The Beverly Hills Orchestra (Little Sym- phony Orchestra) roster

Alf with the Cleveland Orchestra (1934-1936)

This seems a fitting place to discuss Alf and his connection with the Cleveland Orchestra. From what we know, Alf spent two seasons with the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra, and no one seems to know why he did this. Indeed, his colleagues in Los Angeles seemed

quite unconcerned that Alf had "popped up" to Cleveland, as if they always knew that he would never permanently leave LA. It was just one of those things he did, for whatever reason.

A Los Angeles newspaper alludes to Alfred Brain's departure from the Los Angeles Philharmonic and his period with the Cleveland Orchestra: "Alfred Brain is a distinguished and famous artist whose rich experience includes playing under Nikisch, Richter, and Weingartner in Europe. He was with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra for ten years, and followed his former chief, Dr. Artur Rodzinski, to Cleveland this year."

It seems strange that Alf should go to Cleveland for such a short period of time, and we are in the dark as to why he did this. He never moved there to live, and went back to Los Angeles after 1936.

The reason why Alf moved from and back to Hollywood can be better explained by the interviews both he and Vladimir Drucker gave to Inez Wallace in Cleveland: their move to Cleveland was due, in Alf's words, "to the curtailing of their earning capacity due to the activities of the NRA."¹³ [National Recovery Administration] The musicians were limited to working a set number of hours a week.

Examining a very detailed book on this orchestra, *The Cleveland Orchestra Story: "Second To None"* by Donald Rosenberg,¹⁴ we are not given any clues but, from the information given in Rosenberg's book, we know Wendell Hoss was there as principal in the years 1921-1922 and 1930-1933, and Alf 1934-1936. The other horn players listed around this specific time are Alexander Andru (1929-1941), Theodore Seder (1933-1934 – principal and 1934-1937 – horn), and Albert Stagliano (uncle of James) (1936-1937 – principal).



Chamber Music was also started with the Cleveland Wind Ensemble

To paint a fuller picture, the manager of the Cleveland Orchestra, Carl Vosburgh, had secured ten one hour concerts with Rodzinski and the National Broadcasting Company. The Orchestra would be paid \$500 per broadcast. Rodzinski and the Cleveland Orchestra would then be heard across America. Severance Hall was to be used for operas. During Alf's period there, Rodzinski programmed works such as *Die Walküre*, *Ein Heldenleben*, *Petrouchka*, Beethoven's *Eroica*, Brahms Symphonies 1 and 2, Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mzensk*, the great works of Sibelius, Debussy, Albeniz, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Rachmaninoff, and Ravel. *Rosenkavalier*, *Carmen*, *Die Fledermaus*, and *Parsifal* were scheduled for the 1935-36 season. For all those works, a superb first horn is required, and better still, to keep the costs down one who did not require an assistant.

Bearing in mind the financial constraints that Rodzinski was under, the orchestral management probably depended on local freelance horn players to make up Alf's horn sections.

In 1934-35, the horn section listed for that season is A. E. Brain, Alexander Andru (second), Theodore Seder (third), William Namen (fourth), Edwin Allen, Richard Peck, William Freuderma, and Henry Burant.

For the 1935-36 Season, the roster shows A. E. Brain, A. Andru, T. Seder, W. Namen, R. Peck, and William Freuderma.

Probably Alf did not return to do more work there because of the local musician's union. There was a large turnover of musicians with Rodzinski – 120 in total. As previously stated, if a player did not come up to his standard, he fired him.

The orchestra now wanted to bring in out-of-town string players. Probably Rodzinski had fired most of the local ones. It was here that the local musicians union stepped in. They banned the use of "imported" players and threatened to stop the whole orchestral season if local players were not considered. So why did Alf remain there for another season and at the same time create problems for the local musicians? Since doing that would not be in his nature, it is likely there was already some contractual agreement between him and the orchestra (or Rodzinski). Alf's post was then taken over by Albert Stagliano, who lasted one year (1936-37).

As well as taking part in orchestral music with the Cleveland Orchestra, on their home ground, and during their tour in New England, Alf also took part in chamber music recitals with the Cleveland Woodwind Ensemble. The following concert was performed on January 11, 1935:

Chamber Music.
The Cleveland Woodwind Ensemble with Severin Eisenberger as soloist, will give the first concert of the new year in the chamber music series at Severance Hall Friday evening at 8:30, offering as its major item the early Beethoven Quintet, Op. 16, for oboe, clarinet, horn, bassoon and piano, in which the master allies himself the spirit of his predecessors, Haydn and Mozart. The ensemble, augmented this year by the new horn player, Alfred Brain, comprises Philip Kirchner, Maurice Sharp, Daniel Bonade and William Pollis, all first chair men in the Cleveland Orchestra, and each one of them as fine an artist in his field as can be found anywhere. With Eisenberger, noted for his Beethoven interpretations, at the piano, an excellent performance is assured.

The program includes two modern works by Jacques Ibert and Fildowski, one of which has been transcribed for wind quintet by Georges Barrere. Both will receive their first hearing in Cleveland. The closing number is the Divertimento, Op. 51, a piano sextet by the Russian composer, Paul Tjun.

The second of Eisenberger's one-composer recitals in the Hotel Statler ball room will take place Monday evening, Jan. 14. We are told that the program, devoted to Brahms, is in celebration of the centenary of this composer's birth. Brahms was born in 1833, so the celebration comes a little late. However, there is no centenary every year in order to be celebrated, and whether it is his birthday or not, listeners will enjoy hearing this master interpreted by an sterling pianist as Eisenberger. He will include on his program the Ballade in D major, the Schaparden in B and G minor, the Intermezzo in B minor, the Variations on a Theme by Paganini, and the F minor Sonata.

SEVERANCE HALL
Friday evening, January 11, 1935
8 o'clock-10:30
CHAMBER MUSIC HALL
THE CLEVELAND WOODWIND ENSEMBLE
Philip Kirchner, oboe
William Pollis, bassoon
Alfred Brain, horn
Daniel Bonade, clarinet
Maurice Sharp, flute

Assisting artist, SEVERIN EISENBERGER, piano

PROGRAM

Beethoven: Quintet, 5 flat, Op. 16, for oboe, clarinet, horn, bassoon, and piano
Brahms: Sextet, Op. 51, for piano, oboe, clarinet, horn, and bassoon
Ibert: Suite, Op. 16, for piano, oboe, clarinet, horn, and bassoon
Fildowski: Suite, Op. 51, for piano, oboe, clarinet, horn, and bassoon

First time in Cleveland

IFTBHS/IBHS

Fildowski
Suite Miniature
Pastorale
Sonetto
Rondeau
Fugue
Trio

First time in Cleveland

Originally written for eight wind instruments including oboe, flute, clarinet, horn, and bassoon by Georges Barrere.

Paul Tjun
Divertimento, Op. 51, for piano, oboe, clarinet, horn, and bassoon
Allegretto
Intermezzo I
Pastorale
Intermezzo II
Sonata

The next concert in this series, Friday evening, March 1, 1935, at 8 o'clock-10:30
CHAMBER MUSIC HALL
Assisting artist, SEVERIN EISENBERGER, piano
The Statler Piano is used by Mr. Eisenberger

3:00 p.m. Rehearsal, Masonic Temple, Scranton, Pa.
8:30 p.m. Concert, Masonic Temple, Scranton, Pa.
11:00 p.m. Leave Scranton, Lehigh Valley, same station as arrival
1:30 p.m. Arrive Wilkes-Barre, Lehigh Valley Station, Pullman ready upon arrival.

Wednesday, February 5, 2:07 a.m. Leave Wilkes-Barre, Lehigh Valley Railroad, same station.
7:45 a.m. Arrive New York City, Pennsylvania Station
6:14 p.m. Leave New York City, New York Central Railroad, Grand Central Station (different station than arrival)
6:49 p.m. Arrive White Plains, N.Y.
8:45 p.m. Concert, Westchester County Center, White Plains, N.Y.
11:35 p.m. Leave White Plains, New York Central Railroad, same station as arrival.

Thursday, February 5, 12:27 a.m. Arrive New York City, Grand Central Station.
1:00 p.m. Arrive New York City, New York Central Railroad, Grand Central Station.
4:45 p.m. Arrive Troy, N.Y.
8:20 p.m. Concert, Music Hall, Troy, N.Y.

Friday, February 7, 5:00 p.m. Leave Troy, B. & M. Railroad, same station as arrival.
6:25 p.m. Arrive Williamstown, Mass. Buses will meet train upon arrival for transportation to College.
8:30 p.m. Concert, Chapin Auditorium, Williamstown, Mass. Buses will leave immediately after concert for restaurants and then railroad station.
11:30 p.m. Leave Williamstown, B. & M. Railroad, same station as arrival.

Saturday, February 8, 1:50 a.m. Arrive Northampton, Mass.
4:00 p.m. Concert, John M. Green Hall, Northampton.
Sunday, February 9, 11:54 a.m. Leave Northampton, B. & M. Railroad, same station as arrival.
12:25 p.m. Arrive Springfield, Mass.
3:00 p.m. Concert, Municipal Auditorium, Springfield.

Monday, February 10, 8:55 a.m. Leave Springfield, B. & A. Railroad, same station as arrival.
12:00 p.m. Arrive Providence, Rhode Island
3:00 p.m. Rehearsal, Metropolitan Theatre, Providence
8:30 p.m. Concert, Metropolitan Theatre, Providence

Tuesday, February 11, 10:00 a.m. Leave Providence, New Haven Railroad, same station as arrival.
11:50 a.m. Arrive Worcester, Mass.
8:15 p.m. Concert, Memorial Auditorium, Worcester

Wednesday, February 12, 9:52 a.m. Leave Worcester, B. & A. Railroad, same station as arrival.
2:30 p.m. Children's Concert, Bushnell Memorial Hall, Hartford.
8:15 p.m. Concert, Bushnell Memorial Hall, Hartford.

Thursday, February 13, 1:56 p.m. Leave Hartford, Conn. New Haven Railroad
5:35 p.m. Arrive Albany, N.Y.

Here are copies of the Cleveland Orchestra's rehearsal/touring schedules:

The Cleveland Orchestra: Eastern Tour, February 1936
Artur Rodzinski, Conductor
Rudolph Ringwald, Associate Conductor
C.J. Vosburgh, Manager
Rehearsal Schedule, No. 18-19-20

Eighteenth Week

Mon. Feb. 3, 9:00 a.m. Rehearsal, Severance Hall
Mon. Feb. 3, 10:30 a.m. Concert-Broadcast, Severance Hall
Tue. Feb. 4, 3:00 p.m. Rehearsal, Masonic Temple, Scranton, Pa.
Tue. Feb. 4, 8:30 p.m. Concert, Masonic Temple, Scranton, Pa.
Wed. Feb. 5, 8:45 p.m. Concert, Westchester County Center, White Plains, N.Y.
Thurs. Feb. 6, 8:20 p.m. Concert, Music Hall, Troy, N.Y.
Fri. Feb. 7, 8:30 p.m. Concert, Chapin Auditorium, Williamstown, Mass.
Sat. Feb. 8, 8:00 p.m. Concert, John M. Green Hall, Northampton, Mass.
Sun. Feb. 9, 9:00 p.m. Concert, Municipal Auditorium, Springfield, Mass.

Nineteenth Week

Mon. Feb. 10, 3:00 p.m. Rehearsal, Metropolitan Theatre, Providence, R.I.
Mon. Feb. 10, 8:30 p.m. Concert, Metropolitan Theatre, Providence, R.I.
Tue. Feb. 11, 8:15 p.m. Concert, Memorial Auditorium, Worcester, Mass.
Wed. Feb. 12, 2:30 p.m. Children's concert, Bushnell Memorial Hall, Hartford, Conn.
Wed. Feb. 12, 8:15 p.m. Concert, Bushnell Memorial Hall, Hartford, Conn.
Thurs. Feb. 13, 8:30 p.m. Concert, Philip Livingston High School, Albany, N.Y.
Fri. Feb. 14, 8:30 p.m. Concert, McCarter Theatre, Princeton, N.J.
Sat. Feb. 15, 8:30 p.m. Concert, Lyric Theatre, Allentown, Pa.
Sun. Feb. 16, 2:30 p.m. Concert, Colonial Theatre, Lancaster, Pa.

Twentieth Week

Mon. Feb. 17, 8:30 p.m. Concert, from Temple, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.
Tue. Feb. 18, 8:15 p.m. Concert, Bailey Hall, Ithaca, N.Y.
Wed. Feb. 19, 8:30 p.m. Children's Concert, Senior High School, Niagara Falls, N.Y.
Wed. Feb. 19, 8:15 p.m. Concert, Senior High School, Niagara Falls, N.Y.
Thurs. Feb. 20, 8:30 p.m. Concert, Palace Theatre, Hamilton, Ontario
Fri. Feb. 21, 10:30 a.m. Rehearsal, Severance Hall, Cleveland
Fri. Feb. 21, 3:00 p.m. Rehearsal, Severance Hall, Cleveland
Fri. Feb. 21, 8:30 p.m. Rehearsal, Severance Hall, Cleveland

William Doeh, Personnel Manager, Garf. 9700

Tuesday, February 4, 1:00 a.m. Leave Cleveland, New York Central Railroad, New Union Terminal. Pullmans ready at 10:00 p.m. Monday night. Diner on train in morning for breakfast.
12:00 noon. Arrive Wilkes-Barre, Pa. Lehigh Valley R.R. Station.
12:30 p.m. Leave Wilkes-Barre, Lehigh Valley Station, Pullman ready upon arrival.
1:00 p.m. Arrive Scranton, Pa.

Friday, February 14, 3:18 a.m. Leave Albany, New York Central Railroad, same station as arrival.
6:45 a.m. Arrive New York City, Grand Central Station.
5:05 p.m. Leave New York City, Pennsylvania Railroad Pennsylvania Station (different station)
6:13 p.m. Arrive Princeton, N.J.
8:30 p.m. Concert, McCarter Theatre, Princeton
10:54 p.m. Arrive Princeton, Pennsylvania Railroad, same station.
11:13 p.m. Arrive Trenton, N.J.

Sunday, February 15, 1:45 p.m. Leave Trenton, Pennsylvania Railroad, same station as arrival.
4:13 p.m. Arrive Allentown, Pa.
8:30 p.m. Concert, Lyric Theatre, Allentown.

Sunday, February 16, 9:50 a.m. Leave Allentown, Reading Railroad, different station than arrival.
12:00 noon. Arrive Lancaster, Pa.
2:30 p.m. Concert, Colonial Theatre, Lancaster
6:00 p.m. Leave Lancaster, Reading Railroad, same station.
8:10 p.m. Arrive Allentown, Pa.

Monday, February 17, 1:34 p.m. Leave Allentown, Pa. Lehigh Valley Railroad, same station.
3:33 p.m. Arrive Wilkes-Barre, Pa.
8:30 p.m. Concert, from Temple, Wilkes-Barre.

Tuesday, February 18, 1:50 p.m. Leave Wilkes-Barre, Lehigh Valley Railroad, same station as arrival.
4:10 p.m. Arrive Ithaca, N.Y.
8:15 p.m. Concert, Bailey Hall, Ithaca.

Wednesday, February 19, 8:15 a.m. Leave Ithaca, Lehigh Valley Railroad, same station as arrival.
11:45 a.m. Arrive Niagara Falls, N.Y.
3:00 p.m. Children's Concert, Senior High School
8:15 p.m. Concert, Senior High School

Thursday, February 20, 9:30 a.m. Leave Niagara Falls, Michigan Central Railroad, same station as arrival.
11:30 a.m. Arrive Hamilton, Ontario
8:30 p.m. Concert, Palace Theatre, Hamilton

Friday, February 21, 1:00 a.m. Leave Hamilton, T.H. & B. Railroad, same station as arrival.
6:55 a.m. Arrive East Cleveland.
7:10 a.m. Arrive Cleveland, New Union Terminal.

Alfred Brain's horn sections in the US

Below is a list of Alf's horn sections in the US. I am very grateful to Norman Schweikert for the following information.¹⁷

New York Symphony Orchestra (1922-23): Alfred E. Brain, Santiago Richart (alternate first), Schneiderman, Arthur (second), Srbecky, Max (third), Ferd Dultgen, (fourth)

Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra

1923-24: Alfred E. Brain, James Grubner (second), Karl Chlupsa (third), Vincent DeRubertis (fourth) Extras – Sam B. Bennet, E.B. Smyth

1924-25: Alfred E. Brain, J. E. George Hoffman, Vincent DeRubertis. Extras – S. B. Bennett, E. B. Smith, Ferd Schaeffer (third)



1925-26: Alfred E. Brain, J. Grubner, George Hoffman, Vincent DeRubertis. Extras, Odalindo Perissi, Nicola Lovelli

1926-1929: Alfred E. Brain, Vincent DeRubertis, George Hoffman, Max Srbecky. Extras De Gregoriisa, Odalindo Perissi, Culvert Bennett, Samuel B. Bennet.

1929-30: Alfred E. Brain, Vincent DeRubertis, George Hoffman Laurence Sansone Jr. Extras C. Bennett, N. Novelli

1930-31: Alfred E. Brain, Vincent DeRubertis, George Hoffman, Laurence Sansone Jr. Extras C Bennett, P. Lambert

1931-33: Alfred E. Brain, Vincent DeRubertis, George Hoffman, Odalindo Perissi. Extras C. Bennett, P Lambert

1933-34: Alfred E. Brain, Vincent DeRubertis, George Hoffman, Odalindo Perissi. Extra C. Bennet.

1943-44: Alfred E. Brain, James A Decker, Vincent DeRosa, Odalindo Perissi.

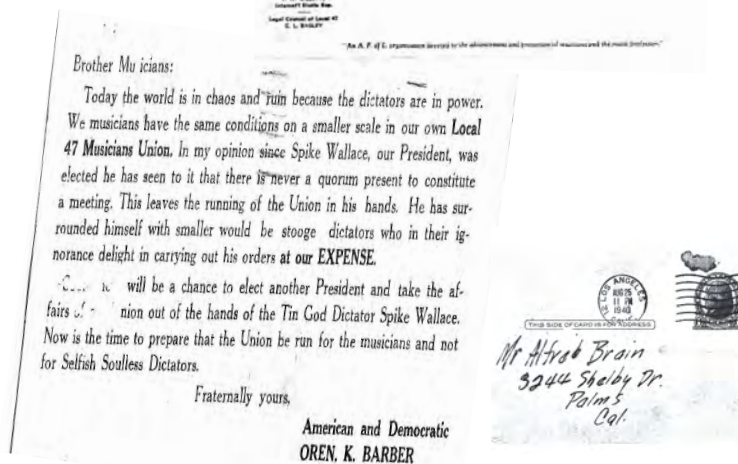
Cleveland Orchestra. Artur Rodzinski (conductor).

1934-35: Alfred E. Brain, Alexander Andru (second), Theodore Seder (third), William Namen (fourth), Extras, Edwin Allen, Richard Peck. William Freuderman, Henry Burant

1935-36: Alfred E. Brain, A. Andru, T. Seder, W. Namen. Extras R Peck, W Freuderman

Return to Hollywood

On his return to Hollywood, the political problems that were prevalent in the studios had not resolved themselves. The postcard (below) sent out by Oren K. Barber on August 25, 1940 illustrates the problem. It was sent to all the musicians involved in the studios and Alf got involved in the "protection" of the musicians, and was elected to the union by a large majority.



Alfred's Character and Style of Horn Playing

I believe that the character/personality of the horn player always manages to come through in the way he plays the horn. This is why I have grouped the two facets together.

To look at Alf's personality I think there is nowhere better to begin than the words of his grand-daughter, Judy Barnhardt:

My grandfather was such a wonderful person. He loved to have a good time; he was very good to us as children (the perfect *spoil-them-and-send-them-home* kind of grandparent that every child should have). My mother played piano when she was young but didn't keep it up. Grandpa gave us a violin, a trumpet and a piano at one time or another when we were kids but neither my sister nor I had any of the talent of the Brain side of the family.¹⁸

Laurence Sansone Jnr, Alf's fourth horn for many years, made the following comment on Alf's playing and personality. [letter to Stephen Pettitt, sent November 1971]:

Alfred Brain's Horn playing was second to no one. I have never heard him play a bad concert in all the hundreds of concerts he and I played together. I never heard him practice one note at home or before a concert. He just went on the stage and played whatever was on the program and his playing was that of a fine artist. His endurance was fantastic. We played after the concerts at the studios all night until it was time to have our rehearsals with the Philharmonic and Alfred always played like the Artist that he was.

I have heard Dennis play and Alfred, and it would be hard to say who was the better player, their tone was alike and the style of playing was the same.

As a man, there was none better. He was always helping the ones that were not as talented as he was and always protecting their positions. I know of many times that he wanted to quit if they fired some Horn player because he could not do his job as well. He always helped everyone.¹⁹

Alf was blessed with "Mother Brain's" jaw formation (which Dennis also had) – a strong square jaw, with small, even teeth. From this basis both he and Dennis used a great deal of pressure, but due to their innate strength, this was never a problem for them.

It was interesting to hear Art Frantz state that, after meeting Dennis at Alf's house, talking about the embouchure of both uncle and nephew he said, "he (Alf) and Dennis just seemed to screw the mouthpiece into their lips." When the great conductor Erich Leinsdorf was asked to compare Alf and Dennis, he felt there was no comparison at all – Dennis was a wonderful soloist, but not a great orchestral player, as you could not hear him. On the other hand, Alf was a wonderful soloist, and one who could truly project his sound through an orchestra. Maybe this was why Dennis himself insisted, "Uncle Alf was the greatest horn player of the whole family."²⁰

Those who saw the embouchures of Alf and Dennis said they were much the same but that there was a slight difference



in the two. Dennis had an “unusual” embouchure and, due to his teeth formation (sloping inwards), used far more of his upper lip than “normal,” which would explain this “lack of power.” Alf’s on the other hand, was “straight on” (two thirds top, one third bottom) and firm. It was this natural power which could carry him through hours of playing without a “bumper” [assistant].

In order to keep up his lip strength, Alf kept rattling off the Gallay horn studies which, to a great many players who heard him, was an amazing feat with such a small mouthpiece,

His “lip” made him money. Whatever and wherever he played, including the Mahler symphonies, he never had an assistant. James Decker recalled, when he first started in the LAPO, Alf would sail through everything with ease. Alf always asked for double fee, “I don’t need an assistant, just give me the money.” We have already read the testimony of Alf’s co-players regarding his breath control and volume of sound, but all the horn players, including Vince DeRosa and James Decker, mention his musicianship and lyricism. Alf made everything sound easy. He had a complete command of all the nuances, anywhere in the range, no matter how quietly – he could just bring it in. After one such entry, Art Frantz asked him how he did it. Alf just smiled, but as Frantz said, “with that great huge chest, his entrance, you couldn’t hear it even when you sat next to him, he just seemed to bring it out from no place.”

His phrasing of the musical line was uncanny – it always seemed “right.” To quote Jack Cave,

It was his phrasing. He was just so musical. He could just put a phrase together or a horn call. I remember I was playing on a picture (with a soprano actress) and doing *L’Arlesienne* with a horn solo. I was first horn and had just done the solo when Brain came in. He was hired to do the horn call, and he got his horn out of the box and the director said to start the recording and he just played the horn call. The way he played that thing, everybody in the orchestra just stood up and applauded, because it was so thrilling. Nobody said a thing when I played this big long solo from *L’Arlesienne*. I thought, “Holy mackerel, what do I have to do to be like him?” No, he was something. No question about it, he had it – he was a big man, just a giant in every way.²¹

There is another story about Alf in similar circumstances. He had just played an amazing horn solo in some film and some members of the orchestra turned round and stared at him. Alf, as quick as anything, said, “What’s the matter? Haven’t you heard a horn solo before?”²²

Alf was completely fearless in his playing and he possessed great control and accuracy even in the most difficult, pressurized, and strenuous sessions. He was not afraid of anyone, including conductors. Wallenstein was conducting the LAPO in Tchaikovsky’s Sixth Symphony and started the rehearsal with the last movement, at the place where the horns have the syn-copated E octaves. Alf had not warmed up, so he came in very cold and the sound was not that nice.

Wallenstein redid the section, adding, “Could you make it sound a little nicer?” He asked for the section to be repeated

three times. Following the third request, Alf stood up, “Mr. Wallenstein, I do not warm up on my time, I warm up when I get paid for it.” Nothing more was said. He and Wallenstein never hit it off.

All of Alf’s contemporary horn players confirm his fearless approach to both his playing and to any conductor. When asked about his experience alongside Alf in the LAPO and Hollywood, Vince DeRosa said simply,

Nobody ever touched him. He was like a god. Nobody questioned him at all. They were lucky to get him on the job. Everything had to be correct. When the LAPO had been asked to play at an Easter Festival Concert, Alf did not hear the announcement that the audience could take home with them the Easter Lilies that were decorating the hall. He became very annoyed at the people “pinching” flowers that should be properly placed on graves. He calmed down when it was explained to him that the people had been invited to take them.²³

James Decker recalled an incident when he was sitting next to Alf at the end of a long take for a film. The director wanted it all “in the can in one.” There was a long exposed horn solo at the very end of a long piece. Due to Alf’s control, composure, and fearless approach, Alf played it perfectly, not a note out of place, and with superb phrasing. As they were putting the horns away, Alf turned to Decker and said, “Why do they do that? Put a solo like that right at the end? It gets so bloody lonesome up there sometimes.” James Decker also recalls when he heard Alf play the Brahms Horn Trio, “his phrasing and control left me enthralled – I had never heard such phrasing.” Whilst on the subject of the Brahms Trio, it is a tribute to how Alf viewed the music he had to play. Being the musician he was, it was not just about getting the horn out and playing the piece, you had to understand and appreciate what the composer wanted. It was obvious by James Decker’s comments that Alf, contrary his reticence to play the Trio in London, knew that he had mastered the pianissimos and the phrasings that he wanted to use for the Trio.²⁴ DeRosa said, “He could bring in the note anywhere in the range and come in – as soft as possible – and just as free and beautiful or loud.”²⁵ Alf had become a perfectionist.

Art Frantz, James Decker, and others believed that Alf’s ability regarding phrasing, nuances, control, and breath support, came as a direct result of Alf’s training as a choir boy in London – he basically sang on the horn. Vince DeRosa supports this when he said, “He had the ability to play with any ensemble and just fit in, he really was a great musician, that first, a horn player second.” Vince went on to say, “He could make the softest entrances, and he never prepared; he’d just pick up the horn and would come in on the quietest double or triple piano, or forte or triple forte, or a ten fortes!” Vince never heard Alf miss one entry on the horn. For over five years the members of the LAPO never heard one “split” either in rehearsal or concert.²⁶

Whilst discussing Alf’s powers of quiet entry, Richard Moore, a member of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra in New York for forty-two years, knew Alf in the 1930s. Moore was working as a security guard at the Hollywood bowl dur-



ing his student years. He recalled, "I remember one time Alf Brain greeted me with his usual – Good evening Mr. Moore," after a concert. I could not resist telling him how beautifully he had just played the Weber *Oberon* opening horn solo. "Oh," he said, "Mr. Moore there's really nothing to it. It's just so bloody lonely."²⁷

This natural "coolness" of personality, which he had from an early age in London, stayed with him the whole of his life. I believe it came from the quiet, modest, but supreme confidence he had in himself as a horn player, very much like his nephew Dennis. Alf's coolness sometimes disturbed people on the "stand." Vince DeRosa, in conversation with Walter Hecht on March 4, 2004, recalled one such instance:

I was sitting next to him and he had had quite a bit to drink. We were playing a real long, very emotional and tender sequence, and waiting for about three minutes for Al to come in on b[♭] natural. The orchestration was very delicate and he still had his horn on his lap, I thought, "Gee, I guess he's not going to make it!" I didn't want to get him into trouble because Newman was kinda tough you know – and so I looked at Al and I thought, "Gee, let's see if he's going to play that thing! Maybe I'll play!" Al picked up his horn at the last second – and just picked it out – perfect!²⁸

At another film session, just before a big horn solo, Alf gave Vince a tap on his leg, when Vince turned to look to see what Alf wanted, Alf smiled, then rolled his false teeth around in his mouth, Vince collapsed laughing, but Alf put the mouthpiece to his lips and played perfectly. Not one note missed.

At one film session, Sinclair Lott recalled a very interesting occurrence that highlights Alf's innate strength.

He was a powerhouse player. At Fox one time there were eight horns playing a melody in octaves – an Al Newman special. Al Brain was playing the melody line – the high line – and seven of us were playing the low line. The remark from the recording booth shook us up. The voice came out amplified "I need more of the lower line." We all laughed – it was possibly due to the mike placement I think, but we all got a kick out of Al drowning us all out.²⁹

Despite his strength, Lott went on to explain, Alf's embouchure did not allow 100% flexibility, and Vince DeRubertis (Vince DeRosa's uncle) had to fill in some of the low notes. For example, in the call from *Til Eulenspiegel*, DeRubertis would play the middle c', the next low g, and the low c.³⁰

There is no doubt that Alf was a "natural," but he was too shrewd not to be careful about his preparation as a horn player. He had his own system – he always emphasized "lungs" – breath control, support – even for the shortest notes, cleanliness of attack, power, strength, and style. "Support" was everything. Alf was naturally a very strong man, around 5 feet-10 inches in height, and with a large barrel chest. Without exception all the horn players who knew Alf remarked on his natural body strength. Jack Cave stated,

I never saw a man as strong as he is and here he is in his seventies and still playing like an angel. He is so strong he can hit a high f[♯] above high c[♯] any time. It is just incredible how he does it – and strong you

know, like he hits double forte on b[♭] concert. The last time I was at his house, I asked him, "Do you still get around the horn like you used to?" And he just picked up a Schmidt horn (not even his usual horn) and he just blasted out (some ascending notes) with incredible ease. Built like Johnny Bull.³¹

With his enormous lung power he could play nearly all the phrases without taking a breath, but still play everything musically. He was a great believer in long notes to develop the lip and control, but with all the playing he did, there was not much need to "keep the lip in shape." If he was away from the horn for a while, he used his little "tricks" to build up his lip strength. In order to get his lip back into shape, his favourite was to practice the horn with a metallic transposing mute, which added to the resistance in the horn. After all, playing meant financial success.

Alf was never one to excessively practice. If he had a solo, he had very definite view: "He told me 'never play a solo in the intermissions.' Hear the whole phrase and then play it when you have to play it." DeRosa went on to say how one famous American horn player would go over his solos countless numbers of times, even a simple solo. DeRosa asked Alf what was all that about, all this going over solos all the time. Alf responded, "They call that the German penalty method. If you can hear it you can play it."³²

Sinclair Lott was first horn with the LAPO, and he got the chance to play the Britten Serenade with the composer conducting and Pears singing. The original soloist scheduled for this concert was Dennis Brain but when news arrived in LA of his death, Sinclair was asked to play the solo part. He recalls in his letter "I played passably." After the concert, following his congratulating Sinclair, Alf told him, "Now that you are a pro, you'll begin to have enemies." Lott continued, "I did not know what he meant until later. I learned a lot from listening to him – learning what to do and what not to do – amongst the latter – never relax 'til the very last note of the solo has been played' – like Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony."³³

I feel there is also a need here to clarify the relationship between Alf and James Stagliano. There were rumours, at the time, that they did not get on, and some said that they hated each other. Although these remarks were made at the time, and since neither of the gentlemen are alive to defend themselves, I feel it is important to set the record straight. When Alf Brain and James Stagliano "swapped" positions in the LAPO and the film studios, this fueled the "story." I have tried to put into perspective the reality of their relationship.

Both were superb players, but had completely different tonal qualities. Alf, as we know, had a very projecting, but "thin horn sound" (to American ears), produced on a single 5-valve Alexander/Sansone horn. James Stagliano played on a full Alexander 103 and produced more of the "accepted" horn sound to American ears. They each had very beautiful but personally distinctive horn sounds.

James Decker, who was taught by Stagliano, told me that the rivalry was "fueled by the students or followers of the two camps," but he did admit that Stagliano wanted to be considered the number one hornist in LA³⁴



Alf was not the type of person to "hate" another horn player – he was too secure in his own playing. Jimmy Decker recalled that, when Jack Cave was contracting horn sections for some of the studio films, he had both Alf and Stagliano playing in the same section.

Whilst Alf pioneered the use of the horn as a serious instrument in the film genre, with films such as *Hurricane*, *King Kong*, his influence can be felt even today. The current top Hollywood horn player, James Thatcher, has stated that, without Alf, the horn scene in Hollywood would be very different. He described Alf as "the father of studio playing," adding that he feels a "great affinity" with Alf.³⁵



Enjoying a drink with friends

The "General Release Form C" that Alf had to sign on finishing the film "Hunchback of Notre dame starring Charles Lawton, Sir Cedrick Hardwick, Thomas Mitchell, Maureen O'Hara, and Edmond O'Brien



Alf's Single F Schmid Horn

Before moving on to other aspects of Alf's life, I think it important to add pictures and information here about the single F horn that Alf used in America. Alf moved on to this horn from a Courtois horn. You can see that the Schmid is a rotary valve horn and I think that Alf, knowing he had to change from his single F horn, took it in stages, first to get the "feel" of a rotary. As stated before, he had confided in Dennis that he found the transition from the old single piston to a rotary horn quite difficult, as did Dennis.

The horn is now in the possession of Ted Chance, a London horn player. His wife Ann gives us the history of the horn: "Arthur 'Pop' Miller (Ann's grand-father) bought the instrument in the 1920's from an Englishman who had come over to play in Los Angeles, and had received some lessons from Alf."

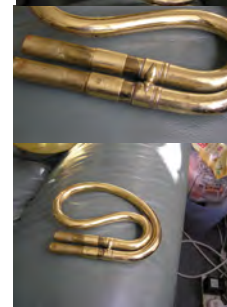
It was later played by Ann's brother Dave Miller, who wrote,

Much of the wear and tear was inflicted by me, I played it in my Junior High School (1961-63) band, orchestra and baroque quintet. The band marched all over Southern California in many parades. All the high school activities were directed by Henry Brubeck, Dave Brubeck's older brother. What a privilege it was to be part of that strong musical legacy. Henry was a genius at the classic march and always chose slower musical pace and longer marching stride length.

Dave had to wear braces and playing the horn became difficult. He was sadly forced to give it up, moving eventually to the sousaphone. Then it came into the hands of Ted.

Ted stated that the horn had been polished and relacquered in its later life, as the engraving is quite faint. He added,

It blows beautifully and has a mellow tone. All the notes are secure even the top g^{\sharp} and a^{\flat} . The valve slides have been tuned, and then sleeves have been cut to fit the slides, so that they can then be pushed in to the correct playing position quickly. The mouthpiece is funnel shaped and has a thin rim but not too small an internal diameter, about 17 mm, bigger than the Aubrey Brain model. I played the instrument on a Roger Norrington recording of Romantic Overtures and, not owning a full double, sometimes took it on stage with the Philharmonia Orchestra to use for certain low sections which really needed the long F.³⁶



The inscription reads:
C. F. Schmid
"Berlin W57
formerly Weimar"



Alf's Enjoyment of Life and Sense of Humour

Since he was a boy in London, Alf possessed a wicked sense of humour, and he would write the most funny and rudest of limericks much to the enjoyment of his horn section. One of the "cleaner" limerick's to survive is:

There was a young lady from Chichester,
Whose shape made the saints in the niches stir.
When she knelt at High Mass the shape of her arse,
Made the bishop of Chichester's britches stir.



He sometimes got his own horn section into trouble. A classic example of this was in a film recording session when Richard Perissi (along with another three horn players) got the sack as the direct result of one of Alf's limericks. Perissi related,

Another time I got fired off a job at Fox. Al Brain was real cut up. He knew all those naughty limericks and lyrics to sing along with the standard repertoire; stuff they would do in England. Well, there were two rows of horns and I was sitting first in the second row, right behind Brain. He turned around and told a joke to the section and we all bust up laughing. Alfred Newman was the leader that day and he was a serious person. He saw and heard us laughing and didn't like it and yelled, "This is not a circus!" The next day, all four of us in the back row were fired.³⁷

Vince DeRosa, speaking to Walter Hecht, recalled the very last studio session Alf played,

We were doing a live television show, and it was just for two horns and percussion. I didn't want to play first horn but he said, "No. I'll play second." I was surprised because he actually played – it wasn't real low – but a middle low range, and of course his pitch was always (before his teeth went) always impeccable. But for a long time he had a problem with his teeth and would like to shock people. Before we were going to play he looked over at me and moved his teeth about an eighth of an inch each way and scared the hell out of me. You know he could have played forever but his teeth just gave way.³⁸

In London Alf was playing in a concert and before the show he went to the toilet. Someone locked him in. Not to be deterred, Alf climbed out of the window of the toilet, scaled down a drainpipe, and made his way to the stage. The conductor, on reaching the podium, noticed that his first horn was missing and started to panic. Suddenly Alf appeared and took his seat without the customary collar and tie.

Many years later Alf got the great Alan Civil into trouble. Alan recalled the story to me. It was in one of the rehearsals of the *Enigma Variations*. In Variation XII, rehearsal number 54 onwards, Alan picked up his horn and played the main theme with the strings. When the conductor, Norman Del Mar, heard this beautiful sound, he shouted at Alan, asking him to play what was written. Back came the reply, "I'm just doing what Alf Brain was told to do by Elgar himself." When asked to explain himself Alan stated that in the early 1900s, during one of the first rehearsals of the work with Elgar himself conducting, he called for a break in rehearsals. On returning after the interval, he heard the theme being played beautifully on the horn. On going to find out who was playing it, he found Alf sitting down playing the theme to his heart's content. On seeing Elgar approaching, he apologized and said that he just loved the theme. The great composer told Alf that he had originally thought of scoring the section for the horn, but was not certain that it could be played so beautifully on the instrument. He then went on to ask Alf to play it in the concert, and that was to apply to any horn player who could play the instrument as

beautifully in any concert performance of the *Enigma*. Mr. Civil won that round.³⁹

Oliver Brockway also recalls the same story. He was listening to one of the "Proms" in the mid 70's when the BBC Symphony was playing. To his surprise he heard the theme being played on the horn. He bumped into Alan a little later and asked him about the incident. Alan replied "Nice to get away with playing that tune with the strings" and went on to recall the incident above. After recounting the Alf story he told Oliver, "That's why I do it, given the chance. You need to know when to drop out when it gets high, though." Oliver recalls that Alan knew he was posing the rest of the horn section a dilemma as to whether to come in or not at the fifth bar of figure 54; but Denzil Floyd, on second horn, just soldiered on as if nothing abnormal had happened.⁴⁰

Alf's Love of Farming – on his Chicken Farm

In his later years in the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, Al and Straussie Brain ran a chicken farm and several turkey farms. Al's colleagues recall him spending a lot of time farming, out with his tractor. This kept him physically very fit. The following is an advertisement for Brain's store:

Do you like chicken? Then listen to this, down at 2461 South Robertson Boulevard, you will find on Fridays and Saturdays only, a shop open which sells the nicest chickens you have ever seen...raised on their own ranch – fresh dressed and brought here for the weekend business selected fowl, sweet and tender, full of flavor. The price, of course, is the OPA ceiling prices. This spot of Downs has "Brain's poultry store" and you can't go wrong when it comes to eggs or chickens. (*unknown source*)

Al's talent for cooking and for hosting enormous parties at the Brain household in San Fernando Valley were legendary. He learned his cooking skills in the Army during the First World War. The following notice appeared in a Los Angeles newspaper:

In celebration of his wife's birthday, Al Brain tossed a cocktail buffet in their beautiful San Fernando Valley home. Also complimented were Captain and Mrs. Hugh Brain, Al's brother and sister-in-law, and niece Helen Van Tonger of The Netherlands. Captain Brain is skipper of the SS Irving McDowell and he and his wife have just arrived from England. Guests at the festive shindig included the Darrell Broughs, the Roland Boswells, the Fred Zahns, the Jack Caves, the Bob Wittenbergs, Mesdames Stella Haggerty, Joe Mendelson, A.D. Willoughby (of Seattle), Anne Burgess, Leah Hayden, Bonnie Martin, Maude Fitzpatrick, Lynch, Dot Jarvis....⁴⁰

Although no date is given on the newspaper cutting, it is probably following the Second World War. Helena Van Tonger was in fact Alfred Brain's sister, Helena (the virtuoso on the long F trumpet), who had married a Dutchman called Van Tonger. During the Second World War, they had both helped to smuggle Jews out of Holland and in this way saved



many lives. Stella Haggerty was Alf's wife's sister and the "Bob Wittenbergs" refers to Alf Brain's daughter, Olga, and her husband, who worked for Twentieth Century Fox. The "Jack Caves" refer, of course, to Mr. and Mrs. Cave – Jack was principal horn for many years at MGM studios. Prior to that he was a colleague of Alf's in the LAPO.

Alf enjoyed life to the full and, due to his love of farming, he bought a small holding on the outskirts of Los Angeles and ran several turkey farms and a chicken farm. The chickens and eggs he raised were sold, but never on a full-time commercial basis. As Art Franz said "he just liked that farming stuff." He stayed fit and strong through working in his garden with a hand plough.

Alf as a Fisherman

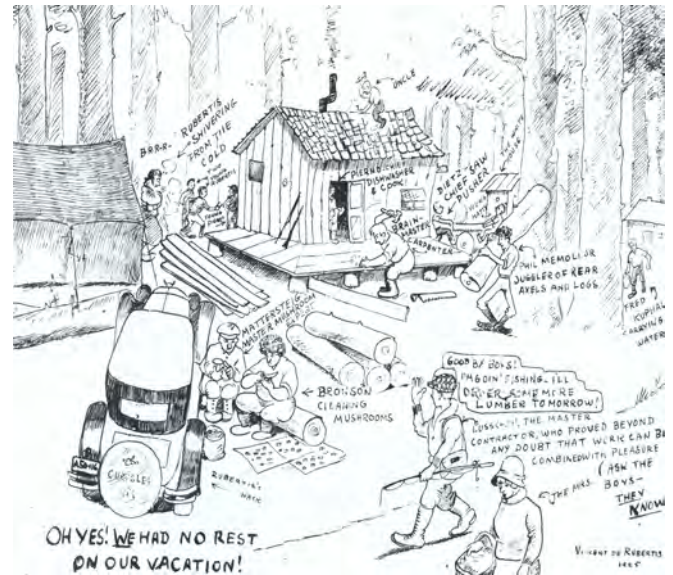
Fishing was another big hobby of Alf's and, in order to spend more time outdoors, he bought a cabin in The Mammoth Lakes area of California – high in the Sierra Mountains.



Vincent DeRubertis was also a keen fisherman and they both enjoyed trips up to Alf's cabin. Alf would invite all his friends to

the cabin, get away from the hustle and bustle of hornplaying to get some time for fishing and cooking, as can be seen in the drawing below by DeRubertis, Alf's faithful second horn in 1925.

When I received it, I made a copy and presented it to Vince DeRosa in Denver; the copy now hangs in his cabin retreat in Montana. DeRubertis was Vince's uncle and Vince recalled all the characters in the drawing.



DeRubertis, as can be seen by the painting to the right, was a gifted artist. In 1945 he drew and printed this picture which he presented as a gift to his dear friend – Alf.



Alf the Host



At Alf's home in Cheviot Hills, Los Angeles, approximately in 1943

In this photograph Jack Cave sent me we see, on the left, John Pennington (violin) with his arm around the conductor

Sir Anthony Collins. Fourth from the left, with Alf on his left, is Charles Warwick-Evans, the Welsh cellist.



Alf knew Pennington and Warrick-Evans very well from their time together in the London orchestras. Pennington was a virtuoso violinist who studied at the Royal College of Music and became concertmaster in Sir Thomas Beecham's orchestra. He went to the US where he became concertmaster of the San Francisco Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, and then Paramount Pictures. Charles Warwick-Evans was a virtuoso cellist who became principal cello in the Beecham Opera Orchestra, then principal of the Queen's Hall Orchestra, and finally a member of the London String Quartet

The London trio of Alf, John, and Charles remained very close friends, shown in the photographs and also this letter (below) sent from Pennington to Alf.

ALICE AND JOHN PENNINGTON Manor House
R. D. No. 1 Hellam, Pa. Tel. Weightsville 4941

October 27, 1963

Dear Alf:

This is something out of the past if I do say so - but I have to write you to say that I've just had a grand time with the boys of the Royal Philharmonic. I've seen them in several cities here in the east and finished up with a party for them in Baltimore.

There weren't many of the old orchestra from when I began it in '46 with Tommy but there were a lot of the kids I used to run around with at College and the old L.S.O. days.

I thought you might get to see them as they will be in and around Los Angeles from November 13 to the 20th at the Mayfair Hotel. They are having a hell of a tour, concerts every night from September 28 in Montreal to December 1st in Anchorage, Alaska, with Saravali (Flash Barry) conducting. Nearly everyone asked about you and I said I would write you - I kind of miss you myself.

I don't play any more - just enjoying life with the most wonderful of wives. Warwick and Beth Evans were here for a weekend recently. We had a great time. They were on their way back from England to their paradise on the west coast of Mexico - Puerto Vallarta.

Please give my best to any of the California boys you may bump into and here's hoping you are in the best of health yourself.

As ever,

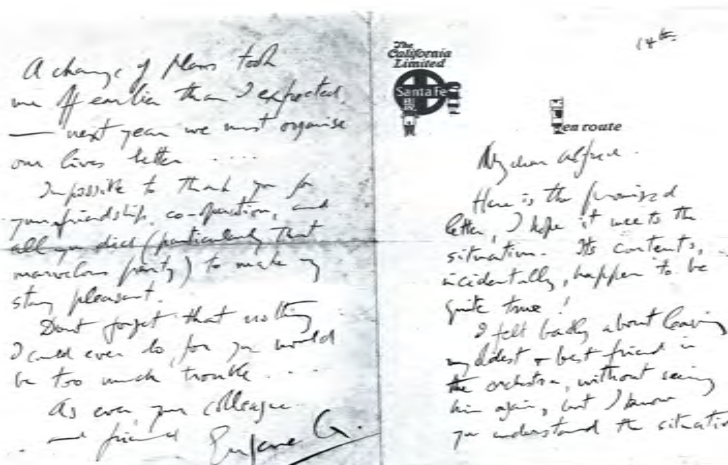
Yours

John



With Sir Anthony Collins at the same party

Sir Eugene Goossens wrote the following apology for not saying goodbye to his "oldest and best friend" at leaving one such party.



Another party



The above photograph is of the MGM Music Department Group hosted by Alf. Jack Cave (right last row) named some members of the photograph. Holding the glass is Herbert Stothart who wrote musical scores for around 40-50 MGM pictures, Alf is seated at the table with his hand on the shoulder of the harpist Joe Quintile, who Jack said, "looked like a devil and played like an angel."

Alf always had fantastic parties. He was a great host and cook, preparing all the food, even if the party consisted of a hundred or more guests. Parties were set up for visiting orchestras and old friends from England.

Arthur Bliss recalled in 1924, "when visiting LA, I had dinner with several ex-London players. Alf Brain had picked the contingent from LA; these were the years of prohibition and Alf was the unofficial source through which drink could be obtained. His supply made the evening a merry one." Conductors such as Stravinsky, Stokowski, and Sir Eugene Goossens and many others came and enjoyed the parties.

At one point, the Moscow Symphony Orchestra was in town and they brought several cases of vodka. Alf acquired a case full of the stuff and when presented with the normal "shot" glasses, he simply went to the kitchen and produced several eight ounce glasses, and with a large smile he said, "Let's do things properly." He was a fantastic drinker, and as



one person said "for 95% of the time he is the greatest horn player in the world, for the remaining 5%, he is the greatest drinker in the world."⁴²

Alf enjoyed springing surprises on people. Jack Cave and Lady Barbirolli recalled such a "surprise." Alf had invited Lady Barbirolli and her husband, the conductor Sir John Barbirolli, to a party he was hosting. Alf knew Barbirolli well as they had played in the orchestra in London together (Barbirolli was a cellist). Alf had cooked everything and the wine was flowing. Halfway through the night, Alf said he wanted some music, so he took out his horn and went on to the roof of his house and played the famous "Long Call" from *Siegfried* "perfectly and with a huge beautiful sound." Lady Barbirolli went on to say that Alf played several solos while the guests listened and talked amongst themselves. He kept them a long time before they were able to sit down to eat!

He had asked Jack Cave, Vince DeRosa, Art Frantz, and Bill Hinshaw to bring their horns to the party ("We can do something impromptu"). When they arrived, they saw an upright piano and, on approaching the music stands, they saw the solo parts to Schumann's *Konzertstück*.

In the back yard the audience, with some of the top conductors in town, including Sir John Barbirolli, was waiting. Alf remained smiling in the audience and then, with an even bigger smile, said, "Ok boys, start whenever you're ready." They played it without a rehearsal. Afterwards Cave asked Iturbi (the pianist) if he knew that they were going to play the Schumann. "Of course," he replied, "Didn't you?"⁴³

Alf was very worried when the World War II broke out. He was perturbed that he was now an American citizen and not of an age to sign up and fight as he had done in the World War I; he had experienced a very tough war in the trenches. James Decker recalled, "Alfred was a staunch patriot." Alf often spoke at length to some of his friends about his concerns toward Britain, and of his hope that eventually Britain would be all right. He never took on an American accent despite the years he had lived there. Lady Barbirolli recalled that Alf, "spoke with a lovely London English accent."



Alf with the composer he loved – Beethoven, with fellow hornist Huntington Burdick on the far right.

Alf and Dennis Brain

As was stated earlier, while Alf and Dennis seemed to have similar embouchures, and played on smaller-diameter mouthpieces with thin rims, there was a slight but important difference. Alf played "straight on" with a very firm and stable "lip." Dennis on the other hand, due to the shape of his teeth, played quite a bit on his top lip, which some people thought was the main reason why Dennis did not have the same power as his uncle.

Although Dennis knew of his uncle, they did not meet until Dennis toured America during the war with the RAF Central Band (8 December 1944 to the first week in March 1945). When the band reached Los Angeles, Dennis and his brother Leonard met Alf when he was living in Gardenia. The brothers were really looking forward to meeting their "uncle Alf," and he was equally thrilled to meet his nephews for the first time. As he knew that commodities were scarce in Britain, he was determined to give the boys a great time.

True to form, Alf organized one of his famous parties and all the top horn players in LA were invited to meet Dennis. Dennis took out his piston horn – his single F Raoux – and played the violin piece *Schön Rosmarin* by Kreisler. He astounded everybody; James Decker said of the playing, "It was amazing how he got around the thing, laughing, and so normal." The other horn players tried to play Dennis's instrument but could not get a sound out of it. Interestingly, Alf took the horn, inserted his mouthpiece, and rattled off a couple of pieces.⁴⁴ Mrs. Leonard Brain related to me that her late husband recalled his stay with uncle Alf as "full of fun, food, and drink."

Dennis used this visit to learn a great deal from uncle Alf. They talked for hours about mouthpieces, the various types of horn models, the different combinations of mouthpipes, each with its different internal shape and dimensions, all in the pursuit of the sound that each wanted to attain. One of the first things Alf did was to change the mouthpiece that Dennis was using – he gave him a copy of his own mouthpiece, as he thought that it would be better for Dennis's embouchure. Alf's mouthpiece was an old Schmidt German-silver cast model, with a very small diameter and an extremely deep cup.

The influence Alf had on Dennis did not stop with the mouthpiece, but extended to the type of instrument Dennis used. Dennis knew that time was running out on him regarding the Raoux. Composers were writing more and more difficult works, both in concertos for Dennis and in general for the orchestra. The Raoux, despite the soft metal that aided legato, was too restrictive for modern works. Dennis knew that he had to change instruments. So in the five days Dennis was in Los Angeles, he played several times on one of Alf's Sansone / Alexander horns.

This is noted by Laurence Sansone Jnr, who was at the famed party, as can be seen in another letter that he sent to Stephen Pettitt, dated 15 November 1971, for Pettitt's biography of Dennis. As a result of Alf's influence, we learn that Dennis took the opportunity to buy a five-valved Sansone B^b horn, similar (or identical) to the horn that uncle Alfred used in the LAPO for many years.

I remember when Dennis came to Los Angeles with the RAF Orchestra because Alfred gave him a



special party and invited all the Horn players here in Los Angeles. It was one of the best parties that was possible. Dennis had his old Raoux French Horn and I remember that it was a F Horn and all taped up and leaked like a sieve and we all took turns trying to play it and we could not. Dennis was playing all the Bach Fugues on it and it was wonderful so when everyone else tried to play it and could not, Alfred took the Horn and played as well as Dennis on it and Alfred said it was the same Horn that he started on and also played many concerts in England on it. Dennis was a wonderful person. I told him to go to New York to meet my Father who was the First Horn with the New York Symphony and also was in the business of manufacturing French Horns and specialized in his own model the Sansone five valve B^b Horn. Dennis did meet my father and was so impressed with the Sansone Model Horn that he purchased one and used it many times.

Both the high regard that Dennis had for his uncle and the depth of influence his uncle had on his playing can be read in the letter Dennis sent to Alf in 1953:

Hampstead 7294. 15th August 1953.
Craigmore,
37 Frognaal,
Hampstead,
N.W.3.

Dear Uncle Alfred and Auntie Straussie,

Doubtless you will be surprised to hear from me after eight years, but I thought a note to let you know how things are over here might interest you.

As you see I am married and enclose a picture of our son, and will admit that having seen my wife alright, the first part of the baby I looked at was his mouth, which looks as though it may have possibilities. Leonard has two children, a girl 4 ½ Jennifer, and a boy 9 months, Roger. Dad is very well in himself but unable to move about very quickly and does very little playing but teaches at the Academy.

I still use your mouthpiece that you gave me and in fact have virtually no other and the copy I had made is not really exact. As soon as I could get to Germany after the war I had Alexander make me a Bflat/A gold brass a narrow mouthpiece which I changed to when it was blown in, and which I have used since, recording the Schumann "Adagio and Allegro" and Dukas "Villanelle" on it. In the past few months I have been using another Alexander specially made in the following manner, Bflat & A (or muting) & ascending D, five valves in all, which gives me everything, particularly low notes; and in fact the lower notes and fundamentals. My second in the Philharmonia, which orchestra I am regularly with uses a Bflat and high F I have the best of two worlds (?)

I often wonder if we shall ever meet again but if not, I should like you to know how much my style of playing owes to you as a result of those five days in Los Angeles which I remember with great affection.

With all our love,

Dennis⁴⁵

It is worth noting here the information I received about Alf and Dennis from Ed Glick of Denton, Texas who studied briefly with Dennis while he was stationed in England during World War II:

The only relevant Alfred Brain information I can give you is from something Dennis said at my first lesson. Incidentally, let me explain my referring to him as "Dennis." When he came into his studio for my first lesson, he was still in uniform [RAF] as was I [US Army]. He was only five years older than I; I was 19, he was 24, and we had the same birthday – May 17. He was a very friendly, unassuming person. I had no idea that I was in the presence of one of the most highly regarded hornists in the world, and it just seemed natural to call him by his first name. I tell you this so you'll understand that I'm not just name-dropping.

Anyway, at the first lesson, he noticed that my horn, an US Army issue, Conn 6D (I'm pretty sure that's what it was) had rotary valves, and asked if he could try it. At that time, he was still playing his Raoux "peashooter" with piston valves.

He seemed uncomfortable with it and noted that his uncle Alfred had had great difficulty converting to the required "German" style horn used almost everywhere else throughout the world and that he, Dennis, was concerned about having to make that same switch. This was in January 1946. I know that a few years later (I don't know the date), he converted too.

So, despite purchasing the Sansone, it took Dennis a full five years or more to convert fully to the Alexander.

Dennis had the advantage of being in the UK, where there was still an acceptance of the piston horns in orchestras, although that was dwindling. However, because of his sound, technique, etc., he could get away with it. It was very different for Alf; when he went to America the piston horn would not have been accepted, and Alf knew this. Hence his change in the first instance was to play a rotary horn in F. At least that way he began to get used to the "feel" of the rotary horn.

It says a great deal about the difficulties and the idiosyncrasies of the old piston horn, pitched in F, its control, holding position, not made to the high standards of horns made to today, which only compounded the playing difficulties. For us to comprehend the difficulties faced by Alf and Dennis (and others who had to change) let's compare it to a modern symphonic horn player being given such an instrument – an old peashooter – and being told to play the works of Brahms, Sibelius, Stravinsky, and Mahler.

Alf never spoke or boasted about Dennis, what he was doing or about his playing; he was just proud as an "uncle" of what his nephew was achieving. When other horn players spoke to Alf about Dennis, especially after the Mozart recordings (which he played on the Alexander A/B^b/D horn). Vince DeRosa recalled, "He was very proud of Dennis, of course, he got him to play his five-valve Alexander and his mouthpiece, and he sounded much better, and when we were all speaking about Dennis's Mozart Concerti, we'd tell Alf about it, and he would say, 'when he surmounts a horn he is a great artist'."⁴⁶



Dennis, Alf, and Leonard



These photos were taken when the brothers were in LA with the R.A.F Band Tour on a War Bonds Drive. He wanted them to enjoy after the hardships the people of the UK had suffered during World War II.



Dinner at The Tropics, January 26, 1945. (l to r): Fabian (actor), Jack Cave, Betty Cave, Dennis, Straussie (Alf's wife), Olga (Alf's daughter), Stella (Alf's niece), Leonard, and Alf.

Second Thoughts on Toscanini

By Neville Cardus

Alf kept this press cutting showing his pride and interest in Dennis's achievements

London, September 30. First impressions of Toscanini last night are still strong after sleep and reflection. At the end of the concert's first part, during the interval, I confine to having felt a certain disappointment with the interpretation of the C minor Symphony was on the side of the matronly orchestra. Symphonically to a point. A Toscanini concert is bound for a time to strain the nerves, as execution and challenge are the atmosphere and the audience. The Philharmonia's entrance into the finale of the C minor they had needed to wait too long, in such a crowded hall, for a chance to "warm up."

But Toscanini sometimes is ruthlessly literal; he seeks to tell the truth and nothing but the truth. Not every composer was as sure as a text, at least not in a developmental section. It is surely certain that Toscanini, as much as the audience, admired the form playing of Dennis Brain. The solo in the finale of the C minor came forth like a sun from the mist; it was beautifully intoned out of a sort of wrought gold of music. And at the end of the first movement of the Second Symphony he breathed a whole transition of romance into his instrument: the fall of the endowment toward the heart more than anything else in the concert. The strains of the Philharmonia are warm and brilliant in tone, and Toscanini, with more

Leighton Jones is a free-lance hornist from Wales.

Notes:

1. Author's interviews with Vincent DeRosa.
2. Author's interviews with James Decker.
3. Ibid.
4. Paul Neuffer, "An Interview with Richard Perissi," *The Horn Call*, Volume XXXVIII, No. 2, February 2008, p. 65.
5. Author's interviews with Vincent DeRosa.
6. Sir Henry Wood, *My Life of Music* (London, Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1938).
7. From a clipping in the estate of Alfred Brain.
8. From a 1971 letter sent by Laurence Sansone Jnr to Stephen Pettitt, which was then sent to Stephen Gamble, co-author of *Dennis Brain – a Life in Music*.
9. Stephen Pettitt was the author of *Dennis Brain – A Biography* (London, Hale, 1976).
10. Author's conversation with James Decker.
11. From an undated clipping in Alfred Brain's papers.
12. From an undated clipping in Alfred Brain's papers.
13. From a personal clipping in Alfred Brains papers, dated Dec. 1934.
14. Donald Rosenberg, *The Cleveland Orchestra Story: "Second to None"* (Cleveland, Gray & Co., 2000).
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Former second horn of the Chicago Symphony, Schweikert has spent years gathering information on horn players in the US; the information was gathered through the author's correspondence.
18. Author's correspondence with Judy Barnhardt.
19. From a 1971 letter (endnote 8 above).
20. John Warrick, *Gramophone*, March 2003
21. Personal correspondence from Jack Cave to Tony Catterick.
22. Author's interviews with Vincent DeRosa.
23. Ibid.
24. Author's interviews with James Decker.
25. Author's interviews with Vincent DeRosa.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Recounted to the author by Vincent DeRosa.
29. Personal correspondence from Sinclair Lott to Tony Catterick.
30. Ibid.
31. Personal correspondence from Jack Cave to Tony Catterick.
32. Author's interviews with Vincent DeRosa.
33. Personal correspondence from Sinclair Lott to Tony Catterick.
34. Author's interviews with James Decker.
35. Author's conversation with James Thatcher.
36. Author's conversation with Ted Chance, a London hornist.
37. From Richard Perissi as recounted by Jack Cave in a letter to Tony Catterick.
38. Recounted by Vincent DeRosa to the author.
39. Recalled by Alan Civil to the author.
40. Recounted by Oliver Brockway to the author.
41. Undated clipping in the estate of Alfred Brain.
42. Author's interviews with Vincent DeRosa.
43. Party recalled by Jack Cave in a letter to Tony Catterick.
44. Author's interviews with James Decker.
45. Reprented from *Dennis Brain – a Biography* by Stephen Pettitt (op. cit)
46. Author's interviews with Vincent DeRosa