



## Lawrence Benjamin Angell

December 3, 2017

On December 3, 2017, Lawrence Benjamin Angell passed away peacefully at 88 following a lengthy, undiagnosed illness. A native of Saginaw, Michigan, Angell studied double bass at the Interlochen Center for the Arts with famed bass pedagogue Oscar Zimmerman. Angell was called out of Interlochen and put into service in the Korean War. Trained in artillery as a Cannoneer, he ended up assigned to the 7th Infantry Division Band and Jazz Bands where he formed and led a jazz troupe. The band played on the front lines for soldiers who couldn't leave their fighting positions, narrowly escaping enemy bullets on at least one occasion. Following his service he continued his studies with Oscar Zimmerman at the Eastman School of Music, earning bachelor and master of music degrees, as well as the Special Performer's Certificate. While a student, he performed with the Rochester Philharmonic, Erich Leinsdorf conducting, and soon thereafter was appointed to the Cleveland Orchestra by George Szell. Promotions to Assistant Principal and Principal Double Bass followed. Due to his propensity towards arriving at rehearsal via motorcycle regardless of the weather, he was dubbed "Szell's Angell." Angell performed in the Cleveland Orchestra for 40 years, from 1955 until 1995. A very active teacher, he was head of the Double Bass Departments of the Cleveland Institute of Music and the Oberlin Conservatory of Music from 1969 to 1999, and from 1980 to 1990, respectively. Angell presented master classes and coached in cities throughout the United States and abroad, and he coached and taught at festivals such as the Kent/Blossom

School, ENCORE School for Strings, the Scotia Festival of Music in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and the Sarasota Music Festival. Angell was appointed to the faculty of the Hawaii Contrabass Festival in 2002 and again in 2004. According to Angell, "The bass is my passion. It is an instrument rich in depth of tone, vocal qualities, and it has a wide spectrum of sonic color. Orchestrally, it is the foundation for harmony and propulsive rhythm. My students learn to be sensitive not only to the instrument, but to music in general and other forms. In teaching I expect the highest standards of technical proficiency and knowledge of the music. Technique is a means to the end, and the end is music." He served on the jury of the ASTA National Competition, and presented master classes for the International Society of Double Bassists, and for orchestras and conservatories around the world. In January 1998, Angell appeared with the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, performing Mozart's "Per Questa Bella Mano" and music of Rachmaninoff, returning in March to lead the Double Bass Section in a series of coachings, private lessons, and master classes. Angell was a frequent performer of solo and chamber music and was Music Director of the 1997 Scotia Festival of Music in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He has been a guest artist of the Sarasota Music Festival and performed with various chamber groups with his beloved wife and pianist Anita Pontremoli, of whose playing he was constantly in awe. Angell has collaborated with Lynn Harrell, James Levine, Arnold Steinhardt, Walter Trampler, Paul Kantor, The Cleveland Quartet and many others. He has performed a great deal of new music including "Musings On the Black Moon" by Marcel Dick, and "Bass Piece," a work composed for him by Donald Erb. Throughout his career he participated in nearly 500 recordings. Following his retirement, Angell wrote "Tales from the Locker Room: An Anecdotal Portrait of George Szell and his Cleveland Orchestra." A project very close to his heart, this book takes an honest, humorous, and sometimes brutal look at Szell's musical genius through first hand interviews of several members of the Cleveland Orchestra who served under Szell. Not just a classical musician, Angell was also a great lover of jazz and the early recordings of Frank Sinatra. In high school he

played in a Big Band and later he could often be found playing jazz at Pier W on Cleveland's west coast and elsewhere. Angell was a licensed single engine aircraft pilot and flight instructor, who relished giving aerial tours of Greater Cleveland to the most eminent guest artists of the Cleveland Orchestra, including Pierre Boulez, Leon Fleischer, and Louis Lane - to the chagrin of Maestro Szell. Angell was also an avid tennis player, a motorcycle and racecar enthusiast, a sky diver, body builder, lover of artwork and the great outdoors, and an early advocate of natural foods and father-present childbirth. Angell's former students have achieved positions in major orchestras including; The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, The Detroit Symphony, The Florida Orchestra, The Los Angeles Philharmonic, The Louisiana Orchestra, The New Jersey Symphony, The San Antonio Symphony, The St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, The Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Winnipeg, Ottawa, and Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestras. Lawrence Angell is survived by his wife of 36 years, Anita Pontremoli, his five children, Alicia Angell Wood, Lauren and Christopher Angell, and Greg and Corrie Slawson, his four grandchildren, Saxon and Haven Angell-Perez, Ira Lefkowitz and Callie Slawson, his mother-in-law Virginia Pontremoli, and his siblings-in-law, Sonya Angell and Terri and Ted Pontremoli. A MEMORIAL SERVICE for Larry will be held on Saturday, February 10, 2018 at 1:30 pm in Mixon Hall at the Cleveland Institute of Music, 11021 East Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44106.

# Tribute Wall

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“ *My thoughts are with you all during this time. I will never forget being serenaded by Mr Angel with a rendition of \"Michelle\" which he would play after interrupting his intense practice sessions, to my chagrin. I remember many of his students who helped in his home to offset the costs of their bass lessons with him. I was in awe of him, as a teenager, and later as an adult delivering pizzas to him in an old English cab. He was one of the greatest men I have known and will be remembered and dearly missed.*

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**Michelle Conti** - December 18, 2017 at 06:32 PM