

IN MEMORIAM

LELAND R. MUNGER

Clarinetist Leland Ralph Munger, who served as a full-time Professor of Clarinet on the faculty of the School of Music at The University of Texas at Austin from 1968 until 1988, died on December 21, 2018, in Austin, Texas. He was ninety-two years of age and was survived by three children, a son-in-law, one stepson and his wife, three grandchildren, and numerous nieces and nephews.

Born in Osage, Iowa, Lee Munger was the fourth of six children of George Howard Munger and Delia Swain Munger. On his seventeenth birthday in 1943, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy Officer Training program and was commissioned Ensign in the U.S. Naval Reserve in 1945. He continued in the Navy until 1946, ultimately serving on the destroyer U.S.S. Hugh Purvis. During his Navy years, he studied at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the Lawrence College Conservatory in Appleton, Wisconsin, and the U.S. Navy Midshipman School at Cornell University. A brilliant student in both piano and clarinet, he was offered the position of principal clarinet of the Cleveland Orchestra by George Szell during World War II, but was unable to accept it due to his military status. Following his military service, he entered the New England Conservatory of Music (NEC), graduating *magna cum laude* in 1950. While a student at the Conservatory, he was awarded two scholarships from the Boston Symphony to study at Tanglewood, where he played under Serge Koussevitzky, Leonard Bernstein, Lukas Foss, and Aaron Copland. He also played with the Boston Symphony on numerous concerts and tours, and performed with the Boston Pops. It was at Tanglewood that he met his first wife, violist Doris Dritsas, with whom he remained for twenty years. He continued graduate study at NEC until 1951,

when he won the audition for principal clarinet of the Central Florida Symphony. In the course of his performing life, he also held principal clarinet positions with the San Antonio Symphony and the St. Louis Symphony.

From 1953 to 1988, Leland Munger taught at a number of colleges and universities, including the New England Conservatory, Trinity University (San Antonio, TX), San Antonio College, Washington University (St. Louis, MO), and the St. Louis Institute of Music, prior to his long tenure at The University of Texas at Austin. He first served The University of Texas in 1953 as lecturer in clarinet, while a member of the San Antonio Symphony, but became a full-time faculty member in 1968. He met his second wife, Willie Marie Colvin, while working at The University of Texas at Austin. She was the administrative assistant to the chairman of the art department, and they were together from 1978 until her death in 2013, after thirty-five years of marriage.

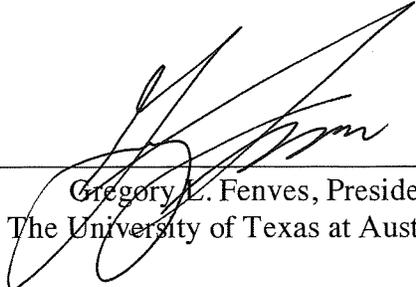
A highly respected pedagogue, Lee Munger led many students, including a large number of doctoral students, through their clarinet studies. Several of his students have won positions in major symphony orchestras in the United States. While teaching in Austin, he played with the Austin Symphony and the faculty woodwind quintet, and in dozens of chamber music concerts, several of which resulted in commercially released recordings and radio appearances.

Lee Munger was a witty, clever man with a warmhearted and gentle soul. His colleagues and former students often referred to him as “the kindest man I ever met,” and several spoke up after his passing to offer words of farewell. Conductor Peter Bay, Music Director of the Austin Symphony Orchestra (ASO), said, “He couldn’t have been a nicer guy. I have nothing but wonderful memories about him as a person and a musician.... I always respected his professionalism and dedication to the music and the ASO.”

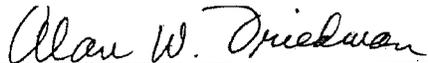
Jerry Junkin, Director of Bands at UT Austin, had some telling recollections of studying clarinet as an undergraduate with Professor Munger:

I began to appreciate his really wonderful sense of humor. I can remember becoming extremely frustrated trying to prepare reeds that would actually work, so I asked him in one lesson 'after investing so much time and energy in these things, and you still can't get them to respond the way you would like, don't you want to just jam them into the wall?' 'Oh, no,' he replied, 'I just place them carefully in the wastebasket.' On one occasion when I was a freshman at UT, I was very excited to play orchestral excerpts in my lesson for the first time. Mr. Munger assigned me the famous clarinet part in Beethoven's Sixth Symphony. I told him how excited I was to play it, and about how I had researched a number of different recordings. I proceeded to play the excerpt, and managed to get totally on the wrong side of the instrument... it was just a total disaster. I finished and slumped back in my chair, dejected, and with a little smile he turned to me and said 'exactly whose recording did you listen to?' Undoubtedly, much of what I am has come through Leland Munger, and was passed to me through his teaching... I will never forget him.

Former students and colleagues were in attendance at his memorial service, held on February 2, 2019, which would have been his ninety-third birthday, at St. Luke's on the Lake Episcopal Church in Austin, Texas.



Gregory L. Fenves, President
The University of Texas at Austin



Alan W. Friedman, Secretary
The General Faculty

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Dan Welcher (Chair) and Donald Grantham.