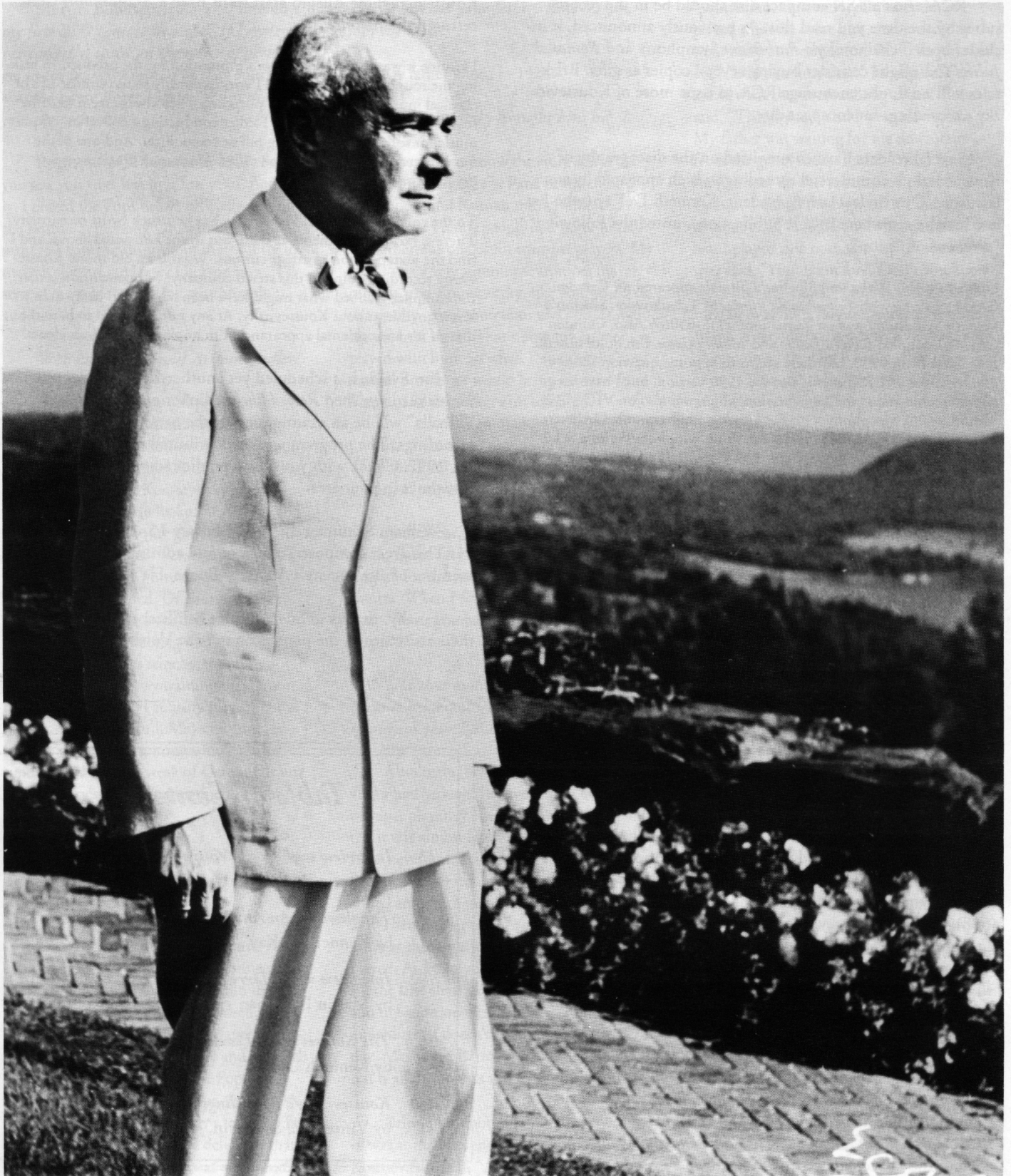


KOUSSEVITZKY

Recordings Society

Recorded at Carnegie Hall, New York, August 1901



Artur Schnabel, pianist. It also offers three heavily featured recordings of the composer's piano music, including the "Sonata in G major, Op. 10, No. 3" and the "Sonata in A major, Op. 10, No. 11".

Letter from the President

Vol. VI, No. 1, Spring, 1992

RCA's first all-SK compact disc should be in the record stores by the time you read this. As previously announced, it includes both Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony and *Romeo & Juliet*. You might consider buying several copies as gifts. Brisk sales will no doubt encourage RCA to issue more of Koussevitzky's recordings on compact disc.

Several readers have commented on the discography of Koussevitzky's commercial recordings which appeared in our last issue. Our tireless correspondent, Kenneth DeKay (who has two articles elsewhere in this publication), noted the following "errors of omission":

Liszt's *Mephisto Waltz* and Sibelius's *Tapiola* appeared on Camden CAL-159 along with *Francesca da Rimini* of Tchaikovsky. Sibelius's Seventh Symphony was on Turnabout THS-65067. Also, Camden CAL-161 coupled Ravel's *Boléro* and *Mother Goose*. I'm quite sure the *Boléro* was from 1930, but there seems to be some question about *Mother Goose*. WERM says it was the 1930 version, but I have seen elsewhere that it was the 1947 version which was also on VIC-1012. Mozart's 40th Symphony with the London Philharmonic Orchestra was on Camden CAL-188 (as the Stratford Symphony) with a Schumann Fourth Symphony performed by Goossens and the Cincinnati Symphony [Mozart's 40th also appeared on Camden CFL-105, a six-disc set that I've never encountered outside of pricey used record catalogs, where it's currently listing for around \$125—Ed]. Liadov's *Enchanted Lake*, Moussorgsky's *Khovantschina* Prelude and Grieg's *Last Spring* [The 1940 recording—Ed] were all on CAL-155.

Both DeKay and Al Schlachtmeyer of Chicago sent along extensive listings of Koussevitzky 45s, which were deliberately left out of the discography for reasons of clarity and space. Anyone who can enlighten me as to the versions of the Ravel works used on CAL-161, please send information or cassette dubs. Other corrections or additions to the discography are also welcome.

Meanwhile, work on the pirate discography proceeds apace. As many of you already know, the recording dates listed by AS Disc are controversial and occasionally self-contradictory. Readers with information about the dates that the following recordings were made are invited to help: Barber Symphony #2 (AS 563), Beethoven Symphony #9 (555), Debussy *La Mer* (574), Mozart Symphony #36 (554), Prokofiev Violin Concerto #2 (568), and Tchaikovsky *Francesca da Rimini* (565). The pirate discography will be published this fall.

The award for finding the most unusual Koussevitzky reissue goes to KRS member Louis Harrison. Among the used CDs in a store in Austin, Texas he discovered a copy of RCA's DPC1-0944. The cover advertises a medication called Entex®, and sports a photograph of a musician who either has a miserable head cold or just missed a crucial cue (or both). The disc includes, among other things, Munch's BSO version of Ravel's *Boléro*, portions of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* with Salvatore Accardo, and the "Bacchanale" from Saint-Saëns's *Samson & Delilah* led by Arthur Fiedler. It also offers three heavenly minutes of

Koussevitzky: the Allegro assai from Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto* #2. Harrison writes:

I assume it was sent to doctors as a promotion for the product. In making the rounds for used records, I've occasionally found similar LPs of classical music used for medical purposes. They always seem to come from RCA Victor. I remember Fiedler conducting a collection of quiet music for some type of sleeping pill or tranquilizer. And one of the most interesting was a collection called *Madness in Opera*, sent to psychiatrists.

To the collection at hand, I can't help but be struck by its eccentricity. There is no apparent theme as there was to the LPs noted above, and I find the juxtaposition of artists curious. What is an old mono Koussevitzky recording doing in this stereo company? My conclusion is that the compiler grabbed what might have been handy and really didn't know anything about Koussevitzky. At any rate, I'm glad to have the disc. If it's an accidental appearance, I'm hoping for more accidents.

Jim Svejda has scheduled yet another Koussevitzky program for his distinguished *Record Shelf* radio series. "Vishny-Volochok Valhalla" will be an examination of the conductor's rare Wagner recordings. The program will be distributed nationally on June 17, 1992. Check with your local public radio station for broadcast times in your area.

William Schuman died on February 15, 1992 at the age of 81. This great composer, educator and administrator was also a member of our Society's Advisory Board. He will be missed.

Finally, thanks to Susan Pearce & Elizabeth Hildebrand for their assistance in the preparation of the Voisin interview.

Tom Godell

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Interview with Roger Voisin

Recorded at Tanglewood by Martin Bookspan, August 23, 1991

Martin Bookspan: Roger, I attended my first BSO concert in 1938. If I remember correctly, listed on the roster of performers in the trumpet section at that point, was the name Roger Voisin. When did you join the orchestra?

Roger Voisin: I joined in 1935. So you see, you were late by a few years. Actually, I played the Pops before officially entering the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Do you want to know the story about that? I'll try to make it short. Like Harry Dickson says, "I'll start in the middle." After I got through auditioning...

Who auditioned you? Arthur Fiedler?

Everybody. Koussevitzky, all the first chair people of the orchestra, and Arthur Fiedler, who had just become the conductor of the Pops in 1930. And Arthur went to bat so much for me that Koussevitzky almost got kind of suspicious. He looked at Arthur, and he said, "Well if he's that good, will you let him play first at Pops?" See, the Pops season was just coming up. This was the end of April that I auditioned. Of course, Arthur had known me since I was around eleven, because he was conducting the MacDowell Club Orchestra. You remember the MacDowell Club? I had my training there. Arthur said, "Sure!" So I actually played first at the Pops in '35 in April, May and June, before I joined the Symphony which, at that time, started the first week of October. It was Koussevitzky's idea of testing Fiedler. That's how I got in.

How did that sit with the other trumpet players? Here you walk right in and you play first in the Pops.

Everybody was delighted because, first of all, they were all my friends. Monsieur [Marcel] Lafosse, who had gone into the army with my father, had no children, so I was like his little boy. Georges Mager was absolutely a superb trumpet player and a superb colleague, who did not play the Pops, ever. He didn't want to play the Pops. So I was not really stepping on anybody's toes. My father couldn't have been more delighted that his son was there, so really I was welcomed with open arms. No question about that.

When did your father, René Voisin, join the BSO?

My father joined in 1928.

So Koussevitzky brought him in?

Exactly. You know the story about the *Concerts Koussevitzky* in Paris in which he presented beautiful Russian music, which all the chauvinistic French people had never heard. My father was one of his trumpet players. My father was a very prominent trumpet player in Paris, and Koussevitzky, like you would do in any city, got a contractor and said, "Give me the best men." That's how my father played with him. So when Koussevitzky needed people, he would bring them in from France, and my father arrived in '28.

As a matter of fact, now that I think of it, the BSO was loaded with French principal players, except Richard Burgin.

Four Americans in the orchestra and, I think, about fifty frenchmen. I didn't speak English for the first ten years I was in the orchestra. When I finally got married, my wife said, "Don't you have any friends that speak English?"

Did that audition, out of which you became principal trumpet in the Pops, qualify as your BSO audition as well?

Absolutely. What happened was Koussevitzky had brought in a wonderful Belgian trumpet player. When he came to this country, it was almost like a psychological blow. He'd never heard such a trumpet section, and he never recovered. He really didn't. He stayed around three or four years. Then he left. Then Fiedler said, "You must play," because at that time it was by invitation. So I played. As I told you, everybody was there. All the first chair people, plus Arthur Fiedler, and my audition went fine. I did all the obvious things. It doesn't change much from today. Maybe the Bartók is on today, but the rest is all the Strauss and the big works.

Believe it or not, the thing that got me in was at the very end of my audition. Koussevitzky said, "*Mon jeune ami*, play for me *en là*"—"Play an 'A' for me"—

"pianissimo, crescendo, diminuendo." I played this one *là* for him, and everybody went crazy at the audition. "*Oh c'est formidable!*" "Did you hear that?" I really didn't know what they were talking about. They said, "Thank you," and I went downstairs. My father was waiting for me downstairs from the green room. I said, "You know, they're nuts up there, because I played all the Strauss, I did all the big works, I did *Zarathustra*, I did *Parsifal*, and what excited them was I played one note, the 'A.'" Then my father said, "You damn fool. Don't you know what that is?" I said, "No." It was the beginning of Wagner's *Rienzi* Overture, you see, which is very difficult, which I've never been able to do since. That's really what impressed them. Of course, I had no fear. I didn't know any better. You start very pianissimo, then crescendo, and it is a trauma. It is really.

The most interesting thing about this audition is that my father absolutely refused for me to join the Boston Symphony. He says, "It's ridiculous. He doesn't know anything. He's sixteen years old. He's never done any *métier*, he's never done a ballet, he's never done an opera." And it took, I think, three days to talk my father into it. Of course, I had nothing to do with it. I'd say, "*Oui papa! No papa.*" Finally Ferdinand Gillet went to my father. He was a highly respected oboe player, and he said, "René, we know he doesn't know anything, but don't punish him. This is a wonderful opportunity." So my father finally gave in.

So there it was, an all-French trumpet section.

For years. And a wonderful first trumpet from Georges Mager. A magnificent sound. Mager, you see, didn't have a very good tongue. So Koussevitzky had his tongue man in me. I was known as the "tongue man" there, and Mager was the sound. When we did [Moussorgsky's] *Pictures*, even from the beginning, I would play "Schmuyle." And Mager was delighted that I played that. And so Koussevitzky had the best of two worlds like this for years.

But Mager always played the "*Promenade.*"

Absolutely. As a matter of fact, I was so disappointed in myself when I became first, and I started to play “Promenade.” It didn’t sound. I had something in my ear, and it wasn’t coming out. But it was all right. I even asked Lafosse once, “Why don’t you play with me, underneath, mezzo forte, just to fill in a little bit?” But that didn’t work either, because he had a magnificent sound.

As a matter of fact, that 1930 recording of Pictures with Mager, sounds like seven trumpets in unison.

And never forced. So I was in. As they say in French, I had a *bonne école* [good schooling] with Mager. And he was a wonderful colleague, too, on top of that.

Before we get a little deeper into the Koussevitzky situation, do I remember that there was one season when Adolf Herseth played in the section?

No. He might have played at Pops as a substitute several times. Certainly he was not on the roster. As a matter of fact, I wanted him to come to Boston when there was an opening. I even went to the management and asked whether they could carry him, because somebody was leaving the next year. They didn’t carry him, and I wanted really to get him. That’s when we lost him to Chicago. He was a student of Georges Mager, and we were all tremendously impressed with him immediately.

What a section that would have been! George Mager, Roger Voisin, Adolf Herseth!

You should have heard the New England Conservatory section then. There was Bud Herseth and Kenneth Schermerhorn, and that was a trumpet section! I had a good time at the New England. We did [Igor Stravinsky’s] *L’Histoire du Soldat* and Octet. I took advantage of all that.

Mentioning L’Histoire, I remember a performance that Lenny conducted in the Theater-Concert Hall in ’47, and I think you were the trumpet soloist, weren’t you?

Exactly. We also recorded it, and it has been reissued by RCA. On the flip side is the Octet with Mager and Lafosse, and I’m doing *L’Histoire*. It was done in the Concert Hall, and I don’t think we had three takes on that. Lenny can be so much on top of it. I remember he had a little stool, and a little pocket score—he had good eyes. And we just went through it this way. It was one of the most satisfying performances, and I guess it showed, because it’s still a good recording, isn’t it?

It has so much energy and fire, and the performance in the Theater that preceded the recording was white-hot. Ok, here you are, at the age of sixteen, in the BSO. I don’t think there’s been a younger musician admitted since then.

If you asked me, “What was the greatest performance with Koussevitzky?”—I’d have to seriously tell you, every one.

No, I don’t think so. I think that’s the record.

What do you remember of Koussevitzky in those years, both in rehearsal and in performance?

The thing I remember the most is that we learned very quickly that on Monday morning you were a white sheet of paper. He would tell you everything. He would tell you very clearly what he wanted on Monday and Tuesday. By Wednesday, it was rather digested. By the time Thursday came around it was set. And by Friday and Saturday for the concerts—I know I’m right on that—even if things didn’t go like he wanted, he heard it the way he wanted, because I would say to myself, “Boy, what’s going to happen Monday at rehearsal?”—because it didn’t go quite well. Nothing. And I think he was really that convinced. So that was his style, and we knew it.

As a matter of fact, I will never forget, when we were rehearsing the Fifth Symphony of Beethoven, in the oboe cadenza, he conducted every note. Pointing with his hand, every single note was dictated like this. Later Gillet went to him, and he said, “Maestro, may I ask you a great favor?” “Yes, my friend, what is it?” “Would you do that at the concert, because I love the interpretation of that?” And, of course, Koussevitzky was terribly flattered, and he said, “Yes, I will.” Then afterwards Gillet told us, “I don’t want my students to think that’s my idea of the way to play it!”

Actually, it was very acceptable. It was fine if you [the conductor] did that. I was trained like this. My father trained me. He said, “When you come in, you’re in the middle of a seesaw. You come in, and which way do you go? You go the way the conductor tells you to go, the way the music tells you to go.” And so it was a good attitude, and I never had any trouble with it. Some musicians sometimes would have a little friction, they might not exactly want to do it that way, but I never had any trouble with him.

You mention his conducting every note. I remember the very same thing in the slow movement of the Eroica, where the violas have that sort of seesaw, rocking motion back and forth. He conducted every note of that.

It was expected. And if you asked me, “What was the greatest performance with Koussevitzky?”—I’d have to seriously tell you, every one, because every concert was really the most important concert of the moment. And this is one of his great secrets. He was so interested, and so *in* his work, that at the moment that was it, that was the greatest moment. And you remember his famous vein? When he would get excited it would pop out. It was really very exciting.

From your perspective as a player, you’ve said exactly what I, as a listener, experienced. Every concert was the event. And looking forward to them week after week after week. It was just something that was incredible.

Of course, I have to be careful, too. There is a tendency as you get older you want to say, "Well in my day ..." So I put a little water in my wine. I don't say as much as I want to sometimes. But I really don't think I'm imagining things. It was a different dedication. Even with the orchestra, I felt that he was like a father image to us. Sometimes he would scold us. He used to tell us, "You are bad *kinders*, but you are my *kinders*." We felt very strongly about that.

And always referred to you as his "kinder." Despite what you've said, and despite what I've said, that every performance was the greatest thing that was going on in the universe at the time, what are some of the performances that stand out in your memory? I have some.

I don't know if it's so much a performance as it is an anecdote. It happened right here in Tanglewood. We had a promotional film, at that time it was not tape, it was film. We were doing the *Egmont* Overture. The procedure was thus. We recorded the whole overture, everybody, full orchestra, and a long shot. At that time they didn't have any zoom lens. So we recorded the whole thing. Then, the producing people said to Koussevitzky, "Now we will separate the orchestra. We're going to take everything away; just keep the woodwinds. Then we're going to come in with our cameras, and you will hear the music. We're playing back the sound. You will conduct like you're conducting the orchestra. You will have the big speakers underneath your music stand. You will hear, and you will conduct." Koussevitzky said, "Fine." So here we go. Cameras come in rolling on their wheels toward the woodwinds, and they start the music. About the fourth or fifth measure Koussevitzky stops, and he says "Follow me. Please, follow me." And he was talking to the speakers! That the speakers weren't following him! They couldn't get through his head that it was his own music that he was hearing. He was incapable of doing it. He wanted to be the conductor.

As a matter of fact, Roger, I have that film, and it's not quite in sync. He is beating just a little bit behind the music.

At Tanglewood, I remember for instance the *Spring* Symphony of Benjamin Britten. That was a big event. He did try to have some big events at Tanglewood. He said, "It's a festival. Let's do a little something." Certainly we repeated programs from

the winter, but we also did some interesting works.

As a matter of fact, here at Tanglewood, he conducted the American premiere of the Vaughan Williams Sixth and the Shostakovich Ninth Symphonies.

So I have a very good association with Tanglewood, with really big stuff, big events that we did. Is it in the Britten that the trumpet has to imitate a cow?

I think so.

Because my father had to play that, and Koussevitzky said, "You are not a good cow." This is also the place, you know the famous story they tell about the trumpet player who's trying to play backstage and he's stopped...

In the Third Leonore?

That actually happened to me, not in *Leonore*, but in *Lieutenant Kijé*. I was in the parking lot. I had two relay conductors. I had Louis Speyer and Bernard Zighera. It starts off with the trumpet. I was there, and a parking attendant came to me and said, "You can't play here. What are you trying to do?" I said, "Well I have to play." As a matter of fact, just then Koussevitzky was walking on stage. I said, "Look, you're going to see the signal." So I had to convince the parking attendant. It delayed the performance a little bit, before I finally convinced him that it was all right. But it really happened.

You mentioned in your audition playing the Strauss and all the other things. Did the Poem of Ecstasy figure in the audition?

Yes, the Scriabin. That was one of his warhorses. Not only that, if you remember the recordings, I think even Monteux liked that.

And Monteux recorded it with the BSO, with you, I presume?

Yes. We recorded it in New York in Carnegie Hall, and the flip side to that is *Les Préludes* of Liszt. And I'll never forget, because of the trumpet solo in the Scriabin, Dick Mohr [producer of the recording session for RCA] said, "You come in front, next to the violins." So I started in front, and I heard from the speaker, "Go back a little bit." So I go back. "Go back a little more."

You wound up back in your chair?

Exactly.

Koussevitzky included the Poem of Ecstasy on his very first concert as BSO music director in 1924. And then he included it on the very first program opening his last season. I don't know if you remember that.

No, I don't remember that. I wouldn't be surprised. That was absolutely magnificent. And I'll never forget my first rehearsal with Koussevitzky playing that. As you know Scriabin writes three notes, and he's got a paragraph explaining them. And there was one spot he was saying something about "*avec volupté*" or something. I started to giggle, and Koussevitzky stopped, and he said, "Young boy, what are you laughing at?"—as if to say, "what you know about *volupté*?" I'll never forget, it was one of those remarks he made, but it's true. If you're familiar with this music, Scriabin's got directions—all in French—for three measures, and you have two paragraphs of instructions.

French, of course, was the language of the educated Russian.

And with Koussevitzky. But you had to be careful, because sometimes he did not quite get everything. I remember Jean Bedetti [principal cellist of the BSO] once getting in trouble, walking by the stage, taking his bow, Koussevitzky said, "*Bon concert, n'est pas?*" And Bedetti answered in French, a little expression, "*Oui, Maître*. Better than yesterday, and not as good as tomorrow." All Koussevitzky heard was "not as good as," and for days he wouldn't speak to Bedetti. And Bedetti, who liked me very much, said, "Be very careful with Koussevitzky. You have to be very clear, because sometimes he doesn't understand." In fact, some of the Russians would say he spoke Russian badly.

He wasn't too hot in English either. You mentioned Bedetti. In the years when I was an usher in the hall, I used to hang around backstage a lot, and Bedetti didn't know me from Adam, but he'd always say, "allo, boy!"

I had some great friends in the orchestra. My father was my great teacher. He had done his job, and I could earn my living. Other people in the orchestra were concerned about other things about me. For instance,

Willem Valkenier [principal horn] was one of the few intellectuals of the orchestra. He spoke about five or six languages, and loved to speak French with me. One day, on our way to Providence, we were on the train. He sat next to me. "Bonjour, Roger" and he'd practice his French. "Roger," he says to me in French, "You know, you're a good trumpet player"—and I start to have a stupid grin on my face—"and there's no reason to be stupid." Then I said, "Oui, M. Valkenier." He said, "Do you read?" I read detective stories at that time. He said, "Let me bring you some books. Would you rather read in French?" I said, "French is still my language." And you know what he did? He got me hooked on Emile Zola. He made me an avid reader for the rest of my life. Don't you think that was wonderful? And Bedetti was like that with me, too. Bedetti showed me how to invest in myself. He said, "You can't be a great artist once a year, when you go up to see the management. You have to be a great artist all the time. You have to invest in yourself as a musician."

You raise a very interesting point, Roger. It seems to me that in those years—in the thirties, forties and fifties—there was something very special about being a member of the Boston Symphony. There was a feeling of pride, a feeling of making music all together in some cooperative spirit.

No question. You have no idea. It was a badge of honor that you wore, even when you went to pay your gas bill. It's absolutely true. We felt that immediately when we were in Boston. There was a great pride within ourselves, too. If you remember, when we would travel, there were no soloists with us.

Very few during the regular season, too. It was the orchestra that was the soloist.

Exactly. They come to listen to the orchestra. It was the Boston Symphony Orchestra; Serge Koussevitzky, conductor—it wasn't SERGE KOUSSEVITZKY and the Boston Symphony. When we went on the road, he used to say, "If they want to hear Heifetz, they can go to Carnegie Hall."

No, it was the orchestra was the main attraction.

There's no question about that, and we certainly felt that very strongly.

I want to talk about some of the recordings—the Brandenburgs which you recorded both with Koussevitzky and with Munch.

As you know, the Koussevitzky recording was on 78s. So, there was no splicing. No tape. It was quite a feat. Toscanini, even at that time, believe it or not, used a soprano sax. I couldn't believe it. So Koussevitzky asked me, "Young boy, do you think you can work it up?" And my father said, "We'll go to France and get a little piccolo trumpet." In France, you don't buy a trumpet. You have your trumpet "mounted." In other words, you go to the factory, you pick bells, pipes and valves, then they put it together. Then they played it. Then you have your horn. So I had an instrument "mounted," a little piccolo trumpet, which sounded horrible in the tuning room, but it was good enough to play the notes. I had a little pea-shooter mouthpiece, and I just about managed to do it. I would work about a week. You see, I couldn't be a specialist, because I had my concerts to go to. Koussevitzky was delighted. I was able to play pianissimo enough so that it was a balance with the four other soloists. And we made our first recording.

Here in the theater, wasn't it?

No, the first one was in Symphony Hall with Koussevitzky. The recording here was with Munch. And the very first take that we did, Ferdinand Gillet, of all people, made a mistake. He turned around, and he had tears in his eyes, and he apologized to me, because he knew how difficult it was to restart again and do it two or three times. At that time, as you know, you had to play about four and a

half minutes, and that was it. And I did it. Now we have much better instruments, but then I was still be able to do it.

As a matter of fact, now that we're talking, it strikes me that what you've been describing may have been the very first incursion of original instruments into the contemporary music scene.

Exactly. When we did it with Munch, then it was, I think, on tape. One interesting thing I have to tell you about here. I asked Munch, "Would you mind doing the last movement first, so I'm nice and fresh. I like to finish in a burst of glory." He said, "Let me go through the last movement without the trumpet first." So, as he was rehearsing the last movement, he turned to me and said, "It's so beautiful without the trumpet!" And actually, I didn't take it personally. I knew what he meant. It's like a trapeze act. Everybody's so interested—is the trumpet going to make it?—that you really don't listen to the beauty of the concerto.

For the recording of the two Sousa marches that Koussevitzky did, Semper Fidelis and Stars and Stripes, I hid myself at the rear of the second balcony. So I was in the hall when those recordings were made. And I'll never forget, after the first take of Semper Fidelis, Dick Gilbert was the recording director, and over the PA system came his voice: "Uh, Dr. Koussevitzky, that was terrific, but could you ask the brass and the percussion to hold back a little?" The equipment couldn't handle it. You played in those?

(Continued on page 8, column 2.)

An interpreter, who possesses a style of his own, creates his performance by uniting past traditions in the shape they reached us with the techniques of our time. Neither Bach's nor Beethoven's tempi and dynamics are in accordance with our tempi and dynamics, and to copy servilely the previous performance would mean to retard modernity forcibly and artificially, achieving only dullness; for it is not possible to turn life backward. In a performance of classical works, seeming sometimes free, the departure from the past serves more to transmit the character and meaning of the work than a servile imitation of the past.

Serge Koussevitzky, 1929

Tanglewood: An Annotated Bibliography

The Koussevitzky years: from the beginnings of the Berkshire summer festival to the end of the Koussevitzky era.

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❑ *Goldovsky, Boris.* My Road to Opera. Houghton Mifflin, 1979.

❑ *Copland, Aaron & Perlis, Vivian.* Copland, 1900 Through 1942. St. Martin's, 1984.

❑ *Copland, Aaron & Perlis, Vivian.* Copland, Since 1943. St. Martin's, 1989.

❑ *Thomson, Virgil.* Music Right and Left. Holt, 1951.

❑ *Kupferberg, Herbert.* Tanglewood. McGraw-Hill, 1976.

The Howe book is the place to start. It brings to life the days of Hawthorne, Melville, and the Tappan Family, and traces the origin of "Tanglewood" as used in Hawthorne's *Tanglewood Tales*. After re-creating the very early literary years, the author moves on to Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, Henry Hadley, Gertrude Robinson Smith, and the many others who put together the first Berkshire Festivals. There follows the first years of Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony at Tanglewood.

The volume ends with the re-birth of the Berkshire Festival after World War II. A slight volume, it is easily read for pleasure, but it offers two distinctive features: an introduction by Koussevitzky, and a listing of the orchestral programs performed at the Berkshire Festival from the first concerts given by Hadley and the "Berkshire Symphony Orchestra" in 1934 to the first post-war concerts by Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony in 1946.

This book is difficult to locate so the Koussevitzky Recordings Society will reproduce these early Tanglewood programs in future issues of this newsletter. Finally, it should be noted that Howe

also wrote a book on the early history of the Boston Symphony and served for over two decades on the Board of Trustees of the orchestra.

The Mahanna book indicates in its sub-title that it is "gleaned from the official minutes of the Corporation." As such it gives all the details—financial, contractual and otherwise—of the organization of the "Berkshire Symphonic Festival, Inc." Fortunately the author, who was one of the editors of the *Berkshire Evening Eagle*, lightens these details to make them readable. He does give us a plethora of names, but these are the names of those—many now otherwise completely forgotten—who gave of their time and money to put together the Berkshire Festivals. Additionally, the book has a superb collection of photographs which well illustrate the processes of organization and construction which created the Music Center as it now exists.

Again, like the Howe book, this volume by Mahanna is a scarce item, but it is essential to an understanding of the hard work and financial arrangements that went into the founding of the Festival and the Music Center.

My opinion of the Smith book is well-known, but, nevertheless, writing as Smith does during and immediately after World War II, he offers some additional details on Koussevitzky's early years at Tanglewood—if, of course, one can overlook the constant carping and innuendo of a bitter and vicious author whose every sentence is loaded with the venom of his very essence.

Goldovsky's family had connections with Koussevitzky from the latter's earliest days in Russia, so Goldovsky's anecdotes are of interest—as is his entire book for that matter. Coming from one who handled opera at the Music Center for many years while Koussevitzky headed the entire operation, Goldovsky's views of life and work at Tanglewood are of major import to those interested in the early years of the Music Center.

Smith offers additional details on Koussevitzky's early years at Tanglewood—if one can overlook the constant carping and innuendo.

The two Copland volumes contain much material on both the Koussevitzky years at Tanglewood and the era of Charles Munch which followed. Not least are some of the interviews of others beside Copland who were at Tanglewood during the composer's years there. In most instances these interviews supplement Copland's reminiscences, but a few present somewhat different viewpoints from those expressed by Copland. The dif-

difficulty comes in the use of these two volumes by those interested mainly in Tanglewood and not primarily in Copland, because Copland reminisces year-by-year, and in each year for twenty years, Tanglewood was but a part of his annual work and travel.

There are a few references to Copland at Tanglewood during the Koussevitzky years in Julia Smith's *Aaron Copland* (Dutton, 1955), but these are almost wholly directed toward whatever work Copland was composing at the time and have little to offer on Tanglewood itself. Arnold Dobson's *Aaron Copland, His Life and Times* (Crowell, 1967) offers only one very slight chapter on the composer at Tanglewood.

The Thomson book is a collection, one of many such, of his pieces written for the *New York Herald-Tribune*. As such, these collections touch on a wide variety of musical items, but this particular collection contains not only a piece entitled "Koussevitzky" from the January 23, 1949 *Herald-Tribune*, but also a piece entitled "The Berkshire Music Center" from the *Tribune* of July 31, 1949. Both should be read: the first for its tribute to Koussevitzky in his role as a promoter of American music; the second for its summation of the Music Center and its activities near the end of the Koussevitzky era.

While the Kupferberg volume goes well beyond the Koussevitzky years at Tanglewood, its first 143 pages present an excellent and very readable summary of the history of the place, the festival, and the school up to 1951 and the death of Koussevitzky (taken largely, it should be noted, from the books already cited). This portion of the book culminates in Kupferberg's interview of Leonard Bernstein, in which the conductor discusses Koussevitzky and, of course, Leonard Bernstein. Additionally, the book contains some well-selected and well-reproduced photographs.

Unfortunately, Paul Hindemith's years at Tanglewood were only a very minor part of his career, otherwise two books by and about this composer might have given us yet another viewpoint by an early participant (Paul Hindemith. *A Composer's World*. Doubleday, 1952; Geoffrey Skelton. *Paul Hindemith, The Man Behind the Music*. Crescendo, 1975; also Gollancz, 1975). Nor did Hindemith live long enough to be interviewed (I wonder if he would have been?) for a minority report in either of the two Copland volumes.

Books about Bernstein are legion, but few of them offer much, if anything, about Tanglewood except the nauseous volume by Joan Peyser entitled, *Bernstein, A Biography* (Morrow, 1987) which this writer does not recommend either as literature or biography. The best of Bernstein is in the Kupferberg interview where Bernstein forgets himself, at least on occasion, and remembers Koussevitzky.

Kenneth DeKay, © 1992

(Continued from page 6)

Of course.

When did you become the principal trumpet?

Let's see. Around seventeen or eighteen years later. Something like that.

So it was already after Koussevitzky had left?

Oh no. I became first with Koussevitzky, a few years. And for quite a few years I remained the first at Pops, too. I loved the Pops anyway, so Arthur asked me to stay on at Pops. Of course, I would do anything for Arthur, and I did until after maybe five, six or seven years, into the season I started to feel it a little bit. I asked Arthur, and he says, "No, I won't let you go. You find me somebody." I said, "Really?" And he said, "You find me somebody that I like, and I'll let you go." There was not really anybody around Boston. So I asked Bill Vacchiano, the first trumpet of the Philharmonic in New York, and he said, "Yes, I have somebody who's very good"—and it was Armando Ghitalla. And then I called him up. I said, "Would you mind coming and playing for Fiedler?" And he said, "Yes," and he came and got the job. So that's how Mundy came, and he played magnificently, and he replaced me when I stepped down.

Again, we were talking about the all-French trumpet section. When you and Mundy were on that stage in the trumpet section it was gangbusters. Who was the trumpet player in Fiedler's recording of Leroy Anderson's Trumpeter's Lullaby? Is that you or Mundy?

That's me. What happened is that I got off the stage after playing Raymond Scott's *Toy Trumpet*, and I mumbled, "My God. I'm so sick and tired of this piece." I think I had played it for fifteen years as an encore. Leroy heard me say that at intermission. And the next day at intermission of the Pops he said, "Come here." He sat down at the piano, and in front of Arthur, he played the *Trumpeter's Lullaby* that he had written overnight. So I played *that* for the next fifteen years as an encore. That was actually dedicated to me.

Anything else about the Koussevitzky experience that you want to have on the record?

I can't tell you enough about the feeling that we had of togetherness with Koussevitzky, which was really unique. I remember coming into the orchestra having heard that sometimes he had trouble with 5/8, this and that. I can assure you that by the time I got in the orchestra in 1935, it was not the same Koussevitzky that I had heard of. Because he progressed with the time, and it was really great to see that. And also his love of contemporary music. It was really great. And, of course, the school here, which is a magnificent memorial to Koussevitzky. One thing I don't know if you remember, in the old days when we had the school here, we used to have rehearsals in the morning, then the students used to rehearse in the afternoon. Koussevitzky let it be known that it would be very good if we came to the rehearsal in the afternoon. So we would attend the rehearsals of the students. As I say, I'm eternally grateful to him, first of all, for giving me a chance to come in so young like this. It was really an experience that was unique. I think everybody who was under his spell had that. And he was very loyal. He had the authority, and he was an autocrat, as far as that is concerned, but in my whole career, I think he fired one person. So you see, the stories you hear about his being a dictator or something, I mean, he was a very loyal dictator, if anything.

Yes, and thinking back to some of the musicians who used to play in the orchestra, who then went on to solo careers—Paul Tortelier, Raphael Hillyer, Walter Trampler...

Harold Farberman, is a conductor...

So is Roger Voisin these days. I've seen you do some wonderful work with the brass players.

No. I'm a good coach. I don't think I'm a very inspiring conductor.

You speak about the legacy of Koussevitzky, and you and your colleagues here carry on that legacy by passing on some of that intense dedication to the art of music and to humanity, really—a direct line from the Koussevitzky inspiration through you to your students.

Well he taught us one great lesson. He told us that we are here to serve music, not music serves us. We serve music, and that's a great lesson which I hope I will never forget. ☺

Interview with Harry Shapiro

Recorded at Tanglewood by Martin Bookspan, August 1, 1991

Martin Bookspan: *Almost as long as I can remember looking down the roster of the BSO, there was the name Harry Shapiro in the horn section. When did you join the orchestra?*

Harry Shapiro: My first year in the orchestra was the season of 1936-37. I was still a student at the Juilliard Graduate School in New York. This was the summertime, and I was playing with the Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra. At that time, the orchestra was comprised of some students from the Juilliard, members of the New York Philharmonic, the Detroit Symphony, and anybody who could actually be qualified to play in the orchestra, because a lot of the regular musicians usually took the summer off.

Not only that, there was very little summer employment for symphony musicians in those days.

That's very true.

Who was the music director in Chautauqua then?

Albert Stoessel. He was the head of the orchestra department at Juilliard.

1936-37 is just about mid-way of Koussevitzky's tenure with the BSO. Obviously, you must have auditioned for him to become a member of the orchestra.

Yes, I did audition for him. We were finishing our season at Chautauqua. That was the end of August sometime. I got a call from Boston. A friend of mine was a trombone player there, and he said, "Harry, we're still looking for horn players here." They'd had two or three auditions already, and they couldn't make up their mind about any of the horn players, and this trombone player asked me to audition. He said, "I've spoken to Koussevitzky about you. Why don't you get in touch with him?" I said, "Ok, that sounds pretty good." So I called Koussevitzky's home in Brookline, and his secretary answered. She apparently knew about me. She said, "Dr. Koussevitzky would like to listen to you. When can you come?" I

said, "I have to finish what I'm doing here, which won't be until about September first, and then I'll be very happy to come." Then I heard some muttering in the background. Finally, she came back and said, "Dr. Koussevitzky says fine. You can come the first week in September. He'll be back from vacation at that time, and he'll listen to you." I said, "Fine. I'll get there as soon as I can," which I did.

As soon as we finished the last concert, I got myself back to Boston within two days, and I went up to visit him in his home in Brookline. It was on a small street coming off Buckminster. He had a lovely old house there. I came in the middle of the afternoon. It was a beautiful day. I still remember that. I came there, and Dr. Koussevitzky was there with the concertmaster of the orchestra, Richard Burgin, and several of the principal players. He sat down, and he asked me to take my horn out, which I did. He was very nice to me, very kind.

I had just bought a new horn, which had been brought over from Germany for me by Anton Horner, the first horn player in the Philadelphia Orchestra. He was a very famous name in the country, because he was one of the greatest principal horn players at that time. My father, who was a horn player, too, and had played with Anton Horner, knew him as a friend and asked him to get a new instrument for me, which he did. He brought back three beautiful, new German double silver horns, actually the first of their kind that had ever been brought to this country. As a matter of fact, he gave me a lesson at the same time to show me how to play it. Anyway, I came to Koussevitzky with this horn and opened up the case. Koussevitzky saw this beautiful, bright horn in there, and he said, "Oh my. Beautiful instrument. New?" I said, "Yes, brand new." "Fine," he said, "What shall we do now? What would you like to play?"

He asked you what you'd like to play?

Well I had opened up my case, and in it there was a little notebook in which

my father had written in the important passages from various symphonies and everything for the horn, solos and things like that. Fifty-odd years ago, they didn't have any of that literature in print, and it was hard to get a lot of this repertory. So I had it there, and he saw it, and he said "What is?" I showed him what it was. He said, "Ok, we will play." He opened it up for me, and of course the first thing there were the Brahms Symphonies and things. I played along for about twenty minutes, this and that. He made a few little observations. He was very nice, very kind. Then he pulled a page out, and he said "Ah, *Till Eulenspiegel*." First I played it in the regular key, and I didn't use the music or anything. Then he says, "Play this half a tone higher, in F-sharp." *Till Eulenspiegel* is difficult anyway, without playing it half a tone higher. "Well," I said, "if you give me the music I can play it half a tone higher, but in the orchestra I would have the music in front of me, and I could do it right away." He accepted that, and he forgot about it right away.

About ten more minutes I played for him, and then he went to the piano. I played in his living room, which was a quite large size room. At one end of the room was this beautiful grand piano. He said, "You stay where you are." He went to the piano, and he started to play simple chords, I-IV-V chords, and he asked me what they were. They were so simple, anybody would know what they were. So, I told him. Then he asked me, "What system did you study at the Juilliard? What kind of solfeggio?" I told him we went by the numbers all the time. We never called it "do-re-mi" or anything. He said, "Well it's good, but the French system is much better. You must learn the French way." "Oh, I'd be very happy, Doctor, to learn the French way," and I smiled, because he knew that I knew what the chords were, and so it was all right. Then he said, "You will come back tomorrow, and I will have Mr. Judd [George Judd was the manager of the BSO at that time] here, and he will speak to you."

So that held out the promise of a contract.

Yeah, it sounded very good to me. So I went home and told my father everything. Everybody was excited. The next day I went back, and Mr. Judd and several other members of the orchestra were there. Dr. Koussevitzky told him that he had listened to me, and he liked my playing, and he wanted them to talk to me, which they did. Everything seemed to turn out all right. Dr. Koussevitzky said, "Yes, we will have you in the orchestra. You will now go with Mr. Judd to the office in Boston." I said, "Fine," and thanked him. Everybody said goodbye. We walked out to the street, and Mr. Judd and I walked down about a quarter of a mile to the Beacon Street car line. At that time they had these old-fashioned cars where the center doors opened wide. You'd go in, and there was a booth where you dropped in a dime. As I was fishing in my pocket for the dime, Mr. Judd said to me, "Hold it, Harry. You are now a member of the Boston Symphony Orchestra," and he dropped in two dimes.

That made it official.

That made it official. We got down to Symphony Hall, and he started to explain everything. It turned out to be a good friendship with Mr. Judd, who was a great manager and a great friend of all the young people in the orchestra that he was engaging.

When did you stop playing the horn in the orchestra?

1976. I played approximately forty years. For a while I was still keeping up my playing, and I was teaching on the faculty at Boston University. I was also on the faculty at the New England Conservatory. But it got to be too much for me to do everything, so I gradually stopped doing the outside stuff and just devoted all my time to taking care of the personnel part of the work.

And you do outside contracting as well, or you did.

I did. I was one of the first real opera contractors. I was Sarah Caldwell's orchestra manager for twenty years, while I was doing the symphony. I was also orchestra manager and on the Board of Trustees of the Boston Ballet Company. I used Boston Symphony people a great deal, because at that time their salaries weren't in the higher levels as they are now, and everybody was looking for outside work to do, so I got permission from Mr. Judd or Mr. Todd Perry, and they let me use the players in the orchestra, which made life very easy for me, because I was a big success immediately with the Boston Symphony players. We had to go on a rotation system, because there were so many people who wanted to play. I kept this up for quite a few years.

In the last ten years of Koussevitzky's tenure, I had the good fortune to attend most of the concerts that he conducted. I have my own incredible memories, and I'm

sure you've got thousands of them. What was it that made Koussevitzky special?

Well you'll have to take it from my point of view, which was orchestra player and also my point of view from the fact that he was the man who engaged me, brought me into the

orchestra, and who was very gentle with all the young people in the beginning. He was trying to teach as well as to conduct at the same time, because he knew he had young people coming into the orchestra. I was perhaps one of the few younger people in the orchestra there, and it wasn't just a question of getting a very experienced, professional musician into the orchestra. He was looking for talented young people that he could train, so they would play in the orchestra the way he wanted them to play. We kept that system up for many, many years. It's a system which very few orchestras follow today, but at that time it was a very successful system, because everybody usually turned out to be fine.

Let me pick up on something you just said: "He taught the young people." And yet there's something of a revisionist attitude out there these days that Koussevitzky was an imperfectly trained musician, that he needed help in score reading, and all that stuff. If that were the case, how could he have taught young people?

You have to remember that here I was, twenty-two or twenty-three years old, just coming into an orchestra. I'd never played in such a big, beautiful orchestra before, and I was very anxious to learn everything that was going on musically speaking. So whatever he said, I took for granted. I didn't question him or anything. I knew he was very successful as a conductor, regardless of whether he was a good musicologist or he had the mechanical training to be a good conductor. I just took him as a person trying to help me play in an orchestra, and I gained very much from that.

Afterwards, I found out a lot of things that, if I had known before, I probably would have questioned him, but I didn't in the beginning, which was very lucky for me, because I learned a lot. I learned that he had utmost respect for musicians, especially young ones and that he was just trying to show what you had to do in the orchestra—that you couldn't play at your own tempi and that you had to be very disciplined. One of his famous remarks was, "The little notes are very, very important." By little notes, he meant eighth-notes and sixteenth-notes in between the larger context of a piece. He said, "The little things are very important."

He would tune up the orchestra, too. This was interesting. He would tune up the double-basses first. Double-basses are notoriously sharp, so he tuned them up first very nicely. He was a double-bass player himself. And then he'd go through the orchestra and tune them gradually.

Implicit in what you're saying, is the fact that he must have had a very good ear.

He had a wonderful ear. He could tune a section—my horn section—he could tune all the inner voices, and make you realize what voice was important and what wasn't. He just had this wonderful sense of balance and hearing. Another

Koussevitzky
had utmost respect
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sense he had that was very well advanced was his sense of balance—balancing an orchestra. He always thought of paintings and color. He never talked that way, but you can tell that he was thinking of beautiful things, paintings mostly. That was a natural thing to him. Everything was natural with him, and that's why he was so good, because he was making music all the time. All he could do was to make music, perhaps not in the most technical, advanced way, but you would hear things with him, because he would have the orchestra play triple pianos really triple piano and then tremendous fortissimos and great climaxes and great developments, even though I'm sure he didn't realize what was going on. He just went on how he felt, and usually his feelings were very good.

The very first concert of his I attended, Beethoven's Fourth Symphony and Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony were on the program. I was a kid, and that performance of the Tchaikovsky still stays in my memory. It was enormous in terms of the dynamic gradations that he made happen and the climaxes were absolutely, unbelievably in tune and precise. The ensemble of the BSO then was phenomenal.

It was a well trained orchestra. People nowadays say Koussevitzky was just an ordinary conductor. Half of them never even heard of him. He wasn't anywhere near ordinary, he was a great conductor. In his own way he was great, in that he was making music all the time. He was a great leader, a leader of men. He knew how to get the best out of people. When he conducted an orchestra, everybody played way over their heads. They tried so hard because that personality, tough as it was, made you try very hard, because you realized he loved music.

In 1942, the New York Philharmonic celebrated its centennial year, and there was a whole string of guest conductors, among whom was Koussevitzky. I wasn't at the concerts themselves, but I heard them on the air, on CBS radio, and I remember that on

those two Sunday afternoons, the Philharmonic sounded like the Boston Symphony.

That's true. Therein lies his greatness, because he had something to say. Pure, beautiful music is what he had to say, and he knew how to get it out of an orchestra. Now we have many conductors today, very fine conductors all over the world, who just can't do that. It's impossible for them. There so involved in technicalities and musicology and all

Koussevitzky would come
back from vacation and say,
"What has happened
to mine orchestra?"

that, that they forget about the music itself. Well he luckily didn't know most of the techniques that the present day conductors know. He just went out there and made music. That was the best thing he could do.

He didn't take many vacations. He worked twenty weeks out of twenty-four and used to do the whole Tanglewood season all by himself. He loved music so much, and he loved the Boston Symphony so much, he would come back from his vacations, and he would always say, "What has happened to mine orchestra?" After we'd been playing with some guest conductors or playing pops concerts, he'd say, "It's not mine orchestra. We must work hard." Another thing that he was known for at that time, he loved the orchestra so much that he actually assisted them whenever they had any trade agreement doings or anything like that with management. One of his famous sayings was, "The murderers of great music are the managements."

It was true then, and maybe it's even truer now.

He gave the orchestra a feeling that it was *his* orchestra, and he would stand with them all the time, no matter what. During the war years, in the forties, he would come back in September, and his first speech was about music. He'd say, "Music is the only way that we will solve all the world problems. Not through politics. You can't trust the politicians. Music. Everybody understands music. Everybody loves music. If we can bring this kind of music to everybody in the world, we'll have peace."

He was a true humanist and a wonderful universalist at the same time. In that "what has happened to mine orchestra," were there elements of egocentricity or jealousy? I'm wondering if there were some elements of resentment that the orchestra had been in somebody else's charge for a while.

Of course. We didn't have many guest conductors. And the few that we had were excellent. Mitropoulos conducted us. George Szell conducted us. But they did so well that they never came back again, as you can understand that. [In his book *Koussevitzky, Moses Smith reports that immediately after Mitropoulos's final concert with the BSO in January 1936, Koussevitzky invited him to return the following season. According to Smith, Mitropoulos conducted the BSO again in both 1937 and 1944. Similarly, Kevin Mostyn's listing of BSO broadcasts from 1935-1950 indicates that Szell appeared as guest conductor in January 1943 and again in 1945—Ed.] All the guest conductors that we had loved the orchestra, but then Dr. Koussevitzky would come back and say "What has happened?"*

What are some of the performance memories that come to you just out of the blue at this moment.

They're mostly Russian music—Prokofiev, Shostakovich, naturally Tchaikovsky—and some American music. He probably was the only conductor that we've had in this country who was trying really to pursue American music. He

established the Koussevitzky Foundation for the purpose of helping American composers in producing American music.

Anything that he put his stamp on, Bartók for instance, then he would work very hard with that. I remember we were working with Roy Harris and his Third Symphony. Koussevitzky made statement after statement saying, "This is the new Beethoven *Eroica* Symphony. That's the only way I can compare this symphony. This is a great symphony. Everybody will love it. It will be played for years and years." As a matter of fact, after one performance he repeated it, and played it again immediately.

He did the same with the Bartók Concerto for Orchestra. Four weeks after the two premiere performances, bang, there it was again in the regular subscription series, the same series.

Actually, he wasn't right [about the Harris Third], because it hasn't been played much after that. It was played somewhat, but it's been forgotten.

I wouldn't say it's forgotten, Harry. If you check the statistics of the American Symphony Orchestra League, you'll see that it really does get as frequent performances as any American symphony, which unfortunately isn't saying much.

I want to get back to this "revisionist" attitude on the part of some who maintain that the Koussevitzky aura is one that is fostered largely by people with memories rather than an absolute understanding of what it takes to be a great conductor. You know he was a great conductor, from the point of view of the orchestra musician. I know it from the point of view of an audience member having been swept off my feet countless times. You say that it was intuitive with him. Of course it was. How did that transmit to you as a player in his orchestra?

He insisted so much, and he rehearsed things so much, that gradually you began to understand that the man had certain failings, and that he had to

rehearse a lot in order to be able to get through at the concerts. But, in the meantime, we learned a lot from all that rehearsing. Finally everything began to make sense—Beethoven Symphonies, Brahms Symphonies. You began to hear things you never would hear otherwise. We began to know the orchestral repertory just as well as he did, which was fantastic. We would usually start a season with a Brahms Symphony or a Beethoven Symphony or Schumann, rehearse it well for one or two weeks, and then put

I still think after working with many conductors that Koussevitzky would still be a great conductor today.

it aside. Then maybe three or four months later, if he wanted to do a program and use those numbers, he could with one rehearsal only. As a matter of fact, we used to come to Tanglewood and play the winter repertory and play each concert with one rehearsal, which was great, because the men never got tired that way. But I don't know what you mean by a great conductor, Martin.

One who makes the music come alive and become an indelible memory, that really establishes a communication between the performer and the composer and then, ultimately, performer to audience.

Well there are many ways of doing that as far as the conductor is concerned. Everybody has their own ideas, and every conductor is different. They think differently. Most of them, you can say, are great conductors, because the audience is pleased, and the orchestra is pleased, but they all have different definitions of that word "great." I think Koussevitzky would really stand on a par with these great conductors. I can only think of people in that era when Koussevitzky was conduct-

ing who were really great, like Bruno Walter. He conducted us, and I remember that I was thunderstruck by the difference in the approach, and the explanations that he could give. He could verbalize like mad. It was wonderful just listening to him. And then he would do it, because he had the technique to be able to do everything, and actually to interpret even with his hands and his whole body, you could understand what he was doing. Then I began to be able to compare people. But I still think after working with many—maybe a hundred con-

ductors—that Koussevitzky would still be a great conductor today.

I'm convinced of it. If only he had been able to be cloned. Oh, could we use him today!

Since the orchestra at that time was not a part of the American Federation of Musicians, was there an element of fear

that also entered into the relationship of musician to music director, fear that, almost on a whim, the job would not be there?

That was very true. Actually he didn't dismiss many musicians in the twenty-five years that he was there. Only in the beginning, when he first came into the orchestra in the middle twenties. There were a lot of Germans in the orchestra, and there were very few French people. He brought in the French people that had played with him in Paris. He brought in a contingent of maybe twenty-five French players over a period of three or four years. After that, they stayed. Everybody stayed. We didn't have this continuous leaving the orchestra for all the reasons that they leave now. We had the same people playing there all the time. The same people were playing second violins. They were happy to play second or first, whatever it was. We didn't have rotation systems, so these people could learn how to play with their partners and learn how they should sound together. It was wonderful in that respect, because it was a beautiful orchestra,



which was well trained and could play beautifully.

Anybody that came to conduct the orchestra knew right away that it was a great orchestra, even though the players probably man-for-man or woman-for-woman are better today. They're better trained. They have better access to all the repertory and had better school training than we had fifty years ago. But the main thing was the way the orchestra sounded. It was beautiful. They played together. They had a wonderful spirit, even though I would say half of the orchestra hated the conductor and the other half just got along all right with the conductor. It doesn't change today. We have the same feelings in every orchestra in the country. There are people for a conductor, and people against a conductor. But you don't have this feeling that the orchestra, no matter who's up there, plays as well as possible all the time. You just don't get that feeling anymore, because you have so many guest conductors. Every orchestra has a lot of guest conductors, and they [the orchestra musicians] don't know what to do usually. They have to

change what they've been trained to do with one conductor and start anew with another conductor. Therefore, performances are usually not what you would expect from these great orchestras that we have today.

Koussevitzky said,
"I will do it anyway.
We will get new trustees,
but I will do it."

Harry, we've covered a lot of ground. Is there anything you want to add that we have not touched?

We're forgetting two things about Koussevitzky. There's the fact that he established the Koussevitzky Foundation and kept it going. It's still going today. Another thing is the fact that he established this Tanglewood Music Center that we have. I can't think of any other

conductor in the last fifty years who did what he has done with his own finances. He established the Foundation, he established the school for young players and really kept it going against a lot of opposition, because there were people who are interested in budgets, like management and trustees. At one time he had said, "I will do it anyway. We will get new trustees, but I will do it." And he did do it.

Look what we have today! We have this wonderful Tanglewood Music Center. We have students from all over the world coming. I think this is one of the great things that the Boston Symphony is doing, keeping this Tanglewood Music Center going, where we have this constant stream of the most talented and educated young musicians going out into the world after one or two seasons here and really making it in a big way. I think a great deal of that is due to the experience they've had here. This is one of the reasons why Koussevitzky was a great man. He had tremendous vision and was very faithful to *his* orchestra. I don't know whether many conductors left in the world today feel that way. ☺

(continued from page 16)

selections. In 1929, the Scherzo came first. The 1936 version is more forceful in sound and hence more effective on the whole.

Peter and the Wolf was recorded twice, first with Richard Hale (4/12/39, M-566) and then with Eleanor Roosevelt (8/11/50, M-1437). Hale contributes an interesting narration. Roosevelt, on the other hand, reads with a grandmotherly insight, and the recorded sound is clear throughout.

The American premiere of Prokofiev's Violin Concerto #2 preceded the first recording by only three days (12/30/37, M-450). For some reason these discs were recorded at 80 rpm. When played at the standard 78 speed, the pitch appears to be slightly lower. [This problem was corrected in the recent *Biddulph CD reissue*—Ed.] The performance is very fine. Listen to the slow movement, and you'll want to own this set. Heifetz played beautifully, and the orchestra backs him up to the hilt.

The Fifth Symphony also received its American premiere under Koussevitzky. Less than three months later, the BSO transcribed their performance for RCA (2/6-7/46, M-1095). It is a noble work that one hears. The slow movement stands out in more ways than one. It is eloquently stated and the fast movements have a rollicking sense of fun.

The *Romeo and Juliet* Suite #2 excerpts get a stunning reading (10/30/45, M-1129). An LP reissue from 1977, coupled with the Fifth Symphony, revealed much detail. The triangle, castanets and celesta in the first section were especially clear. This set is unique and would be welcome in a CD reissue.

BERLIOZ

Koussevitzky recorded only three of this composer's works: *Harold in Italy*, the *Roman Carnival* Overture and orchestral excerpts from the *Damnation of Faust*. The latter gets a refined performance under the conductor's baton (5/8/36, 14230/1). The *Rakoczy* March is especially stirring.

Harold received its first recording with Koussevitzky and violist William Primrose (11/28/44, M-989). This kaleidoscopic score is brilliantly done despite some over-reverberation. This last element nearly eclipsed the final pages of the *Roman Carnival* Overture, although the orchestra plays wonderfully well (11/22/44, 11-9008).

Vincent C. Schwerin, Jr.

Notes:

¹David Hall, *The Record Book* (International Edition), 1948, Durrell: New York, p. 987.

The Koussevitzkys Leave Soviet Russia

Gustav Hilger was born of German parents in Russia in 1886. Educated first in Russia in German schools and finally in Germany itself, he worked for a time in Upper Silesia. He was about to accept a position with a farm implement company in the United States when he took a job with a Russian firm owned by a Russian-born German who in time became his father-in-law.

Returning from a business trip to Germany in August 1914, he was arrested as a spy. When that charge was dropped, he was finally released and sent deep into Russia as an enemy alien. There he was designated as the local trustee of the United States Consulate General to represent the interests of German civilian internees. When the United States entered World War I, he was designated as a representative of the Swedish Consulate General. When Russia left the war, Hilger returned to Moscow and began work for a Commission to Aid Prisoners of War, supervising the evacuation of German war prisoners from Russia.

After the defeat of Germany, the new Bolshevik government of Russia and the new Social Democrat government of Germany severed diplomatic relations, and the two governments exchanged all their diplomats in accordance with the strictest timetables for each group to cross the Russian border. Back in Germany, Hilger went to work for the Reich Central Office for Military and Civilian Prisoners, supervising the German prisoner-of-war camps which still held Russian prisoners.

When diplomatic relations were re-established between the two countries, Hilger returned to Russia to supervise the repatriation of German military and civilian prisoners still held in Russia. To get back to Russia in 1920, one had to go through Estonia, which was the first nation in the Baltic area to conclude a peace treaty with Soviet Russia. Later in 1920,

Lithuania, Latvia and Finland followed suit, but Poland was then at war with Soviet Russia. Traveling from Germany across the Baltic Sea and through Estonia by train, Hilger wrote:

The next day, I departed for Moscow. My traveling companions were an official of the Soviet diplomatic representation in Estonia and the Russian left-wing Socialist Axelrod, who had been expelled from Germany and who was now returning to his home country after many years of exile. Apparently his feelings about returning to a Bolshevik Russia were mixed, particularly after the Bolshevik border control had paid excessive attention to

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his baggage, which was filled with products of the capitalist world. The Soviet diplomatic official going to Moscow with us was Davtian, a man of elegant appearance, with a finely modeled face and polished European manners, all quite out of keeping with the impression his chief had made on me the day before. Nor was it easy to believe that this cultured gentleman belonged to an agency whose name is closely linked with all the horrors of the Red Terror. For the next seventeen years, Davtian occupied a number of high and responsible positions in the Soviet Union. He was finally made ambassador in Warsaw, whence he was recalled to Moscow. He disappeared in the great purges of the mid-thirties.

In Yamburg, the first station on the Soviet side of the border, the guard in charge of the courier car announced that a gentleman by the name of Sergei Koussevitzky wished to see me. I had previously met Koussevitzky in Moscow, where he had become well known first as a bass violinist, and later as a conductor. His wife came from one of the wealthiest and best

known Russian merchant families; through her he was connected with Moscow's leading society circles. In the hospitable villa of his father-in-law on Lake Geneva, my wife and I spent part of our honeymoon in the summer of 1912. Sergei Koussevitzky and his wife, it appeared, were being detained at the Soviet-Estonian border because the Cheka in Yamburg would not recognize as valid the exit permits they had obtained in Moscow. Neither I nor even Davtian could persuade the authorities to relent. Willy-nilly the Koussevitzkys had to go back to Moscow once more, an exceedingly difficult and exhausting trip at that time. There, after some efforts, I finally helped them obtain papers with which they took leave of Soviet Russia forever. I had the further great satisfaction of being able to help them over the first days in Estonia with a few hundred Estonian crowns still in my possession.

On my way to Moscow I saw Petrograd again for the first time since the Bolshevik Revolution. This magnificent city, built by a tsar who used the most brutal and objectionable means for the purpose of doing great things for his country, was now terribly sad to behold. The faces of the population were modeled by starvation, misery and desperation, no matter whether they were the sorry remnants of the dispossessed classes or representatives of the victorious proletariat. All had but one thought: To obtain a crust of bread. The food obtainable by means of official ration cards meant certain starvation. Not a single shop was open; no public means of conveyance was running; and much of the once famous wooden pavement of St. Petersburg had disappeared: the people had used it to fire their stoves.

Hilger spent the next twenty-one years with the German Embassy in Moscow, leaving only when the Russo-German War started in 1941. His book, *The Incompatible Allies* (Macmillan, 1953), is a close look at German-Russian relations from 1920 to 1941 and details the maneuvers of various Germans to have Germany (under both the Weimar Republic and later under Hitler) make every effort to maintain a close friendship with Soviet Russia instead of emphasizing closer relationships with "the west," i.e. France, England and Italy.

by Kenneth DeKay, ©1991

Koussevitzky's Recordings

When recording for RCA, Koussevitzky was sometimes required to fill an odd side with some short piece. These vignettes are as engrossing as the longer works to which they are appended. To tie up some loose ends to this ongoing discussion, I will review these miscellaneous items, as well as some more substantial works.

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV

Koussevitzky's matchless *Dubynushka* occupies side four of Fauré's *Pelleas et Mélisande* Incidental Music (11/7/39, M-941, 11-8346). From the opera *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh and the Maiden Fevronia* comes the Act II entracte "The Battle of Kershenetz" which completes the set of Liszt's *Mephisto Waltz* (11/7/39, M-870, 18411). All the drama and excitement plus mystery are caught suspensefully by orchestra and conductor.

RACHMANINOV

The Isle of the Dead (4/23/45, M-1024) could not have received a more stirring reading. Despite David Hall's caveat that the interpretation is fussy, I think this "fussiness" serves the music well.¹ It is absolutely shattering at the climax, and the gondola strokes are eerily recreated. The *Vocalise* on side six (4/24/45, 11-8959) is also beautifully done.

SIBELIUS

A virtually unknown excerpt from Sibelius's *Swanwhite* called "The Maiden with the Roses" graced the Tchaikovsky *Romeo & Juliet* album (M-347, 12/29/36) not to mention several other albums. The sonorities are gorgeous and well recorded.

MOUSSORGSKY

The Prelude to *Khovantschina* moves somewhat slower than the usual, but it has a conviction all its own (12/28/36, 14415). It's as if Koussevitzky wants to squeeze every drop from the work. *Pictures at an Exhibition* hardly needs any critical appraisal (10/28-30/30, M-102). Here composer, arranger and conductor function as one. This superb version is long overdue for reissue. *Pictures* did appear on a Japanese compact disc several years ago (RCA ORG 1005), coupled with the 1950 Sibelius Second Symphony. According to Tom Godell, the equalization was all wrong, producing a miserable result. Let's hope the next transfer will have the fullness of sound and impact that Ed Young's tapes reveal.

PROKOFIEV

The *Danse finale* from Prokofiev's *Chout (The Buffoon)*, showing a strong Stravinsky influence, fills out Koussevitzky's second recording of the *Classical* Symphony (11/25/47, M-1241). It receives a colorful evocation. The *Classical* itself was one of Koussevitzky's specialties, and it gets the utmost of refinement and *joie de vivre*. The earlier version of the *Classical* Symphony (4/22/29, 7196/7) differs little from the later one. In fact, these two recordings create a common virtuosic atmosphere.

The *Lieutenant Kijé* Suite, in its world premiere recording, emerges stunningly (12/22/37, M-459). Coupled with *Kijé* are the March and Scherzo from Prokofiev's early opera, *The Love for Three Oranges* (12/30/36). Koussevitzky had previously recorded the March and Scherzo at the same sessions which produced the first version of the *Classical* Symphony. A comparison of these two recordings reveals the same virtues in both, although for some reason Koussevitzky reversed the order of the (continued on page 14)

About the Koussevitzky Recordings Society, Inc.

The Koussevitzky Recordings Society was established in 1986, and we are dedicated to the preservation and dissemination of the recorded legacy of Serge Koussevitzky. The Society is a non-profit corporation, which is staffed entirely by volunteers.

The Society is involved in a variety of projects, including the creation of an "oral archive" of conversations with those who knew and worked with Koussevitzky and an archive of the conductor's recorded performances. The activities of the Society are highlighted in our bi-annual newsletters. These include interviews from the oral archive, articles about the conductor, and book reviews.

To become a member and receive our newsletter, send a check or money order in the amount of \$15 to P.O. Box 288, Boston, MA 02254. Memberships run from January to December. Those who join in the middle of the year will receive all the publications for that year. Back issues of our newsletters are also available. For a complete list, contact the Society at our Boston address.