KOUSSEVITZKY
Recordings Society

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by Tom Godell

Letter from the President

It is my sad duty to report that three of Koussevitzky's colleagues have died since our last issue: Cellist Raya Garbousova, soprano Dorothy Maynor, and conductor Antonio de Almeida. Garbousova was the soloist for Koussevitzky's premiere performance of Samuel Barber's Cello Concerto on April 5, 1946. She went on to teach at the Hartt School and Northern Illinois University. She died on January 28. Almeida studied conducting with Koussevitzky at Tanglewood. He specialized in French music and opera, though his catalog of recordings also includes such rarities as the complete symphonies of Gian Francesco Malipiero (on Marco Polo; the Fourth was dedicated to Nathalie Koussevitzky) and the colorful orchestral works of Joaquin Turina (RCA). He was music director of the Moscow Symphony, and a member of the Koussevitzky Recording Society's Advisory Board. He died on February 18 at the age of 69.

The incomparable soprano and founder of the Harlem School of the Arts, Dorothy Maynor, died on February 24. Koussevitzky "discovered" her. Here's how the *New York Times* told the story in their obituary for Maynor: "After hearing her sing at the 1939 Berkshire Symphonic Festival at Tanglewood in western Massachusetts, the conductor Serge Koussevitzky reportedly jumped up and down, shouting: 'It is a miracle! It is a musical revelation! The world must hear her!' Koussevitzky, who called Miss Maynor 'a native Flagstad', immediately used her in recordings with the Boston Symphony Orchestra."

Only two arias—by Mozart and Handel—were preserved for posterity on that memorable occasion (reissued on Pearl 9179). But Mark Obert-Thorn recently discovered that Maynor and Koussevitzky returned to the studio on March 20, 1940 for 'Micaela's Air' from Bizet's *Carmen* and 'Depuis le jour' from Charpentier's *Louise.* Although Koussevitzky's name does not appear on RCA's log entries, his name wasn't typed on the Mozart/Handel session sheets either. We know he was present, because the matrix numbers directly follow the Hanson Third Symphony and Grieg's *Last Spring,* which were recorded before the arias. The Bizet and Charpentier were never issued. According to the logs the masters were destroyed. Still, there is a remote possibility that Maynor may have kept test pressings. We are attempting to contact her estate to see if copies somehow survived. Naturally, these recordings would be a priceless and invaluable addition to the Koussevitzky discography.

Speaking of welcome additions to the discography, Pearl has just re-issued Koussevitzky's beautiful 1945 Boston *Eroica* coupled with the *Missa Solemnis,* which was recorded in concert on December 3, 1938 (9282; two CDs). The latter was never available on LP. Until now, only collectors who owned two bulky sets of Victor 78s (M-758 & 759) were able to hear it. The transfers are once again remarkable for their clarity—a tribute to the skills of Mark Obert-Thorn. Another Koussevitzky release is pending later this year from Biddulph: Copland's *Appalachian Spring, Lincoln Portrait,* and *El Salon Mexico,* coupled with Randall Thompson's *Testament of Freedom,* and two Sousa Marches. Meanwhile two new Stokowski discs have just been released: "Stokowski/Iberia" on Pearl (9276) includes Bizet's *Carmen* Suite (NYCSO, 1945) and Falla's *El Amor Brujo* (Hollywood Bowl SO, 1946) while Biddulph LHW 036 has Rachmaninov's 2nd Piano Concerto with the composer as soloist. This unique issue is made up almost entirely of alternate takes, and thus is not the same recording that appears on RCA. Also, look for Stokowski on BMG's new World Wide Web site: www.classicalmus.com/artists/stokowsk.html.

Readers of this Journal may be interested to learn that there is now a Rachmaninov Society. They issue newsletters on a quarterly basis, covering a wide variety of topics. Of particular interest are their record reviews, which often appear weeks or even months before the discs are reviewed in commercial publications. Members and their guests are also invited to participate in the annual Member's Weekend near Wolverhampton, England in April of each year—including musical performances and lectures by Society members. Dues are $22 per year. The membership year runs from July 1 to June 30. To join, contact Scott Colebank, 5215 W. 64th Terr., Prairie Village, KS 66208.

All photos in this issue courtesy of the Boston Symphony Orchestra Archives

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by Louis Harrison

Serge Koussevitzky and the Centennial Symphony Orchestra

Looking through a copy of the *Schwann Long Playing Record Catalog* in mid-1955, a browser could find eleven different listings of the Sibelius Second Symphony. These included recordings by Eugene Ormandy conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra on Columbia (ML-4131), Sixten Ehrling conducting the Stockholm Radio Symphony on Mercury (MG-10141), and Anthony Collins conducting the London Symphony on London (LL-822). There were two recordings listed on RCA Victor, a new high fidelity version by Leopold Stokowski and the NBC Symphony (LM-1854), and a slightly older interpretation by Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony (LM-1172). Then there was a listing for the Centennial Symphony Orchestra on Camden (CAL-108). No recognizable orchestra here; no conductor noted.

Flipping through the *Schwann* one could find a number of other Centennial Symphony recordings—Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony, Moussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition,* Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf,* and Ravel's *Bolero* among them. There were also listings for other unfamiliar orchestras on Camden. The World Wide Symphony performed Franck's Symphony in D Minor (CAL-107). An LP by the Festival Concert Orchestra coupled two overtures: Rossini's *William Tell* and Tchaikovsky's *1812* (CAL-116).

The Sibelius Second was, of course, the celebrated 1935 Victor Red Seal recording by Koussevitzky and the Bostonians, here hidden behind a *nom du disque.* All of the other Centennial records emanated from Boston. Likewise, the Festival Concert albums disguised Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops Orchestra, and the World Wide designation masked Pierre Monteux and the San Francisco Symphony.

There were over twenty major musical organizations represented by pseudonyms on the old Camden label. The Warwick was actually the Philadelphia Orchestra, whether conducted by Stokowski or Ormandy. The Cromwell, Globe, Star, and Stratford were also known as the Cincinnati, National, Hollywood Bowl, and London Philharmonic Orchestras.

Camden records were a product of RCA, a low-priced reissue label designed to complement the prestigious RCA Victor Red Seal line. The first Camden albums were released in rather spartan jackets that generally featured black-and-white cover illustrations overlaid with one color. There were no notes on the backs, only generic listings of other titles in the Camden catalog. These LPs sold for $1.98 each, with 45 extended-play albums going for 79 cents.

RCA conceived Camden as the phonographic equivalent of paperback reprints. The idea was to revive vintage recordings from the past catalog and to reach a new group of customers who were not buying the more expensive Red Seal discs. After successfully test-marketing the label in Boston and Detroit department stores RCA introduced Camden to the entire country in October, 1953. Although available nationally, the label was not listed in the Schwann catalog until February, 1955.

Camden records were intended to compete with no-name, often pirated recordings then being sold primarily in department and variety stores—low fidelity records pressed on inferior material and sold at bargain-basement prices. Before Camden, the budget classical record market was dominated by these phonographic duds that usually featured such performers as the 'State' and 'International' orchestras. Unlike the products from the schlock labels, however, Camdens were carefully engineered according to the standards of the time with most releases being pressed on quality vinyl. The Camden label was an immediate success.

Since Camden reissued performances from the early 1930s through the mid-1940s, the records were not contemporary high fidelity and were not represented as such. Instead,

Camden offered something called 'Plus Fidelity' reproduction that, according to one ad, "puts you right in the concert hall." Sure. The frequency range of a Camden LP did surpass that of an equivalent 78 rpm issue, but to get 'New Orthophonic' high fidelity still meant springing for a $3.98 Red Seal.

As to the semi-anonymous performers on the record jackets and labels, it was believed that listing the actual orchestras and including the names of conductors and soloists would take sales—not to mention royalties—away from current, higher priced recordings by the same forces. After all, the Boston Symphony was still recording for RCA Victor in 1953, as were Arthur Fiedler and Leopold Stokowski. Thus, the Chicago Symphony became the Century, the Minneapolis became the Marlborough, and the Boston became the Centennial. Why these names were chosen is now anyone's guess, but if the Paris Conservatory Orchestra could be turned into the Seine Symphony why couldn't the Boston Symphony have become the Charles?

Not all of the original Camdens were pseudononymously released. A few artists ranging from Lawrence Tibbett to John Charles Thomas to Guy Lombardo were issued under their true names. By late 1955, though, the curtain of anonymity was lifting and many of the classical releases not yet deleted from the catalog now sported real orchestras and actual conductors.

A customer could now officially purchase recordings by Serge Koussevitzky on Camden. The logo was changed from 'Camden Records' to 'RCA Camden.' Program notes were added to many new releases and older jackets were spruced up with full color photographs and illustrations. The old Centennial coupling of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* and Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegel* now identified Richard Hale as the narrator in the former and featured a slick jacket photo of a pint-sized, carnivore-hunting cossack holding a rope and peeking around a bush.

Some earlier Camden issues were repackaged. Excerpts from Koussevitzky's *Unfinished* and Stokowski's *Nutcracker* were coupled on a disc titled *Arlene Francis Presents Music Appreciation for the Home* (CAL-256). A note on the cover coincidentally reminded listeners to watch the *Home* show on the NBC television network. The Boston recording of the finale of Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony was included in a compilation called *Great Artists at Their Best, v.1—Conductors.* Here Koussevitzky was in the company of Toscanini, Mengelberg, Walter, Ormandy, Fiedler, Stokowski, Monteux, and Bernstein. Other Koussevitzky Camdens were included in a series of six-disc albums: *The Six Symphonies of Tchaikovsky* (CFL-100), *Evenings at the Ballet* (CFL-102), *29 Classics You Should Know* (CFL-103), *A Treasury of Favorite Symphonies* (CFL-104), and a 1956 bicentennial *Mozart Anniversary Album* (CFL-105).

The strangest Koussevitzky/Camden repackaging was a collection called *Waltzes for Listening* (CAL-282). Not that the contents raised any eyebrows—Koussevitzky's Tchaikovsky kept company with Monteux's Ravel and Fiedler's Strauss—but RCA's marketing department presented the set as strictly lounge listening. The blurb on the back of the jacket boasted that "RCA Camden's wonderful series of mood music recordings, called *Lush & Mellow,* creates a relaxed setting for easy hi-fi listening ... here is music for dining or conversation, for parties or play, for dancing or dreamy listening." Koussevitzky, meet Mantovani.

As the Camden label evolved, many of the early classical releases were discontinued. The label featured more popular artists. The arrival of stereophonic sound brought a series of 'Living Stereo' warhorses performed by the Oslo Philharmonic. Koussevitzky and company made way for new recordings by the Living Strings, Living Voices, Living Jazz, and finally the Living Marimbas.

Camden was eventually licensed to Pickwick records, an independent budget label that repackaged the more commercial titles in the catalog and issued a few new LPs. Some Camden titles have also appeared on compact disc via Essex Entertainment in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

At its peak, Camden was an important label from a major company. It offered customers quality reprints of valued recordings

at reasonable prices. It brought historic recordings back to the record shops and catalogs. Camden reacquainted collectors and introduced new listeners to important artists, especially Serge Koussevitzky. ◆

Louis Harrison's Koussevitzky/Camden Discography appears on p. 12

by Robert Ripley

Interview with Willis Page

Jacksonville Beach, Florida
September 10, 1994

Courtesy of the Boston Symphony Orchestra Archives

[Interviewer Robert Ripley is no stranger to most of our readers. He was a member of the Boston Symphony's cello section from 1955 to 1995, and a student at the Tanglewood Music Center where he performed under the direction of Serge Koussevitzky. His interviews with Manuel Zung and Karl Zeise appeared in Vol. VII, No. 1. He, in turn, was interviewed by Martin Bookspan in Vol. IX, No. 2—Ed]

Robert Ripley: *Let's start with your BSO career, Willis. How did you happen to audition for the BSO?*

Willis Page: It happened in 1940. Seems like a hundred years ago, but that was the year Leopold Stokowski started what was known as the All-American Youth Orchestra, and I was one of six bass players from all over the country selected to go with that orchestra to South America. My audition for Stokowski was in the spring, and we were all set to start rehearsals in Atlantic City. I had signed a contract. Then on a Friday I got a call—it was early June, I think, of 1940—from Howard Hanson, who was the director of the Eastman School of Music, and it said, "Page, be down in my office Sunday afternoon to play an audition for Dr. Koussevitzky, conductor of the Boston Symphony." Well, I hadn't practiced in three or four days!

So I immediately started to practice, and I went down to play the audition for Koussevitzky in Howard Hanson's office. Alexander Courage was there with me. I don't know whether you know his name or not, but he became a very prominent Hollywood composer. He's composed music for over three hundred movies. He was the only other person there. He was having an interview about going to Tanglewood, because that was the summer Tanglewood began as the Berkshire Music Center. See, both of these major things for young people happened the same year. Well, I played my audition for about thirty minutes, and I played really quite well.

Dr Koussevitzky said, "Fine, mine boy; I would like it to you to join mine orchestra. And you must come to Tonglevood. Ve start a music school." I'm trying to imitate his accent. I'm not trying to be a comedian, because I'm not, but this was his accent. Then, I almost killed myself—Howard Hanson heard me say this. I said, "Well, Dr Koussevitzky, that's wonderful, but I've been offered a position in the All-American Youth Orchestra with Leopold Stokowski." And I shouldn't have even mentioned his name, you know! Hanson told me afterward, "My God, Page just ruined his whole career!" And these are Koussevitzky's exact words: "Vhat? You vill play in dis child's orchestra, vhen you can play in de greatest orchestra in de vorld?" I said, "Dr Koussevitzky, it is every musician's ambition to play in the Boston Symphony, and I'm so honored that I'll call up Mr Stokowski tomorrow and tell him that you've offered me a position." "Good! Dat is so. Do dat." And he confirmed his offer, but added, "Let us keep this a secret. You vill come to the school, then I will say I take you from the school to be a member (of the Boston Symphony)"—which actually happened. I mean, I was there for three weeks as a student, playing in the student orchestra, with people like Leonard Bernstein, Thor Johnson, and Lukas Foss as student conductors. Then Mr [George] Judd [BSO assistant manager 1918-35; manager 1935-54] came to me and offered me a contract and said, "We want you to play in the Boston Symphony beginning now." They were playing some of the repertory of the winter season, a lot of which I had never played before.

> *Koussevitzky said, "You must come to Tonglevood. Ve start a music school."*

And there wasn't much rehearsal.

Very minimum rehearsal.

How was it getting out of the Stokowski orchestra?

Well, the next day (after the audition) I called Mr Stokowski. And I got through to him right away. I think the rehearsals were going to begin in Atlantic City in the next two or three days. I told him the story, and I said "I know I have a contract, Mr Stokowski." And he said, "Page, all I can offer you is twelve weeks. It's a great honor to be in this youth orchestra, but," he said, "the Boston Symphony is a lifetime job. You take it. And God bless you."

Well good for him. So there you were suddenly thrust into the Boston Symphony Orchestra. How did that feel?

Unbelievable. I was 21 years old, and I'll never forget the first notes that I played with the Boston Symphony. It was the Schumann First Symphony. You know it opens with the trumpet. Then the whole orchestra plays a B-flat

major chord. Chills went up. I couldn't believe an orchestra could sound so full and so wonderful. And, of course, the Schumann Symphony is not a Tchaikovsky Symphony, where you have extra percussion and all that sort of thing. But that was an unbelievable moment. That was one of the highlights of my entire career—the very first note I played with the Boston Symphony.

So, the fall season started a few weeks after that.

Yes. That's right.

Had you ever played in Symphony Hall before?

I'd never even seen Symphony Hall. I'd never even been to Boston. I drove alone from Rochester, which was my home. At the first concert, we played the *London* Symphony of Vaughan Williams. And I honestly don't remember the rest of that first program, because I had already played so many concerts. We played three concerts a week at the Festival. So I'd already played nine concerts and, I think, also a benefit. So I'd played ten concerts with a tremendous repertory. Tchaikovsky, Hindemith—Hindemith was the visiting composer in residence. And we played *Mathis der Maler,* and played things with the student orchestra, which he conducted.

If there was anything wrong with the basses, he'd look right at me.

This was probably far more playing than you had ever done at one concentrated time.

Oh, far more.

You really had to learn fast.

Yes. You know, nobody can play in the Boston Symphony without being a kind of virtuoso player. That sounds self-serving but...

There's a lot of reading.

You have to be a good reader. Fortunately, I always was a good reader, and I could handle that, but I practiced a lot.

How were you received by the members of the orchestra?

Very well. Very warmly. They were really nice to me, especially Richard Burgin. He was the concertmaster of the Boston Symphony for forty years. I considered Richard so knowledgeable, and one of my regrets is that I didn't ask him more questions. He had a repository of knowledge of string playing that there's no way you can learn unless it comes from a master—fingerings and interpretations.

Well, who was principal bass when you joined the orchestra?

Georges Moleux [1930-66]. I was on the third stand. Then I went into the army. Koussevitzky wanted me to stay out: "Tell them something wrong vith you." When I came back, legally, I was supposed to get my position back, which would have technically been on the third stand. Moleux for some reason told Koussevitzky he was going to put me on the fourth stand, inside. Well, I was very depressed for a while, and then—just before the beginning of the next season—I had a call from Rosario Mazzeo [clarinet, 1933-66], who was the personnel manager [ca. 1946-66]. He said, "Koussevitzky wants to hear all the bass players tomorrow morning." So I quickly called up a piano player, and I played the first movement of the Schumann Cello Concerto.

Wow! On the bass!

Yeah. I played it on the bass. It's such a wonderful piece. So we went through it once, and all the bass players played. Koussevitzky and Richard Burgin were there. So then Koussevitzky moved me to the first stand. I moved up with Moleux, and became principal bass of the Pops Orchestra. Fiedler came downstairs, I remember. He said, "I missed your audition. Play something for me. You're going to be first bass of the Boston Pops, and I insist you play an audition for me, too."

He had no power!

I know he had no power, but he wanted just the personal satisfaction. So I played "The Elephant". He said, "Ok, fine." But Arthur eventually became a very good friend and supporter of mine, and he helped get me started in conducting.

What were your first impressions of Koussevitzky? Had you heard anything about him before you met up with him in your first audition?

Yes. I'd heard him, and I'd seen him conduct the Boston Symphony at the Eastman School of Music—at the Eastman Theater there—where I went to school. And there was just an aura around his name. I had never met him until my actual audition, but I agreed with an article in *Time Magazine* calling him a "benevolent tyrant". His picture was on the front of *Time Magazine,* and I subscribed to that. He *was* a benevolent tyrant. He would call us *schweinhund* or pig. But *kinder,* he used the word *kinder*—German for "children". There were certain people that he did not like, but when I joined the orchestra—especially that first summer—he was so encouraging to me. But then, I think, in order to avoid

jealousy of some of the older members, because I was on the third stand of basses right off the bat at the age of 21, he started to pick on me.

He would say to the basses, "Bessie! Extremely bad playing from you." That's the way he talked all the time. And now, as you look back, it seems almost child-like, some of the things he said—Koussevitzkyisms. It's just unbelievable. He was wonderful with young people, but he put me through my paces. Every rehearsal, it seemed that if there was anything wrong with the basses, he'd look right at me. You know, you think that the conductor's looking at you when maybe he wasn't all the time, but I thought so. But when I would run into him coming into the hall, or going out of the hall, or on tour, he would always put his arm around me and say, "Mine boy, you are doing very well in mine orchestra." So, I always wanted to say, "Gee, why are you giving me such a hard time?"

I think what you said is true. Everybody thought he was looking at them personally. He had a way of making you believe he was looking at you and nobody else.

Oh, absolutely.

I felt the same thing as a student, and everybody seemed to think that. It was a genius he had.

He had an electrifying personality. When he walked on the stage, boy, there was absolute quiet. As Arthur Fiedler used to say, it was like a Jewish temple at a funeral. Nobody said anything. In fact I can tell, if you'd like, a couple of anecdotes about speaking.

Please do.

On one occasion, somebody made a burp or something like that, and he would say, "Please, no observations." And I'll never forget this episode. [Fernand] Gillet was the principal oboe [1925-46], one of the great oboe players of the world, and we were doing scherzo of the [Beethoven] *Pastoral* Symphony. You know if Koussevitzky would ask a question, "Vhat is the dynamic do you have? Vhat is the dynamic?" Somebody would say, "Piano". He'd say, "Don't speak!" He would ask a question, but he didn't want an answer. That was just rhetorical. But, finally, Gillet's part went (hums the music) and so on. The second time, pianissimo. It sounded beautiful to us. But Gillet and Koussevitzky were just at loggerheads—as close as any great musicians can come to hating each other. It was amazing. So Koussevitzky says—I think I have this right, "Gillet, for me it is not pianissimo enough." And Gillet says, "I'm sorry." And Koussevitzky said, "You're sorry? I'm sorry!" And then Gillet says, "I'm sorry that you're sorry." And Koussevitzky slammed down his baton and walked off the stage. That's the only time I heard anybody talk back, let alone argue with him.

When Koussevitzky's wife Natalie died, he went away for about six weeks. They were very close, and she would come to rehearsals sometimes. But she was taken ill in 1940, when I joined the orchestra that summer. After she died, he went away to Arizona or some place. Then he came back. He was sincere—I mean, really honest about this. He came on the stage looking rather fragile. He really depended upon her for many, many years. And he said, "Gentlemens, I don't know whether I can conduct again. But I vill try. And you vill help me." The whole staff was in the hall, and he turned around. He said, "Please, I vould like to be vith the orchestra alone." And here we were—the orchestra and Koussevitzky—and we played.

We started the Brahms Fourth Symphony, and a little tentative at first. We played the Brahms Fourth Symphony from beginning to end without a stop, and a lot of people in tears, really. I was really choked up. It was one of the great performances that we ever played. It was a magnificent performance of the Brahms Fourth Symphony. Nobody ever heard it, except us. So that's one of the great moments. He went like this: "Thank you" and walked off the stage. Everything silent. That was the end of the rehearsal.

We had so many wonderful concerts. I'll never forget his doing the Tchaikovsky Fourth, Beethoven Ninth, Debussy *La Mer,* and Sibelius. He was a master of Sibelius. And Tchaikovsky Fifth. Everybody said, "Gee, the Tchaikovsky Fifth. What an old warhorse." But when he conducted it, it was something alive and great.

Along the way did you do teaching or playing outside the orchestra?

Yes, I did some teaching. More after the war, after I came back from the service. I had five students at the Hartt School of Music at Hartford Connecticut.

Oh that's a trip. Did you do that every week?

Every other week. They would come to Boston one week, and I would go there the next week. But I didn't care much for teaching.

Well, now, you went in the service when exactly?

In July of 1943. I let myself be drafted, which was really kind of ridiculous. Then, when I went through the examination, the final examination was with a psychiatrist. They had a whole row of psychiatrists from the best medical schools in the country. The one who examined me said, "You're in the Boston Symphony? Listen, I can keep you out. Why don't you let me do that? Hitler is not touching the Berlin Philharmonic. Why should we touch the Boston Symphony?" He talked as though he was a member of the orchestra! He said, "You don't belong in the army. I can keep you out." I said, "No sir. I don't feel comfortable." In retrospect, I would have stayed out. But I didn't. Then, I got in. I was called on KP duty my very first day at five o'clock in the morning. Well finally—after two weeks—I got orders: "Report to the 95th Infantry Division". To this day, I've never had any basic training.

You won't get it now.

It's too late. They gave me 'private' basic training. Little odds and ends as we went along. I was in Europe in Patton's Third Army. We had about eight months of combat.

So you were never in a band.

I was assigned to the 95th Infantry Division band. I have a double major's degree in performance from the Eastman School of Music. I used to play the tuba. So I played tuba in the band, and then I eventually played bass in the dance band. It was the big band era, you know. The band members did everything from litter bearing, to military police, to directing traffic—of which I did quite a bit. In fact, a truck almost knocked my head off one time. We played for Patton twice.

I was going to ask if you had any direct contact with Patton.

I was on guard duty once when he came in, and he saluted me back. But we played for him twice, and we heard him speak. As you probably know, every other word was a four letter word with Patton.

When did you get discharged?

In September of 1945. The orchestra had started, and I went right back into the orchestra. The symphony was getting ready to record *Appalachian Spring.* They had just played the first performance of the suite, and I wanted to come in and play. See, I really did a lot of practicing when I got back here. So I was in pretty good shape. I thought I could read it. I remember Mazzeo said, "Well, maybe you could read this in the recording session. I don't know what rehearsals are for, but usually they are for getting used to the music. And we have rehearsed it and performed it, and you haven't even seen it yet." I said, "OK, Rosario, whatever you say." So I went back the day after they recorded. I didn't play on the recording, and it was probably just as well.

Any other Koussevitzky stories?

We played a piece by Berezowsky in which the second movement was a funeral march. I've never heard the piece since, and I don't know anything about Berezowsky. Koussevitzky was absolutely wonderful for introducing new music. Of course, he had the greatest orchestra to do that with, and he had such a reputation. Week after week—or almost week after week—we would play a new piece, some of which would be very hard to listen to. Difficult to play, too. Anyway, we were playing this piece, and we had a tuba player named Adam—very nice man. And there was a tuba solo. So Koussevitzky said, "Adam I know very well this is a *marche funebre,* but please you must not represent it yourself a cadaver."

And good old Larry White, the percussionist [1928-43]. He went to the Chicago Symphony from Boston. Koussevitzky did not like him.

Really.

Well, he had been in the service. He was the only one who became an officer, and he came back and said, "I'm going to tell Koussevitzky we fought a war for democracy and this has got to be more democratic here in the Boston Symphony." Larry White had some unusual type of guts. So he went up to Koussevitzky his first day back, and said what he told us. You know, we tried to talk him out of it. So, Koussevitzky came on the stage—he was livid! He said, "Dis stupid mans comes back from the wars, and he comes to my room and says to me I've got to have a more democratical feeling in the orchestra. There is no democratical feeling in the orchestra. I'm a dictahtor. I say do, and you do. You don't take a vote—loud, soft. No, no vote. I'm dictahtor. No democracy here. But you vant a democratical feeling, ve have a glass of beer together. Of course, you are my friends, you are my *kinder.* That's a democratical feeling, but not in front of de orchestra. This stupid mans..." From then on he was merciless to him. He was a fine percussionist. He was the best. In the *Forest Murmurs* of Wagner, couldn't be better—I mean, perfect—the glockenspiel.

Another time we played the *Pathétique,* and we came to the last movement. As you know, there's one gong note toward the end, and then the trombone chorale. Larry White played the gong. We came to that, and he hits the gong. Sounded fine. And Koussevitzky throws down his baton. "You kill the whole thing. We play now so beautiful. And you hit the gong bad." So he walked up to the gong, took the mallet—boom. "It must be like a temple". Boom. He really did it so well. Then Larry White would try it, and Koussevitzky stopped the orchestra again. He said, "I vill tell you Mr Vhite, you vill be known as the killer. The killer from the Boston Symphony. You kill the whole thing!" Just with one note! I'll never forget that scene. One note in the Tchaikovsky 6th Symphony.

That's funny, because I was in the student orchestra in '41 and '42, and he did the same thing. He didn't go up and play it, but he talked to the percussionist—I don't know if we were playing the Sixth or whatever. There was a gong, and he said, "No it must not be boom. It must be booooom."

Exactly.

A long boom. How do you make a long boom? He did it. Then he criticized the triangle player—triangulo. He said, "Yes! I shtoodied to play triangulo!"

So you played with him then?

Yes. I played principal cello.

Well, I must have met you, because they sent for me when conducted the Ninth Symphony and the Shostakovich Fifth. I got orders. Mr Judd called me, and said, "Koussevitzky wants you to go to Tanglewood to play in the student orchestra."

Oh. You played?

I played with you.

I'll be darned. Now somebody said that some BSO members played...

No. I was the only one. Because they were short on bass. So I came up, and I played the Shostakovich Symphony and also the concert with the Beethoven Ninth. You know, I played in the back of the section, and gave 'em a boost.

A lot of the bass students studied with me. I taught at Tanglewood. And I asked each one of them what Koussevitzky asked me at my audition—my original audition. After I played a solo and a whole bunch of things, he asked me to play the G-sharp minor scale, which is probably the toughest scale on the bass. Harmonic minor and melodic minor. Three octaves.

Of course, being a bass player, he would know what to ask for.

Yeah. He asked for G-sharp minor, F-sharp minor, and G major. So I would ask these students this, and sorry to say most of them couldn't play. Their teachers didn't teach them scales. I'm a great believer in scales. I don't know how you feel about it.

Definitely.

I mean that's the foundation of music. You've got to know scales, and sometimes you've had no time to warm up. I would get on the stage early and just play a few scales, and I would be ready to go.

You spoke of Gillet, that he and Koussevitzky didn't get along, but Koussevitzky brought Gillet to the orchestra.

Yes he did.

And he brought Gaston [Dufresne, double bass 1927-51] to the orchestra.

Yes he did. Well, their personalities just conflicted, but he had great respect for their musicianship. Gaston was a fine bass player, but he didn't look as though he was on top of it all the time. Koussevitzky didn't like that, so he accused him of being asleep one day. And Gaston says, "I'm not asleep. I'm doing my best"—which he was. It was very unfortunate. And so, finally, he had to leave the stage.

Koussevitzky told him, "If you are asleep, you must go home."

So he went out. He was out of the orchestra for three weeks. Did he tell you how he got back in or what happened? Fritz Kreisler was injured in a car accident in New York, and a telegram was sent to Koussevitzky, saying too bad it could not have been you—too bad it happened to Fritz Kreisler instead of you, Mr Koussevitzky, signed Dufresne.

And he, Gaston, did not send that telegram.

Of course he did not send that. I don't know they ever found out who sent that stupid telegram. Maybe Koussevitzky sent it to himself. We thought of that, because that was his reason for getting Dufresne back. And we all applauded: Mr Dufresne is back with us.

What was the reason?

Because Koussevitzky knew that Dufresne—that nobody—would stoop so low. Nobody. Especially Dufresne.

Koussevitzky said, "I'm a dictahtor. I say do, and you do. No democracy here."

So the prank worked to bring him back. It's as good a theory as any. Well, look, let's get into your early life. When and where you were born.

I was born in Rochester New York, September of 1918.

Were your parents musical?

Yes. My mother especially. She was a good singer. She never had a chance to do much, but she had the gift of being able to read music, which I inherited. And my father played a little bit of banjo and had some talent.

Did you have brothers and sisters?

My brother was a very good musician. He was a fine singer and a piano player. When he was 19, he got rheumatic fever. He decided that if he ever got out of bed, he would give his life to the lord. He became a minister. My three sisters are musical in the sense that they can sing. I was the youngest, and I was spoiled. I started at 13 on the tuba, and then a year later I started the bass.

How did that happen? Did the music teacher say we need a bass player or we need a tuba player?

Tuba was the only instrument left. I studied bass with a teacher at the Eastman School, and I studied with a teacher at the Eastman School on the tuba. But my father thought that music was too precarious. So I applied at Harvard, and I was accepted. But we were poor, and I didn't get a scholarship. So I applied for a job waiting on table. At the last minute I went down to play an audition

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by Radcliffe Bond

Koussevitzky v. the Internal Revenue Service

While studying estate tax law, I was very surprised to come across the name of Serge Koussevitzky. It seems that after his first wife died in 1942, Koussevitzky was named executor of her estate and was the victor in a battle with the Internal Revenue Service.

The facts of the case are these: from 1930 to 1940, Nathalie Koussevitzky deposited approximately $62,500 into an account in her name at the State Street Trust Company in Boston. (The tax court assumed that all of this money had been given to her by her husband.) During 1941, Serge Koussevitzky added $35,000 to the account. After the last deposit was made, one of the trust company's managers warned the conductor that he would have to pay inheritance taxes on the money in the account if his wife predeceased him. The manager suggested that the title of the account be changed from "Nathalie Koussevitzky" to "Serge Koussevitzky and Nathalie Koussevitzky as Joint Tenants with Right of Survivorship".

Olga Naumoff, Mrs Koussevitzky's niece and the conductor's secretary, talked the conductor's wife into converting the personal account to a joint account by telling her it would make the older woman's business responsibilities easier. (Mrs Koussevitzky was in charge of her husband's financial affairs.) A letter changing the title of the account was sent to the State Street Trust on December 17, 1941.

Mrs Koussevitzky died of a cerebral hemorrhage in January 11, 1942. Her health up to that time had been relatively normal, though she might have had several small strokes in 1940 and 1941. She gave no one the impression that she expected to die soon. Though her will gave all of her property to her husband, the tax court found that she had never had any property of her own except that which came from her husband.

The Internal Revenue Service contended that the title of the account at State Street Trust was changed by Mrs Koussevitzky "in contemplation of death" and that, under section 811(C) of the Internal Revenue Code, any monies contained in the account should be included in her estate for tax purposes.

The tax court disagreed, deciding that Mrs Koussevitzky had changed the title of the account for the reason stated in her letter to State Street Trust, "to carry out our original intention, which was to hold this property jointly."

Interested readers may find the full opinion at page 650 of volume 5 of the Tax Court of United States Reports.

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continued from p. 9

at the Eastman School, and I got a scholarship there. For the most part I never regretted it. I played in the Rochester Philharmonic my last two years as a student. The core orchestra was called the Rochester Civic Orchestra. The year I graduated, I was 20. I got a job in the Civic Orchestra on the tuba, and I continued to play bass in the Philharmonic. That was '39, and the next year was 1940, and my getting in the Boston Symphony.

Now about your career as a conductor. How did that develop, evolve?

I saw an announcement that Pierre Monteux was accepting student conductors—especially people from orchestras—who could go to Hancock, Maine. And so I went there after Tanglewood. This was 1951. I went there four consecutive summers. Then I came back, and Mr Judd called and asked me if I would conduct a Pops Concert at the Esplanade. I had never conducted in public before. Of course there was no rehearsal. I made my debut conducting with 20,000 people. My friends—and I can honestly say they were my friends—you know, my colleagues [in the orchestra], really helped me.

Finally, I was invited as guest conductor to Buffalo eleven times, and they invited me to be associate conductor. They wanted somebody to do pops concerts and young people's concerts, and an occasional symphony concert. I said no. I liked the security of the Boston Symphony. I talked it over with my friends, and Mr [Henry B.] Cabot [President, Board of Trustees 1945-68], and Mr Munch, and after turning it down, I decided to accept it. I left right in the middle of the season. Mr Munch called me in front of the orchestra, and they presented me with a beautiful gold watch, and I left. I said, "I hope I will always treat the musicians the way Mr Munch has treated us." And so that's what I've tried to do. I was in Buffalo for five years, and then I went to Nashville, Tennessee. That was the first time I was a Music Director of an orchestra. During my tenure in Nashville, I was invited to come to Japan, and so I asked for a leave of absence.

How did that come about?

They wanted a fairly unknown conductor. I always considered myself one of the better-known, unknown conductors. William Strickland recommended me as "an honest musician"—those were his words. And two or three other people had recommended me. I went to Japan for fourteen months. Later I went to teach at the Eastman School of Music for two years. Then I went to Des Moines, Iowa, and taught at Drake University and conducted the Des Moines Symphony for two years. Then I was invited to come to Jacksonville, Florida. I conducted the orchestra here for twelve years. ◆

by Louis Harrison

Koussevitzky on Camden: A Discography

The following is a list of Serge Koussevitzy recordings issued on the Camden label. All are with the Boston Symphony Orchestra unless noted. The prefix CAL indicates a single long-playing record, CFL referring to an album containing six long-playing records. CAE is the prefix for a 45rpm extended-play record.

CAL-101
STRAUSS: *Till Eulenspiegel*
PROKOFIEV: *Peter and the Wolf*
(*Eulenspiegel* also in CFL-103)

CAL-102
BEETHOVEN: Symphony 3, *Eroica*
(London Philharmonic)

CAL-103
BEETHOVEN: Symphony 5
(London Philharmonic)

CAL-106
SCHUBERT: Symphonies 5 and 8
(8th also in CFL-104; excerpted in CAL-256)

CAL-108
SIBELIUS: Symphony 2

CAL-109
TCHAIKOVSKY: Symphony 4
(Also in CFL-100; finale included in CAL-336)

CAL-111
MOUSSORGSKY: *Pictures at an Exhibition*

CAL-146
HAYDN: Symphony 94, *Surprise*
MENDELSSOHN: Symphony 4, *Italian*
(*Italian* also in CFL-104)

CAL-147
BACH: *Brandenburg* Concertos 2 and 5

CAL-155
TCHAIKOVSKY: Serenade for Strings—Waltz
GRIEG: *The Last Spring*
LIADOV: *The Enchanted Lake*
MOUSSORGSKY: *Khovantchina* Prelude
(Also includes Eugene Goossens conducting the Cincinnati Symphony in a suite from Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier.* Koussevitzky's Tchaikovsky is also in CAL-282. The Tchaikovsky and Grieg are on CAE-161 with the Liadov and Mussorgsky on CAE-157)

CAL-156
RAVEL: *Daphnis and Chloé* Suite 2
(Also includes Pierre Monteux conducting the San Francisco Symphony in Ravel's *Valses nobles et sentimentales* and *Daphnis and Chloé* Suite 1. The Koussevitzky selection is also in CFL-102)

CAL-157
BEETHOVEN: Symphonies 2 and 8
(8th also in CFL-104)

CAL-158
BACH: Orchestral Suites 2 and 3

CAL-159
TCHAIKOVSKY: *Francesca da Rimini*
LISZT: *Mephisto Waltz*
SIBELIUS: *Tapiola*
(*Mephisto* also in CFL-103)

CAL-160
MOZART: Symphonies 26, 29, 34
(also in CFL-105)

CAL-161
RAVEL: *Mother Goose* Suite
RAVEL: *Boléro*
(Also includes Pierre Monteux conducting the San Francisco Symphony in Debussy's 'Gigues' and 'Rondes de printemps' from *Images for Orchestra.*)

CAL-173
STRAUSS: *Also sprach Zarathustra*

CAL-174
BACH: *Brandenburg* Concertos 3 and 4
C.P.E. BACH*: Concerto for Orchestra

CAL-376
DEBUSSY: *La Mer*
RAVEL: *Rapsodie Espagnole*
SATIE: *Gymnopedies* 1 and 3

CAL-404
BEETHOVEN: Symphony 3, *Eroica*

CAL-405
BEETHOVEN: Symphony 5
BEETHOVEN: *Egmont* Overture

**Now known to be a composition of Henri Casadesus—ED*

selected by Kenneth DeKay

Bits and Pieces

[In the months since our last issue, Kenneth DeKay has kindly sent me a fascinating series of excerpts from various books that pertain to either Koussevitzky and Stokowski. It is my pleaseure to share them with you—ED]

✏*from* Music in My Time *by Alfredo Casella. Translated from the 1941 Italian Edition by S. Norton. Published by University of Oklahoma Press, 1955*

In December, 1909, I returned to Russia with the Society of Casadesus. On this second trip we were the guests of Serge Koussevitzky. This singular artist, who had succeeded so brilliantly as a virtuoso on the contrabass, had recently married a very intelligent and extremely rich woman and had devoted himself to orchestral conducting. He led the life of a great gentlemen and a patron of art...

Koussevitzky informed us that we would all leave the following evening to play for Tolstoy

On the evening of December 7, 1909, we were at the Imperial Opera in Moscow. Koussevitzky informed us that we would all leave the following evening for Yasnaya Polyana to play for Tolstoy. It can be surmised how happy we were to receive this news. We departed from the Kursk Station (Siberian Railway) and arrived early the following morning at a little station in the country. A half-hour sleigh ride through the snowy forest brought us to the house of the grand old man. At the door of the great wooden house, which was quite simple in appearance, we were met by a servant who wore the Count's coronet on every button of his livery. We learned that this rather unexpected detail was required by the Countess. We entered the antechamber and found Tolstoy dressed in his usual muzhik's blouse and boots. He greeted us in a holiday manner. In the purest French, he told us that he had already heard our music in a dream the preceding night; he was certain that the actuality would be still more beautiful. We got to work at once and played for about two hours. He was insatiable, and continually asked for something new. Luncheon at noon was a menu of a type I had already endured at Balakirev's, which was certainly not pleasing to Latins. However, we thought little of food, absorbed as we were in looking at that historic face and listening to his voice. After the tea, Tolstoy mounted his horse and went to ride in the woods for two hours. He was eighty years old, but exercised daily. We visited the house. He lived in an extremely modest little room of Franciscan type. There was a little iron bed, a washstand, and at the head of the bed a collection of sacred books in many languages (he read fourteen, including Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic). On the ground floor, we saw the room in which he had written almost all of his great masterpieces, including *Resurrection* and *Anna Karenina.* The studio was also of extreme simplicity. The late afternoon was passed in pleasant conversation. Tolstoy asked many questions about my life and my parents and said that I seemed too fragile and should take care of my health as well as my spirit. After supper we began again to perform. The group played old music; I played piano pieces; I accompanied Koussevitzky in various solo compositions. The news of the concert had spread through the neighborhood, and numerous peasants had entered the adjacent rooms furtively in order to listen. When Tolstoy became aware of this, he invited all these country people to enter and personally offered seats to the women. He stood up at eleven, the hour at which he invariably retired, and all of us arose with him. He said to us in a voice which I can still hear resounding: "I am infinitely grateful to you for your musical gift; I wish you every good, and hope to see you again in this world, or in the next," adding with a strange smile: "If there is a next world."

His musical tastes were somewhat puzzling. He did not understand Bach, thinking him too "learned". He loved Beethoven, and Chopin was very dear to him. Wagner was incomprehensible, and he had no sympathy for the moderns, except for Moussorgsky.

✏ *from* Bax: A Composer and His Times *by Lewis Foreman; Scolar, 1983*

Koussevitzky was a conductor who had shown interest in Bax's music in America. Some time in 1927 Ernest Newman, who had recently returned from the States, delivered to Bax a request for a new work from the great conductor. Bax was undoubtedly flattered and proposed his Second Symphony, then still existing in only one manuscript copy. (How fragile, before the days of cheap mechanical copying were the methods of transmission of musical works, and how important was publication!) The problem of there being only one copy resulted in considerable delays before the music was heard. Bax did not preserve his letters from Koussevitzky, but Koussevitzky kept Bax's side of the correspondence. Bax first wrote on 25 October 1927:

Dear Mr Koussevitzky

Owing to holidays and other confusing circumstances it was only a few days ago that Mr Ernest Newman managed to give me your message. I am so sorry about this delay.

'E.N.' told me that you were good enough to enquire about a work by me which has not been performed as yet in America. As a matter of fact I believe all my published scores have been played in the States, with the exception of a short piece called *The Happy Forest.*

Apart from this there is only my Second Symphony, which is still in MS. I have not tried to get this work played as it is very difficult and requires more rehearsal than can be given at concerts in this country. At present there are no parts of this work and only one score.

Personally I have always felt a great desire that you should take up my First Symphony, as it is a work which demands from its conductor the passion and breadth of treatment which are so characteristic of your own splendid style.

I shall be very glad to hear from you if you still consider giving a work of mine. It has always been a regret to me that I was unable to hear your performance of *The Garden of Fand.*

With kind regards, yours sincerely, Arnold Bax

My scores are, I think, obtainable now from the Oxford University Press in New York. If you wish to see any of them I will direct the manager there to send you copies.

...Koussevitzky must have replied almost by return, and we next find Bax writing on 7 December to say that he has been 'looking over and considering' his Second Symphony, and is having 'a copy made of the score and parts' ... He feels that it will not be ready for the current season and suggests putting it down for the following autumn. Koussevitzky in fact performed Bax's First Symphony on 16 December 1927, obviously having given up waiting for the later one. Press cuttings were sent to Bax, who replied by return on 4 January 1928, 'delighted to hear of the fine performance'. Bax went on: 'Your oboe player Stanislaus wrote a few days back telling me that you took a great deal of trouble over the work and that the rendering was magnificent. Please accept my warmest thanks and congratulations. It gives me particular pleasure to hear from you that you like the work as I have always liked to imagine a performance under your baton. The public and critics have always been rather startled by the somewhat unbridled character of the symphony—perhaps because contemporary music is not expected to be emotional.'

In his dealings with Koussevitzky Bax was most unbusinesslike. The conductor wrote again requesting the Second Symphony, but there was still no duplicate score or parts. Bax consulted again with Murdoch's, his publishers, and a decision was taken to print the score, 'as they don't want the expense of copying the score and parts and probably publishing it later as well'. On 14 September we find Bax suggesting it should be put 'into a programme in the latter part of the season in February or March, so that there may be plenty of time'. But delays continued, and Koussevitzky showed commendable doggedness and persistence on his side of the negotiations.

On March 2 Bax wrote from the Cairngorm Hotel, Aviemore, Invernessshire: 'Thank you for your letter which has just reached me forwarded from London. I am very pleased that you propose to play my new symphony in the autumn and I will send you a score as soon as it is ready. I am sorry there has been so much delay, but engravers on this side are incredibly slow in their methods.' Finally, two performances were given, with great success on 13 and 14 December 1929. They had taken well over two years to arrange.

✏ *from* A Bundle of Time: The Memoirs of Harriet Cohen *by Harriet Cohen; Faber & Faber, 1969*

Knowing that I was going to play with the Boston Symphony the following year, Hilda Loeb took me to Carnegie Hall to hear them on my last night in New York. The playing of this incomparable orchestra was a revelation, the finest that I had heard in any land. Their response to their conductor, Sergei Koussevitzky, was different to that of the New York Philharmonic with Toscanini: he was the master of that excellent orchestra and they obeyed. The Boston Symphony and their Russian conductor were one and indivisible...

The Boston Symphony and their Russian conductor were one and indivisible

Koussevitzky, like Sir Henry Wood and Pierre Monteux, was one of the most thorough and painstaking conductors I have ever played with. Arrived in Boston I went to his home and had two 'run-throughs' of [Arnold Bax's] *Winter Legends* each lasting about four hours. Came the first orchestral rehearsal. My heart, it seemed, was beating great blows in my throat: my hands were frozen. Once over the initial tearing, screaming passage that introduces the Symphonic Concerto, and finding that I could bring it off on the marvellous piano about which I have written in a previous chapter, the

rehearsal went well. The Boston Symphony, to me that greatest of all orchestras, obviously loved this work (the fourth of Bax's symphonic works they had tackled under Koussevitzky—both Monteux and he having also performed some of the Tone Poems).

The programme, which was the same at both concerts (Friday afternoon and Saturday evening), consisted of Haydn's Symphony No. 17, the Bax *Winter Legends,* and the First Symphony of Sibelius.

✏ *from* Maurice Ravel *by Gerald Larner, Phaidon, 1996*

As for the professional side of the tour [in 1928; Ravel's only American concert tour], he was thrilled to conduct his own music with orchestras he considered 'the best anywhere' in concerts in New York, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, and San Francisco. Although he was emphatically not, as Serge Koussevitzky flatteringly described him, 'the greatest of French conductors', he was particularly pleased with his concerts in Cambridge and Boston. He was 'profoundly touched', he said, by the Boston Symphony Orchestra's 'conscientiousness in rendering exactly the spirit' of his music...

[By the end of 1929] Ravel was contemplating nothing less ambitious than a world tour... But for the heroic purpose of the world-wide procession he had in mind—through Europe, North and South America, and the Far East—he clearly needed a piano concerto. He had cherished at least two such projects in the past, the Basque rhapsody *Zazpiac bat,* which was well advanced before he abandoned it, and a fantasy inspired by Alain Fournier's *Le Grand Meaulnes.* The latest piano concerto project was more realistic that either of those, not least because of his determination to go through with the world tour which depended on it. In December 1929, when Koussevitzky sought to commission the concerto and to obtain all American rights on it for the fiftieth anniversary season of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1930-31, the composer turned the conductor down. By then, when Ida Rubinstein no longer had exclusive rights on *Boléro* and the royalties on what was about to become a phenomenally popular work were beginning to pour in—the piano version sold out as soon as it was published—he could afford to reject such advances. But the real reason for not accepting Koussevitzky's terms was that, after giving the first performance in Boston, it would have been his intention to tour the concerto throughout the USA. In September 1930, when the work was still incomplete, he was persisting with the idea of touring it far and wide, although he was now saying, 'Providing I hold out'.

If he had not accepted a commission for another piano concerto [from Paul Wittgenstein] in the first half of 1929 the world tour might well have happened.

✏ excerpts from an interview with William Schuman in *Trackings* by Richard Dufallo

William Schuman: Aaron (Copland) sent me a penny postcard...saying, "Dear Mr Schuman, please send a score of your symphony [#2, subsequently withdrawn by the composer] to Serge Koussevitzky, 88 Druw Street, Brookline, Mass." I sent the score and thought that was that! And about six weeks later I got a letter from John Burk, the program editor of the BSO, saying that Koussevitzky had scheduled the Symphony for February [1939] and would like to meet me; there would be a pair of tickets at the box office for the next concert, and would I please come backstage afterwards. Frankie and I went there and were taken back by [Roy] Harris and Copland to meet the great man—this was all through Copland. Harris heard about it from Aaron, who invited him to come with us. All I remember about it is that Koussevitzky looked me up and down (you've heard descriptions of Koussevitzky—this is an accurate story), and said, "I will play the Symphony, but you must change your name. We cannot have two Schumanns!" I remember just looking at him and smiling and thinking, should I change my name (for) Koussevitzky or just let it go? Well, I let it go! ...

Richard Dufallo: *Do you think (your) dance band experience filtered into your thinking when you composed?*

Not the dance band so much as the fact that I was brought up on popular music. It made American speech a very natural source of musical expression for me; and I think the melodic turns of my music are based very much on American speech patterns... I wrote "scat" music. One of my first published choral pieces really had "scat" sounds, and I did it again in *In Sweet Music.* I love the idea of making syllables that sound the way the music sounds. For example, Randall Thompson had a Second Symphony that was widely played at one time: (singing) *Dum* da-*Dum* da-*Dum* da-*Deee* dum/*Dum* da-*Dum* da-*Dum.* And Koussevitzky used to sing it (singing) *Hul*-la/*Hon*-da/*Heen*-da/*Hoy*-da—a kind of Russian thing. He could never quite get it. I think there is a natural sort of syllabilization that goes with music when you sing...

How difficult was it to get a performance of your symphonies?

I was very spoiled having Koussevitzky's interest. You can appreciate a conductor being in a position to say, "Everything you write, I will play. All you have to do is write it, and I will play it." How extraordinary! So I grew up knowing the Boston Symphony would play whatever I wrote. I just took a virtuoso symphony orchestra for granted.

To close and bridge us to the second portion of this Journal, here are a pair of Stokowski stories:

✏ *from* Out of Character *by Maureen Forrester; McClelland & Steward, 1986*

First [Artur] Rubinstein stood up and told an anecdote about travelling

on a train in South America and finding himself in the dining car where a man stared at him all through his meal. "I knew the poor man had recognized me," he said, "but I was hoping he wouldn't come over and make a spectacle of himself." Rubinstein could really ham a story up. "Finally the fellow came over to my table and was terribly apologetic. 'I do beg your pardon, sir,' he said, 'I realize this is a terrible thing to ask, but could I beg you for an autograph for my grandchildren?' 'Well, certainly,' I said and took a napkin and scrawled my signature for him. He was ecstatic. 'I'll never be able to tell you how grateful I am, Mr Stokowski,' he said."

Then Stokowski took the microphone to respond. He told a story about having a headache one day after playing a concert in Chicago. He asked his driver to stop at a drugstore so he could buy a painkiller. There were two pharmacists behind the counter, and he explained that his head was throbbing; then, realizing that one of the men had recognized him, he felt compelled to add that he had been working very hard. "Oh, yes, I understand, Mr Rubinstein," the pharmacist said. His colleague looked aghast at his friend for making such a gaffe. "That's not Rubinstein," the other pharmacist corrected him, "That's Tchaikovsky."

✏ *from* Bad Boy of Music *by George Antheil; Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1945*

One day previous to my visit, Leopold Stokowski had come to see Stravinsky, who was then taking a bath. Oeberg, Stravinsky's publisher, was waiting for him in the living room of his hotel suite, so Oeberg opened the front door and asked Stokowski what he wanted. Stokowski said that he wanted to see Stravinsky. Oeberg yelled back in Russian to Stravinsky that a bloke was there at the front door who wanted to see him. "Tell him to go away and come back some other time," yelled back Stravinsky, still in Russian. "But he says that he is the conductor of a symphony orchestra in America," shouted back Oeberg.

In the meantime Stokowski, shifting his weight from foot to foot, and on the outside of the door, too, began to get pretty hot under the collar. They should have known who he was.

"Ask him what orchestra," instructed Stravinsky, still in Russian. "He says the Philadelphia Orchestra," replied Oeberg. "Never heard of it," said Stravinsky. "Send him away; in all probability he's an impostor!"

"Wait a minute," interrupted Stokowski (who understands Russian as well as anybody!), "There IS so a town called Philadelphia, and it has an orchestra; and I am its conductor, and what's more I can prove it! I have records in my hotel across town, and I'll go get them!" And Stokowski did.

When he came back an hour later he passed the records through the door, and Stravinsky played one side of one or two of them in order to ascertain whether or not it was a good orchestra. Then, and only then, was poor Stokowski admitted.

Curiously, and without any reason that I have been able to grasp, Stravinsky has ever since maintained a semisuspicious attitude concerning Stokowski—who is certainly one of the very best interpreters of Stravinsky's music alive. ◆

Reviews of Recent Koussevitzky CD Issues

✏ *from Robert Cowan's review of Pearl 9237 (Brahms Symphonies 3&4), September 1996* BBC Music Magazine.

Put on the opening track of this Pearl CD and you're rocketed heavenward on what must be one of the most thrilling Brahms Thirds ever recorded. The Boston brass rings resplendent, double basses are well to the fore (Koussevitzky was himself a double bass virtuoso), and the massed strings have a glamorous sheen that fully equals Karajan's in Berlin. Koussevitzky's ear for sound was matched by an acute sense of musical structure, so that although the Fourth Symphony has a distinctive tonal lustre, the profound logic of Brahms's utterance is never compromised. As Fourths go it's pretty near the top of the list, but the Third ranks with Furwängler's (EMI) at the *very* top.

✏ *from David Patrick Stearns's review of Biddulph 34/5 (Tchaikovsky Symphonies 4-6), December '96/January '97* Classical Pulse!

Most immediately (especially in the opening moments of Symphony No. 5) one notices the conductor's distinctive sense of rhythm: It's clearly inspired by dance, but has a brooding heaviness, allowing emotional depth without the slightest hint of lugubriousness. In general, Koussevitzky follows the 19th century practice of giving every musical idea its own tempo. This can often seem mannered, but he calucated his tempo scheme so carefully that the effect is that of inevitability. Within this scheme, tempos are highly flexible, allowing him little miracles of phrasing, such as the mysterious and wistful treatment of the opening bars of Symphony No. 4. The earliest of these performances, the 1930 *Pathétique,* has more generous portamento and less vibrato than his later Tchaikovsky recordings. It may be the closest recorded window to performance practice in Tchaikovsky's Imperial Russia, where Koussevitzky spent his formative years.

[In the February/March '97 issue of Classical Pulse! *Stearns rated "The Sessions of November 22nd, 1944" on BSO Classics one of the best recordings of the preceding year, noting that the disc "hits one bull's-eye after another."—ED]*

Robert M. Stumpf, II

Reviews and Comments

✏ *Leopold Stokowski: Discography & Concert Register.*
Compiled by John Hunt

This book may be just for specialists in the Stokowski legacy. It is not perfect, but it is an impressive work of scholarship. The amount of work that had to be put into compiling these two documents is staggering. I find it a valuable insight into the work of Maestro Leopold Stokowski and highly recommend it to those interested.

Leopold Stokowski conducted in public from 1904 until 1975. He recorded from 1917 until 1977. The sheer quantity of material that had to be documented is immense. That a few errors occurred is forgivable. In almost every case the error was one of omission, not commission. In some cases the problem is minute. For example, Ed Johnson came across a photocopy of an LP issued by a high school in New York in 1966. Taken from a live performance, it includes Stokowski leading the student orchestra, chorus, and soloists in Fauré's Requiem. This was missed in Mr Hunt's document.

The first half of the book contains a discography of all of Stokowski's recordings. It lists everything from 78s, LPs, and the CDs as well. It is very up-to-date, including the CD numbers on the new 14-disc RCA set (recently released and reviewed below). Rare items are also included such as the recent CD issue of a live performance of Shostakovich's 11th Symphony done when Stokowski toured the Soviet Union in 1958. The first recording issued was Brahms's *Hungarian* Dances 5 and 6, recorded on an acoustic disc in October 1917. The last was a stereo recording with the National Philharmonic of Bizet's Symphony coupled with Mendelssohn's *Italian* Symphony made in May/June of 1977. There were plans to record Rachmaninov's Symphony #2 in October of that year, but Stokowski died in September. Included are also several CD issues of live performances, like the Shostakovich 11th mentioned, which were never on LP.

The Stokowski legacy in recording is an amazing document in itself. There are 135 pages, small type, listing every piece recorded or available from live performances. They are listed alphabetically by composer. Each piece which was recorded more than once is so indicated, giving details about the date and matrix numbers for each release. Ten recordings of the famous Toccata and Fugue in D minor are listed, including 3 from live performances which were not listed in the last published discography (done by Ed Johnson in 1982 and issued in Oliver Daniels's tome, *Stokowski: A Counter Point of View.*)

I was even more educated by reading the Concert Register, which comprises the second half of the book. It is a listing of the concerts conducted by Stokowski from 1904 until his last public performance in 1975. The first listing is of a 1904 concert when Stokowski was an organist at St Piccadilly in London. Next comes the 1909 concert in Paris with Stokowski conducting the Colonne Orchestra in Russian music, including his wife-to-be, Olga Samaroff, in the Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto 1. It was this concert that was watched by a Cincinnati Symphony 'scout' and led to the offer to have Stokowski assume the conducting and music director position in Cincinnati. This list consumes 111 pages of text. I have not had the chance to examine each page with a fine-tooth comb, but the list is interesting for what is not in the conductor's repertoire as well as what is. Specifically, I can find only two times that Stokowski ever conducted a Bruckner Symphony: the Fourth and Seventh, both with the Philadelphia Orchestra. I always thought that Bruckner and Stokowski were made for each other. By and large, his repertoire was Beethoven, Brahms, Rimsky-Korsakov, Wagner, Tchaikovsky, and the usual suspects. There is also a large dash of 'modern' music, more in some cases than others.

Another interesting thing you can learn from reading these lists of concerts is an insight into Stokowski and his orchestras as they traveled. He made several trips throughout Ohio with the Cincinnati Orchestra. Particularly interesting for me to read was Stokowski's tours with the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra (the NYPO) in the 40s. These tours included swings through the Midwest in cities not all that close to one another. For example, in 1948 he took the NYPO on a tour that covered 13 cities and 14 concerts in 14 days!! This means that the orchestra would pull into a city, set up and warm up, play the concert, pack up, get back on the train, travel to the next destination by the next day, and do the whole thing over again. This kind of schedule is hard to imagine even with today's advanced means of transportation. These were no easy trips, either. As an example, after playing in Cleveland, the orchestra performed the next night in Detroit. Keep in mind that Stokowski was 65.

There are other interesting tid-bits. For example, Stokowski did perform with soloists frequently. It would be hard to guess this given just his recorded legacy. He performed with violinists from Kreisler to Perlman. Hell, I can even find out what he was performing the day I was born! There's a lot to educate and even tingle your imagination if you let it.

The final section of the book lists the 400-plus world or U. S. premieres led by Stokowski. An interesting thing here is that Elgar's Symphony #2 got its U.S. premiere in Cincinnati. Unfortunately, to find this out you would have to go from the listing on page 273 to the Concert Register to track down the details. This is a pain.

The bottom line, however, is that despite its flaws Mr Hunt has provided an excellent source of information

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about the Stokowski legacy. Many people count as their introduction to classical music the movie *Fantasia* (Fan-ta-sia...as Stokowski pronounced it). This book lets us see just how much more Stokowski did for classical music and recording. I think that Stokowski's time has come, and this book is another piece of the puzzle.

Members of the Leopold Stokowski Society may get your copy by writing to them in c/o Dennis Davis, Flat B, 23 Grantbridge St., London N1 8JL England. There are limited copies, so get your order in early. $32 in the U.S. and Canada. 14 pounds in England; elsewhere 18 pounds. Prices include Air Postage. Allow 28 days for delivery. Non-members need to write Mr Hunt at: Flat 6, 37 Chester Way, London SE11 4UR England. His prices are: 22 Pounds Surface Mail, 28 Pounds Air Mail. The U.S. Air Mail charge is $45.00—checks only.

Ⓐ *Bach Transcriptions.* Leopold Stokowski conducting His Symphony Orchestra. EMI 66385

It is time, I think, to deal with the idea that a Stokowski/Bach transcription is a Stokowski/Bach transcription is a.... In fact, if you listen to the many different recordings you will hear different versions. Stokowski's genius included the fact that he could appreciate the potential of any given orchestra and/or recording venue. In later life, when he did more guest conducting, Stokowski kept a black book that included the personnel of each orchestra with notations regarding each players strengths and weaknesses. So, one way he was able to 'create' The Stokowski Sound was by doing his homework.

Some of these transcriptions have been previously released. My personal copy has been the Japanese EMI disc from 1991. It was later issued on a domestic EMI/Angel CD in sound that was more shrill. The Toccata and Fugue in D minor was part of an earlier FDS release: *Landmarks of a Distinguished Career.* This latest incarnation includes material not on the first release, and I can report that EMI is back to its superior standards in reproducing The Stokowski Sound. I talked with Rob LaPorta at EMI about this. Basically what he said is that he went back to the original session tapes, as so advertised, but this time they made adjustments where necessary to produce the rich sound Stokowski wrought from an orchestra. In this he was following suggestions from Ed Johnson and me. These were not just subjective, however. We sent Rob the notations Stokowski made to the recording engineers as to how he wanted the master tapes, specifically for EMI releases, to be manipulated to produce the sound he wanted. The results this time are a marvel. The basses here are deeper, firmer; they have a snarl to them. There is more air around the music, it is warmer and at the same time more finely detailed.

Just how does this EMI disc differ from the 1974 London Symphony recording included in RCA's new 14-disc *Stokowski Stereo Collection?* EMI's strings have a more homogenous texture. The RCA recording's strings are more individualized, more of a feathery texture. Also, in the late 40s and early 50s Stokowski had the strings play in a 'throbbing' sort-of-way. At times this could sound syrupy. This can be heard in an earlier monaural release of Stokowski/Bach on RCA. His Philadelphia recordings did not have this quality to them, nor does the new RCA release. This EMI offering has a couple of brief moments where this occurs, as if Stokowski was moving away from that sound to something else.

How about the orchestras? The Leopold Stokowski Symphony Orchestra was an ad hoc group of musicians from the NBC Symphony and New York Philharmonic, occasionally with other free-lance performers. It usually numbered only around 60 players. Stokowski would get "His" Sound through microphone placement and fiddling with the master tape. Of course, the London Symphony recordings were made with the whole orchestra. This, alone, dictates an inherent difference in the sound of the RCA.

Do you duplicate by adding this disc? Well, if you have only the earlier EMI issues, there is no problem. This is much better. What about the recent RCA and London releases? Get this one, too. I cannot say one is better than another. Each, on the other hand, is sufficiently different to offer new delights and insights. In those tracks where there is duplication of a piece there is still differentiation sufficient to say that you will hear a different facet of the music. Stokowski was a genius, and what he accomplished can be appreciated in different ways.

Ⓐ The Stokowski Stereo Collection

BACH: Transcriptions. BEETHOVEN: Symphony 3; *Coriolan* Ov. BRAHMS: Symphony 4; *Academic Festival* Ov. CANTELOUBE: *Songs of the Auvergne.* DVORAK: Symphony 9. ENESCO: *Roumanian* Rhapsody 2. HANDEL: *Royal Fireworks* & *Water Music.* KHACHATURIAN: Symphony 3. LISZT: *Hungarian* Rhapsody 2. MAHLER: Symphony 2. MENOTTI: *Sebastian* Suite. PROKOFIEV: *Romeo & Juliet* (Selections). RACHMANINOV: Vocalise. RIMSKY-KORSAKOV: *Scheherazade; Russian Easter* Ov. SHOSTAKOVICH: Symphony 6; *Age of Gold* Suite. SMETANA: *Moldau; Bartered Bride* Ov. TCHAIKOVSKY: Symphony 6. VILLA-LOBOS: *Bachianas Brasilieras* 5. WAGNER: Various selections. Plus rehearsals & shorter selections with chorus. Various orchestras. Recorded 1954-75. RCA 68443. 14 discs.

My, God. Where to start? Well, there is the finest Brahms Fourth I've ever heard. There's Bach/Stokowski and Wagner (Stokowski standard repertoire). There's another Stokowski forte, the Tchaikovsky *Pathétique* in an excellent recording. There's...well, I could end up just repeating everything you've read above. An interesting thought crossed my mind while reading the contents. This set would make an excellent introductory gift to someone who wanted to explore the world of classical

continued on back page

by Victor Koshkin-Youritzin

Revealing Stokowski: Anthony Morss Interview, Part II

[As a young man, Anthony Morss met Serge Koussevitzky and later became Leopold Stokowski's Chorus Master and Associate Conductor during the maestro's tenure with the Symphony of the Air. Today Morss is active as a conductor with various orchestras and opera companies. His thoughts on Koussevitzky appeared in Vol. VIII, No. 1—ED]

Koshkin-Youritzin: *Could you begin this second installment of our interview about Stokowski by commenting on his conducting technique?*

Morss: I believe he was the first one to conduct without a stick in this century. He generated quite a fad in that regard, which has now largely passed, even though Kurt Masur is one of the last people to work without a stick. Bernstein, for years, worked without one; then when he came to conduct the New York Philharmonic, he came to realize it was simply much easier for the players and himself with a stick, and he had to learn not to let it fly out of his hand, which it wanted to do—and which indeed it does want to do, until you get used to handling it. That's what happened to Stokowski when he was conducting in Cincinnati: the stick flew out of his hand, because he came to Cincinnati with, I believe, only two concerts conducted in his whole life before. He had filled in for some ill conductor in Paris, who had been scheduled to conduct an orchestral concert for a singer whom Stokowski had coached, and there was nobody else who knew the repertoire. He had done nothing but church choir conducting before that time. The delegation from Cincinnati going through Europe to find a young conductor in Germany happened to go to that concert in Paris, because the singer was famous, found Stokowski and engaged him for the Cincinnati Orchestra. So, he came back to Cincinnati having to speak German, because rehearsals were all in German in those days (as they were, by the way, in Boston when Koussevitzky started). Stokowski told the orchestra that he had conducted only two concerts in his life, so he was still trying to get used to the feel of the baton, and it flew out of his hand. Until you have worked with a stick for some years, the baton feels like a dead piece of lumber, an impediment to the natural expression of the hand. Once you get used to it, it is an extension of the hand which greatly facilitates your communication with the orchestra. And if you watch a great conductor use a baton, you will see that the it seems to be a living, organic extension of the hand. But you require some time to achieve this. Stokowski never achieved it, because once the stick flew out of his hand he felt so free that he decided he was never going to use it again. And, of course, he developed an extraordinarily fine technique. But let me tell you that orchestras inevitably want to see a stick. They're working with peripheral vision, and the hand is harder to see than the stick, for very obvious reasons. When I was working with Stokowski, the Symphony of the Air was in a pit situation, and whenever he turned to the winds on the right hand side—and he was doing close-to-the-body conducting— I would see the violins all crane their necks around to find out what his right hand was doing, because his body was partly covering it. So, it's really not a good idea to work without a stick. He himself had an excellent sense of rhythm, and a lot of performances which he conducted had a marvelous sense of propulsion. You can't be a first-rate conductor without a first rate sense of rhythm; that's perfectly obvious. One of his most powerful characteristic patterns was a strict up-and-down for an allegro "one and." His right hand was open at the top of the stroke and clenched as it hit "one." I used to call this "Milking the Orchestral Cow." Nonetheless, the only weak part of his conducting technique was indicating the divisions of, let's say, a 12/8 or a 6/8. He used to do this by flicking his fingers while the wrist was moving. That struck me as ineffective, and I observed that occasionally the orchestra could not follow it. Now, Stokowski also said to me, in the very first meeting with him, that there were many ways to learn conducting, and one of the best ways was to watch good conductors do things wrong; because when they were doing things right, it was so inevitable and so easy-looking that often you couldn't tell exactly what they were doing. If a skilled person did something wrong, it immediately drew your eye to it, and you saw why it was wrong without needing to have it explained to you. He did not believe that the purely physical side of conducting, at which he was personally outstanding, could be taught beyond what any reasonably intelligent student could absorb in about three-quarters of an hour. He also told me that conducting is so difficult, it is a good idea that young conductors had no idea how difficult it is, because they would never dare conduct at all. It is a great comfort to them to see older, experienced men making obvious mistakes. So then they think, "If those jokers can do it,

Stokowski said that one of the best ways to learn conducting was to watch good conductors do things wrong

Victor Koshkin-Youritzin is David Ross Boyd Professor of Art History at the University of Oklahoma, Norman

I am obviously going to be able to do it better." That subdivided beat was the one part of his technique that didn't always work for him. He did a lot of subdividing close to the body so that it was hard to tell which beat he was on; in one case I saw the orchestra misinterpret that. But that was in one of the most splendid interpretations he ever gave. The day Toscanini died, Stokowski was conducting a public concert of the Symphony of the Air. The orchestra met early and interpolated into the program the *Siegfried Funeral Music* from Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* in honor of Toscanini's death. Stokowski conducted it, and they played with such fervor and such dramatic fire as I have never heard from any other orchestra or conductor in that piece. It was so superb that I urged Stokowski to record it, and he said he would, and he did; it is a very, very fine performance.

Is that the one with the London Symphony?

I can't remember. I know that the very slow tempi in the Funeral Music require a lot of subdivision of the beat. At one point he was doing so much subdivision that the orchestra could not follow, especially with so little rehearsal beforehand, and different players took different interpretations of what he was doing. It was a minor flaw in a great performance.

Like almost all truly great conductors, Stokowski did not walk around the podium when he conducted. His feet were stationary, just far enough apart to give him maximum balance. The only change in his stance occurred at the grandest climaxes, when he would step out slightly forward and to the right with his right foot, simultaneously throwing both arms out and upwards, embracing a huge beach-ball of sound in front of him. This maneuver invariably produced a staggering volume of gorgeous tone. He saved it for the biggest moments, so it was rare. When it happened, it blew you away.

His characteristic gesture for maximum lushness was to throw his right hand from upper right of center to lower left and then do a kind of taffy-pull back along that trajectory. You could practically see the sweetness dripping from his fingers. His whole upper body was contributing to that pull: it was drawing sound out of the players rather than striking it from them. The great piano pedagogue Karl Friedberg used to say, "The grandest sounds are drawn from the piano, not struck from it." I'd like to quote that to a number of ham-handed pianists I've heard!

As he grew older, the wonderful fluid motions of the hands, which were so obviously creating the sound that you were hearing from the orchestra, grew very much sparser. And ultimately, Stokowski would slap his hands down, moving his arms and even his wrists as little as possible. At that point, his spine had begun to curve and he became quite round-shouldered. After he retired at age 91 and went back to his birthplace, London, his physical condition had deteriorated to the point where he couldn't walk. He was in a wheelchair, or he had to be carried from place to place, and he always then conducted sitting down. I saw him in a newsclip, or some kind of reportage, doing part of the Tchaikovsky B-flat minor Concerto and he was obviously having to be helped to the chair, to sit down. His gestures were just schematic at that point. What was astonishing was that even with the fluidity of the all motions gone, the tone quality was still there.

How do you think he managed to keep that?

That was sheer personal projection. That's the only possible explanation. Certainly, Karajan never had what looked, to me, like a very good stick technique, and yet he had the ability to step in front of a student orchestra and reach out his hand and produce Berlin Philharmonic sound. Now, that is just amazing. Von Karajan's hands looked, to me, often rather wooden. But he had the sound within his personality, and that sound survived even when his hands were so crippled by arthritis that he could scarcely move them. Furtwängler, who looked as if he couldn't conduct his way out of a paper bag, produced this wonderful, famous golden glow from the orchestra. That was just something in his soul that came out. When I worked with Stokowski there was an exact one-to-one correspondence between the gesture made and the sound achieved. And even after he was no longer able to make those same extraordinary expressive gestures, the musical intentions somehow went zinging out to the orchestra and came back to him, at least most of the time. When conductors get old, really old, the way Stokowski was—he died at 95—you have to expect that there are going to be days when they are just not on top of it, and the vitality is not there, and since the physical part of conducting has diminished, all that remains is spiritual projection. If the spirit is weak that day, and the hands are not helping, well, the orchestra is not going to be able to read anything very much. I noticed that happening to Bruno Walter. It certainly happened to Toscanini. Toscanini's gestures started getting arthritic, and the orchestra sound started to match them. Late in his career, Stokowski got a chance to conduct for the first time the Boston Symphony. I believe he was in his eighties.

Stokowski had not conducted it before then?

Never. The interesting part about it was that he was nervous! With all of his experience, his immense wealth of background, repertoire, his total command of the orchestra, he told his secretaries that he was nervous to go and confront the famous Boston Symphony.

Was that because Koussevitzky, the great colorist and romantic, would have been his greatest counterpart?

No doubt, although Koussevitzky had retired by that time. When I tried to talk to him about Koussevitzky, whom of course I had known, Stokowski wouldn't talk about him. The only thing he'd say about the orchestra was that, even before Koussevitzky got there, the Boston Symphony was famous as setting the standard of excellence throughout the entire United States.

So he was actually giving it first place over the Philadelphia?

It's hard to say. My personal opinion is that the Boston Symphony was the finest orchestra in the world under Koussevitzky, but certainly the Philadelphia was on the same general plane: those two were the only ones in their category in the whole world. And I think the New York Philharmonic was close behind, but not quite in their league. It was a wonderfully trained orchestra, but somehow Philadelphia and Boston had greater tonal resources, both of them. Philadelphia certainly retained that under Ormandy; I think of Ormandy as an underappreciated conductor.

I totally agree with you on that.

Well, Stokowski was, by any account, a great conductor. And he conducted a very wide range of music. He conducted just about everything you could imagine. It's a pity that we didn't actually ever hear him doing complete Wagner operas. His favorite composer was Wagner, and he did, of course, a lot of Wagner excerpts. Many of them were absolutely extraordinary. He wanted to be invited by the Metropolitan Opera to conduct Wagner, and they offered him—I think they offered him *Tannhäuser*, but he turned it down. Ultimately, what he took was Puccini's *Turandot,* but what he really wanted was *Tristan,* or one of the *Ring* cycle.

His various performances of Tristan *are magical.*

I assumed his colorful personality was simply put on for stage purposes. I was dead wrong.

And his sound was perhaps more characteristically lush than under Stokowski, because Stokowski commanded a very wide range of colors and Ormandy tended to favor the very heavily romantic palette, even in literature which might have benefited from a slightly lighter touch. Also, Ormandy stayed perhaps too long in Philadelphia. He did a number of works well, but when somebody stays forever, you start to take for granted what he can do well, and you start to get annoyed at what he can't do. I think that was the basis of tending to dismiss Ormandy as simply a conductor of show pieces. He was certainly more than that.

Isn't this something that has been leveled as an accusation against Stokowski—namely, that he was too much of a showman? Do you think this is true? Where was his great strength, do you think, in terms of repertoire?

Yes, and that was his favorite piece of all of the Wagner canon. It usually is, by the way, to the dedicated Wagnerian. If you are a Wagnerite, as opposed to simply somebody who likes the music of Richard Wagner, then your favorite composition is usually *Tristan und Isolde,* because it is the basis of the Wagnerian personality. Incidentally, I heard Stokowski do *Tristan* several times. At one of these particular performances, he had completely reorchestrated the conclusion of the Liebestod. The end of it is tutti, but with the winds predominating. Wagner asks for pianissimo diminuendo, and it has to die away, but you know, there comes a time when you've got to calculate that that's as soft as the winds can play, and you've got to cut them off decently. But Stokowski had reorchestrated that final chord so that it was nothing but strings, and he could afford to let his hands slowly float down while the strings disappeared into thin air. Instrumentally it may have been a very nice effect, but there was something about the original Wagner scoring that evoked the church organ, the moral solemnity of his whole philosophy, which was entirely missing from this reorchestration. And Stokowski eventually gave that up and went back to the original scoring.

When I first came to work for him, I assumed that his colorful personality was simply put on for stage purposes, and that he was a great showman who would turn out to be very much more conventional in everyday life. I was dead wrong. He was much stranger in everyday life than he was on the stage. But strange as he was, and as eccentric as he was, he was smarter than he was eccentric, and that's saying a very great deal. This brings me to the two principal points I want to make about Stokowski. Aside from his enormous intelligence, the first outstanding personality trait of Stokowski was his continual search for the new, the inventive, the experimental. When I worked with him, I was backstage conducting a whole battery of chorus and brass instruments and percussion. After each rehearsal I would come to him with a laundry list of things which could be improved in one way or another and suggestions of how to improve them. He had his own mental laundry list; we would go through our respective lists, and between every rehearsal he would change things—always to the benefit of the piece, by the way—and between every single performance he made changes. Every single time he'd change anything, the work sounded better. I well recall the first rehearsal, which began with a fanfare for three trumpets and then a snare drum roll—highly dramatic. He let the snare drummer do the roll, and after listening to it once, he said, "Put a second snare drum on that roll." It would never have occurred to me, because one snare drum can sound quite loud. But there was an impact generated by that second snare drum which instantly justified his decision. And he was making decisions like that non-stop. I had the feeling that if we had done 17 performances, there would have been something

different about the 17th. So, he would reorchestrate.

He loved to experiment. I once asked him, for example, how he ever acquired his extraordinary knowledge of high fidelity recording, since he grew up in an era when it was in its infancy, and he had no technical training in that regard. He said it was pure experimentation, that he didn't much like the sounds that were coming out of the early studios, and he'd look to see what they did, and if they were going west, he'd go east. Sometimes it didn't work, and sometimes it did. But he at least knew that what they were doing didn't work, so he'd try something else. He never stopped trying for that something else. Again, at one point I was involved in a recording session with him. We were recording the sounds of the chimes of midnight for the *Midsummer Night's Dream.* Orff had devised a very complicated percussive ensemble to do this. I was playing the piano part. And we were recording it, appropriately enough, around midnight!

Good timing!

To me, it sounded quite acceptable. But Stokowski thought, no, it could sound more like bells, and it could sound more haunting and more evocative; and he would change this distribution of the instruments, and he'd change the other thing, and, finally, he was not satisfied with any of the takes. Ultimately, I said, "Maestro, why don't I do a tone cluster down here, instead of up there?"

He looked at me strangely and said, "Now, you're doing something that you shouldn't do," and my heart sank. He said, "You're reading my mind!" I relaxed visibly, and then he smiled and added, "Actually, now it's not too bad, but often I have evil thoughts." And we all laughed. Ultimately, that was the take that he took. That take, finally, with my suggestion was the sound of the bells that worked. You could tell what Orff was trying for, but Stokowski was not satisfied until the effect was magical, and he would try anything to realize this. He knew the dramatic effect Orff wanted, and the specifics of what the composer had written were to him absolutely unimportant. As long as he knew what the composer was aiming for, he was going to try to achieve its most perfect realization, and he would experiment until he got it. And, believe me, he got it.

That's an extraordinarily creative approach.

Yes. Absolutely. You can tell that the search for new music, for new composers, for new effects, for new ways of seating the orchestra, for new ways of dealing with instruments, was all part of his mind set. An acquaintance of mine, Fred Batchelder, who played bass in the Philadelphia Orchestra, told me of his experience when Stokowski came back to guest-conduct after—what was it?— 19 years away—and, by the way, I heard that concert, and it was electrifying. Fred at that point had a large collection of double basses. I ran into him in Barcelona, where I was guest-conducting the Barcelona Symphony. He was buying up all the really good double basses that he could find in Barcelona. He told me that every day he brought into the Stokowski rehearsals a different double bass, that he had told Stokowski he had this wonderful collection, and that Stokowski wanted to hear every one of them, wanted to hear Fred play different passages on each instrument and see how different they could be, one from another. Stokowski really heard those differences. Even on a much lower level, I was learning viola, and when he came to dinner and saw the viola case he asked me to play. I was embarrassed as a beginner that I couldn't play at all well. He said, "Never mind, play a little; I would like to see what the instrument sounds like. Play a little on the C string and then the G, and then play on the D and E. Let's hear what that sounds like." So I did. He said, "Mmm—really unusually good for a modern instrument. Good sound. But in my opinion, the two upper strings don't match the lower." *In my opinion* very heavily emphasized. So, a couple of days later, I took the instrument to Wurlitzer to be looked over, and Wurlitzer said, "Pretty good instrument, but the upper two strings don't really match the two lower ones." Again, Stokowski was right on.

He would listen to individual players in the orchestra. Not only did he get a perfect blend, but he was hearing the individual contributions to an incredible degree. I watched him in a rehearsal break of his own American Symphony take a young cellist to task by saying, "You simply don't use enough bow to get enough sound out to pull your weight in the section." The cellist was very upset and figured he was being axed from the orchestra. He pleaded, "Well, I ask you to give me another chance. I know you won't do it." And Stokowski said, "You're wrong!" He turned to the personnel manager: "Let him play another concert, and we'll see if he can learn from his colleagues." He loved to be unpredictable that way, and he loved to make improvements in a situation whenever he possibly could.

His quest for the new also allowed him to change his mind about old repertoire. He had never much liked the Rachmaninov Second Symphony, as shown by his recording of it with the Hollywood Bowl Symphony—expressionless and breathtakingly fast, as if he couldn't wait to get to the end of it. Not knowing this recording yet, I suggested to him that he would interpret this symphony marvelously. No, he said: even with cuts, he found it *langweilich* (boring). The very day he died at age 95, he was scheduled to record the Rachmaninov Second in London! In his extreme old age, his only musical activity was the two or three recordings he was conducting each year. Consequently he spent a lot of time and thought choosing the pieces to be recorded. This symphony, which he had conducted and disparaged, had finally become of great importance to him. Doesn't that demonstrate his absolutely remarkable mental flexibility at such an advanced age?

Transcribed by Cynthia Koshkin-Youritzin. This interview will be continued in our next issue.

Letters to the Editor

The interview by Martin Bookspan with Robert Ripley reminded me of a conversation I had with Stokowski in Nether Wallop. During the day, I would not engage him in conversation because we were usually preparing for a concert or recording sessions, but during our afternoon tea (which we had every day) we would discuss various topics. One afternoon Koussevitzky came up, and I mentioned I had attended a number of concerts conducted by Koussevitzky and asked Stokowski about him. He said, "In the beginning Koussevitzky did not know how to conduct, but he learned. But," he said, "I don't think he ever learned really how to read a score well." He admired Koussevitzky because he said "he was not mechanical."

Jack Baumgarten
Brooklyn Heights NY

I've just finished reading your latest newsletter and found it thoroughly engrossing. I finished the newsletter with a better understanding of the different techniques and tools the great maestros Koussevitzky, Stokowski, and Toscanini used to achieve their special musical and interpretive goals. Great leaders inspire loyalty and affection along with awe and fear. I worked for many years for David Oglivy in the field of advertising. How lucky I was that he would put up with me. He was a genius, a showman, thoroughly demanding and unyielding in his quest for communications excellence. I learned much from him, and apply it every day in my working life—to the benefit of my clients. Those who performed under Koussevitzky are surely still under his spell. And are the better for it.

Billings S. Fuess
Summit NJ

It was with great interest that I read the collection of your Society's publications. I enjoyed everything I read, but there are two points about which I wish to comment, as well as describe my own introduction to and feelings about Koussevitzky.

It was almost thirty years ago that my life was changed by listening to a radio program called "The Conductor" one Sunday night on the long-defunct Beverly Hills, California, FM classical music station, KCBH. I remember that I had tuned in because the announcer, Hamilton Williams (whose deep bass voice was legendary among classical music lovers in Southern California), had run a promotional announcement about it and, somehow, because I do not remember if I had ever heard of Koussevitzky before this, intuitively knew that I had to hear him conduct and to tape the program.

The program ran two hours and, for the most part, consisted of items from the Victor LP set devoted to Koussevitzky, VCM-6174. I had been listening to classical music for most of my life and collecting records and tapes for a number of years (almost all from the stereo era), but nothing had prepared me for what I was to hear. It was as if all of the classical music I had experienced up to that time amounted to nothing. Since it is difficult to put the feelings I experienced into words, I will simply describe the physical reaction: My arms were covered with goosebumps and the hair on them stood straight up! Moreover, the same reactions continued when I listened to the tape I had recorded over and over.

The results of this encounter led to my fortunate discovery that Koussevitzky was one of a select number of artists from the past (Sir Thomas Beecham, for one) who, in my estimation, knew more about performing classical music that the whole gamut of those in current generations.

Because I had to start collecting 78s in order to hear most of the recorded performances of these artists, my ear became attuned to their characteristics and I became interested in techniques and practices used in recording them. I read that until the late 1930s most classical recordings were done without mixers because they were prone to distortion, so when multiple recording lathes were used at a recording session to provide 'safety' copies, each tended to have its own separate microphone. This distortion proved quite obvious in the few early examples of multiple microphone recordings that were written about and which I obtained. There were also two or three times when after obtaining a second copy of a record, the sound seemed to be from a different perspective than the first, even though they were the same take. My knowledge of recordings told me that multiple channel (stereo) recordings of these sides could be obtained by synchronizing such records, and, after a few incomplete attempts to do so, my ears told me this was indeed the case.

In reference to the comments about stereo Koussevitzky 78s in Vol. 5, No. 1, this was a few years before Brad Kay finally started to work on the same premise (even using some of my records), but with much more skill than I. Let me make the case simply: All of the people who deny that these are not multiple channel recordings, if not true stereo, are wrong. The fact must be faced that no individual, be he or she musician or performer, is able to hear all nuances of musical production or reproduction. If that were not true, there would not be inferior musical interpretations or recordings! The few of us who have a highly developed ability to hear when two 78 sides are 'stereo' and when they are not have the truth in this matter.

The recent passing of William Malloch in Los Angeles, a composer, critic, broadcaster, and specialist in the life and music of Gustav Mahler (as well as an admirer of Koussevitzky, if not a true enthusiast and a believer in 'stereo 78s') leads me to comment also on something in Kenneth DeKay's article on various writers' reactions to Koussevit-

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zky and the Boston Symphony in Vol. 3, No. 1, specifically those of Sir Adrian Boult. Boult's comments about British orchestras having better principal players and needing less preparation than the Boston Symphony should be respected. In his earlier years especially, a much larger percentage of solo artists in Britain either were or had been principals in a major orchestra than was the case in America, and the British players' ability to understand and perform music more quickly than those in America derived from the severe rehearsal time restrictions with which they often had to cope. Boult's perception that Koussevitzky must have treated the musicians like children and that they would not respect nuances without repeated practice reminds me of how Mr Malloch described some rehearsals he attended during the brief tenure of the Dutch conductor Eduard Van Beinum with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. He was having precisely the same problems that Boult described, and Mr Malloch concluded that this was responsible for Van Beinum's untimely death! The point of all this is that even though Koussevitzky's Boston Symphony Orchestra was superb and unique, it was still an American orchestra of its time and should not be thought of as anything less for being that.

Charles Niss, Executive Secretary
Sir Thomas Beecham Society
Redondo Beach, CA

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music. The cost for the 14 discs is at $125.97 (plus shipping) direct from RCA. That's about 9 bucks a disc. What you get is a vast scope of time, excellent performances, excellent recordings. What else could a tyro ask for?

Many readers are already familiar with "The Stokowski Sound". On the other hand, there may be some who are complete neophytes to the sound world Stokowski was famous for. In a few words, let me say that Stokowski's original instrument was the organ. When he turned to conducting that other instrument, the orchestra, he brought the organ sound to the orchestra. He underlined the bass line clearly, often adding more bass to the orchestra. He developed a seamless sound in the string sections using 'free bowing'. The resulting sound is one which is rich, deep, and sensuous. In fact, sensuous is probably the best word to describe The Stokowski Sound.

The presentation of this set is handsome. It comes with remarkable pictures, often differing from disc to disc. More important, each disc has its own insert commentary written by Ed Johnson. Now, I will clearly state that Ed is the best Stokowski scholar alive today. His comments are fascinating, educating, entertaining... everything you could ask for. They are about Stokowski, about the recordings, and about the music itself. Ed's notes constitute a paradigm of what insert notes should be.

What we have here are all of the stereo recordings that Stokowski made for RCA between 1954 and 1975. Many are new to CD. In fact, my personal collection of Stokowski CDs from RCA numbered only 9 to compared to this volume of 14, and some of mine were scarcely available. If ever there was a fitting tribute to Leopold Stokowski, RCA has provided one with this release. Stokowski's first recordings, made in 1917, were with RCA and his last ones for them date from 1975. It is also a tribute to Jack Pfeiffer, who worked hard to realize this project and died too soon to hear it.

I have checked on prices for this set. The best source is to get them directly from RCA through the Internet. As mentioned above, their price is $127.95. Other sources I have checked, Tower Records among them, are asking around $140.00. I give this production my highest recommendation.

About the Koussevitzky Recordings Society, Inc.

The Koussevitzky Recordings Society was established in 1986, and it is dedicated to the preservation and dissemination of the recorded legacy of Serge Koussevitzky. The Society is a non-profit corporation staffed entirely by volunteers. Our Board of Directors consists of President Tom Godell, Vice President Victor Koshkin-Youritzin, Secretary Karl Miller, and Treasurer Louis Harrison. Members of the Society's distinguished Advisory Board are Alexander Bernstein, Martin Bookspan, David Diamond, Harry Ellis Dickson, Charles Dutoit, Mrs Irving Fine, Lukas Foss, Karl Haas, Richard L. Kaye, and Gerard Schwarz. Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland, William Schuman, and Antonio de Almeida were Advisors during their lives.

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 these bi-annual journals, which include interviews from the archive, articles about the conductor, and book reviews.

To become a member and receive our publications, send a check or money order in the amount of $18 to 1211 W. Hill Street, Carbondale IL 62901-2463. Memberships run from January to December. Those who join in the middle of the calendar year will receive all publications for that year. Back issues of our Journals are also available. For a complete list, contact the Society at the above address.