

KOUSSEVITZKY  
Recordings Society



## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Since last fall, several of Koussevitzky's greatest broadcast performances have appeared on Italian CDs. Twenty-four discs (from a projected total of fifty) have been issued by AS Disc, while one (including Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra) is on the Stradivari label.

In the *New York Times*, Martin Bookspan summed up the results: "The sound throughout is uniformly bad, at times totally unacceptable, with merciless dynamic constriction, droupouts, wild variations in volume level and, toward the end of the Beethoven Ninth, fluctuations in pitch... that are excruciating... With all these negatives, is there any value to these releases? Only if you can adjust your ears to block out all the sound deficiencies, for there are some white-hot performances buried underneath."

For those who never heard Koussevitzky in performance or those seeking to recapture that incredible experience, it is worth trying to obtain at least a few of these CDs. For example, the Beethoven Ninth (with the ORTF Orchestra of Paris, rather than the BSO) may be the most hair-raising performance that the Choral Symphony has ever received. Unfortunately, Bookspan was overly generous: the recorded sound on this disc is even worse than you might expect from his review.

It may now be impossible to purchase these items in the U.S., however. Robert Price, a member in Berkeley, California, reports that Tower Records has pulled all of the AS Disc Koussevitzky recordings from their stores and returned them to the distributor. The Italians presumably did not bother to obtain a license to issue these recordings in the U.S. from the copyright owner. Several of these discs *are* listed in the most recent catalog from the Berkshire Record Outlet (RR 1, Lee, MA 01238), although they, too, may have been withdrawn from their shelves by now.

Pearl's two-CD set of Koussevitzky's commercial recordings of the music of Sibelius have apparently been issued in England although, according to Victor Koshkin-Youritzin, they probably won't be available in this country for another couple of months. If, like the AS Discs, they have not been properly licensed, they may not appear at all on this side of the Atlantic.

Professor Roland Nadeau of Northeastern University has devoted three installments of his wonderful *A Note to You* radio series to Koussevitzky. These programs will include several of the maestro's finest recordings along with fascinating commentary by Boris Goldovsky, Harry Ellis Dickson, and Nicolas Slonimsky. (Complete transcripts of Nadeau's interviews with Goldovsky and Dickson are scheduled to appear in future editions of our newsletter). The programs will be made available to all NPR member stations in June. Check with your local public radio station for broadcast dates and times.

Membership in the Society this year has already nearly equalled last year's total of fifty-four. Still, we remain a very small organization. With our current membership base, we *can* continue to produce our two biannual newsletters and even add occasional interviews to the Koussevitzky Oral Archive. However, more ambitious projects (a compact disc or cassette issue, for example) will require significantly more member support.

In an attempt to increase membership, we have produced public service announcements about the Society and its work for distribution to public and fine arts radio stations. Press releases are being sent to the musical press. In addition, we are producing an hour-length radio program devoted to Koussevitzky's Copland recordings in honor of the composer's 90th birthday.

You can help us to increase our membership by encouraging your friends to join or by purchasing gift memberships. If each of you were to bring in just one new member or purchase a single gift membership, we would immediately double our membership!

With a significant increase in member support, it will also be possible for us to pursue our recording project with renewed vigor. The Society's policy against record piracy remains in effect, however, which means that the process will continue to be a slow and difficult one. Clearly, high quality recordings of Koussevitzky's best efforts are long overdue. Look for an update on our progress in this area in the fall.

Tom Godell,  
President

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## SERGE KOUSSEVITZKY AS AUTHOR

Beginning with Wagner's essays, each new generation of conductors has contributed philosophical writings to the general literature. There are books by Beecham, Bernstein, Stokowski and Walter as well as articles by Furtwängler and others scattered throughout periodicals. Among these select titles one can also discover a substantial body of articles and speeches from Koussevitzky that add to an understanding of his art and attitude toward the music that he conducted. Although the conductor was at home in the Russian language, English phrasing presented some difficulties. Fortunately, Madame Koussevitzky spoke and wrote fluently in their adopted tongue, and her niece Olga served the maestro well as secretary, translating into English his magnificent ideas and imagery.

One of the earliest American publications is an honorary doctoral dissertation for Harvard University dating from

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1929. Parts of this paper found its way into an *Atlantic Monthly* article published in August 1948 entitled "Interpreting Music." Koussevitzky stressed, above all, the spiritual values inherent in the music and expounded on the "central line" of the major composers. For him, Bach's compositions centered around religion and glorified God. The essence of Mozart was tonal purity and formal perfection; this composer's music emerged as a separate entity from his life. Haydn's humor permeated his work, while Beethoven had a transcendental quality. When the latter mourned, the whole world mourned with him; when Beethoven rejoiced, it was a universal joy.<sup>1</sup>

Earlier, in May and June of 1942, two articles appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*: "The Emotional Essence of Brahms" and "Debussy—The Resurrected Pan." Each brilliantly illuminate Koussevitzky's unique views of these composers. While Brahms was an undeniable master of his craft, he did not add to music in the way that Beethoven, Schubert and others did. According to Koussevitzky, nothing this composer wrote was better than his predecessors, but Brahms inherited the great German symphonic tradition and enriched its repertoire.<sup>2</sup> Debussy, on the other hand, represented an archaic as well as a futuristic panorama; the Frenchman looked backward and forward, combining the two elements in such works as *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* and *La Mer*.<sup>3</sup>

These articles make for fascinating reading and are an indispensable supplement to Koussevitzky's wonderful records of Brahms and Debussy. The rich sonority implicit

in Brahms and the metric freedom that exemplifies Debussy receive their full due here. Since these papers are so little known today, it is well worth the trouble of seeking them in dusty volumes and reading them in order to better appreciate what Koussevitzky was trying to achieve with the Boston Symphony. Perhaps one day a reprint of these *Atlantic Monthly* articles could reach a new reading public.

Koussevitzky would occasionally write for the *New York Times*, whose head critic, Olin Downes, was a close personal friend. There are several papers of note; especially eloquent is "Soaring Music." A special World's Fair supplement to the *Times* issue of March 5, 1939 featured the conductor's inimitable prose. Throughout this article, Koussevitzky's love for music of all eras and countries is clearly evident. He extols the development of the art in the Western world thus:

We believe contemporary music has important advantages. Can anyone doubt the profound significance this new factor is bound to have for the immediate and more distant future? The development of symphonic orchestras and the variety and progress in musical performances may also be taken as a portent of the future. In matters of culture and art there is no differentiation between the Old World and the New World. It is not too much to say that the musical future of the whole world is bound up with the musical future of America. If in the past the torch has been carried from France to the Netherlands—England to Italy to Germany to Russia—then it is a safe prophecy that America has been singled out to carry forward the banner of musical progress.

It is a fact to which every American has a right to point with pride that, having begun by merely inviting the best of artists of the Old World to its shores, America has known how to wield its own performers into organizations which have a right to be compared with similar European organizations. Without an educated and responsive music-loving public, there is no chance of having a musical culture. Today American audiences not only show love and admiration of music, but also a deep understanding of the need and importance of musical art in the progress of humanity.<sup>4</sup>

At the beginning of the Tanglewood seasons, Koussevitzky would always address the music students in an opening speech. These documents are also, in their own way, vintage Koussevitzky, because his gift for inspiring the young comes through as strongly as in the above excerpt. Here is what the conductor had to say at the opening ceremonies in 1946:

In a period of unprecedented crisis in history, when men find no common contact and means of understanding each other, when all values have lost their significance, music is the element of unity among

men. More than any other art, music has the driving force, facility and freedom of crossing political, geographical and racial barriers.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Koussevitzky, Address to the Berkshire Music Center, June 30, 1946.

**In addition to the above, Koussevitzky authored the following:**

“Music and Christianity” (*undated and unpublished*), 4 pages in the Olin Downes papers at the University of Georgia.

“American Composers,” *Life*, April 24, 1944.

“Call to Musicians,” *New York Times*, January 4, 1942.

**Several interview articles include the following:**

“Koussevitzky Speaks,” *New York Times*, July 25, 1937.

“Koussevitzky Discusses Shifts in His Reactions in 15 Year Period,” *New York Times*, June 4, 1939.

**Speeches:**

“They Shall Have Music Wherever They Go,” Town Hall Address, *New York Times*, January 17, 1943.

Tanglewood Addresses, 1940-50.

There can be no doubt about Koussevitzky’s special genius as manifested in Boston at the helm of one of the leading orchestras. His tireless efforts on behalf of many fine talents at Tanglewood and elsewhere continue to be felt to this day. A champion of modern music as well as earlier music, his place in music history is assured. The discovery of Koussevitzky the author was indeed a wonderful surprise. I hope that this rather obscure aspect of Koussevitzky’s creativity will receive more attention along with his enduring legacy.

Vincent C. Schwerin, Jr.

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Serge Koussevitzky, “Interpreting Music,” *Atlantic Monthly* 192 (August 1948): 24-25.

<sup>2</sup> Koussevitzky, “The Emotional Essence of Brahms,” *Atlantic Monthly* 169 (May 1942): 554.

<sup>3</sup> Koussevitzky, “Debussy—The Resurrected Pan,” *Atlantic Monthly* 169 (June 1942): 743.

<sup>4</sup> Koussevitzky, “Soaring Music,” *New York Times*, March 5, 1939.

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## INTERVIEW WITH LUKAS FOSS

**Ed Young:** Perhaps you’d like to say a few words about how you first came to the Boston Symphony.

**Lukas Foss:** I was studying conducting with Fritz Reiner at the Curtis Institute at that time. Now he was a great teacher, a great conductor. But we got to conduct the Curtis Orchestra once a year in an overture, maybe. That’s not really quite enough. So when Tanglewood announced its first summer of a school with the Boston Symphony there and Serge Koussevitzky as the teacher and Paul Hindemith in composition and a whole distinguished, wonderful faculty—Copland, I think, was there also—I immediately applied. And I applied for both Hindemith’s class and Koussevitzky’s class.

For Koussevitzky’s class we had study *Till Eulenspiegel*, among other things, and audition with an orchestra. I don’t think it was the Boston Symphony, but now this is so long ago. I was then 17. And we were to audition, and I remember Koussevitzky saying, “You are Lukas Foss? You are very, very young—17? Well, you have time, you know. I see that you have applied to study with Hindemith. You cannot possibly do both Hindemith’s and my

class. So why don’t you just take Hindemith this summer, and then next summer you can apply for my class.”

So, of course, I was a little disappointed, and I said, “But, Dr. Koussevitzky, I learned all those scores, and I never get a chance to be in front of an orchestra. Can’t I do the

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audition anyway, even though I have nothing to expect?” And he said, “Yes, if you want, you can audition. Fine. Audition!” And so I got to conduct, and when I got through he said to me in his inimitable English, “If you want, you will have,” which meant I was accepted in *his* class as well as Hindemith’s. I was really very, very happy, and to this day “If you want, you will have” has become a standard in my repertory of favorite sayings.

He was not only a teacher to me, he was very much like a father. He had no children of his own, and when he took on someone, as he took on Lenny [Bernstein] and myself, he really was such a wonderful person to work with. You see, as a technician, he was not a Fritz Reiner, but he had something else. He could do Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony for the hundredth time as if it was the first time.

He had something gala, a way of giving all of himself to his students and to his orchestra. That was different from Fritz Reiner. Fritz Reiner was much more reticent and would sometimes be very bored at a concert, occasionally, when he did something for the hundredth time.

So all this was very refreshing and very interesting, and then he took me on in very special way. He realized I had no money, and when he wore out a suit, which means he had worn it maybe three times, he would give it to me. I was close to his size. He would try it on like a tailor, and then he would say, "How you like? You feel reech now?" And all these things are treasures in my memory, as you can well imagine...

EY: A question about something you said there. I've heard a lot of discussion over the years about Koussevitzky not being such a great technician with the orchestra. Can you say a little more about that?

LF: Well, you see, let me put it this way, Koussevitzky came to conducting relatively late. He was a famous double bass player. There are records of his playing the double bass, and he was a double bass player until his wife bought him his first orchestra. And so he came to conducting late, and that shows in his technique. It's very important for your technique to start early.

I remember when I came for my audition with Fritz Reiner, I was literally in knee pants, a boy straight from Paris. I walked into that auditioning class, and Fritz Reiner said, "What's that?" and he shoveled a score under my eyes, and I said, "It's the slow movement from the Beethoven Fourth." "All right, you're in the class. Good bye." On his way out, he yelled back at me, "One more thing," as if I had said anything, "You think you're young? You're almost too old!" Those were Fritz Reiner's parting words at the end of my audition with him, when I was barely 17. No! What am I saying? I was barely 15, and I had just arrived in America. I was 17 when I arrived at Tanglewood.

So you see, it is difficult to have that kind of technique when you start late, but he [Koussevitzky] made up for it in other ways. His stick technique was not as precise and effortless as it might have been, but who cares? I mean, he did wonderful things. His gestures were extremely expressive. They might not always have been terribly clear, but that didn't seem to matter. He gave so much of himself; he just worked harder to overcome that.

It's a little bit like the performance of our presidential candidates. If they become good presidents, who cares whether or not they're good on television? This is the

way it was with Koussevitzky, and he certainly was a great conductor.

After all, a conductor is basically as good as he can make his musicians play. In other words, you are as good as the results you get from others, and he certainly got results from the Boston Symphony. They weren't always on his side. They didn't always appreciate him, but they played for him. Now, that's part of that missionary zeal that he had and which was incomparable. He really loved the

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music, and he had this zeal, and it came across. Other conductors may have had a more flamboyant technique, but they didn't have that zeal, and they didn't convey that love for the music. So, therefore, they didn't get the kind of results that Koussevitzky did.

EY: There's been a lot said about the great personalities of the conductors of yesteryear and how their personalities came across to the audience. Do you suppose an era like that will ever come again?

LF: You see, it's different now. Now we've got the kind of jet-set conductor who is less interested in one particular orchestra and more interested in his image all over the world. This is the media type of conductor that we get nowadays, and that to me is a little less serious. I mean a conductor today is likely to say to himself, "What are we playing tonight? Oh, Beethoven's Fifth. Okay. [Singing] Da-da-da-dum."

Whereas when a Klemperer or a Furtwängler got ready to conduct Beethoven's Fifth, they would say a prayer, you know. It was just a more involved kind of service that the conductor felt toward the great music. Today he's likely to use the music more for his own aggrandizement. He is likely to be more narcissistic, although maybe this isn't quite true. I think narcissism has always been around, so it's hard to say.

EY: I've noticed something curious in relation to these so-called *star* conductors, and it includes today's *star* soloists as well, that I might not have discovered if I didn't live in a place like Fort Lauderdale. Until recently we actually had two up and coming local orchestras, and now we're down to one, but anyways I have heard some very interesting conductors and soloists with these orchestras. I find myself liking these musicians much better than most of the big names that appear with the major orchestras. Have you ever noticed this yourself?

LF: Well, unfortunately, you're so right, because in the

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age we're now living in, where everything is hype, the wrong people get hyped and get into super-stardom. And the right people, if they don't have the right personality for hyping, and if they're not *operators* for themselves, may not even get an orchestra! I mean, we're living in a rather unserious age for America, and maybe for the whole world, and it does worry me. I see this phenomenon more and more.

People don't even talk about the really interesting artists, because one becomes interesting only if he's hyped and successful and in the newspapers and on television. Then they find him interesting and then, as far as I'm concerned, he may not be interesting. I mean, he may be, but he may also not be interesting. I mean, the fact that somebody's on television doesn't make him interesting to me. But, unfortunately, success is what interests everybody, success in terms of media coverage. And this is all very dangerous, because in music, very often misfits are interesting. But misfits will not get to the top positions. So, I don't know.

I think things were better in the days when strange people like Klemperer and Furtwängler and Koussevitzky got to be on top. Whether they would be on top today, it is possible, but by today's standards they might not have been smooth enough operators to make it.

EY: Do you think that today the name of the game is more public relations?

LF: Like in politics, absolutely, it's all public relations. If you're good at public relations, you'll get places. If you're not good at it, you won't.

EY: Which I guess seems to indicate that perhaps most of the audience out there isn't really serious about the music, because if they were they wouldn't put up with these so-called star musicians.

LF: Well, maybe they're serious about music, but they get brow-beaten—actually 'brainwashed' is the word—into believing what the media tells them.

EY: Well, it's certainly a curious subject.

LF: Yes, conducting has always been a strange profession, because it's elusive. You hear what the musicians play. You don't hear the conductor, and that presents us with a very strange situation—just what does the conductor do? What is the mysterious relationship of his gestures? Well, most of the work of the conductor is at rehearsals, of course, where he can really tell people what to do. But then comes the performance. If a musician

makes a mistake, if he enters too soon, what can the conductor do? He is totally impotent. He can glare, but it's too late.

So, actually, this leader, who is at the mercy of the led, you know, what is this all about? And who is doing this work with his back to the audience? I don't think there is any other profession where you do your work with your back to the audience, and then the audience decides how good you are by really a weird combination of how you look and what they hear.

It's all very make-believe. It's a very strange profession. And yet, it's a very necessary evil, because you can't really get it done without the conductor. It's been tried in Soviet Russia. They tried to do away with the conductor, and it didn't work.

EY: Let's go back to 1940 again. You said that you were 17 years old in 1940 at that first session of the Berkshire Music Center. Then you became the pianist of the orchestra very shortly after that time, didn't you?

LF: I was pianist of the Boston Symphony from 1946 to 1950. It was something Koussevitzky did for me, because he wanted me to be on a salary, so I would have time to compose, and he also, I think, liked the idea of having his students in the orchestra, working with him and watching him. And I think he was really doing me a good deed. As a pianist there were many programs where I had nothing to do, and I didn't have to come to rehearsals, and I could stay in my studio and hear the Boston Symphony rehearsals in my little loft and compose. So he was very helpful.

He also was the first or the second to conduct my music. Actually, Fritz Reiner was probably the first. But Koussevitzky did a great deal of my music, and did it beautifully. And I remember he did my *Song of Songs* eight times in seven days! But that's unusual. He did it all over on tour, and he loved it. He was most encouraging. It was really wonderful to have this kind of a father to work with. So, those Boston Symphony years were memorable, and, of course, I learned a lot sitting in the Boston Symphony, watching him and playing for him. We had wonderful times.

EY: Of course, I suppose with the contemporary music there was more place for a piano in the scores. Isn't that so?

LF: Exactly. I remember playing *Pétrouchka*, which has a big piano part in the orchestra, and Koussevitzky saying

to me, "You are now the greatest *Pétrouchka* player." Of course, that wasn't exactly my ambition in life, but why not? At any rate I played solo, too. I played the Mendelssohn Concerto in Carnegie Hall with the Boston Symphony and got rave reviews. In those days, I didn't know what a bad review was. You know, first in America they love to proclaim you as a great young talent, and then they love to jump on you. And then you have to survive. If you survive, you've got it made. And I guess I survived.

But those were wonderful days. And Koussevitzky would feature me as a composer and as a pianist. His successor also did my music. I remained as pianist for one year under Charles Munch. It was interesting to see the difference between Koussevitzky and Munch handling the same orchestra in some of the same repertory. It was very instructive. And then after that I left. I had three years as pianist of the Boston Symphony with Koussevitzky and one with Munch.

EY: Could you recollect some of his colorful remarks in that broken English of his?

LF: You know, we used to mark the parts, the orchestra parts, with those inimitable, wonderful expressions that Koussevitzky had. We would put them into the music.

One time he said, "What is this? I make it just like I want a key, and you give me something nothing." That was typical, inimitable Koussevitzky language. And I remember one time I made a mistake. I didn't come in when I was supposed to. Being a conducting student, I was so interested in the way he gave the cue, that I forgot to play. But

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## He felt that he had let down the whole world of music when things didn't go well

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Koussevitzky automatically understood that. He said, "Vy you vatch me? You didn't play. You vatch me conduct? I know." And all the other men in the orchestra said, "This Lukas can't do wrong. My God, we get *hell* when we don't come in, and here *he* is; the conductor's pleased when *he* makes a mistake!" But he understood why I didn't come in. You know, it was that kind of a relationship. It was very human.

I remember Koussevitzky saying to the young student orchestra at Tanglewood, "*Kinder*, vy do you play so cold when the sun is shining?" He always said "*kinder*" which means children in German.

EY: One of the things that I have read that you wrote about Koussevitzky was in some record jacket notes, and you were commenting about all the fire he put into his

performances compared to the blasé conductors today.

LF: Yes, I think that in a sense, when I mentioned the missionary zeal, that's what I meant, that kind of fire. And also the way he was upset when things didn't go so well. I mean, he felt that he had let down the whole world of music when things didn't go well. Toscanini had that same attitude. Conductors nowadays are much more glib about that, because they know that hardly anybody hears these details, and you can have a success and a good review whether the concert was good or bad. Somehow they don't take it as seriously as Koussevitzky did.

EY: Well, I guess times really have changed, because one rarely hears performances with that kind of involvement any longer.

LF: Right. That's it. The involvement. And not only with the great classics, but with Shostakovich symphonies, even with my music, with whatever he was doing. He was completely involved. Completely.

Oh, Lenny and I speak very often about him. We have a few sort of catch words that immediately bring him to life. There's one remark that we always remember, which will sound totally incomprehensible now, if I just say it by itself, and that is "*und Haydn*."

Well, that goes back to the time that Koussevitzky was struggling to remember a particular Beethoven tune, and he couldn't identify it. He said it was from one of the concertos. So Lenny jumped to the piano and immediately played the first theme of the first concerto, and maybe I played the first theme from the second, and we went through all the themes of the five concertos, and, no, it wasn't any of them. And he started to sing it. Then he looked very prophetic, as if his mind were somewhere else, and said, "*und Haydn*?" This to us was the greatest *non sequitur* of all times, "*und Haydn*." We still don't know what went on in his mind. And a lot of things like that we remember with love.

And then we remember his way of telling jokes, which sometimes got him into trouble... But he was not a person without a sense of humor, believe me. Some conductors have no sense, or not much of a sense of humor. But I think Koussevitzky did. He could laugh at himself, too.

EY: Oh, really?

LF: Yes.

EY: Did you see much of the famous Koussevitzky temper? I'm sitting here, remembering talking to Louis Speyer about that subject.

LF: Yes, Speyer, the English horn player of the Boston Symphony.

EY: Yes, because he was involved in the famous flying score episode. Did you ever hear that story?

LF: No. I never heard about the flying score. Tell me.

EY: Well, Koussevitzky got mad at Speyer and picked up the score and threw it at him. Then he left the stage and went off to the Green Room. He thought that Speyer and some of the others were making fun of the music. I think it was Copland's *El Salón México* that they were playing. He thought that they were making it too jazzy, too sexy. Some of them were tapping their feet, and he got mad at them.

LF: He had a wonderful way of getting mad at an orchestra. By the way, this was a lesson, a conducting lesson, that I wish I had learned long before I did. For years and years I didn't know how to get mad at an orchestra. I should have learned that from Koussevitzky instead of becoming sarcastic or something.

For instance, let me tell you what he would do. I remember he stopped the orchestra. Now I wish I could remember what piece it was in. It doesn't matter. He stopped the orchestra. He said, "Again." He got more and more upset. "Again! Again!" And finally he said "A thousand times, until I will have." And finally he stopped the orchestra and said, "If I will not have, I will resign. I will resign from this orchestra if you cannot play and give me what I want." He went on again. Then he stopped the orchestra and bellowed at them, "I will not resign. *You* will resign!" That was effective. Everybody sat up and took notice.

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And it showed to the orchestra how much it meant to him that they play well. Now tell me who does this sort of thing today? It was totally without rancor. I mean this wouldn't hurt anybody's feelings.

EY: Because it was addressed to everybody.

LF: Exactly.

EY: That must be an awful problem. If you have 100-plus men out there, with all the usual sort of ego situations, how do you discipline them? How do you get their attention?

LF: Exactly. How do you? That's right. And I could have learned from him. It took me about 20 years until I got results from an orchestra. At first, I thought that knowledge of the score was the important thing. Well, it is a prerequisite. But that's not enough. You have to be a leader. He was a leader. You see, he became a leader, but it also took him years to learn that.

He advised us, for instance, not to conduct from memory unless we really knew every note. He would sometimes stop a conductor who was conducting from memory and say, "Now what does the clarinet do in that place?" When

the young conductor said, "Well I'm not sure. Is that the clarinet or the bassoon?" "Well, why are you conducting from memory?"

You know, he was very astute in that way, and he was absolutely right. That show-off business of conducting from memory is absolutely ridiculous, because it's smuch to easy. You can very easily conduct from memory. It means nothing. Of course, if you really know every note, why have the music there and have to turn pages? True. But he never conducted from memory. He always used the music.

By the way, we were speaking of his sense of humor. I remember once he stopped, I think it was Beethoven's funeral march from the *Eroica*, and he said, "Maybe it's a funeral march, but, gentlemen, you're not the corpses." So you see, he did have a sense of humor.

EY: Yes, that was very apropos, wasn't it? Are there many conductors today who actually still keep the orchestra afraid of them?

LF: That doesn't work any more. But Koussevitzky never had them really afraid. He just got them excited. But he never fired because somebody didn't play right at the concert. In fact, when he was getting older, he said, "I don't want to fire a musician. Let my successor do that." He was very human. But the days of George Szell, Toscanini and Fritz Reiner, of the dictator-conductors, are really over, because nowadays you have to apologize to any orchestra if you don't treat them well. Otherwise, they'd simply refuse to play. There is now an orchestra committee, which is close to the union, and the union simply will not tolerate a dictator-conductor. So you have to be very careful nowadays with an orchestra. But Koussevitzky never had that problem. He was always lovable.

EY: I suppose it must be difficult to get the results you're after, if you have to be always thinking, "I can't say this" and "I can't say that—I've got to be so careful."

LF: Well, in a sense it's better. Why put a musician on the spot? They're not school children. They shouldn't be treated like school children. They should be treated like colleagues. I kind of like the fact that we have to now treat them like colleagues. I think we can get results by being reasonable. Being a dictator worked for some people. As a matter of fact, it worked for people who were also lovable. But I can't imagine that you can get good results through fear, just fear. There has to be something more. If you're also a good daddy at the same time, then maybe fear is all right.

EY: I guess I was under the impression that he did fire a lot of people, but you say he didn't.

LF: Well, maybe in the earlier days. But by the time I came along he was getting old, and by that time he didn't do much firing. I didn't notice it. I wasn't aware of it, if he did. He probably did more firing in his early years in Boston. But he had such a great orchestra. He really had a great



Hindemith wrote: "I will not have Lukas Foss back in my class, because he wants to know everything, but he doesn't want to follow." Koussevitzky said, "Bravo, Lukas. That's what I want from a student."

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instrument there, with the Boston Symphony. Everybody tried to do their best, and they were wonderful players.

EY: How did you find him as a teacher?

LF: Wonderful, because of that missionary zeal. In other words, to let him down and not do a good job was unheard of, you know. We really worked so hard to please him. It was very important. And that makes basically a good teacher. I had one like that for piano, Isabelle Vengerova at Curtis. I mean you just couldn't come without practicing. She might have a heart attack! So you had to please her. It was wonderful that way. It meant so much to him.

You see, today we've got so many teachers who couldn't care less. It's so important to a student to have a teacher who cares. An interesting part of the job of being young is to find your great teacher. You really need to find a teacher you can believe in and learn from and not just get a teacher in order to get your degree or something, the way it's often done.

You know, when I studied that summer at Tanglewood, with Koussevitzky and Hindemith, I remember I wasn't always a good student with Hindemith. I was sort of at the height of my adolescence, and I had already loved Hindemith's music long before, and I was just discovering Stravinsky when I was studying with Hindemith, which made me a very rambunctious teenage student.

And Hindemith was very often upset with me. And so, at the end of the summer he wrote a letter to Koussevitzky: "I will not have Lukas Foss back in my class, because he wants to know everything, but he doesn't want to follow." And Koussevitzky showed me that letter and said, "Bravo, Lukas. You want to know, and you don't follow. That's perfect! That's what I want from a student."

So, Hindemith had a totally different reaction from Koussevitzky. In other words, Koussevitzky actually liked me for being that kind of a renegade, but actually, you know, Hindemith did take me back. And I studied with him at Yale in the winter, and we became friends.

It is very interesting how these things happen, because somehow I was able maybe to apologize. I don't know what happened, but he did take me back. And he is right, a student should follow. I think a student should realize that he is in the world of the master. He should not use his adolescent kind of rebellion against the teacher.

EY: Do you think his [Koussevitzky's] beat was clear when he conducted?

LF: Well, it wasn't the kind of fascinating beat of a Fritz Reiner, but it was a perfectly good beat to communicate what he had to communicate. It was energetic. It had fire. It had elegance, too. He was always elegant, by the way. No matter how much fire he had, he was always elegant. He never did something which was sort of repulsive, like bathing in pathos. I can think of a few conductors who are obnoxious to me in that way. He never did that. His hands never trembled as he would turn to the violins to show a *vibrato* or an *espressivo*. He would never act as though he was having a seizure of ecstasy or something. It was never to the point of bad taste. It was always in good taste. And you could learn good taste from him.

EY: Yes, his recordings often show him in the midst of very emotional performances, but he only lets the emotion go just so far. He just seemed to know how far to take it, while it was still tasteful.

LF: That's right. And he never Mickey-Moused the music either, which a lot of conductors do, which is mainly for the audience, because it doesn't help the orchestra, that Mickey-Mousing. You know what I mean by Mickey-Mousing? It's a kind of imitating the meaning of the music. In other words, if the music is full of pathos, you look like you have pathos written all over you. And if the music is violent, you become violent. If the music is elegant, you do a little dance. I mean, that kind of conducting I don't believe in and neither did he. There's a certain dignity to the profession that you violate when you Mickey-Mouse the music.

EY: So you think he really did have a clear beat? It was easy to follow?

LF: It wasn't as difficult as Furtwängler was to follow. Furtwängler had a kind of a beat that went sort of criss-cross, instead of up and down. And there's a famous story that a musician once asked him, "Mr. Furtwängler, on which floor do we come in?", meaning that his beat had different levels. I remember Koussevitzky once saying, when some musician complained about his beat, he said, "When I touch the air, you must come in," which is a very beautiful way of putting it. So we watched him, and, as the baton stopped, he was touching the air, so to say.

EY: Oh, is that what that meant? In other words, he'd

bring it down just a little bit, and when the stick stopped, that was it.

LF: Yes, that's when he touched the air, so to say. I think that was clear. But musicians are always complaining. They're always trying to get at the conductor. That's a famous thing. They always do that. I think Koussevitzky's beat was pretty clear. And clarity isn't everything. It's a lot, but it's not everything.

EY: I must say that watching most of these conductors nowadays, in the concert hall or on television, they certainly seem very clear about everything they're doing.

LF: Yes. We have now a lot of books on conducting, about stick techniques. Actually, to me personally, the only really important technique that a conductor has to learn, and it takes years, is that he hears when something just happened. Therefore his critical ear is behind the music, but the beat has to be ahead of the music, because every beat is an upbeat. Even a downbeat is an upbeat to the next beat. So, therefore, with your hand you are ahead of the music, but with your ear, you're behind, and that is quite schizophrenic.

Therefore, a young and inexperienced conductor, for instance at rehearsals, will start listening very hard, and his beat goes to pieces. At performances he will concentrate on his beat, and he doesn't hear what's going on. That's typical of a young conductor. But, to an experienced conductor, that schizophrenic situation becomes natural. That, to me, is basically the mystery of the conducting technique.

EY: Is that one of the reasons that when people look back on conductor's careers they often observe that he wasn't the greatest when he was a young man, but as he got older, he became a master?

LF: That's part of it. Well, you don't have to get old for that, but you have to have at least five years of regular conducting until this process comes naturally. After a while, it becomes natural for your beat to be ahead and your ear to be behind, but that takes five years or so. What you develop as you become older is the mystery of leadership, which means that you identify with the led.

Every great leader is a father figure. Every great leader, even if he is young. Now for some people it is possible to be a father figure at a young age. And for some, like me, I had to get older to be able to be a father figure. So it took me longer than most people to grow up as a conductor, to belong. And that is because I couldn't really identify with a lot of the musicians. And that, I think you learn after a while, if you're human. Some people can never learn it.

But I think that if you're human you begin to realize what it takes to sit there day in and day out and watch the conductor, and do what he says. You begin to identify with them a lot, and then you begin to talk to them differently. You begin to give them compliments when they do something well. You don't just take for granted that they do it

well, and just yell at them when they do something badly. You begin to get really excited when they do something really beautifully. And, you know, then you have the relationship of a leader.

EY: Was Koussevitzky much of a one for throwing bouquets if things went well?

LF: He would compliment people. Yes, he did. He really did. He would say, "Oh, that was beautiful." Yes, he would say that.

EY: Are conductors nowadays allowed by the Musician's Union to yell and stamp the way Koussevitzky did in rehearsals?

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I think passion is the secret of conducting and of art in general. Without passion, nothing happens.

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LF: The way *he* did, yes. The way Toscanini did, no. That was too nasty. Or George Szell or Reiner, that was too nasty. But Koussevitzky was not nasty. He really didn't have a nasty bone in him. It was always excitement. He was too much a part of the music process. I think he could get away with the way he was even now. I think.

EY: Do you do that yourself sometimes, to impress upon them what you want? A little stamping, a little shouting?

LF: A little bit, although I'm rather polite on the whole. I never forget that they're my colleagues, and I'm rather polite. But sometimes, yes, that happens to me. I lose my temper now and then. And sometimes it's all right to lose your temper. As the director of Columbia Concerts, Wilfred, once told me, "You know, there's nothing wrong with losing your temper with an orchestra, as long as you do it right then and there, as the trouble happens, but not later on in a sarcastic remark that shows that you haven't yet overcome the problem."

So if you get furious right then and there it won't hurt you, because they'll understand, but they won't like some nasty crack the next day. That was the best advice, you know. He was absolutely on the ball. These conductors got away with it, because they got furious about the incident right then and there.

EY: I heard a *Les Préludes* on the radio that you did with the Milwaukee orchestra about four or five years ago, and I thought to myself, "I wonder if Lukas Foss is the sort of conductor that Koussevitzky was, with the stamping and the shouting," because, for instance, that *Les Préludes* was really on fire.

LF: Well, I think passion is the secret of conducting and of art in general. Without passion, nothing happens, but conductors are not always genuinely passionate. Very often they just act out a kind of passion. They act fiery, but it's all not very believable. I think real passion is very important. And at rehearsals, too, not just at the concert. At rehearsals the musicians should realize how important it is to the conductor that they play well.

I hope I have real passion. I think I do, and I don't think anyone loves the classics any more than I do. Sometimes they stamp me as, you know, Mr. Modern Music, because I compose *avant-garde* music and all that. But I became a conductor and a composer because of Mozart, Beethoven,

Bach, Schubert, Tchaikovsky even. And I think that love for music is what you have to communicate as a conductor, and not by looking loving, but by what you say and what you communicate to the orchestra people; not by gestures, but by your understanding of the score, and I think I know how to make a score passionate.

I know when I do Tchaikovsky just what will make it more serious and more passionate, but not more hysterical. There's a big difference. Some conductors think that passion means being hysterical. I hate those performances, and Koussevitzky's performances of Tchaikovsky were never hysterical. ♦

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## DUKE, DUKELSKY, OR V.D.?

Vladimir Dukelsky wrote two books which epitomize his split personality. Because the personality which achieved fame was *not* the one he preferred, this was something he could never accept. In a way the poor man's Sir Arthur Sullivan, Dukelsky yearned to be a successful classical composer, a fate which constantly eluded him during his lifetime and evaporated completely after his death, if not well before his earthly demise.

For every person who has ever heard of Dukelsky, there are thousands—perhaps millions—who know and love the music of Vernon Duke, although many may not immediately identify him as the composer of “Taking a Chance on Love,” “Autumn in New York,” “I Can't Get Started with You” (the great Bunny Berigan hit) or “April in Paris,” probably the most unforgettable of his many hit songs.

But his books, while bemoaning the lack of appreciation of Dukelsky's music and seeking to glorify Duke, were certainly written by V.D., the appellation given to the

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author by Igor Stravinsky. The two books by Duke are: *Passport to Paris: An Autobiography* (Little, Brown, 1955, 502 pp.) and *Listen Here! A Critical Essay on Music Depreciation* (Ivan Obolensky, Inc., 1963, 406 pp.).

W.C. Fields is generally credited with the truism that “no man who hates dogs and small children can be all bad.” So, too, no man who could devastate the later Igor Stra-

vinsky and his Svengali, Robert Craft, as V.D. did, can be all wrong. But V.D.'s denigration of this infamous duo is only part of his attack on his rivals (e.g. Constant Lambert), his critics (e.g. Virgil Thomson), his patrons (e.g. Serge Koussevitzky), and his enemies (e.g. Olga Koussevitzky, among others) in the best tradition of “never get mad, just get even.”

*Listen Here!* is not written in the vein of Henry Pleasants' *The Agony of Modern Music* (Simon & Schuster, 1955), for V.D. finds much more to recommend in some modern classical music, especially that of Dukelsky. Rather, it seems to take the form of an attack on many in the field of modern music but with no real underlying rationale or philosophy to give such attacks consistency or clarity of purpose.

Written in a much more vehement style than Constant Lambert's *Music Ho!* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), it is not nearly as entertaining as Lambert's book and is merely pseudo-sophisticated by comparison. Yet V.D. avoids many of the wrong-headed judgements which date Lambert's book so badly. However, the purpose and intent of Lambert's work are clear throughout, while V.D. seems to flay about in all directions with little rhyme or reason, except to bring down Dukelsky's rivals, real or imaginary.

In spite of his disdain for Lambert, a one-time rival for Diaghilev's favors (musical, not sexual, in either case), Dukelsky subtitled his book *A Critical Essay on Music Depreciation*, not unlike Lambert's subtitle, *A Study of Music in Decline*. V.D.'s attack on Stravinsky and Craft differs from Lambert's criticism of Stravinsky only in that there was no Craft on the scene when Lambert wrote his book in the early thirties. However, V.D. never comes close to the wit of Lambert, who wrote of Diaghilev's relations with Dukelsky, Sauguet and others: “They were merely the gunmen, executing the commands of their Capone, who, like all great gangsters, never touched firearms himself.”

## *Passport to Paris* leaves one awestruck at the ability of the author to make himself obnoxious to a degree not usually achieved by mere mortal man or woman.

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*Passport to Paris*, the autobiography of first Dukelsky, then Duke and finally of both, leaves one awestruck at the ability of the author to make himself in his early years obnoxious to a degree not usually achieved by mere mortal man or woman. But that is as nothing compared to the wonderment of the author who just cannot understand why his behavior is not accepted willingly and wholeheartedly by all of those whom he insulted in his own inimitable ways. He *really* does seem puzzled that Natalie and Olga Koussevitzky did not love him all the more for his ability to denigrate almost everyone they knew other than Dukelsky.

V.D.'s breach with Koussevitzky is blamed on many who are not named and others who are only suggested. In the autobiography, Dukelsky mentions Koussevitzky's third wife, Olga, and a female friend of hers by name. But in his later book, the name of Olga's friend is omitted. One gets the feeling that Aaron Copland has a role to play, but it is only a feeling, and clearly Dukelsky is of at least two minds about Copland.

But what confounds this reader is V.D.'s intimation that his music failed of acceptance with Charles Munch because Munch was under the influence of the same cabal which had turned Koussevitzky against him. If this was neither imagination nor paranoia, then V.D. would have done better to have stated his case rather than merely intimate it.

V.D. is hard on conductors, especially any who refused to perform his works. One who escaped mention and, hence, attack was Sir Adrian Boult. Apparently V.D. had never read Boult's comments after hearing Koussevitzky and Piatigorsky perform Dukelsky's Cello Concerto, which Boult found "a thankless work...overscored and overplayed by the orchestra." But for a good part of his classical career, V.D. was very close to Koussevitzky, who not only performed Dukelsky's music but propagandized it as well—even recommending it to Stokowski for performance in Philadelphia. Further, Koussevitzky performed Dukelsky's music in New York City, a real mark of approval by the conductor.

Dukelsky came from the Soviet Union under circumstances not unlike those of the Koussevitzkys. Hence, there was a commonality of language, culture and the like on which a kind of friendship, both personal (given the age differential) and professional was built in Paris and Boston.

Dukelsky may never have been as close to Koussevitzky as he liked to think, but for a time he admired the conductor as fervently as Duke worshipped Gershwin. As a result, we do get some feeling for how the Koussevitzkys lived, worked and entertained from Dukelsky's descriptions of his visits with the conductor and his second wife who, it must be admitted, remains as enigmatic as ever even after any number of Dukelsky visits.

The influence of Natalie Koussevitzky on her husband has never been given adequate consideration; rather the emphasis has always been on her money. But there seems to have been far more to their relationship than a mere marriage for money by the conductor. While Dukelsky gives us more of a picture than others have done, even he can hardly be considered definitive regarding Natalie. As to Olga Koussevitzky, Dukelsky, while not nearly as outspoken about her as he is about others, makes his feelings eminently clear. There was no love lost between Vladimir and Olga for which there appear to have been good reasons on both sides. Yet under the circumstances Dukelsky could only be the loser—and he was!

Eventually Dukelsky and Koussevitzky parted. Whether this was due to baleful feminine influences on the conductor, Koussevitzky's realization that Dukelsky's music was not as earth-shaking as he had originally felt, the influences of other composers, or the successes of Vernon Duke on the musical stage, we shall probably never know. Certainly Dukelsky is neither an impartial witness nor a wholly trustworthy one in this matter.

In the final analysis Dukelsky became—and will probably always remain—Vernon Duke. His songs for the musical stage will keep his name alive as long as those of Kern, Gershwin, Porter, Rodgers, Berlin, Youmans and the others of America's elite of the musical theater. It was not the fate that he sought, and he could be bitter about it. But many a greater or finer composer of classical music has gone into limbo, so his fame as Duke is no small achievement.

As for V.D., read his two books—not just one, but both! They may infuriate you, amuse you or leave you scratching your head in wonderment over the author, but they are well worth the reading, and they do add to the all-too-little we have on the man who was Serge Koussevitzky.

Kenneth DeKay

## KOUSSEVITZKY'S RECORDINGS

When Koussevitzky conducted the music of Haydn and Mozart, he adhered to the principle of a reduced orchestra. This chamber concept allowed for greater clarity of the various sections and also prevented the hefty strings from dominating.

While renowned for outstanding romantic and modern era performances, Koussevitzky was able to recreate the sound of the classical works. The recordings offer only a small portion of his repertoire.<sup>1</sup> It is unfortunate that Koussevitzky did not record more of the Haydn and Mozart symphonies; from the evidence on discs he seemed to be in sympathy with these masters.

The majority of the Mozart symphonies (#'s 26, 29, 34, & 39) were transcribed in Symphony Hall, and its venerable acoustics project the ensemble onto wax. There is some reverberation, but it is not too serious; the small BSO group, for the most part, was extremely well recorded for the time. The Tanglewood Theater-Concert Hall acoustics (#'s 33 & 36) are less echoy than Symphony Hall, and the textures are even clearer, especially those of the *Linz* Symphony. The London recording locale of Queen's Hall was admirably suited for the version of #40 with Beecham's orchestra.

The overtures to *La Clemenza di Tito*, *Idomeneo*, and *The Impresario* were taped in the Concert Hall on August 17, 1949. Each piece is played with close attention to dramatic and lyrical elements. In short, these are excellent, lively statements of the three overtures. They were originally issued as fillers for larger works: *Clemenza* for Bach's *Brandenburg* #1 (RCA M-1362); *Idomeneo* for Mozart's Symphony #33 (M-1369); and *Impresario* for Tchaikovsky's *Serenade for Strings* (M-1346). The *Clemenza* and *Impresario* Overtures were issued together on a 10" LP (LRM-7021).

The symphonies were equally accomplished, although listeners unfamiliar with Koussevitzky's unique methods may find certain allegros a bit too fast for comfort and the adagios overslow. Otherwise, his readings are in their own way as distinguished as his contemporaries in this literature.

Symphony #26 (2/7/46, 11-9363) moves lightly and, in the middle, section poignantly. Symphony #29 (12/22/37, M-795; originally issued together with Symphony #34) is marked by jaunty rhythms; the first movement especially bounces along at quite a clip! The slow movement is nicely done with the right expression.

Symphony #33 (8/15/46) is very fine, with an adagio rather than the designated andante. Symphony #34 (3/18-19/40; among the last recordings made before the four year ban), aside from an impetuous opening (I think that it should be more measured), is a model reading. The last movement is absolutely stunning. For a while Symphonies 26, 29 & 34 were available on a Camden reissue (CAL-160) fairly faithful in sound to the originals.

Symphony #36, *Linz* (8/16/49, M-1354), benefits from an eloquent introduction, then moves at a pace equal to cut time instead of common time that other conductors assume. The rest of this symphony is wonderfully well done, with an especially winged finale.

The Symphony #39 (1/3/45, M-1379), the best of all the symphony readings, has a very moving slow movement; Koussevitzky discovered more underlying tragedy within the music. Many conductors could learn from this performance—their conceptions seem to reflect a kind of "jet-set" rush that is at odds with Mozart. Symphonies #36 & 39 were reissued on LP (LM-1141) during the early '50s.

The G minor Symphony #40 (9/34, M-293) first movement contains some tempo shifts; obviously Koussevitzky had some original ideas here. The familiar first theme is a bit slow at the start, then the London Philharmonic moves into strict time. It is most refreshing to hear this different approach to a well-known work. One appreciates the music anew through this provocative interpreter.

Two other instrumental works deserve comment: the *Serenade for Winds* (K. 361) and *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*. The former was recorded at the end of the 1947 Tanglewood season (M-1303). This is an unusual recording, mainly because it presents only the solo BSO wind players under Koussevitzky's direction. It is beautifully

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One appreciates the music anew through this provocative interpreter.

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played (no small coincidence that the session took place on August 15, the same day that Koussevitzky married Olga Naumov). The only quibble is that the first trio of the second movement is omitted, perhaps in order to fit the movement on a single, 78 rpm side. Movements 4 & 5 are excluded to make for a shorter serenade. This version was available in the early '50s on LP (LM-1077).

*Nachtmusik* was done at Koussevitzky's final recording session at Tanglewood (8/15/50, M-1451). Another sterling portrait of the BSO strings, the performance is excellent. For some reason, the last movement proceeds at a furious pace; indeed the players sound overdriven here. After the poised preceding movements, this abrupt change is more than a little startling! Otherwise a fresh rendition of a perennial masterpiece. It was coupled for some time in the '50s with Haydn's *Oxford* Symphony (LM-1102).



# Koussevitzky seemed to have a real rapport with Haydn. Everything flows and moves so naturally that composer and conductor are of one mind.

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[One other Mozart recording was issued during the conductor's lifetime: a lovely reading of the aria "Ach, Ich fühls" from *The Magic Flute* with soprano Dorothy Maynor. Made on November 6, 1939, it was originally issued on a single 78 side (#15826) along with "O Sleep, Why Dost Thou Leave Me?" from *Handel's Semele*. Also recorded (on August 15, 1946), but never published, was a tantalizing fragment: the *Adagio* from the *String Quintet in G, K. 516*.—Ed.]

The Haydn records are marvelous—in this case only three symphonies were transcribed, plus the last movement of #88. Koussevitzky seemed to have a real rapport with Haydn and in contrast to the critical remarks above in reference to certain Mozart works, the Haydn group is free of such tempo problems. Everything flows and moves so naturally that composer and conductor are of one mind.

The *Symphony #92, Oxford* (M-1454), dates from the penultimate session at Tanglewood, excellent in sound and a glorious performance. The symphony appeared on the "Tanglewood on Parade" program of August 11, 1950, with Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* (narrated by Eleanor Roosevelt) and the Dvorák *New World*.

The *Surprise Symphony* (#94) is excellent in both versions (4/22-24/29, M-55; 11/5/46, M-1155). In fact, they are virtually identical interpretations; nonetheless both offer refreshing views of an old warhorse. The later set was reissued on LP by itself on a 10" (LM-28) and on a regular 12" (LVT-1044, coupled with Munch's *London Symphony*).

One of the most widely distributed of all the Koussevitzky recordings was the *Symphony #102* (12/29/36, M-529). This work also appeared on the first BSO program in 1881 and Sir George Henschel, conductor at the time, returned to direct the first concert of the 50th season. Koussevitzky made this particular Haydn symphony his own. There is not much I can add to this justly famous reading other than the fact that after more than 50 years it remains a unique achievement. Though the dynamic range is somewhat limited by today's standards, all sections come through clearly, and Koussevitzky's sublime reading is permanently preserved. One critic said that it would be a long time before such a performance of this symphony would be heard again.<sup>2</sup> The reading was incomparable then, and so it remains.

The Wagner discs are also small in number, but choice. Here remarkable drama as well as lyrical beauty are much in evidence. Koussevitzky regularly played the operatic

excerpts (including the first act of *Die Walküre*, which was a tremendous success in late 1933, according to Warren Storey Smith of the *Boston Post*).

It was not until the spring of 1946 that he began to record Wagner: the "Good Friday Spell" music from *Parsifal* (4/19/46, M-1198; originally issued with the *Prelude* below) was scheduled for the same day as the Khachaturian *Piano Concerto*. Due to the unqualified success of that session, the Wagner came out very well indeed.

The *Parsifal Prelude* followed a year later (4/4/47), on the same day as the Schubert *Fifth Symphony*. All the color and majesty of the score are captured in a stunning version. Along with the *Parsifal Prelude* (4/4/47, 12-0958), Koussevitzky recorded the *Flying Dutchman Overture*. The opening fury is resplendent, and the middle pastoral sings as it should.

The *Lohengrin Prelude to Act I* (12-1326, 4/27/49) and the *Siegfried Idyll* (originally issued on 45's, WDM-1571, also 4/27/49) were recorded on tape, the first real high fidelity replicas of the BSO/Koussevitzky sound. The *Lohengrin* is as eloquent as the Toscanini versions, even a bit faster, but nonetheless makes its points, and the Holy Grail climax is overwhelming.

*Siegfried Idyll* represents a different Wagnerian aspect and it, too, gets a warm reading. One writer stated that Koussevitzky "caresses the music"<sup>3</sup>; it was reissued with Strauss's *Don Juan* on early LP (LM-1177) and, like so many discs, has not seen the light of day since. Certainly an all-Wagner disc with these excerpts would be most welcome and enlightening to a new generation of listeners.

Vincent C. Schwerin, Jr.

## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Information for this article derives from the booklet published by the Koussevitzky Recordings Association.

<sup>2</sup> W.J. Henderson, *New York Sun*, November 20, 1936.

<sup>3</sup> Motte, *New Guide to Long Playing Records*, 1955, Durrell: New York.

## BOOK REVIEW

Copland Since 1943, by Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis. St Martin's Press, New York, 1989. 463pp. \$29.95

What a pleasure it was to open this handsome volume and read its heartfelt dedication: "To Serge Koussevitzky, for his devotion to American music."

For those who are not fortunate enough to have encountered the authors' first volume (*Copland: 1900 Through 1942*), this combined autobiography/biography/history is somewhat unusual in form.

In her introduction and seven interludes, Vivian Perlis sets Copland's career into its historical context, discusses the impact of historical events on music and musicians, and provides a wealth of biographical information which the composer himself, for one reason or other, has omitted. Interspersed throughout the book are portions of fascinating interviews with Copland's colleagues and friends drawn from Yale University's Copland Oral Archive.

For his part, Copland authored nine chapters of reminiscences. The sources of this material are not always clear to the reader, although the Preface to this second volume does provide a few hints. As Perlis tells us, "Copland's material is drawn from interviews made for the Yale project, Oral History, American Music in 1975 and 1976, and from an extensive collection of earlier writings and lectures."

Later she gives us further insight into the process of transforming this material into book form: "When we drew on writings and speeches from earlier times, as we often had to, it was necessary for me to add missing lines or connective links. Our procedure was for him to read these sections out loud. He never failed to stop at what he had not written and ask, 'Did I say that?' I would answer, 'No, but how would you say it?' Then Copland would supply in his own words what had been missing."

The result is a pleasure to read from start to finish. The autobiographical chapters are written with the same directness and charm that characterize Copland's best music (not to mention his other books, such as the landmark *What to Listen for in Music*).

Perlis's interludes are always perceptive and serve as a welcome supplement to the composer's narrative. The interviews tell much of the story of the creation of such scores as *Appalachian Spring*, Copland's other career as a teacher of composition and champion of fellow composer's works, and even that dreadful day in the summer of 1949 when the unfortunate Copland accidentally killed a cow while driving through a thick fog near Tanglewood.

The period covered by this volume was a rich and fascinating one for both American music in general and Copland in particular. Of especial interest here are the impact of Joe McCarthy's witch-hunts on Copland, the compos-

er's discovery of the twelve-tone technique, the growth of his conducting career, the (still not fully explained) decline of his compositional output, and his eventual role as the elder statesman of American classical music.

One significant omission, though, is the history of the Alzheimer's Disease which has plagued Copland for the past several years. Perhaps the reason for this deficiency is the same as that given for Copland's reticence regarding the McCarthy era: "...he never wanted to deal with unpleasant situations at great length. He would say, 'Agonizing is not my thing!'" While Copland can certainly be forgiven for his failure to dwell on the unpleasant facts of life, one does feel compelled to fault Perlis for her failure to discuss this important subject and its impact on the composer.

Copland is also uncomfortable with the analysis of the technical aspects of his music. For example, his longest orchestral work, the Third Symphony, is dispatched in two brief paragraphs. Although pages of manuscripts and printed scores are occasionally reproduced, no specific musical examples are provided to help guide the reader. As Perlis tells us, "If asked about a particular piece in a more formal way, his answer was likely to be, 'I prefer to leave analysis to those who really know how to do it.'"

Often the "analysis" is followed by a recital of the subsequent performances of the work in question. While this procedure can be tedious, it does serve to forcefully remind us that Copland's newest works were played and played again by the major artists of our time, while the creations of most other contemporary composers are rarely heard.

The last two decades are, perhaps, less interesting than the other periods under consideration. While Copland may have pursued his conducting career with great enthusiasm, he was neither an inspired interpreter of the music of others nor the most persuasive conductor of his own music (Koussevitzky and Bernstein share that honor). The final chapters tend to focus on the when and where of Copland's conducting engagements, and this recital of dates and times is hardly as compelling as the genesis of his original works or his confrontation with Joe McCarthy.

These deficiencies aside, reading *Copland Since 1943* and its companion volume is rather like leafing through a carefully and lovingly prepared scrapbook with the composer and his friends looking over your shoulder and commenting as you turn its pages. For anyone with an interest in Copland or 20th century American music, these two books are highly recommended.

Tom Godell