

KOUSSEVITZKY

Recordings Society



Letter from the President

Earlier this year, I learned that Robert Stumpf, President of the Leopold Stokowski Society of America (LSSA), was going to disband that organization and cease publication of its excellent journal, *Maestrino*. Had it not been for the LSSA, there would be no Koussevitzky Recordings Society today. I first encountered a copy of *Maestrino* ten years ago and decided immediately that something similar had to be done for Koussevitzky. So I wrote to Bob, and he generously took the time to tell me how he'd created and organized the LSSA. Armed with his extremely helpful advice, I set to work. I had noticed that Leonard Bernstein was on the LSSA's Advisory Board, so I asked Bob how he'd arranged that. Again, he pointed me in the right direction. When a letter from Harry Kraut arrived a few weeks later informing me that Bernstein had accepted my invitation to join the KRS Advisory Board, I knew that our Society was a reality. Thus, we all owe Bob Stumpf and the LSSA our deepest gratitude.

With that in mind, I contacted Bob once again this past August to ask if he'd be willing to contribute Stokowski material to this Journal. He accepted immediately, and I'm glad to welcome him on board. Beginning with this issue, we'll devote several pages to articles from Bob and the other distinguished writers who have contributed to *Maestrino* over the years. In addition, copies of this Journal are being sent without charge to all current members of the LSSA. If you are one of them, welcome! If enough LSSA members join the Koussevitzky Recordings Society, we can expand the Stokowski section—possibly as early as next spring. Information about membership will be found on the back page. Bob's fascinating essay on recent Stokowski reissues and the philosophy of music begins on page 15.

Koussevitzky lives—on the Worldwide Web. If you know how to use the Web (and if you don't, just ask the nearest 10 year old), here's the address: <http://www.webcom.com/~music/guide/society/krs/krstop.html>. There you'll find a biography of Koussevitzky, photographs of the conductor, highlights from recent Koussevitzky Society interviews, a complete list of back issues and instructions for ordering them, information about the KRS, an updated list of available recordings, and brief reviews of the best Koussevitzky CDs. Future upgrades will include a complete discography, an annotated bibliography, more articles from earlier publications, and a preview of the next issue of this Journal. Our heartfelt thanks to Internet guru Dave Lampson for making this possible. Dave also moderates a fascinating classical music discussion list that you can join by sending an e-mail request to lampson@wco.com. In addition, Dave is an extremely knowledgeable record collector and critic. His article on the problem known as "CD bronzing"—which affects several Koussevitzky discs on Pearl—is on page 23.

More Koussevitzky compact discs are on the way. Mark Obert-Thorn reports: "I'm just finishing up two projects for Biddulph. The first is a two-disc Tchaikovsky set with Symphonies 4 (recorded in 1936), 5, 6, *Romeo & Juliet*, and the Waltz from the String Serenade (also from '36). The second showcases Koussevitzky and the BSO in three of their repertory specialties: Russian (*Khovantschina* Prelude, *Enchanted Lake*, *Battle of Kershenetz*, and *Dubinushka*), French (Fauré's *Pelléas* Suite), and American (Hanson 3rd Symphony). These should be out before the end of the year." RCA, as you may recall, used an unapproved take of side 9 in their release of the Tchaikovsky *Pathétique* several years back. As a result, there was a bad clinker in the middle of the finale caused by some out of tune brass. Mark assures me that he's found a useable copy of the originally issued take of side 9, though he cautions that "there is some noticeable distortion in loud passages in this side which is inherent in the master." Meanwhile, BSO Classics has announced plans to follow up their release of the Boston Symphony's earliest recordings with an all-Koussevitzky disc including the Berlioz *Roman Carnival* Overture, Corelli Suite, Tchaikovsky 5th Symphony, and Debussy *Afternoon of a Faun*.

Thanks to Yana Davis for the many tireless hours he spent helping prepare this issue of our Journal for publication.

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The Koussevitzky Symposium at Tanglewood

July 27, 1974

This transcript first appeared in the Boston Arts Review in January 1975, edited by Richard Burgin, Jr. It is reprinted here by permission of the editor. Our thanks to Richard Benson of New York City for calling this excellent publication to our attention—ED.

Participants: Thomas (Todd) Perry, Seiji Ozawa, Richard Burgin, Aaron Copland, Lukas Foss, and Leonard Bernstein

Thomas Perry: The distinguishing characteristic that brings us all together is that we all knew Koussevitzky; we all worked with Koussevitzky; and in our own way gained from him. We are the legatees. Mr. Copland is a composer, of course. Mr. Burgin was the Concert Master and Associate Conductor of the Boston Symphony for the entire time that Dr. Koussevitzky was its conductor. I can't imagine anyone more totally familiar and acquainted with his musical activities. Mr. Bernstein, excuse me, we'll just pass that. Mr. Foss, marvelous pianist, composer, conductor, and again one who drank at the well of Koussevitzky. Mr. Ozawa sums up what this is all about. He is the most complete example of what Serge Koussevitzky's heritage means.

Seiji Ozawa: I missed maestro Koussevitzky. All these gentlemen here, they knew him personally; but I never met him. But I feel like I know him because Lenny imitated him a thousand times when I was an assistant to Lenny. Lenny took me as an assistant—that was my first job in my life, in my career. The first time I was paid was when I became Lenny's assistant in the New York Philharmonic, and I heard many times about Koussevitzky, Koussevitzky, Koussevitzky. Then I heard the recording of his *La Mer*. So I feel very close. And, of course, Madame Koussevitzky made arrangements for me to come to maestro Munch, who is like my papa in music.

Fourteen years ago I came to Tanglewood for the first time as a student; it was my first time in America, too. If there had been no Tanglewood, if there had been no Koussevitzky, I don't think I ever could have come to this country; and I probably would have ended up with a little orchestra in Japan or as a musical director for a countryside orchestra. It's true! I came here as a student, and everything starts from here. When they gave me the Koussevitzky Prize, Mr. Bernstein asked me to come for an interview. This was the biggest interview in my life, and it was in West Berlin. West Berlin...crazy place. That was after the summer I came to Tanglewood, 1960. Lenny asked me very straight questions including "Are you a good musician?" What can you answer? But I had the guts to say, "Yes, I am a good musician." Since then many things have happened in my life, but I always go back to that beginning.

Music festivals started in Europe and Russia, but all those festivals were very intimate and in small towns. But Tanglewood is absolutely right for America because so many people can come and be very relaxed and just hear music. Many European festivals have great performers and great names, but they don't have this nature with lots of people who come to share music. Maestro Koussevitzky had that idea when he came to Boston to become the musical director, and he made that dream real. I think that is marvelous and fantastic for America.

PERRY: Mr. Burgin is the one who knew Koussevitzky perhaps longer and musically more intensely than any of us, and I ask Mr. Burgin about any reminiscences he'd like to share with us.

Richard Burgin: It was 1922 when I first came in contact with Serge Koussevitzky on a person-to-person basis. About twelve years before that happened, I was a student at the

Petrograd Conservatory. My colleagues and I were fully aware of him as a great artist on the double bass and as a conductor of his own orchestra. We students always looked forward to the concerts which were given under his leadership or under those whom he invited to conduct the orchestra. We always looked forward to those concerts because of the excellence of the orchestra which he himself created. It was known as the Koussevitzky Orchestra. It was originally founded in Moscow, but they had a series of concerts in Petrograd. They were always interesting programs and, at that time, very avant-garde. I think I first heard works by Debussy, Stravinsky, and Scriabin in those concerts. They were always Koussevitzky's favorite composers.

I met him in Paris in the spring of 1922. I took a vacation and went to Europe to spend the summer after my second season in Boston. Of course, I stopped in Paris and happened to be present at a concert given under Koussevitzky's leadership of an orchestra composed of French musicians. I saw him after the concert, introduced myself, and was immediately invited to come to his house the very next day—which I did. There was something about Serge Koussevitzky; as soon as you shook hands with him you felt completely at ease; there was some charisma about him that made you feel comfortable.

I enjoyed a conversation with him lasting almost two hours in which I gave him information about musical life in the United States. He asked me to come again a couple of days later, and I did so. When I left Paris, I carried with me a wonderful feeling of having spent a few hours with a person who was warmhearted, who made you feel at ease, who was what we call a grand seigneur. He had also told me that he probably would come to Paris in the summer, and that I should be sure to see him again.

In April of 1923, Mr. Monteux told me that he was leaving Boston. It was not yet officially announced. I expressed my sincere regrets and asked him, naturally, who his successor would be. He told me that he was not at liberty to tell me the name, but to rest assured because it was somebody I knew and somebody I had seen last year. I drew the proper inferences; and when I went to Paris, I didn't need an invitation from Serge Koussevitzky. I just went straight to him. Again he received me warmly. He asked me more questions. I had to go into all kinds of details about the orchestra. Still, he didn't tell me that he was coming as the next conductor. It was not until the next day that he finally broke down and said "Yes, I will be your next conductor."

From then on my association with him was based on being with him every single day. And not only in our professional work, but also in his home. I almost became a member of the family. I became very attached to him as a person; I admired him for certain traits which, to me, were very important. He was a person of great integrity. He was very tolerant—with the exception of one thing. He couldn't stand a lackadaisical attitude towards music. That really rubbed him the wrong way. Otherwise, he was very sympathetic to the problems of the musicians with whom he dealt. I admired him as an artist because of his enthusiasm, his involvement with the work he was doing.

Because of his attitude toward performing musical works, Serge Koussevitzky was a person who was very deeply affected by music. He became part of the composition he had to conduct or perform. He absorbed the composition, and perhaps the composition absorbed him. Therefore, he probably felt towards the composition just like he felt towards the orchestra. He identified himself with the orchestra and called it "my orchestra". It was not the Boston Symphony Orchestra; it was his orchestra. I think that he felt that way about music that he performed too. So whether he performed the *Pathétique* or the *Romantic*, it was his piece. Whether he performed the

Ninth by Mahler or the Ninth by Beethoven, it was still his piece. I think that was one of his strong points, and because he carried a great conviction about the performance, he communicated that to the listening audience.

I wanted to mention an anecdote. After Koussevitzky performed a particular work of a contemporary composer, the compatriots of the composer, who was from Europe, surrounded the composer and asked him how he liked it. He said "Well maybe it wasn't exactly what I intended, but it was good. It was very good." I think that really counts. If it's very good, it really doesn't matter if it's a little different. Perhaps it should be a little different; otherwise, life would be too monotonous.

I personally consider it a great privilege that I had the opportunity to work with this man, who really was capable of inspiring people, who had vision of which this, Tanglewood, is one example—and who had the ability to realize what he envisioned. I was part of his activity. I am very happy about that and very proud of it.

Perry: Mr. Copland, would you like to give a recollection?

Aaron Copland: It's rather difficult to choose what aspect of Dr. Koussevitzky one might talk about, but obviously, the one I know best is the relationship he had with the contemporary composers of his time. That was something really special. I've known many conductors in my life. I've never known anyone among them who had so passionate an interest in the unplayed work, the new work that was going to show the way to the future, as Serge Koussevitzky had. When he was in Paris, he was already involved in introducing new works to that public—Scriabin's, Ravel's, and, of course, Debussy's works. But he brought with him to America a sense that we hadn't yet created a school of composers such as the French and Germans had. America was really virgin territory. His passionate interest in developing that virgin territory simply changed the entire scene.

It wasn't like having one of your works played for the first time by just anybody. Especially in my own case, when Dr. Koussevitzky told me he was going to play one of my new pieces, that meant I would go to Boston from New York and live in his house. Every day, every evening, we would sit together for several hours going over the piece, talking about the difficulties or the easy parts and about what I had done wrong or what might be bettered. We lived the thing together, and there was nothing at all casual about what was going to happen at the Boston Symphony that week. The whole week in his mind was planned in relation to the new piece. The other works on that same program were chosen so that he wouldn't have to spend much time on them. They'd be works familiar to the orchestra so that he'd have plenty of time to practice your new piece.

This attitude of his really made one feel that he, in his bottom soul, would have loved to have been a composer himself. And his interest in other composers was simply expressing the side of his musical personality which had been frustrated. Since fate decided that he was going to be a great conductor, he took out, so to speak, his interest in composition by devoting a major portion of his life to younger composers. Now that particular scene in the United States was exactly what we needed at the time it happened. I cannot think of another example—even of men like Walter Damrosch, who did quite a bit in the introducing of new music. I cannot think of any parallel situation where the new music of one's time was introduced with such passion and enthusiasm. All American composers, whether played by him or not, should be grateful for what he did in the introduction of new music. He believed in it himself, not only as a conductor, but as an educator and as a man who had in his hands, you might say, the future of music. This attitude really inspired everything that he did; it gave meaning to everything that he did. When he introduced a new piece it wasn't only this one new piece that he was introducing, but he was help-

ing to create the future of new music in our country.

I can remember discussions with him about, well, the way I had notated something. He might say, "Oh, I think if you notated it this way, the orchestra would find it easier to play." Or he might have found that one of the sections I wrote was too short or too long, but however he found it, I used to consider it. I didn't always follow his advice, but I always gave it serious consideration because I knew that he had the best interests of the piece and of my own work at heart.

Finally, I can say that he expressed this everlasting interest in new music in the establishment of his own Koussevitzky Music Foundation. Up to this time, and I hope continuously in the future, the Foundation gives commissions to composers to write works especially for the Foundation and for performance. I hope his work will go on into the far-distant future and that it will keep his name alive to future generations.

we don't need. Yet, Todd was very eloquent when he invited me up. He said we must talk about his heritage.

Now what does that really mean? Heritage? Obviously, one cannot imitate a great man. His greatness lies in his originality, and nobody needs a second-hand Koussevitzky. It would be impossible to find; it would be bad if we found it. Maybe that's what Toscanini had in mind when he said, "What else is tradition but the last bad performance?" I think the Boston Symphony was wise in not looking for another Koussevitzky, because there would not be anyone, certainly there is not anyone on this panel, who is willing to devote his life to Tanglewood the way that man did. Everybody on this panel has other things to do.

Now Koussevitzky was a great teacher, and, in a sense, the tragedy of a great founding father is that the young he rears will not exactly go on where he leaves off. I realized even while I studied with him that I was

Though he would notice, I think, a definite improvement in the lunches.

But to wear the Koussevitzky suit—who can do that? Maybe the man on my right (Bernstein) can wear his suit and does wear his suit better than anyone else. And certainly Lenny has, just by nature, some of that warmth and gala-lovingness that Koussevitzky did have. That's possible. But to wear Koussevitzky's suit? I'm using that metaphor advisedly because he did give me his suits. There was one that I particularly loved. He called it his ambassador. He had names for all those suits. And when he wore them out, which was after the fifth or sixth time he wore them, he would pass them on to me—even try them out, study how I looked, and say, "You feel reech now, don't you?" But anyway, here I am realizing that it is impossible to wear his suits. No one can do that. He was an original. There will never be another Koussevitzky.

But we do have Tanglewood, and we do have the Koussevitzky Music Foundation. I only wish perhaps that Tanglewood could actually reflect the mainstream of musical thought the way I fancy it once did. I may be wrong; but when I was seventeen, eighteen years old, I did feel that the mainstream of music was right here. Of course, now there are many other distinguished summer places and schools, but in those days Tanglewood was unique, and I had the feeling that Tanglewood was where the seat of intellectual thought was. I do feel that if he came around he might say, "Well, I think maybe a little change in programming and a little this or that would have to be different, but we must not become provincial. We must not become self-pleased and satisfied and complacent—complacent about things the way they are." At the same time, I also know that he would be delighted that we are all here to commemorate and to reminisce and to talk about him with the love and respect that one only has for the great.

Perry: I love the scene of his trying out his suits on you. I like that very much. Leonard, will you add to this?

*"He was an original.
There will never be another
Koussevitzky."*

Perry: Mr. Foss.

Lukas Foss: When I flew up this morning from New York in that lovely, little twin-engine plane that carries you right from Kennedy to Pittsfield, I was suddenly saying to myself, "Why on earth am I coming to this sort of thing?" I'll tell you why I had misgivings. Whenever we eulogize someone who has died, a great man, it is unavoidable that, in a sense we turn this into a form of self-aggrandizement or self-appreciation. It's almost as if we bathed in his glory, as if we were saying, "Well, I was around. He helped me. He was my teacher. Look at me." That quality, I think,

about something else. I have no idea what he would say if he heard my music now, if he saw me making music now. I also studied that memorable summer—that first one, I was seventeen years old—with Paul Hindemith. And, in that case, many years later I did proudly come with what I thought was my best work to date—the *Time Cycle*—and I showed it to Paul Hindemith, my Tanglewood teacher of composition. He looked at it, and he said, "Somesing hass gone wrong!" It's quite possible that Koussevitzky would say the same about Tanglewood, but I think he would be pleased. I'm sure he would, because here it is, the way he built it.

Leonard Bernstein: Well my dear friends, I've been talking about Koussy—as we always called him when we were his pupils—so much this week that there's almost nothing left to say. I feel I'm repeating myself. I brought along a yellow pad thinking I would get all kinds of ideas; and, of course, everybody stole my ideas. Todd very sweetly left me for last, and that's a double-edged sword. Because you can pick up ideas from your colleagues; but, at the same time, they can rob you of the ones you had. Whenever I have nothing written down on a yellow pad except doodles, I find that the only way out is to write a poem. So I wrote a poem, a very long poem of two lines which says—"Your disciples are loyal and staunch/Happy Birthday Sergei Alex-aunch."

Of course yesterday was his birthday, and I was full of his spirit all day. But one thing struck me yesterday, and Lukas touched on it when he used the word 'complacent'. The Koussevitzky dream, the much spoken of dream which is symbolized and represented in a most tangible way by this glorious place, is not fully realized by any means. It is in the nature of a vital vision that it not ever be realized. Complacency is death. When that sets in, then Sergei Alex-aunch's vision will have died. The way it can be kept alive, the only way, is to keep developing it, keep seeing it through.

For example, one of his original ideas was to have a Berkshire Music Center Orchestra, a student orchestra which was truly international, not just American. That was one of the first things I ever heard him say. This was not possible in that great decade between 1940 and 1950 when he was reigning here, because of a certain war and because of certain post-war conditions which made travel difficult and international relations a bit strained. This week I found myself conducting a student orchestra called the World Youth Orchestra, and we gave a concert yesterday afternoon in celebration of his birthday. This ought to be the Berkshire Music Center Orchestra; this is suddenly, by happenstance, one of those fulfill-

Leonard Bernstein came to Tanglewood the year it was created. Nothing quite like it had ever existed before. For a young musician, it must have seemed like a paradise itself: inspired teachers, eager students, everyone awash in music and thriving in the idyllic natural setting.

Bernstein's indelible experience at Tanglewood gave him what his mentor there, Serge Koussevitzky, liked to call in his thick Russian accent "the central line", meaning the thread that pulls a life work together. Surely, Leonard Bernstein's "central line" was to pass onto younger generations the joy of making great music.

In his later years, Bernstein had the opportunity to help create two institutions modeled on his beloved Tanglewood: the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival in Germany, and, in his final year, the Pacific Musical Festival in Sapporo, Japan. His grown children had a nickname for him: Lenny Tangleseed. Had he lived on, he undoubtedly would have continued planting new Tanglewoods all around the world.

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ments of his original vision. It wasn't easy to do, but there were representatives of twenty-five different countries in the orchestra. Now there's something to work for. It's difficult; it's expensive; it's complicated; its administratively very demanding—but it can be done. That's something I would like to see happen here, because he would have liked to have seen it happen. Tanglewood was not to be parochial, provincial, ever, even if the province was as large as the United States of America. It had to be international. That was the big aura that surrounded this dream. He was very nationalistic in other ways: he was very Russian. As Aaron has beautifully put it, he was very nationalistic about the growth and development of American Music. He became almost more American than we Americans in his passion for seeing American music develop. But in spite of all these various nationalisms, he was a universal man if I ever met one. And there was no part of the world that he did not want to see incorporated somehow or other into this dream which is Tanglewood.

He also said that at this place there would come the great thinkers of the world to stimulate and provoke the young and to disseminate new ideas. We have marvelous thinkers here, but they're musicians mainly. Something else I think that Tanglewood still has to do is to bring in thinkers who are related to the arts but not necessarily artists—philosophers and writers, particularly poets, who can flesh out the purely musical activities of Tanglewood. I'm perfectly aware, having been a student here since it was first founded, that it takes all the time you have and then some to get the musical work done.

In those days, I don't think we ever slept an hour. We worked twenty-four hours a day and loved it. But there is always time for that extra injection of a non-musical idea, of what is apparently a non-musical idea which immediately ties up in an interdisciplinary way. That was a very essential part of his vision, and it has not yet quite happened.

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Recent Koussevitzky Compact Discs

Biddulph WHL 019. The complete double bass recordings, with BEETHOVEN: Symphony #6; STRAUSS: *Vienna Blood & Voices of Spring*.

Nearly two months before his first recording with the Boston Symphony (Stravinsky's *Petrouchka* in November 1928), Serge Koussevitzky visited Victor's Camden, New Jersey studios. Joined by pianist Bernard Zighera, he recorded six selections with his trusty Amati bass. However, the finicky maestro was not satisfied. One year later, joined this time by Pierre Luboshutz, he tried again. The fruit of this session was issued by RCA soon after. As occasionally happened in those bygone days, the master disc of one item—Koussevitzky's transcription of the Largo from a Violin Sonata by Eccles—became damaged and had to be replaced. In a note accompanying this new disc, Mark Obert-Thorn (who prepared these splendid transfers) explains that "sometime during the mid-1930s, the 1928 take of this selection was substituted on Victor 7159, however the label crediting Luboshutz was never changed"—even years later when it eventually appeared on LP (LCT 1145).

Thanks to Biddulph we have a fascinating opportunity to compare both versions of the Largo for the first time in nearly sixty years. The playing on the earlier recording may not be technically perfect, but Koussevitzky's ardent interpretation speaks directly to the heart and builds to a heroic conclusion. The 1929 disc is far noisier and the sound is not as clearly focussed. Koussevitzky's playing is more polished than in the previous year, and his seamless phrasing allows the music to flow in one grand, unbroken line. Despite the beauty of this intimate reading, I prefer the personality and passion of the first take. The remaining double bass selections (Laska's *Wiegenlied*, Beethoven's Minuet in G, and three miscellaneous Koussevitzky compositions) are all beautifully played and sensitively interpreted. No one—not even Gary Karr performing on Koussevitzky's own instrument—can approach the composer's unique authority and command of his own music, which in his hands alone suddenly seems equal in stature to Rachmaninov's greatest miniatures. All double bass players, from beginners to orchestral principals, should hear and study these astounding recordings. They are models of tonal beauty and phrasing that will never be surpassed.

The disc is appropriately filled out with orchestral recordings that Koussevitzky made in Boston in 1928. After conducting Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony, Sir Thomas Beecham once quipped that he "couldn't stand the country any longer". He might have changed his tune if he'd heard this performance. Indeed, Koussevitzky's bracing, no-nonsense approach to this often over-sentimentalized work is the only one that bears comparison with Hermann Scherchen's or Paul Paray's, though

the Russian *is* more gentle and less driven than either of his colleagues. Somehow this sparkling performance never made it to LP, so it is doubly welcome in CD format. I have written before of the magnificent polish, tonal sheen, and discipline of the late 1920s Boston Symphony. This glorious *Pastoral* is yet another example.

Biddulph's captivating program concludes with delightful, if hardly idiomatic readings of two popular Strauss waltzes in abridged versions. Others may enjoy the liberal doses of whipped cream heaped upon these works by generations of Viennese conductors, but I prefer Koussevitzky's clarity and directness.

Pearl GEMM CD 9090. RAVEL: *Daphnis & Chloe* Suite #2, *Mother Goose* Suite; DEBUSSY: *Danse, La Mer*; SATIE: *Gymnopedie* #1; FAURÉ: *Elegie*.

The primary attraction of this disc is Koussevitzky's colorful, dynamic, and thrilling *La Mer*. Mark Obert-Thorn has obtained an amazing dynamic range and presence from the original 78s that easily surpasses any previous transfer. As with the double bass recordings above, the earlier takes sound better: The 'Play of the Waves' (recorded in 1938) almost seems like a product of the early LP era, while the outer movements—recorded the following year—are not nearly as clean or realistic. As an interpretation, only Pierre Monteux's Boston Symphony recording makes an equally compelling, though distinctly different, case for Debussy's elusive masterpiece.

Pearl's program holds other delights as well, including a vividly characterized *Mother Goose* and a haunting Fauré *Elegie* that gives principal cellist Jean Bedetti a rare opportunity to show off his golden tone and unique sensitivity to the music. Indeed, my only regret is that Koussevitzky didn't make more recordings of solo repertory with his outstanding principal players. Koussevitzky's 1947 *Mother Goose* boasts more modern sonics, but the version heard here (from 1930) has a charm and warmth that the conductor couldn't quite recapture 17 years later.

Koussevitzky flies through Debussy's delicate little *Danse* at top speed, perhaps in order to jam it onto a single 78 rpm side. Although madly driven, the result *is* undeniably thrilling. On the other hand, even Robert Cowan (whose excellent notes accompany this collection) has reservations about Koussevitzky's 1928 *Daphnis*: "(His) earliest commercial recording is noticeably broader than its successors and less prone to spontaneous caprice." Indeed, it pales by comparison with the vitality of the 1944 remake, now readily available from RCA (61392). Either version, however, is preferable to any modern recording.

RCA 61657. PROKOFIEV: Symphony #1, Symphony #5, *Buffoon* finale, *Romeo & Juliet* Suite #2 (excerpts).

No conductor knew Serge Prokofiev or his music more intimately than Koussevitzky. Their friendship began in 1913 and continued until Stalin's Iron Curtain finally made it impossible for them to keep in touch. Koussevitzky recorded more of Prokofiev's music than that of any other 20th century composer, and the selections here (dating from 1945-47) are representative of his best work on his friend's behalf.

The tantalizing ballet excerpts will leave you wishing that Koussevitzky had made complete recordings of both scores. His high spirited and wonderfully clangorous *Buffoon* finale makes even a fine stereo recording like Walter Susskind's (recently reissued by Everest) seem tame by comparison. Koussevitzky successfully condenses the tragedy of *Romeo & Juliet* into four heartbreaking episodes to which he brings extraordinary warmth, character, and intensity. On records, only Karel Ancerl scaled similar emotional heights, but his Czech Philharmonic couldn't match either the refinement or brilliance of the Boston Symphony.

Prokofiev once remarked that Koussevitzky's recording of his Fifth Symphony was the best he'd ever heard. I doubt that he would feel any differently today. In spite of the many conductors who have essayed this work in the years since this monumental recording was issued, no one has yet approached the epic grandeur or tragic depth of Koussevitzky's interpretation. Tempos—especially in the first two movements—are significantly faster than today's norm. Vladimir Ashkenazy, for example, takes two minutes longer to work his way through the opening *andante*, and he sounds hopelessly shallow and episodic next to Koussevitzky. The brisk pacing of the Koussevitzky never allows the music to relax for long, particularly the volatile *adagio*, which forms the emotional heart of this great masterwork.

Koussevitzky also zips through the beloved *Classical* Symphony, though I don't think that approach works nearly as well with this more delicate score. The ensemble playing is phenomenal, but Koussevitzky treats this lighthearted romp far too seriously. Although the sound is primitive and the tempos are just as brisk, Koussevitzky's 1929 recording of the *Classical* (available on Pearl GEMM 9487) is warmer and more gently playful.

Despite the dynamic range compression inherent in the original 78 rpm discs, RCA's transfers have a depth, presence, and clarity that rivals many modern releases. Unfortunately a loud, annoying whine intrudes for over half a minute in the midst of the Fifth's sublime *adagio*, and a whistle is audible in the background toward the end of the opening movement of the *Classical*. Don't,

however, allow these minor distractions keep you from obtaining this magnificent disc. Booklet notes are by yours truly.

Biddulph WHL 029-30 (two CDs). Koussevitzky's complete HMV recordings. MOZART: Symphony #40; BEETHOVEN: Symphonies 3 & 5; HAYDN: Symphony #88 finale (with London Philharmonic); SIBELIUS: Symphony #7 (with BBC Symphony).

Koussevitzky's contract with Victor lapsed in 1933, but the conductor was determined to continue his burgeoning recording career. Thus Columbia preserved his Carnegie Hall performance of Roy Harris's First Symphony. HMV, meanwhile, captured his white hot Sibelius Seventh in concert and invited the conductor to make a series of recordings with the London Philharmonic the following year.

Apparently Koussevitzky himself was not satisfied with either of the two Beethoven Symphonies that resulted from these sessions, for he eventually rerecorded both in Boston. The Boston discs (not yet on CD) are preferable owing to the peerless playing of the BSO and the powerful, riveting interpretations that far surpass the overly careful and occasionally sluggish performances heard here.

In contrast, Koussevitzky's only commercial recording Mozart's 40th Symphony is a pure delight. With its wildly (but consistently) fluctuating tempos, unwritten dynamic shadings, and slithering string slides it is one of Koussevitzky's most wayward interpretations. Such a shameless display of personality on the part of a conductor would hardly be tolerated today, and that makes this unique document even more valuable as an antidote to the scholarly, but often empty performances of our time. The amazing vocal quality and elegance of Koussevitzky's phrasing in the *andante* also sets this version apart from the current competition.

In the all-too-brief Haydn snippet, not even Furtwängler could match the fluidity and panache of Koussevitzky's boisterous reading. Perhaps due to its training under Beecham, the London Philharmonic plays markedly better in the Haydn and Mozart than in either of the Beethoven Symphonies.

This new set concludes with the same recording of the Sibelius Seventh that was previously issued by Pearl (GEMM CDS 9408; still in print). Its duplication here is unnecessary, especially given that the side joins are not nearly as seamless as on the earlier release.

The 78s used for these transfers are noisier than average. Still, this set *is* well worth exploring—if you don't mind wading through some turgid Beethoven.

Pearl GEMM CD 9037. SCHUBERT: Symphony #8; MENDELSSOHN: Symphony #4; SCHUMANN: Symphony #1.

A more joyous and exuberant reading of Schumann's *Spring* Symphony would be impossible to find. Here Koussevitzky somehow manages to impart a Brahmsian depth to the symphonic argument while simultaneously highlighting the Mendelssohnian delicacy and grace of the instrumental scoring. Tempos are always perfectly judged—from the deliberate pace of Koussevitzky's riveting introduction to the lively, tempestuous finale. Thanks to an uncanny knack for scene painting, Koussevitzky portrays the arrival of spring (in the opening movement) more vividly than any other conductor on record—even his protégé, Leonard Bernstein. Koussevitzky never forgets for a moment that Schumann was one of the greatest lieder composers. Thus he emphasizes the melodic richness of the score at every turn. Like so many of Koussevitzky's best recordings, this one was never available on LP. Pearl has done us all a tremendous service with this long overdue compact disc.

*Koussevitzky allows us to hear Schubert's
Unfinished in a new, sometimes
profoundly disturbing way.*

As Ray Tuttle rightly pointed out in a recent review of this disc on the internet: "Koussy's brisk tempos create an *Unfinished* which is more threatening than regretful." While there are certainly more profound and moving interpretations (i.e. Furtwängler's), Koussevitzky's first recording of the Schubert (1936) is nonetheless quite effective on its own terms. By skillfully heightening the contrast between the tension of the first movement and the timeless vastness of the second, he allows us to hear this music in a new, sometimes profoundly disturbing way. Tempos are considerably broader in Koussevitzky's 1945 remake (not available on CD), and the clarity and warmth of the later recording represents a vast improvement over the strident sound of the earlier effort. Unfortunately, the orchestra did not play as well the second time around, and the finale seems flaccid and sluggish next to the original.

Koussevitzky also recorded Mendelssohn's *Italian* Symphony twice. The 1935 set is included here, though this time the remake is preferable (1947; also not yet on CD). The string tone on the first recording is uncomfortably edgy, and so is Koussevitzky's interpretation. Twelve years later he led a more expressive, songful, and smooth-

ly flowing performance—this in spite of the fact that his tempos are somewhat faster! The later version includes the crucial first movement repeat that Koussevitzky skipped in '35, and the sound is considerably more transparent and open. Nonetheless Pearl's new CD can be safely recommended for Koussevitzky's monumental Schumann and unconventional Schubert.

Biddulph WHL 028. BERLIOZ: *Roman Carnival* Overture, *Damnation of Faust* (orchestral excerpts), *Harold in Italy*. William Primrose, viola.

Berlioz's *Harold in Italy* is a hopeless piece of musical trash, but you'd never know it from Koussevitzky's fiery and thoroughly committed interpretation. Even when the composer is simply marking time (toward the end of the 'March of the Pilgrims', for example), Koussevitzky somehow manages to command our attention. But most outstanding of all is Koussevitzky's gentle and tender way with the score's most reflective episodes, such as the lovely third movement 'Serenade'. Primrose complements the

maestro's reading splendidly thanks to his elegance, golden tone, and soaring lyricism. Meanwhile, Koussevitzky proves once and for all that he was a splendid accompanist. The Boston Symphony plays with breathtaking virtuosity, especially in the aptly titled 'Orgy' which concludes the work. Berlioz's frequent outbursts of brass

and percussion at full tilt must have given RCA's engineers fits, but they nonetheless managed to reproduce them with surprising clarity and accuracy for the time (1944). Surface noise and rumble from the original 78s unfortunately intrude on several occasions.

Koussevitzky's sensitivity to this composer's volatile moods and kaleidoscopic colors made him the ideal interpreter of the splashy *Roman Carnival* Overture. As with *Harold*, Koussevitzky whips the orchestra into a tremendous frenzy by the end. RCA's engineers chopped off the reverberation of the final chord, but Mark Obert-Thorn covers their mistake unobtrusively and tastefully with artificial reverberation.

Although the three brief *Faust* excerpts were recorded as early as 1936, the sound boasts surprising detail and transparency with a minimum of surface noise. The Minuet and Dance are dispatched with a unique charm, grace, and delicacy. Koussevitzky's strongly-accented and smartly paced *Rakoczy* March brings the suite to a dazzling conclusion. Despite the conductor's obvious affinity for this repertory, he made no other commercial recordings of the music of Berlioz.

BSO Classics 171002. STRAVINSKY: *Petrouchka* Suite, *Apollo pas de deux*; RAVEL: *Daphnis & Chloe* Suite #2, plus alternate takes from the above and the complete recordings of Karl Muck with the BSO.

The Boston Symphony's first recordings date from October 1917. The conductor on that occasion was Karl Muck, who within a few short months would be imprisoned as an enemy alien. For its initial release, BSO Classics has brought together all of the surviving sides from those sessions, including five items that have never been issued before in any format. A three and one-half minute snippet from the finale of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony is quite exciting, as is Muck's brisk and broadly comic rendition of Wolf-Ferrari's *Secret of Susanna* Overture. Otherwise the performances are unexpectedly cautious and routine. Perhaps both orchestra and conductor were intimidated by the bizarre recording process (described in detail in Brian Bell's excellent booklet essay). Winds and brass dominate these ancient acoustic discs. The legendary Boston strings sound embarrassingly scrawny, thin, and annoying, but the 78 surfaces are unexpectedly quiet. Muck's post-WWI German recordings of Wagner reveal far more of his unique personality and genius.

This release is filled out with Koussevitzky's earliest orchestral recordings, needlessly duplicating material already available from Pearl. The Stravinsky ballet excerpts can be found on GEMM 9020, while the Ravel is on 9090 (review above). Moreover, Pearl's transfers are better on all counts. Completists may possibly want this disc for the first release of alternate takes from *Petrouchka* (side 2) and *Daphnis* (side 3), but they add little, if anything to our understanding of Koussevitzky's art.

Pearl GEMM CD 9179. VIVALDI: Concerto Grosso in d, Op. 3/11; CORELLI (arr. Pinelli): Suite for String Orchestra; Henri CASADESUS: Concerto in D for Orchestra (attrib. to C.P.E. Bach); HANDEL: Larghetto from Concerto Grosso, Op. 6/12, *Semele*—O Sleep, why dost thou leave me?; MOZART: *Magic Flute*—Ach, Ich fühl's; SCHUBERT: *Rosamunde*—Ballet Music #2; LISZT: *Mephisto* Waltz #2; TRADITIONAL (arr. Koussevitzky): *Fair Harvard*; GRIEG: *The Last Spring*. Dorothy Maynor, soprano. Harvard Glee Club & Radcliffe Choral Society.

This remarkable collection brings all of Koussevitzky's recordings baroque music (other than his fine Bach discs, that is) together with several odds and ends from the far corners of this conductor's wide-ranging discography. The string playing in the Corelli is a wonder even by Koussevitzky's exacting standards, and his expressive—not to mention erratic—tempo in the gigue will drive the period instrument crowd nuts. For some unknown reason, this recording was not issued during the 78 era, and it is made available here for the first time in any format. African-American soprano Dorothy Maynor was one of Koussevitzky's "discoveries". (Mario Lanza was another.) Hear her sweet voice in the Handel and Mozart

arias and you will understand at once why Koussevitzky was so totally captivated by this great artist. The other recordings are all among Koussevitzky's best, though his frankly monotonous arrangement of *Fair Harvard* may only be meaningful to graduates of that august institution. *The Last Spring* is heard here in the earliest of Koussevitzky's two recordings of the work. It's a minute or so faster and not nearly as magical as the later version (on an RCA compact disc).

Pearl GEMM CDS 9185 (two CDs). HAYDN: Symphonies 94 & 102; MOZART: Symphonies 29 & 34; BEETHOVEN: Symphonies 2 & 8.

This wonderfully witty, brisk, and bracing Haydn 94th is no surprise coming from Koussevitzky, who was one of the most perceptive Haydn conductors of his—or indeed any other—time. Two different takes of the Symphony's finale are included. Producer Obert-Thorn warns of distortion in the loud passages of the first, but my badly worn ears can't detect it. Obert-Thorn is right about one thing though: the originally-issued take of the finale is the most attractive of the two. With this issue, all of the recordings Koussevitzky made in the '20s are now readily available on compact disc. I would not have dreamed such a thing was possible just a few short years ago!

Koussevitzky's Mozart 34th is a model of poetry and chaste beauty, while his Beethoven 2nd is one of the most thrilling interpretations of that symphony ever put on disc. In addition, there's amazing body and definition to the sound of this vivid transfer. On the other hand, I've never found Koussevitzky's rather icy reading of Haydn's 102nd Symphony wholly satisfying, and the opening movement of the Mozart 29th is rushed and breathless. There is, nonetheless, some truly gorgeous playing in the slow movement. ▲

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Book Review

Leonard Bernstein. By Humphrey Burton. New York: Doubleday, 1994. [xiv, 594 p. ISBN 0-385-42345-4]

In writing a review of a biography there is always the problem of answering the question of what a biography needs to be. Some biographies are purely factual in nature but can never be a thorough representation of the personality of an individual as I would like to think that the essence of a human is far too complex to be expressed in words. Consider also how any of our closest friends may view us as individuals, that opinion and perspective is likely to differ from one friend to another. That is especially true when the personality is as complex as was Leonard Bernstein's.

After reading Burton's essay I decided to reacquaint myself with Peyser's Bernstein biography and the Schuyler Chapin memoir, *Leonard Bernstein, Notes from a Friend*. The Chapin notes are reminiscences and were definitely written by a friend as they are fairly non-judgmental. The Peyser book is on the other extreme. Burton's essay is clearly on the friendly side and benefits from access to materials in the Bernstein archives and some personal acquaintance with his subject. The impression of a Leonard Bernstein being one of the pall bearers at Koussevitzky's funeral, Bernstein at his marriage being clothed in an ill-fitting suit presented by Olga Koussevitzky, and Bernstein attending to his dying wife coupled with numerous quotes from his letters are just a few of the images in the Burton book that enrich the picture of the Bernstein personality.

Both in his personal life and his career, he seemed to be strongly influenced by those he cared about. On a personal level his flamboyance was probably greatly subdued by his marriage to Felicia, and professionally his compositional aspirations were subdued to some extent by the relative lack of interest Copland and Koussevitzky showed in his music. Reading Burton one deduces that Copland saw Bernstein as potentially the great American conductor who would continue to foster the American school of composers much in the same way Koussevitzky had. It seems that Koussevitzky was looking for a star pupil who would demonstrate the success of his educational venture, Tanglewood, and perhaps to a lesser degree, follow in his footsteps. Bernstein seems to have been fairly constant in his reverence for Koussevitzky and Mitropoulos. At least this is the picture we are given. On the other hand there were times when Bernstein would even feel comfortable criticizing the work of one his closest friends, Copland. One could suggest that Bernstein sought out a father figure in Koussevitzky and to a lesser extent, especially in his younger years, in the person of Copland. Both men urged Bernstein to concentrate on his conducting. Much of his life Bernstein expressed the desire to concentrate on composition, but conducting, for whatever the reason, proved to be his primary occupation.

Of particular interest to readers of this journal is the relationship between Bernstein and Koussevitzky. Reading

the Burton book one finds that the relationship was rather unlike most of the others Bernstein had. There seems to be some suggestion that Koussevitzky served the role of Bernstein's musical father even more so than did Copland. Burton further suggests that Bernstein did his best to keep from offending his mentor and on more than one occasion displayed an almost subservient posturing in dealing with the strong-willed Koussevitzky.

How great Koussevitzky's influence was on Bernstein the conductor is fairly clear. Were it not for Bernstein's great interest in Mahler, one could see that the Bernstein repertory and programming reflected much of the Koussevitzky attitude in programming. Bernstein explored the repertory, performed the works of his contemporaries, and was every bit and even more so the educator than was Koussevitzky. Koussevitzky brought the music of Harris, Copland, Schuman, Piston et al to our attention. While Bernstein favored the music of many of the composers introduced by Koussevitzky, he did less to bring other compositional talent to our attention, the possible exceptions being works commissioned for the Philharmonic's opening season at Lincoln Center and its 125th anniversary. Bernstein however, seemed more at ease sharing the spotlight on stage with the great instrumental soloists of his time than did Koussevitzky. Also to Bernstein's credit, he fostered the careers of many young instrumentalists like Entremont and Watts, and conductors like Ozawa.

Burton devotes a fair amount of space to Bernstein's educational ventures including the many television broadcasts. One cannot help but wonder if Bernstein's interest in education is yet another reflection of the impact Koussevitzky had on him.

In short I do not feel that any of the extant biographies is the last word on the subject of Leonard Bernstein, as no book could ever be the last word on any individual who was as creative and complex a personality. Burton provides a good balance between the chronicle of Bernstein's personal life and his career as a musician. As someone who is more interested in Leonard Bernstein the musician and his music, I was disappointed with both the Peyser and the Burton. These are books written for a more general reader. These books do capture some of the essence of Leonard Bernstein, but from differing perspectives. There is still much to be written about Bernstein the musician. Music appears to have been the center of his life, often at the cost his relationships with others. And almost in a contradictory sense, his musical expression was limited by those same relationships. While it may seem like an odd thing to say of one who was so successful at his art, it seems that his life was torn in so many directions by the influence of those around him. Ultimately the best insight into any artist is the legacy of their art. Burton's essay is likely to stimulate an exploration and reexamination of that art while providing a sympathetic portrait of a most complex personality. ▲

A Conversation with Gerard Schwarz

St. Louis, January 8, 1994

On that chilly, mid-winter morning, I had a welcome opportunity to hear Gerard Schwarz, Music Director of the Seattle Symphony, rehearse the St. Louis Symphony's Chamber Orchestra at Powell Hall in a program of Diamond, Bach, and Haydn. The clarity of the conductor's gestures was matched only by the depth of his musical insight. Indeed, this stimulating rehearsal led me to expect a magnificent concert that evening. And the audience was not disappointed. After the rehearsal, I invited Mr. Schwarz to join our Advisory Board and to record the brief interview that follows.

Tom Godell: *Since you are, like me, too young to have heard Koussevitzky in concert, I wonder how you became acquainted with his work and what kind of influence it's had on you.*

Gerard Schwarz: The main influence Koussevitzky had on me, of course, is through repertory. In a way the great thing that conductors can do, besides giving great performances for their community at the time they are giving them, is to in some way have an impact on the repertory. If you start thinking about what Koussevitzky did, including his years with the Koussevitzky Concerts in Paris when he commissioned Ravel to orchestrate *Pictures at an Exhibition*, the impact he's had on repertory is really quite extraordinary. When I started conducting some of the great works of Bartók, Copland, or Diamond—so many of them, in fact a majority of them, seem to have been premiered by Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony. What he did was not only play a lot of contemporary music in his days in Boston, not only commission some wonderful pieces during his days in Paris, but he obviously had remarkable taste, because he ended up commissioning a large majority of successful works. Look at a conductor like Paul Sacher. He's done an extraordinary amount of marvelous things. He, for example, commissioned Bartók's *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta* and

the *Divertimento*, the Honegger *Second Symphony*, I think the Honegger *Fourth Symphony*—a number of pieces like that. His track record was very good. Koussevitzky's track record was great. Just one piece after another. Not only that, but the interesting thing to me, and maybe the most important of all is that he didn't do a single piece by Copland or Diamond or Hanson or anyone. He did many pieces. He kept at it. When he found a composer he believed in, he thought was remarkable and made a tremendous contribution, he continued to ask for more music, which meant two things. One is that the composers had an opportunity to write for large orchestras, knowing that a great orchestra was going to play those pieces, and second he had the opportunity to acquaint his audience with the language of that composer, which is very important. They weren't just arbitrary pieces being thrown out. Then we see as we go along that he continued to play those pieces. He didn't play the premiere and then throw them away. He believed in the composers. So the greatest influence he's had on me is from the stories I heard from Lenny (Bernstein) and David Diamond, but more importantly the repertory that he helped create.

Were you in the New York Philharmonic when Bernstein was still the Music Director?

No. Boulez was the Music Director, but Bernstein was there quite often. We toured with him, and he and I became very good friends. Until the end he always spoke of Koussevitzky and what he did. I remember sitting with Lenny listening to our (the Seattle Symphony's) recording of the *Diamond Second Symphony*. If I'm not mistaken that was a Koussevitzky Boston premiere. Lenny was just bowled over by how great this piece was. He was very happy with the performance and very complimentary about my orchestra, but he was just so intent to listen to

this great music. Then he started talking about Koussevitzky and about doing those pieces again. He said, "I have to do this again. I've been doing so much Beethoven and Brahms and Mahler that it's time for me not only to do the isolated program with the Copland Third or the Harris Third or the Bill Schuman Third, but rather to really get into this repertory once again in depth." Unfortunately he died.

I wonder, too, if Koussevitzky has had an influence on your programming.

The way he put programs together, that's the other thing of great interest to me. I'm a program studier, as a music director needs to be. I always study everybody's programs. I study old programs, new programs. I've studied every program the New York Philharmonic ever did. Here I am in St. Louis, and I was just studying their season brochure. I'm going to ask next week if I can have a look at what they're doing next season. You get ideas of the way pieces are put together, and sometimes it reminds you of pieces that haven't been done or composers you may not know or pieces of some interest. Koussevitzky put programs together in a remarkable way. Yes, he played a lot of contemporary music, but he did it in such a way that it was not offensive. If it had been too terribly offensive, he would not have survived all those years and been loved so much in Boston. He had an extraordinary knack of not only being able to inspire the composers, inspire the orchestra, inspire young conductors, but balance it in such a way in his programming that the audience was supportive, respectful, and felt that they were involved—at least that's what I'm told—with a remarkable time in musical history where something of great significance was going on.

One of the things I find amazing about Koussevitzky's programs, and one of the major changes since his time, has

been the move away from baroque music, away from classical, with a very heavy emphasis now on the late romantics and some twentieth century music. You look back at Koussevitzky's programs and you have a Bach Suite and ...

...a Handel Concerto Grosso. And he played Mozart and Haydn. You're absolutely right. That's probably one of the reasons the orchestra was so wonderful. The foundation of all great orchestras is in that baroque and classical repertory. We know what happened. The chamber orchestras and then the early music ensembles said you don't know how to play this music. We do, and there's only one way to play Bach, and there's only one way to play Handel, and there's only one way to play Mozart, and we know that correct way—which is as bizarre as saying there's one way to play Diamond or one way to play Mahler. What's interesting is so many people now say you have to play baroque music this way or Mozart this way and the reality is there was no tradition in Mozart's time. We try to understand the style and try to imitate it as best we can, but you can't replicate it because there was no one way of playing anything. If you listen to Lenny's recording of Diamond's Fourth Symphony with the New York Philharmonic or my recording with the Seattle Symphony you will hear two very different sounding orchestras, very different interpretations, very different ideas of how the piece goes. David was present at both recordings. Which is the right way to play, if there is one way? Of course, there is not one way, and that's the key.

Now finally, we're getting back into the spirit of being able to play classical music again—and baroque music for that matter—with symphony orchestras. And we must. We must for the audience, and we must for the souls of the musicians who need to play Handel, Bach, Mozart, and Haydn. That's not to say we should play it without good taste, without an understanding of the repertory, but we have to go back to the roots. Quite frankly in terms of phrasing, articulation, ensemble...the music is much simpler than Mahler

in terms of technical feats. On the other hand it's much more difficult in terms of making decisions about length of notes, phrasing, rubati—which does exist in classical music. It's a great lesson for an orchestra. It really cleans out the cobwebs and makes an orchestra play better. I think that the greatest achievements that we've made with the orchestra in Seattle have been because of playing a lot of Mozart and Haydn.

In this country, in a way, it really is Koussevitzky who established that balance between classical, baroque, romantic—I mean he was famous for Tchaikovsky, early twentieth century, he was famous for Prokofiev, and the new. He really was the perfect music director as I see it, and I think all music directors in this country, if not other countries, should emulate him.

You mentioned the difference in sound between your orchestra and the New York Philharmonic. Yet, for the most part, I think there is a disturbing sameness, not only between one orchestra and another, but all too often between one interpretation and another. I recently listened to nearly a dozen modern recordings of Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony and discovered that it's hard to tell them apart.

A shocking thing, I agree. When I was a kid growing up I could tell the difference between every orchestra in this country in a second. Play me ten bars, and I could tell if it was Philadelphia, Boston, New York, Cleveland, Chicago. I could even tell St. Louis because Golschman was recording here in those days. I could tell the London orchestras. You could tell a Russian orchestra from a German orchestra from a French orchestra. Conductors are trying to homogenize it all. We have this international set of conductors who want everything to sound the same. There was one music director who tried to get the Vienna Philharmonic to stop playing on Vienna oboes and horns, and there was another music director in France who tried to get some of the French orchestras to stop playing with French bassoons—with some success I must say.

To me the individuality of the orchestra is crucial and important, and eventually, if they do end up sounding the same, it is not healthy. Philadelphia always had the great string sound. It still has the great string sound. You can't say, "I don't want it to sound like the Philadelphia Orchestra anymore." You have to say, "I want it to sound like the Philadelphia Orchestra." We will play Mahler differently than Beethoven certainly, but what's characteristic in our orchestra we should take advantage of and emphasize, not deemphasize. And performances are the same.

What happens is people listen to records to make performances. A conductor will listen to my recording of the Diamond Second Symphony and from now on most performances of it will sound like mine, I suspect. Maybe I'm wrong, but conductors tend to be lazy, and as they are lazy they tend not to study. They tend to copy. People like Slatkin and me can't do that, because we're doing much of the repertory for the first time. So when we do all the Hanson symphonies, it's certainly not based on the way Howard Hanson conducted the pieces. I do them very differently than Hanson did them. In the same fashion, when I do the Diamond, even though I heard Koussevitzky's performance of the Second Symphony on tape and loved it, I do it completely differently than Koussevitzky did when he premiered it. I think that goes with the integrity of the conductor. You have to find your own way.

Tchaikovsky Symphonies are the worst example, because I remember hearing a very fine conductor perform the Fourth Symphony with the New York Philharmonic, and in fact think there was no interpretation anymore, because all the performances sounded the same. All the rubati that he did were the same rubato that everyone else does, and I thought I would never conduct Tchaikovsky Symphonies.

Of course, I do conduct a lot of Tchaikovsky Symphonies, but hopefully with my own ideas rather than someone else's! ▲

Mini-Maestrino

It seems that, like Mark Twain said, rumors of my death are a bit premature. Thanks to the good graces and invitation of Tom Godell, I have the chance to keep members of the old LSSA informed. I have hopes this will be a regular column in Tom's journal. I will keep you all informed about coming releases and review those which have been recently released. As I can, I will also include articles submitted to me from people who knew and worked with Stokowski. Anything else that Tom lets me include, too, I will. As this all came to pass rather suddenly, this first installment may be a bit short. I published all I had at hand in the last full issue of *Maestrino*. Still, there is news of recent releases to discuss.

The Leopold Stokowski Society has added a new chapter to the Stokowski discography and his legacy. *First Releases* (CALA CD0502) makes available for the first time a baker's dozen items which were recorded by Stokowski, but never released. Why? Well the answers, when there are any, vary, but it certainly couldn't have been because of the quality of the recordings or the performances themselves. In the excellent insert notes, Edward Johnson discusses these matters and offers many more fascinating insights and details about the recordings.

What is on the disc? It opens with excerpts from a 1935 Pension Fund Concert. It includes Stokowski's arrangement of *La Marseillaise* and Schubert's Serenade. Then comes Joseph Monaca's Saltarello. This is followed by a real howler, a *Balance Test* March written by Stokowski and recorded in 1929. According to Mr. Johnson's notes, it was customary before recordings for orchestras to play varied music to 'test' the microphones and other apparatus used in the recording. Stokowski 'wrote' this march to do just that! After listening to the 1:44 piece you can tell that it must have served its purpose well and may have had something to do with the success of the Stokowski Sound on disc. Then comes *Oh, Susannah!* as arranged by Stokowski, Handel's Pastoral Symphony (from *Messiah*) and Strauss's *Dance of the Seven Veils* from *Salome*. While Stokowski rerecorded most of these pieces and they were released on other recordings with the Philadelphia Orchestra, these are all new.

Then follow recordings made with the NBC Symphony. Tchaikovsky's *Solitude* and *Marche Slav* are given serene and riveting recordings respectively. They are interrupted by Robert Kelly's "Sunset Reflections" from *Adirondack* Suite. Kelly must be one of the last living composers to have his work recorded by Stokowski released. Frankly, this is the most interesting piece on the disc. Not having heard it before, it is marvellous and makes me wonder why more of his work isn't being performed.

The disc closes with three recordings made with the New York City Symphony Orchestra. Alexander Scriabin's Etude in C-sharp minor (arranged by Stokowski) is followed by Schubert's Tyrolean Dances from *Deutsche Tänze*. The disc ends with one of the best performances of Tchaikovsky's *Romeo & Juliet* Fantasy Overture I have ever heard. Mr. Johnson writes at some length defending Stokowski's "changes" in the closing of the piece. Frankly, after hearing "his" closing it seems that the "other" recordings should instead be defended. While no empirical data exists to vindicate Stokowski's alterations, there is sufficient inferential and aural evidence.

The sound is some of the best of 78 transfers I have yet heard. Ward Marston has done a wonderful job as usual, but some additional touches were added by the people at CALA. I can only say that the results seem to warrant the work at CALA. It seems that I am one of the few people writing who dislike Michael Dutton's transfers. In my opinion he is too 'interventionist' in his work. The sound has no air around it despite "adding" reverb. It seems that once it's been removed, you can't really "put the tooth-paste back in the tube". While CALA's sound is less "natural" than what you would hear on Biddulph or Pearl, it is very detailed and smoother. I strongly recommend this disc to Stokowski fans and other lovers of great music from the "golden years of conducting".

Vanguard/Everest has issued two more CDs in their project to release all of the Everest recordings. The first (EVC 9023) contains Villa-Lobos's *Uirapuru* and *Modinha*; Prokofiev's *Cinderella* Suite; and Debussy's *Children's Corner* Suite. The sound on this disc varies somewhat. The Villa-Lobos is full, wonderfully detailed and sensuous to match the music. The Prokofiev is very good but the Debussy sounds just a little dated and distant. The second disc (EVC 9024) sounds wonderful and atmospheric to match the incomparable Stokowski recordings of Wagner's music! It opens with *Wotan's Farewell* and *Magic Fire Music* from *Die Walküre*; then comes *Good Friday Spell* and the Stokowski synthesis of Act III of *Parsifal*. Some people might carp about the short timing on this disc (45:32) but can anyone think of any appropriate couplings? I would rather listen to three-quarter's hour of Stokowski's Wagner than 80 minutes of anyone else's. This disc is most strongly recommended!

I talked with Mark Obert-Thorn the other night. He was able to give me some news of what can be expected from Biddulph and Pearl in the future. Later this year Biddulph will issue what Mark calls a CD of "pops". It will include the *Invitation to the Dance* ('27), two Strauss Waltzes, Sibelius's *Finlandia* and *Swan of Tuonela* ('30 and '29), and Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* Suite in a new remastering of the 1926 version. Mark was almost certain there would be some other items, but didn't want to be

quoted exactly. I asked him about any other possible releases, specifically if we might see the acoustic recordings issued. Mark told me that this was definitely planned within the next year or two. He also informed me that the last Pearl issue will be a Volume 4 of Wagner recordings. After that the rest of the Stokowski recordings will be issued on Biddulph. Finally I broached the subject of the Bell Labs tapes. Mark indicated that matters are still in the discussion stage. He and I are both hopeful that these fine recordings will be issued in the near future. I recall being at some conference and talking with one of the original engineers at those sessions. He told me that Bell Labs waited a long time before finally deciding to issue the LPs. The reason for the delay was that the master tapes contained "information" that exceeded the LP format. Finally they agreed to issue them produced by a German company. Even then, he told me, there was a lot missing. This was at the dawn of the digital era. Maybe now we can hope for issue in a format that can do justice to the masters.

This column is developing a "chatty" kind of tone. Keeping in that vein, I want to share something sent to me from Ed Defreitas, who, in turn, got it from *Radio World* (what's that?) and an article by Frank Beacham

titled "Studio Sessions". There are, in the world of recordings, many lesser-known people who played an important role in the development of recordings. One such person was Marvin Cameras. To quote:

"Marvin Cameras, the man who is known as the father of magnetic tape recording, has died at the age of 79 in Evanston, Ill. Cameras, an electrical engineer and inventor, began his work in magnetic recording as a student in the late 1930s when he built a magnetic wire recorder for a cousin who was an aspiring opera singer. Later, he discovered that using magnetic tape instead of wire made it easier to edit the recordings.

"In 1944, Marvin Cameras was awarded a patent on 'method and means of magnetic recording,' a forerunner of modern tape recorders. Over the years, he was awarded more than 500 patents for the invention and refinement of technology that is the basis for today's audio and video recording and computer data storage. Magnetic coatings developed by Cameras are now used for tapes in video and cassette recorders, computers and on hard and floppy disks for computer storage. 'Marvin Cameras is a legend, and we are all grateful for what he did,' said Ray Dolby, Chairman of Dolby Labs in a *New York Times* obituary. 'The basic principles he explored and designed are used in the tapes and recorder designs in our machines today'. Lest we forget.

I recently got the latest issue of *ICRC*, *Gramophone's* latest venture in publishing. In it is more evidence that Decca will release, later this year, 15 CDs in the *Phase 4* series. No specifics are given, but the article promises "several by Stokowski".

In October Sony will release Volume 3 in the Bruno Walter series. Among the ten discs are the Brahms and Mozart Symphonies. I had a chance to talk with John Kelly, who works for Sony, and he told me a bit about their new SBM process. He sent me a pamphlet discussing the process but much of it escapes me and what I can relay would likely be of little interest to you. One of the important aspects of the process, however, is that the new masters are made not only using computers, but also adjusting the new masters based on a panel of human listeners. That is, the final decision regarding the quality of a transfer is not made solely by a computer somehow cramming 20 bits into 16, but by human beings, just like you and me.

The word Quality is used or alluded to in reviewing recordings and stereo equipment. Whenever a reviewer recommends a recording s/he is maintaining that it is a Quality product. What, however, is meant by Quality?

This is what Stokowski was getting at when he talked about "relief" in music, using an analogy to sculpture.

Stokowski would often exhort his orchestras to "do better." He was searching for a Quality performance and/or recording. This is one reason why he was so interested in the science of recording, he wanted to improve it so that at some time 'recordings will be better than live performances.' While the Holy Grail of recording has yet to arrive, I think we have come a long way towards Stokowski's prophesy.

You must understand that Quality as a noun has various, related meanings. One is an essence of perfection. Another is as some aspect of an object. An example is, 'music has several qualities.' In writing about music, however, the relation between these two meanings becomes more intertwined. That is, when a recording of music (or anything) is judged to be "of Quality" it is so because of a relation between the inherent qualities of the piece (its parts) and the gestalt. Unfortunately, when reviewing a recording we are forced to fall back on the "qualities" in an attempt to discuss its "Quality". The danger in writing reviews, then, is that we might not be able to see the forest for the trees. That is, when (timings,

the recording itself, or pick your choice) become a yardstick for judgement the whole concept of “Quality” has been reduced to its “qualities”. A judgement of a particular recording, therefore, if it is to be valid, must look at the qualities as function of a necessary but not sufficient condition for a judgement. The ultimate judgement of Quality must be the product of a synergistic evaluation.

How do you “know” it is of Quality? It fits. It fits comfortably. It always fits well. The relationship of all the “qualities” to one another is “in harmony” (pun slightly intended). I know this all sounds a bit “sixtyish” but, as usual when discussing music, words are all we have to fall back on and sometimes it is more “accurate” when discussing music to refer to poetic terms. I do not mean to say that Quality music isn’t dissonant. In fact, dissonance is an inherent part of the universe. I am also not restricting my argument to any one kind of music nor arguing one kind is “better” than another. (Although I have to admit having said on occasion, “I thought ‘Country/Western Music’” was an oxymoron.) Nor am I saying that Quality has a necessary perfect symmetry. The universe is not so anymore than one half of the face is a symmetrical duplicate of the other. I mean harmony like the similar but different symmetry of the qualities.

This is what Stokowski was getting at when he talked about “relief” in music, using an analogy to sculpture. When performing, the conductor must make sure all the elements are in proper balance. For example, if the triangle must be heard, the conductor must make sure the rest of the orchestra plays such that the tiny instrument may be heard. One element of the Stokowski sound was building it from the double basses, through the cellos, etc. This had the effect of giving greater body to the overall sound. What that means is that Stokowski had to make sure it “fit”.

The skin is the largest sense organ on the body. If something “fits” we have millions of receptors to tell us. The same analogy applies to judgements about music. It also brings into focus the vital and inherent importance of the listener. As “I” approach a recording a plethora of sensory, psychological, educational, intellectual, emotional and historical factors are involved. The leap, then, from “is” to “ought” is in the leap of the “self” between them.

It is obvious that there is a difference between listening and hearing. When we listen to music it is not solely a “sense” sensation. The physical aspect of ‘hearing’ is only part of the actual sensation. When we hear it is also a function of the physical feeling generated by deep bass. This may be further accentuated with pictures that add to the sensation. As we begin to actually listen, other elements enter into the sensation: memories, educational levels, etc. Thus, what we experience at any given time is not a “sense” of music, but a *sensation* of it.

This sensation is a gestalt, not reducible to its constituent elements. If you collected the proper elements in the proper proportions of the human being you would still not have a person. The same analogy relates to sensation. We cannot attempt to study the sensation of music by gathering its constituent parts for examination. While in one sense it may be necessary to isolate various elements of a recording, it is meaningless if that is the focus and end. It is like taking a sentence and diagramming it. While you may be able to analyze the locutions in such a way, it in no way contributes to our appreciation of *Leaves of Grass*.

Does this mean that such judgements are “only subjective”? No, because there is that part of the triad that “is”. No amount of subjective will ever truly divorce the “self” from the “is”. That is, we are tethered to “reality” no matter what. There are those in our society who create “their own reality” and...we lock them up. They’re a danger to themselves and, more important, the collective-self. There exists a recording of this piece of music that exists independently of my existence and will do so regardless of my opinion.

If a reviewer commits the fallacy of reductionism (the forest can’t be seen because of the trees) forget it. S/he cannot know a Quality recording because they don’t know Quality. A convergence or consensus of opinion about a recording (let’s use Carlos Kleiber’s recording of Beethoven’s 5th as an example) would indicate an agreement on a sense of Quality, thus making it generally desirable rather than specifically so. Such a consensus would not, however, constitute a valid reason for condemning or censoring a contrary judgement. That is, my opinions about Country/Western Music, even if supported by most people—which is hardly the case—are not universal nor mandatory. That would be like trying to argue from the “ought” to the “is” (which, I am convinced, is another type of fallacy committed primarily by religious fanatics). That is, we can say “should” when it is defined as: “that which ought to but not necessarily will be done.” We cannot, however, define “should” as merely ‘ought’ and therefore ‘must’ be done.

What has all this to do with Stokowski? In one sense probably nothing. I am relatively certain that the Maestro would find the language here unclear or even incomprehensible. Still, I am more convinced that he would understand what I mean if not what I said.

Another reason for taking your time with this is to offer a philosophy of recording(s). It seems a common generality that *musicians* represent the “affective” domain and are, therefore, intellectually suspect. I think it is important to argue that such a view is nonefficacious and even counter-productive. The latest studies of the brain indicate that the *Cartesian* view of reason is just plain wrong. I believe that the great musicians, like Stokowski, had a “philosophy” of music and recording. Stokowski attempted to relate it in his book, *Music For Us All*. The notion that musicians are “artsy” and therefore do not

really have a philosophy is, like all stereotypes, as dangerous as all thinking errors. There *is* a "sound" (pun intended) that can help us in the search for Quality music. This brief treatise is my attempt to provide that philosophy of music. One that I believe Stokowski would have endorsed.

Did you ever listen to a piece of music and think, "No, that's not quite right. It would sound better if..." I first experienced this in the '60s when singing and playing guitar (I'd gotten lost and thought I was Bob Dylan for a few years). I'd hear in my mind what could be and then set out to provide that. If I didn't think I could do it better, and not just different, I'd not even try. (Nobody does 'Like A Rollin' Stone' better than Dylan.)

I experienced this a few years ago as I matured as a listener of classical music. I just recently had the same realization when I finally had the chance to listen to Sir John Barbirolli's recording of Mahler's 6th Symphony, *Tragic*. I'd heard Horenstein and Chailly (the former poorly recorded, the latter dead as a beat). The DG Bernstein is a nightmare in every aspect of the word. The pace of the first movement just stuck me as parody and I didn't 'hear' that was what Mahler was at. This evening, all the girls are out of the house, and I can 'crank it up'. As soon as the opening filled the room I caught myself muttering, "Yes. That's it!" Now you have to remember that I am an 'autodidact' (that's one of those terms you only come across in pretentious journals or speeches, I think it's hilarious) at classical music. Still, I could 'hear' the first time I listened to the symphony that there was "something wrong" with the performance. Now, as I hear the opening of the Second Movement, I find myself muttering, again, "Yes! That's it!" Given that there has been no 'school of thought' I have grown up with (unless you want to count Bob Dylan) then what is it in this and other pieces of music that I seem to know when it is "right" and when it is not?

I'll let you know if and when I come to an answer on that one. I can maintain, however, that any true musician (like Stokowski) also hears the music that's not being played. Those musicians then also compose in their mind's ear a "right" rendition. If they are lucky enough they might get the chance to conduct or compose it themselves. Even then, however, the fulfillment of the mind's ear's realization may not be met due to outside elements (like not being able to read music, like me) or you may just spend your life and not hear the Mahler 6th as performed by Barbirolli. It is on an EMI import coupled with Barbirolli's recording of Strauss's *Metamorphoses*, number CZS 7 67816 2.

For the next few items my thanks to Ed Johnson who sent me the info.

This just in from The Leopold Stokowski Society in England. Since the release of their last CD they have now begun work on the next, to be released in the spring of

1996. It will be an all NBCSO release including the Tchaikovsky Symphony #4, previously released by the LSSA as its second LP. The disc will also contain Rimsky-Korsakov's *Russian Easter Overture*, with a bass rather than the trombone in the interlude, Stravinsky's *Firebird Suite* and Prokofiev's *Love of Three Oranges* (also previously released on an LSSA LP that contained the Shostakovich Symphony #5). They are seeking advance orders or sponsorship for this release. The price for an advance order is only \$12.00, which includes postage!! Contact Ed Johnson at 12 Horbury Crescent, London W11 3NF, England. If you want to send a cheque make it out to The Leopold Stokowski Society.

You might recall the "philosophic headache" I laid on you a while ago and my condemnation of the Dutton releases. Well, for balance I offer the following from someone who would likely be considered an expert:

Dear Mr. Dutton:

Thank you so much for your splendid transfer of the Stravinsky CD conducted by Stokowski. You seem to be the only person transferring old records of Stokowski who understands the kind of sound he wanted.

I was assistant to Stokowski the last seven years of his life. When we were not working on a new recording, I would play his old records for him every evening. He would comment on them, what was good, how the existing recording should be remastered. I have pages of notes on these recordings and the repeated wish was for "more bass" and add reverberation. Even when working on the test lacquers from RCA he would constantly list on his "suggestions" list "Add reverberation!" (Which they never did.)

I hope you do more Stokowski CD's. The other CD's of Stokowski have no bass, they are dead, thin; giving a cold hard sound, not what he wanted.

Sincerely Yours,

Jack Baumgarten

The major chains have started putting out their own recording review brochures. Ed Johnson sent me the following excerpt from Tower Records' *Tower Classical News*.

HISTORICAL: Stokowski conducts Tchaikovsky: Symphony #5. "Solitude Again, as before, alone". Song without Words. 1812 Overture. Biddulph (M) WHL 015.

Stokowski Conducts Music From France (Vol. 3): Debussy: *Nocturnes, Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune, Danses sacrée et profane. La cathédrale engloutie. La Soirée dans Grenade* from *Estampes* (orch. Stokowski) Ravel: *Rhapsodie Espagnole*. Biddulph (M) WHL 013.

Stokowski Conducts Beethoven: Symphony #7. Schubert: Symphony #8. Ballet Music from *Rosamunde* (previously unissued), *Moment Musical* #3 in F. Biddulph (M) WHL 033.

Stokowski Conducts Dvorák: Symphony #9. Liszt: *Hungarian Rhapsody* #2. Chopin: *Mazurka* in B flat. *Mazurka* in A minor. Borodin: *Polovtsian Dances*. Biddulph (M) WHL 027.

with the Philadelphia Orchestra (recordings made between 1920 and 1940).

I have always argued that however controversial or even unjustifiable some of Stokowski's bolder adjustments and changes to a composer's score may have been, his pioneering and revolutionary achievements in rich, glowing orchestral sonority and exciting technical virtuosity were amongst the most influential forces this century on public taste and their perception of performance standards. It was one of the thrills of my career (fear included) to play for Stokowski, and I have never got over how Carlos Kleiber and Klaus Tennstedt both asked me how the maestro got his wonderful sound. Well, Biddulph's CD reissues of some of Stokowski's Philadelphia recordings from 1920 to 1940 give us the chance to hear their legendary sound in excellent transfers, meticulously prepared by Ward Marston.

Stokowski conducts French Music Vol. 3 contains valuable rarities of previously unpublished recordings of *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* and his *La Soirée dans Grenade* from *Estampes*, in Stokowski's orchestration—the former with even more rubato and expressive nuance than the published recordings of the same year (1940), whilst the latter is a gem of sensuality, brilliance, color, and knife-edged precision that made Stokowski and Philadelphia so legendary. Debussy's *Nocturnes* are very voluptuous and unmysterious but sensationally played, while Ravel's *Rhapsodie Espagnole* comes off in a sparkling, well controlled reading with quite a few changes of orchestration by the conductor.

Stokowski conducts Beethoven 7th and Schubert's *Unfinished Symphonies* is, for me, a most interesting collection since Stokowski's readings are for the most part classically controlled and the playing has outstanding rhythm, strength, and ensemble. The Schubert is performed with the kind of straightforwardness yet beauty that became more fashionable as this century progressed. The other two CDs are less revelatory: both the Dvorák *New World* and the Tchaikovsky 5th Symphonies receive

particularly eccentric readings—cuts, tempi variations abound (remarkably the 1927 *New World* Symphony is almost consistently similar in this respect to a broadcast I took part in 1973!). The Tchaikovsky CD does, however, contain a rare 1812 Overture which despite omitting the important cymbals part, receives a very classical and controlled performance. As for the Chopin transcriptions, these are fabulously played, the Prelude sounding as though it should be part of a film about the Wild West rather than Poland!

These CDs vividly recreate the sounds and atmosphere of performances that set new and far-reaching standards for music lovers and performers all over the world nearly 70 years ago. JT

A NEWS FLASH!! I got a letter from a member of the LSSA asking me if I'd seen a recent issue of Dave Canfield's monthly catalogue. He told me there was a listing in it for a CD with Stokowski conducting the Tchaikovsky 5th with the Stuttgart Radio Orchestra. Well, I fell off Dave's list again and missed it! I called Dave, and he told me it was on a Japanese CD. He was out, but he planned to order more copies. I'll keep you posted.

"...pioneering and revolutionary achievements in rich, glowing orchestral sonority and exciting technical virtuosity..."

Well, I come toward the end of this missive. If you hear of anything regarding Stokowski, let me know. One of the interesting things I learned over the years at the helm of the LSSA was that writing a newsletter was in some ways easy. I had over 150 potential reporters!! I would also invite you who knew and worked with Stokowski to submit to me recollections. Don't fret the grammar, I teach writing.

It's good to still be breathing. Thanks, Tom

Sincerely,

Robert M. Stumpf, II
106 E. Curtis St.
Mt. Vernon, OH 43050
(614) 392-LSSA ▲



Reviews and Comments

□ *Fritz Reiner* by Philip Hart. Northwestern University Press, 1994.

Inasmuch as this may well be the only biography we are likely to have of Fritz Reiner, this volume must be read in that light. And one must accept it as such in spite of the failure of the author to dig deeply enough into the personality of a really remarkable man; remarkable perhaps for all the wrong reasons, but remarkable all the same!

Admirers of the art of Serge Koussevitzky will find but little of interest about that conductor except for the author's discussion of the selection of a new music director by the Cincinnati Symphony in 1922:

After Stokowski's successor, the Austrian Ernst Kunwald, fell victim to World War I hysteria, his successor, the Belgian Eugene Ysaÿe, proved to be less persuasive as a conductor than as a violin virtuoso. By early May 1922 the Cincinnati executive committee had narrowed its list of seventeen mainly European applicants and nominees down to four names—Wilhelm Furtwängler, Felix Weingartner, Serge Koussevitzky, and Fritz Reiner. Neither of the German conductors would give up a major European career to be resident conductor of a midwestern American orchestra, and the Cincinnati board balked at Koussevitzky's demand for a seasonal salary of thirty thousand dollars. Although Reiner countered with a proposal for only half a season, he readily accepted the offer of twenty thousand dollars for a seven-month period that included the 1923 May Festival. Robert A. Taft, nephew of Charles Phelps Taft and later a United States senator, drew up the contract. The Cincinnati press, undoubtedly inspired by the orchestra's management, reported that Reiner willingly cancelled an engagement for the following season in Rome because "from my childhood days I always wanted to go to America."

Of course there is the seemingly inevitable matter of the training of Leonard Bernstein, to which this volume adds little or nothing new. However, the author does indicate that Reiner strongly recommended that the young Bernstein join Koussevitzky's conducting class at Tanglewood—which is the more interesting for our having Anthony Morss's comment that Koussevitzky strongly recommended Reiner to Bernstein as being "in possession of the very highest European traditions".

As for the professional relationship between Reiner and Koussevitzky, one finds only this:

A year later Reiner was guest conductor of the Boston Symphony, his only engagement there. The one-week engagement in December 1945 included a concert in

Providence and a pair in Symphony Hall. Reiner showed his respect for the Boston Symphony Orchestra with an exacting program—the Mozart *Haffner* Symphony, Debussy's *Ibéria*, and two works by Richard Strauss, the *Sinfonia domestica* and *Salome's Dance*. He arrived in Boston early enough to hear Koussevitzky's preceding concert and to join him at his home for supper afterward. A few months after his visit to Boston, Reiner asked Zirato about the possibility of a reengagement there, reporting that Koussevitzky had indicated he wanted him back. He was apparently unaware of the Russian conductor's habit of promising guests a reengagement even if he did not intend one.

This volume on Reiner may not be "all Hart", but there does seem to be rather too much Hart and not enough Reiner. And the author is rather too defensive, both of his subject who was, after all, notably offensive, and of his publisher, Northwestern University, which lost out to Columbia University in the battle over Carlotta Reiner's estate which encompassed a great deal of Reiner material and money.

□ Koussevitzky's Last Years — On Tour

In the interview published in our last issue, Anthony Morss commented: "Incidentally, I heard that when Koussevitzky retired, instead of doing nothing, he went off on a whole tour guest conducting all over, and he conducted some great orchestras and some orchestras distinctly not so great..."

In the absence of a decent biography of Serge Koussevitzky—and even the indecent Moses Smith tome was written in 1947, well before Koussevitzky left the Boston Symphony—it would be of value to gather together a compilation of all the orchestras Koussevitzky conducted after his retirement from the BSO.

We know that Koussevitzky conducted an augmented Israel Philharmonic on its 1951 tour of the United States. *Grove's* tells us that he conducted the London Philharmonic in 1950. From *Symphony Orchestras of the World: Selected Profiles* (edited by Robert R. Craven and published in 1987 by Greenwood Press), we learn that Koussevitzky conducted the Symphony Orchestra of Brazil in Rio de Janeiro in 1949, as well as the National Orchestra of France in the early 1950s.

It is hoped that all those members of the Koussevitzky Recordings Society who can furnish additional information on the orchestras Koussevitzky conducted after leaving the Boston Symphony will do so in order that a complete compilation of Koussevitzky's guest appearances in his last years can finally be made. Please write to Tom Godell at the Society's Carbondale address (on the back page). ▲

Continued from page 6

Another thing I would like to see happen here is the resurrection of the opera department. That was so close to his heart, and perhaps one of his proudest days—or nights—was in this building when he stood and made a little speech before the American premiere of Benjamin Britten's opera *Peter Grimes*, which had been commissioned through his Foundation. He spoke very glowingly of the opera, but the real pride was that he was able to bring together in this building singers, conductors, scenery, lighting—everything that goes into making an opera. Another aspect of his universality was the bringing together of the arts. He had very grandiose plans about this. I remember every year he would discuss with me the possibility of what he called a "pagan". It took me a long time to know what he meant by a "pagan". I had visions of bacchanalian rites and people going mad with tortures and drunk with wines. What he meant was a pageant.

He had it all figured out in that decline there near the west barn. There is a natural amphitheater. Every once in a while we'd go down there and test it out acoustically. I would sing something, and he would stand at the other end and listen; he would sing something and I'd stand there. He said, "This is perfect for our pagan"; and he would assign to me the task of making a pagan. I'm not so keen on pagans myself. They can turn out to be very corny and overblown, but one of these days we're going to have a pagan, and we're going to have it every year, once we get the hang of how to do it in an unpretentious way. What he meant by a pageant, of course, was something again that would bring together the arts, and even the sciences, and would bring together great minds that could collaborate and feed one another. Out of this would come something quite new.

I hate to talk about Koussevitzky in personal terms because it always winds up being jokes and making fun of his accent. I've only one reminiscence which popped into my mind

when Seiji was talking about his first interview with me in Berlin. I suddenly remembered my first interview with Koussevitzky. I'd never met him, although I'd grown up in Boston with him as the great conductor—this remote figure that I would see from way up in the second balcony. I never expected to meet him; I'd never thought of being a conductor. That hadn't occurred to me until long after I graduated from school. He was just somebody I worshipped. After I did graduate from school, I went to the Curtis Institute for a season and studied with Fritz Reiner—that was 1940.

I read in the paper somewhere that Serge Koussevitzky was opening a school to be known as the Berkshire Music Center, and I decided, of course, that I had to go. So I rounded up all the letters of recommendation I could—one was from Fritz Reiner, one was from Aaron, bless him, Roy Harris, the various musicians I had met of prowess and dignity and importance. Armed with this sheaf of letters, I arrived at Symphony Hall and was brought into the Green Room shaking. I can't tell you what a way I was shaking. The Green Room is very impressive. It's full of statuary, had a bust of Sibelius, and, of course, a bust of Koussevitzky. It was gloriously furnished, and it seemed to me the most palatial place in the world. Very different from the Green Room at the Shed here, which is a kind of backwoods outhouse. With knees trembling, I was ushered into the presence of a great man. I presented these letters, which he didn't even read; and he said, "Please sit down." Richard spoke of the charisma; he spoke of the grand seigneurism, of the way he made you feel at ease. This is all perfectly true. I suddenly found myself sitting down and feeling rather comfortable. He asked me about myself. He asked me about Fritz Reiner, of course, slightly mischievously—as one conductor does ask about another. "How do you find your experience with Reiner? He's a good man—yes...good man." We talked about one thing and another, and suddenly he said, "But of course I will take you in my class." I thought, "This is incredible. I mean, isn't he

going to ask me to beat three or play the piano or do something to audition?" Nothing. And he hadn't even read those letters.

I suddenly realized that there was an innate genetic connection from that moment when he said, "Please sit down", and I sat down. It was a love affair. It was a father-and-son relationship if you like, a surrogate father, but it was more than that. I can't even name it. There was something we had in common that I call innate. We share some genes; I don't know where they come from, but we had them in common, from that moment until the moment he died. I think I was the last one to talk to him. The night before he died I held him in my arms in the hospital, and we talked for three hours. The last thing I remember him saying to me was "Keep the Tanglewood dream growing." 'Growing' is the key word. Tanglewood is here; the dream is palpable. But it must keep growing; otherwise it will stagnate. And I come back to the word 'complacency'. Let's for God's sake, avoid it. ▲

Coming in our next issue:

*An interview with
composer Arthur Berger*

*Koussevitzky as the
Rodzinskis Saw Them*

Mini-Maestrino II

*...and more reviews of
the latest Koussevitzky
and Stokowski
compact discs*

CD Bronzing

Not long after the CD was introduced in 1981, questions concerning the longevity of the medium began to arise. Since the mid-eighties, when the CD began to supplant the LP as the primary consumer format for pre-recorded music, rumors of “laser rot” have periodically appeared to challenge industry claims that CDs would remain playable for at least a century or more. All but one rumor have proved groundless; any problems that have occurred have been traced to specific, improperly manufactured batches or releases where a manifest breach of quality control occurred.

One reported fault, however, has rightly continued to concern collectors. In the late '80s and early '90s several hundred titles produced at Philips & Du Pont Optical UK Limited (PDO) were made with a lacquer that was unable to withstand the long-term corrosive effects of the sulphur normally found in paper used for CD booklets and inserts. Lacquer is used as the clear, plastic coating that protects the shiny aluminum layer from which the digitized data is read to produce music. Aluminum is especially susceptible to oxidation when it comes into contact with air. After the aluminum layer of a CD becomes oxidized, it loses the ability to reflect accurately the laser beam that is used to read the digitized data. If the lacquer is porous and allows air to oxidize the aluminum layer, the CD will eventually become unplayable. It is possible that most or even all of the CDs manufactured by PDO during the period of substandard lacquer will become unplayable in time.

Complete and definitive information has been difficult to obtain, but it has been reported that this problem may be specific to discs manufactured within a 16-18 month period overlapping the turn of the decade from the 1980s to the 1990s. During the defective lacquer interval, PDO was contracted to produce discs for a number of labels, including Hyperion, Pearl, Academy Sound & Vision, CRD, Archiv, Deutsche Grammophon, London/Decca, and Unicorn-Kanchana. Most of the discs made during this period have the words “MADE IN U.K. BY PDO” etched in the inner hub.

PDO anticipates problems will develop with discs produced for all of these labels. Collectors who have these labels in their collection should check them for discoloration. Breakdown of the lacquer is characterized by a gradual “bronzing” of the disc starting at the outer edge and creeping inward; usually the bronzing appears first on the label side. (The slight yellowish hue that some discs display is entirely normal and should not be confused with fatal bronzing.) The rate of corrosion is variable, and not every CD of a given release will develop this problem. Eventually affected discs start producing digital errors, especially in the last few tracks, which lie on the outer margins of the disc. (Unlike vinyl records, CDs track

from inside to outside.) These errors usually sound like the clicks and pops heard on LPs.

I have spoken with Mrs. Pat Burns at the PDO Helpline. PDO's stated policy is to replace CDs that become defective. Defective discs eligible for replacement are defined either as showing a visually advanced stage of bronzing (with or without audible defect), or as discs having been manufactured by PDO that are audibly defective. PDO has pledged that they will re-press new CDs as long as 20 years from now if the customer notices the corrosion problem, so there is no need to act before a deadline. PDO suggests that customers inspect any suspect CDs at six-month intervals.

Customers may contact PDO directly for replacement of eligible discs. Each CD for which a replacement is sought should be identified by label and complete catalog number at the time of replacement request. PDO may be contacted at: Philips & Du Pont Optical UK Ltd., Philips Road, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB15RZ (FAX: +44 1 254 54729; TEL: +44 1 254 52448).

Though potentially a substantial number of discs were affected, it is important to remember that the defects resulted from the use of substandard materials and were not symptomatic of a deficiency in digital compact disc technology itself. Well into the second decade of mass production of CDs, no fault inherent in the medium itself has yet been identified in this product.

To date, three of my Koussevitzky compact discs have been affected by the "bronzing" phenomenon described above by Mr Lampson—the two-disc Sibelius set and the all-Prokofiev recording, both on Pearl. I first noticed the discoloration at the beginning of this year, but since the discs sounded perfectly fine, I thought no more about it. Then, while preparing my review of the new transfer of the Sibelius Seventh Symphony, I listened again to my Pearl CD. Suddenly, I heard the kind of distortion that is so common on worn LPs: a swishing and crackling noise in the fortissimo passages that became more pronounced the louder the music became and the closer I got to the end of the disc.

Lampson alerted me to the fact that these discs might have been pressed by PDO. There was, however, no indication of this on the disc itself or the enclosed booklet. So, I contacted Mark Obert-Thorn. He confirmed that these were indeed PDO pressings, and he advised me to mail them, minus their jewel boxes, directly to the manufacturing plant at the above address. I did just that, and within a few short weeks pristine new copies of the discs arrived. The cost of shipping the discs to England was \$15—or just slightly less than the cost of a new Pearl CD—ED. ▲

Letters to the Editor

I had hoped to include these letters in our last publication, but there simply wasn't room. I hope that the authors will forgive me for the delay. —Tom Godell

Great to have the Tanglewood programs from 1940–1950. As to 1942, (in which I played principal cello for all concerts) I don't recall any BSO members playing with us in the BMC orchestra. Where did you or the author get that information? I'm sure I would have remembered, especially if any first chair BSO members had sat in with us. As far as I know, that didn't happen. If I'm wrong, I'd like to be corrected.

Robert Ripley, Westwood MA

Mr. DeKay responds:

Inasmuch as all my sources were secondary at best, I am happy to stand corrected by one who was on the scene in the summer of 1942. Further, I am very pleased to know that as a participant in some of the concerts listed, Mr. Ripley found my compilation of interest.

Koussevitzky was a passionate conductor who, like Leopold Stokowski, did not mind leaving the markings of composers for his own interpretation. No matter what or how much the musicians gave, Koussy was always ordering MORE! MORE! MORE! No matter how eloquent, his left hand begged for more nuance in sound, in feeling, in *gemutlichkeit!*

My wife and I once planned our New York trips to coincide with the Boston Symphony's visits to Carnegie Hall. We also travelled to Bloomington, Indiana, where

the Boston Symphony visited Indiana University's then new auditorium where one could "hear a pin drop", according to the acousticians. Well, we heard those glorious brasses in Koussy's rendition of Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler* Symphony—and we saw from our nearby seats the blood vessels pop upward at the brow of the most famous double bass player ever to become a symphony conductor.

One had to have heard Koussevitzky in person to get the full power of his message. But this does not denigrate the marvelous records he made or the people who still love them, Lord bless them. When we bought the recording on Victor of his *La Mer* of Debussy, we had recently heard him do it in Boston. The recording was so fine that, had one not heard the live performance which well may have been preparatory to the recording session, happiness would have been complete. That is, had one not heard the live one, when the waves of the furious ocean crashed against the piers, and the breakers rolled in on high tide. Likewise, his Shostakovich Fifth or Sibelius Second were unique to my experience in excitement. Were they according to Hoyle—or Shostakovich or Sibelius? Does it matter, when the sheer joy of listening drove us in the audience to roaring, rising acclamation as a claue of 100% rooters? Not at all.

Koussevitzky with the Boston Symphony, and later Munch, did two of the great Beethoven Ninths that I have ever heard in live performance. (And we heard Toscanini in the Ninth and in his own great *La Mer*, which did not send the waves of Debussy quite so high or so hard.)

William W. Weaver, Louisville KY

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 Antonio de Almeida, 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, and William Schuman 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 the publications for that year. Back issues of our publications are also available. For a complete list, contact the Society at the above address.