

**IN MEMORIAM KOUSSEVITZKY (1901-1978)**

Olga Koussevitzky spent the last part of her life carrying on the work of SERGE KOUSSEVITZKY — notably via the Koussevitzky Music Foundation, which continues to commission new works, and the American International Music Fund, Inc., which furthered the cause of new music on records. When she died on Jan. 5, 1978, CRI decided to honor her memory along with that of her husband, by a record that would highlight various facets of the Koussevitzky legacy.

**SERGE KOUSSEVITZKY**

**CONCERTO FOR DOUBLE BASS AND ORCHESTRA (1902)**

**Gary Karr, bass; Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra; Alfredo Antonini, conductor**

*Allegro, Andante, Tempo 1*

Koussevitzky, whose achievements as conductor of the Boston Symphony were legendary long before his death in 1951, and whose championing of new American music has never been equaled by other conductors, began his career as a performer on the largest member of the viol family, the double-bass. He was only 14 when, as a scholarship pupil in Moscow, he chose to study this bulky instrument, and only 20 when he replaced his teacher at Moscow's Philharmonic Conservatory. In 1898 he appeared as double-bass soloist in Berlin, immediately bepedestalling himself in the historical procession begun by Domenico Dragonetti, a century before, and followed by Giovanni Bottesini, half a century later. Koussevitzky played on one of the three instruments made by the celebrated 17th century violin maker, Amati.

Traveling as a recognized virtuoso, the young Koussevitzky soon felt the shortage of music for his rare instrument, so he created some. In addition to transcriptions of music written for other instruments, he composed several short original works, and, in 1902, completed his CONCERTO FOR DOUBLE BASS AND ORCHESTRA. He first performed the concerto in Moscow, then in Berlin and Leipzig under Nikisch, in Dresden under Schuch, in Paris under Colonne. In 1905, the young virtuoso turned his energies to conducting, and in 1910 founded his own Symphony Orchestra in Moscow. In 1924, following three years of conducting activities in Europe, he was appointed conductor of the Boston Symphony.

In America, Koussevitzky's instrumental virtuosity remained a legend until he received an Honorary Doctorate of Music from Brown University (1926), at which point he felt greater confidence in his playing than in his speaking voice and responded with a solo. He appeared again at special benefit performances in 1928, in New York and in 1929 in Boston (when he made his only recording as a bassist, for Victor), and then put his Amati aside forever.

The only manuscript score of the CONCERTO remained for years in Koussevitzky's personal library, until Alfredo Antonini re-discovered it and, with his customary thoroughness, set about making it ready for use.

When searching for a soloist equal to the task of performing the Concerto on his CBS-TV program, he immediately thought of GARY KARR, the young Californian who had obtained special permission to use Koussevitzky's own treasured Amati.

**WALTER PISTON**

**CONCERTO FOR STRING QUARTET, WIND INSTRUMENTS AND PERCUSSION (1976)**

**Emerson Quartet (Eugene Drucker, Philip Setzer, Lawrence Dutton, Eric Wilson); Juilliard Orchestra; Sixten Ehrling, conductor**  
*Confuoco, Lento, Allegro energico*

WALTER PISTON (b. 1894, Rockland, Maine, d. 1976, Belmont, Mass.) was one of the most skillful of American composers, a great teacher, a brilliant theoretician, author of textbooks from which generations of musicians learned their craft, and a two-time recipient of Koussevitzky commissions. When he was ten years old, his family moved to Boston, where he later studied draftsmanship and then art, but after some experience as a saxophonist in a café and in an army band during the First World War, he turned to music and entered Harvard College at the age of twenty-five. Following his graduation he studied composition for two years with Nadia Boulanger in Paris, returned to Harvard as a member of the faculty in 1926, and remained there until his retirement in 1959.

Despite the great amount of time Piston spent on his theoretical works and in his classroom at Harvard, he composed a formidable amount of music — almost all for orchestra or instrumental ensemble. This CONCERTO, one of his last works, was written for the string quartet of the Portland (Maine) Symphony Orchestra, he said. “after they gave me the finest performance of my Fourth Quartet that I ever heard . . . I had a wonderful time writing it . . . In most concertos for quartets, the soloists are swamped by the strings of the orchestra, so I wrote music, for winds and percussion only.” It is in one compact movement that was described by the composer as “a set of variations, in a way, with the themes growing out of one another.” The music falls into three principal sections, in the fast-slow-fast sequence of the classical concerto.

Most of the Concerto was written in 1976, while Piston was hospitalized with a broken hip. He was unable to attend the first performance, which was given on October 26, 1976, and less than three weeks later, in his eighty-third year, he died.

The CONCERTO was recorded following a performance by the Juilliard Orchestra that was dedicated to the memory of Olga Koussevitzky.

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*(Original Liner Notes from CRI LP Jacket)*