

LINER NOTES

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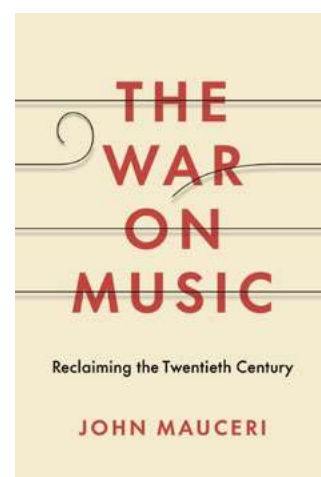
+ 1937 Ysaÿe Competition

A Musician for All Seasons

Conductor John Mauceri in Conversation with Roger Pines



For five decades, John Mauceri has had an extraordinary impact on musical life internationally. One of America's most celebrated conductors, he is also a writer, lecturer, teacher, and producer. Mauceri is responsible for introducing countless important yet unjustly neglected works to the public, especially in twentieth-century repertoire. He has earned many prestigious honors, among them the Grammy, Emmy, Diapason d'Or, Olivier, and Echo KLASSIK awards. No other major conductor has begun in Broadway repertoire, then established and maintained a significant career in operatic and symphonic repertoire, while maintaining a passionate commitment to musical theater and film music. Here he speaks with Roger Pines about his unique career and his revelatory new book, *The War on Music: Reclaiming the Twentieth Century* - see [book review on page 195](#) and a profile of Roger Pines on [page 76](#).



Speaking in March 2022 via Zoom, Mauceri clearly remains grateful that the performing arts entered his life so early. Being a native New Yorker gave him access to great musical theater and opera onstage. Pioneering arts television helped, too (he saw his first opera, *Madame Butterfly*, on NBC Opera Theater). His godmother took him to Broadway shows, and as a high-school freshman he heard his first Met performance. He began sending requests to the box office – “I’d say, ‘I’m 14 years old and would like to hear Mme. Nilsson sing *Aida*,’” Mauceri recalls. “They started to know who I was. Those blessed people almost always gave me exactly what I asked for.” He attended so frequently in those years that if

one asks him about something happening at the Met, it’s likely that he was there. “Here’s the thing that makes that story: in every case, I started as a fan – as an observer – and then I became a participant.” The same was true in musical-theater performances: “I saw Barbara Cook do *Carousel*, and then a few months *The Music Man*, and then 50 years later she was standing next to me, singing with me.”

In certain artists, Mauceri immediately recognized extraordinary individuality. “Stokowski carried a sound with him, Lennie [Bernstein] and Karajan had their sound.” He also learned how sound affects an audience in the theater and the special artist/audience relationship that results and that recordings,



Mauceri: "At the end of 'Un bel dì' in Tebaldi's *Butterfly*, the B-flat was so enormous that I can still remember the feeling it gave."

of course, can't duplicate. Mauceri notes, for example, that hearing Renata Tebaldi on disc gives little idea of the size of her voice: "[The Met] was the house where the acoustics so worked with the complex wave form she was emitting." At the end of "Un bel dì" in Tebaldi's *Butterfly*, "the B-flat was so enormous that I can still remember the feeling it gave." Mauceri also mentions Maria Callas's now-legendary return to the Met as *Tosca*; at her entrance, "it was as if there was an electric shock sent through all 3,900 of us in the opera house." In recalling all the great artists of his youth, Mauceri notes that "they taught me about opening up to that communication. I call it 'alternating current' – the audience gives back and inspires performers to give more."

As both an undergraduate and graduate student at Yale, Mauceri anticipated making a career as a composer. He wondered, however, why every university placed such

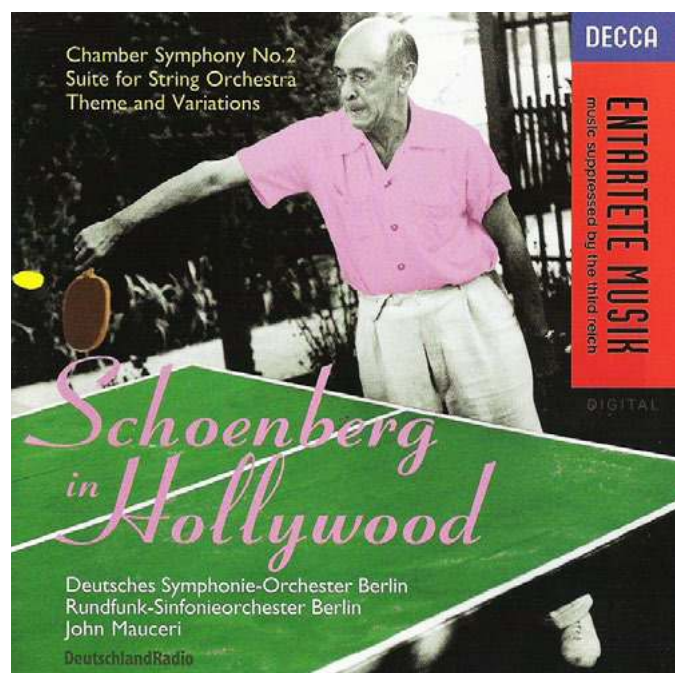
an emphasis on composers who wrote only in twelve-tone serial technique. When he began studying conducting in his junior year, "something shifted in me. Another voice, another composer, that's always a good thing, but there's something else that music requires – the kindness of not strangers but lovers to translate it." He also realized that so much little-known music needed to be played, promoted, and shared. Performing it would be "a service, and in service to an art form that is so quintessentially human."

Having first met Leonard Bernstein at Tanglewood in 1971, two years later Mauceri conducted the composer's comic operetta *Candide* for director Harold Prince's revival in Brooklyn, 17 years after the original production. When Bernstein asked him to conduct *Candide* in its transfer to Broadway, the offer came just a day after Pierre Boulez had invited him to be his assistant at the New York Philharmonic. "I said yes to both of them, knowing I couldn't do them because they conflicted." Fortunately, "that's where God intercedes: the New York Philharmonic goes on strike!" By the time *Candide* arrived on Broadway, Mauceri was already immersed in opera conducting. Much as he loved Broadway, he wasn't interested in being a Broadway music director, although he has subsequently undertaken that position twice: for the 1982 revival of *On Your Toes* (for which he enjoyed being one of the producers) and for *Song and Dance* in 1986.

Mauceri knew he'd be denigrated for his association with Bernstein and other musical-theater composers, which was so crucial in his artistic life. "Committing career suicide' was the line," he recalls. "I once said, having conducted three productions of *Lulu*, that it's nullified by one 'Carousel Waltz.' It was one thing to do *Fledermaus*, because that's European, but once you start messing around with Broadway, you lose all your credentials – you kiss your Shostakovich goodbye." Mauceri's attitude was, "I'll survive and learn more from these experiences."

His career trajectory was rapid and impressive. He was soon a highly successful guest conductor with most of the major American opera companies and orchestras, while performing extensively in Europe and teaching at

Yale. His work as music director at Scottish Opera (1987-1993) was particularly fulfilling, highlighted by *Lulu* and *Salome*, plus a fair amount of Verdi and important productions of several American works, *Candide* and *Regina*. A turning point came in 1991, with two momentous events: the launching of Decca's Entartete Musik series, with Mauceri learning and recording music previously banned by the Nazis; and the Los Angeles Philharmonic's creation of the new Hollywood Bowl Orchestra, with Mauceri as music director.

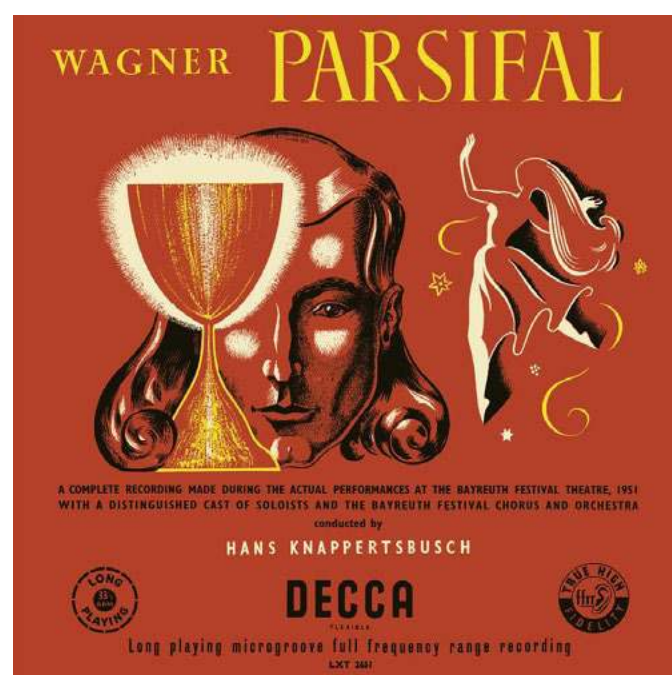


Above: "Schoenberg in Hollywood", which included the Chamber Symphony No. 2 Op. 38b. This was just one of several Mauceri-led titles in Decca's extraordinary Entartete Musik series: © 448 619-2, a landmark in recorded history.

At the Bowl, it was vital to Mauceri to play music written in Los Angeles by Schoenberg and Stravinsky during their years there. Its neglect by the Philharmonic stunned Mauceri, who was also surprised that the orchestra played no film music. "I had this learning curve: who were Rózsa, Korngold, Waxman, Steiner? And here was the moment of shock: seeing the names on Hitler's list [of forbidden music], and then the names in Hollywood – it was the same list!" He learned that these men, during their formative years in Europe, were the *Wunderkinder* of their time. "At the

same time, I learned of this incredible repertoire that Paul Hindemith had written in America. I started to put together a new version of the 20th century, which is the subject of *The War on Music*. "

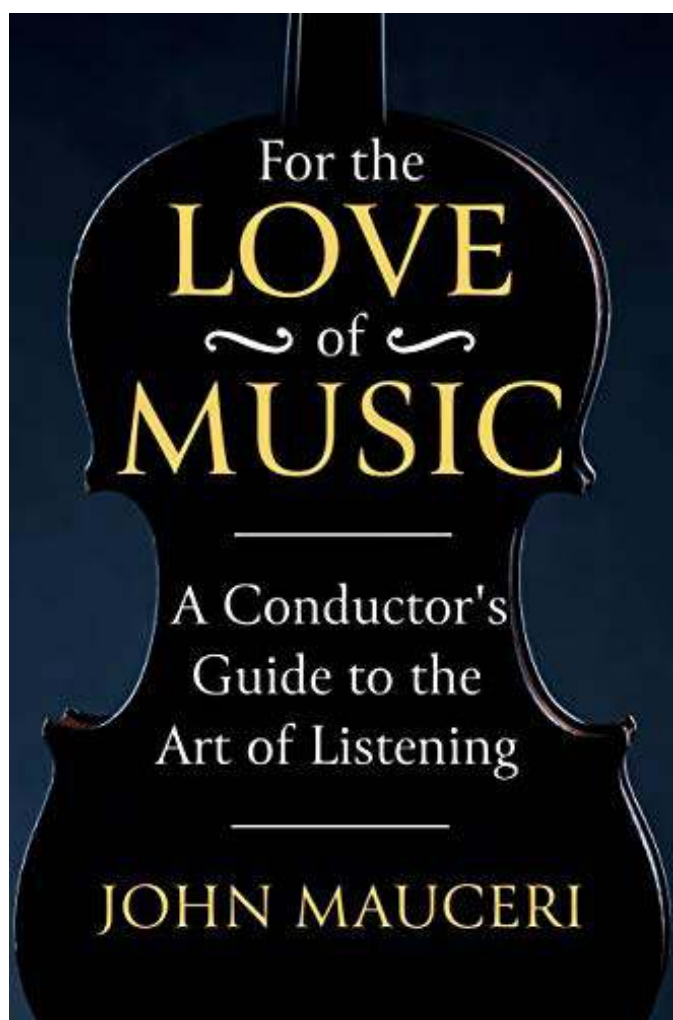
Film music had actually long been fundamental to Mauceri's understanding of movies, as far back as *The Ten Commandments*, *The Robe*, *Ben-Hur*, and *Cleopatra*. "What would you do with [this music]? How could you conduct it? Aaron Copland owned his music, and you went to Boosey & Hawkes and rented the music. But you couldn't perform *Ben-Hur* even if you wanted to."



Above: Knappertsbusch "live" 1951 *Parsifal* on Decca (● LXT 2651-6), a recording that influenced Mauceri:

"The recording captures the acoustic of Bayreuth. Even though it's a mono recording I feel the room in the engineering of it."

Mauceri's 15 years leading concerts of highly varied repertoire at the 18,000-seat Bowl were hugely successful, but the Philharmonic saw him as the pops conductor, "and they were marketing Esa-Pekka [Salonen] as the serious conductor. It was this idea of a binary world in music – there was a line and you shouldn't cross it." That was frustrating, in that the Bowl concerts had, in fact, included works by such formidable composers as Ligeti and Maxwell Davies. The orchestra played many



Above: John Mauceri's well-received 2019 book *For the Love of Music • A Conductor's Guide to the Art of Listening*. No less than pianist and composer Stephen Hough has written of it:

"This delightful book is not so much the opening of a door as an affectionate hand on the arm, guiding the reader with enthusiasm and intelligence into a world of beauty which reaches to the very heart of what makes human life of value."

concerts with some kind of theme. For Ligeti's *Atmosphères* in 2001, "we did a concert called '2001' where we played Ligeti but also *Planet of the Apes* and *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*."

The conductor takes pride in the music he's introduced to audiences worldwide – for example, programming Korngold for North German orchestras who'd never heard the composer's name before. (He also led Korngold's music for the 100th-birthday celebration in Vienna.) Of course, Mauceri was aware that his concerts of rarely heard music weren't

necessarily going to be big box office. "What people don't understand is that those who do those concerts make no money. We're just gig workers who do our job, we take our music and our bag, we show up, rehearse, and go home. [But] at a certain point I said, 'I know this is my calling.'"

As a writer, Mauceri began with theater reviews when he was in junior high. He's continued to write regularly, including frequent lectures, contributions to numerous publications in print and online (among the latter, many pieces for *The Huffington Post*), and two previous books – *Maestros and Their Music: The Art and Alchemy of Conducting* (2017) and *For the Love of Music: The Art of Listening* (2019). While enjoying all his writing projects, he confesses nonetheless that "I don't think music needs words to interpret it." At the same time, of course, he relishes sharing any information that can illuminate a listener's experience, especially in opera – "why it exists, why we created it, why we've always sung our most important stories, whether *Beowulf* or the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* or high Mass at the Vatican or *Aida*. It's what we are as humans."

Mauceri wrote *The War on Music* for "people who are curious about music and politics and art and want to know about the 20th century. I think it's important to remind people of what was happening then and what's happening now." He addresses some very important issues: "One was to look at the standard repertoire. Why was the last Italian opera in the standard repertoire [*Turandot*] written in 1924? When Puccini died on the operating table, why did it end an entire genre of opera? Why don't we know the operas of composers written in Puccini's lifetime? Hindemith, Schoenberg, and Weill wrote valuable pieces in Berlin and Vienna, then they come to America and we don't play any of their music! Schoenberg died in '51, Hindemith in '63, Korngold in '57. Where is that repertory? Why does the standard repertoire that we hear in concerts stop in 1930?"

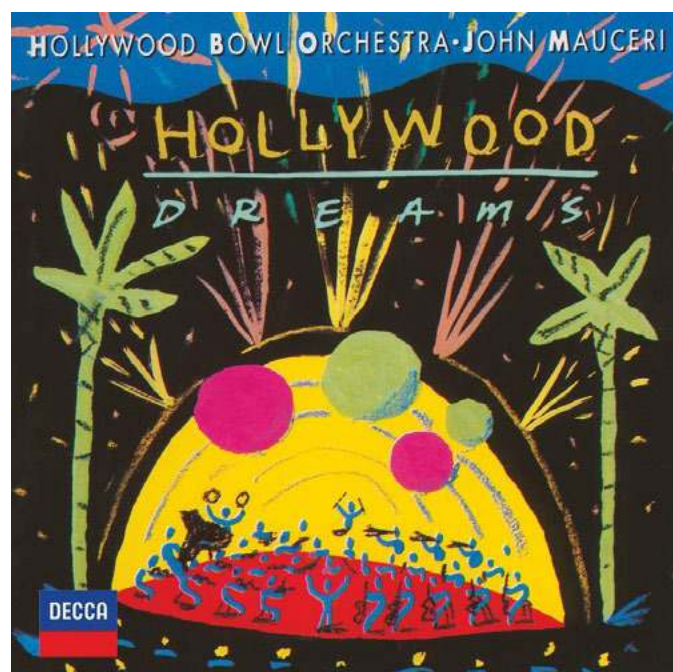
In working on the book, crucial to Mauceri's understanding was "a sudden embrace of this thin line of very intellectual and angry men who were born in the rubble of the war and said very strong things about what music should be, and

why American universities and critics accepted this as truth.” Mauceri is addressing the increasing complexity of music for much of the 20th century: “We look at Beethoven as more complex than Mozart, Wagner more complex than Beethoven, and we get into this total saturation harmonically so that every note can be played at the same time.” The book moves from *The Rite of Spring* to *Pierrot Lunaire*, and then the increasing dominance of serial music, with Pierre Boulez then becoming “the most articulate representative of the idea that anyone who doesn’t write twelve-tone music is of no worth whatsoever... Who is playing Pierre Boulez’s music anywhere in the world now? Yet he was the one who articulated what was valuable in music in our time.” Whether with Stockhausen, Xenakis, or any number of others, “critics embraced the institutional avant-garde...the iconoclastic side of being shocking, taking something and breaking it apart.”

The continuum of music is hugely important to Mauceri. He brings up a Jewish composer, Italy’s Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, whom Mussolini’s racial laws forced to move to America in 1938. Castelnuovo-Tedesco, whose music is little played today, taught in Los Angeles, where his students included – wait for it – Nelson Riddle, Henry Mancini, Jerry Goldsmith, André Previn, and John Williams! “These are the stories of what actually happened in the 20th century – stories I feared might get lost.”

Mauceri confesses to a certain sadness thinking about “the composers whose lives were cut in half,” says Mauceri. “Heitor Villa-Lobos has disappeared because of the total embrace of the avant-garde. You come to someone like Egon Wellesz, who may be famous for the first biography of Schoenberg, but you listen to Egon Wellesz’s music and you say, ‘This is such beautiful music!’ We are in a deficit. You’re ‘in deficit’ now, as a doctor would say. This is linking a continuity of human expression that went right through the 20th century. ‘Postmodern’ and ‘post-verismo’ are fake words. When did that actually seep into the popular culture? It happened in the 20th century.”

The further the standard repertoire moves into the past, it’s harder, in Mauceri’s opinion, “for governments to support institutions



Above: The Decca album “Hollywood Dreams”, featuring music by Korngold, Steiner, and Waxman, among others, all brought off with impeccable élan by John Mauceri (© 478 6673). The entire Hollywood Bowl series is worthy of any collection.

and harder for orchestras to cater to young audiences. Where’s the continuity in the programming?” He asks the questions, “how do you link Beethoven to our life today? Once you get to Mahler and Strauss, where does it go? It goes to Hollywood. It goes to those composers who were writing music, not “movie music.” By writing the book, “we can show that line. It’s obvious, but you may not hear it in the concert hall or on the opera stage.”

Mauceri brings up the example of *Casablanca*, “one of the greatest films of all time, but one reason for that is that Max Steiner wrote the score. He was given a song he didn’t want, but it becomes a leitmotif using Wagner’s principles. Max knew Richard Strauss and the Johann Strauss family, then he comes to Hollywood and writes *King Kong* and *Casablanca* – that’s a continuity that can’t be erased. But until that music is played as concert music, it becomes a separate genre, and it’s not separate.”

The book quotes a 25-year-old critic (a footnote identifies him as Alex Ross, writing in 1995) who commented when reviewing a work of Korngold, “Who can fault music for

giving pleasure?” Mauceri says today, “It would really be valuable if he’d said, ‘I changed my mind about Korngold. I actually like his music and I’m proud to say it.’” The conductor likens such a situation to the men in everyone’s favorite epic film crying out one after the other in solidarity, “I’m Spartacus!” But Mauceri declares, ‘I don’t want to spend my life with my finger pointing ‘J’accuse.’”

On the other hand, Mauceri does view his book as something of a call to action, where re-discovery of neglected 20th-century repertoire is concerned. “You have to have enlightened marketing departments! You have to ask them to be smarter. The requirements would change significantly. I would say that there are different ways to do this, but the most important way to find connectivity with your audience.”

When the word “music” comes to mind, “people think of notes and sound. Those notes are the excuse for what music really is. Real music opens us into a world of spirituality and connectivity. That can happen with a really complex modern piece, with a simple song like ‘Amazing Grace,’ a comic operetta like *Candide*, with a dark and serious work like the *Pathétique* [Symphony] of Tchaikovsky, or a fugue by Bach. Style is irrelevant! The only thing that makes it great is whether it connects with you.”

— Roger Pines

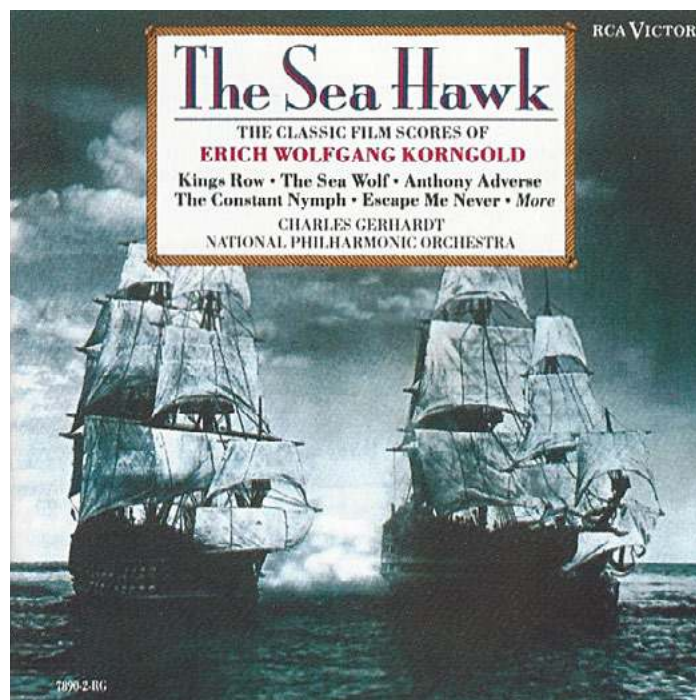
Recordings that have influenced *John Mauceri*

Film Music — The Gerhardt classic film score series on RCA

Mauceri: “Charles Gerhardt’s sets on RCA of Korngold, Waxman, and Steiner were transformative. Once I heard modern recordings of the original orchestrations of those refugee composers... that was the key to my understanding of the greatness of an entire generation of composers who came to this country.”



Above: Dutton-Vocalion CD (© CDLK 4633) featuring excerpts from film scores by Korngold, Steiner, Waxman, et al. in demonstration-quality sound.



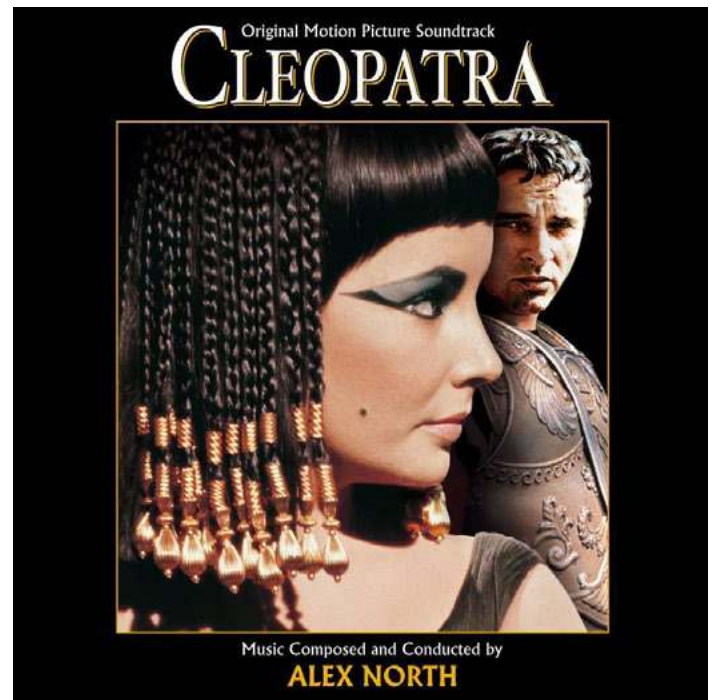
Above: RCA Victor CD (© CDLK 7890-2-RG) containing the complete score to *The Sea Hawk* with solo violinist Sydney Sax and engineered by Kenneth Wilkinson.

Other classic film score recordings



Above: Sunset Records release (● SLS 50315) of Elmer Bernstein conducting his soundtrack to Cecil B. DeMille's 1956 film *The Ten Commandments* starring Charlton Heston. Mauceri:

"I was a kid when that movie came out, with Elmer's score. What Cecil B. DeMille said about this young man's ability to write Wagnerian leitmotifs linked the epic Hollywood score to the operas I was also first learning."



Above: The Varèse Sarabande 2CD (© 302 066 224 2) issue of Alex North's complete score to *Cleopatra*. Mauceri:

"I remember thinking I'd love to conduct this someday, even before I think I knew I was going to be a conductor, because of its mixture, being so modern with quarter-tones and jazz for the African music, and non-tonality and the use of African instruments, but with the ability to write beautiful melodies."

Opera recordings



Left: Solti's legendary traversal of Wagner's "Ring Cycle" on Decca (© 478 6748). Mauceri:

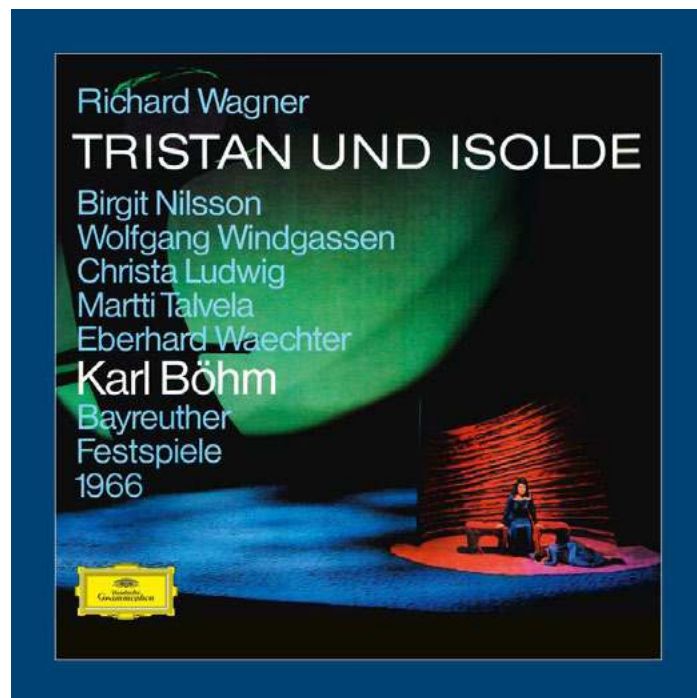
"No matter what you say about other Ring recordings that have proliferated since, [Solti/Culshaw] has to be the benchmark of the 20th century when it comes to Wagner recordings...It is the great legacy of what recorded sound and great engineering can do."

Other opera recordings



Above: Furtwängler's stirring account of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, here on Warner (© 567 6212). Mauceri:

"The Furtwängler Tristan from 1952 is how I learned the piece. Something about the mysterious acoustic of the recording is like going back in time – not to great engineering, but to the way it captures a great energy."



Above: Böhm's *Tristan und Isolde*, recorded "live" at Bayreuth in 1966 - DG (© 479 7530. Mauceri:

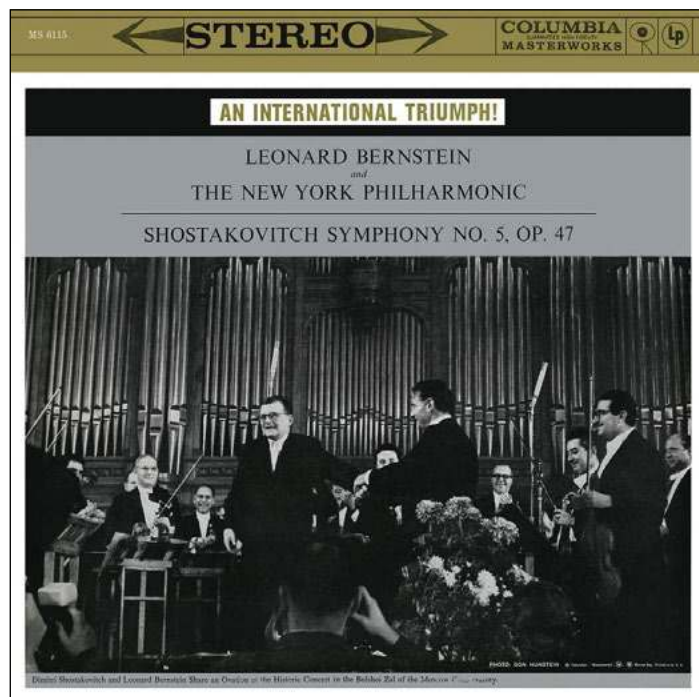
"I was at Bayreuth in 1966 for Böhm's Tristan sitting in the first row in the middle seat, 30 feet from Nilsson singing Isolde. Those two performances have become emblematic of my Tristan world."



Left: Victor de Sabata leading a remarkable cast in a stunning rendition of Puccini's *Tosca*, here on Warner (© 2564634103). Mauceri:

"Callas's first Tosca recording, an interesting choice for anybody because it's monaural sound, but it's with Gobbi and the young Di Stefano. It's a testament to a time. If you're going to talk about one recording by Maria Callas, this would have to be it."

Orchestral works



Above: Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic in a searing performance of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5 Op. 47. On Columbia Masterworks ● MS 6115. Mauceri:

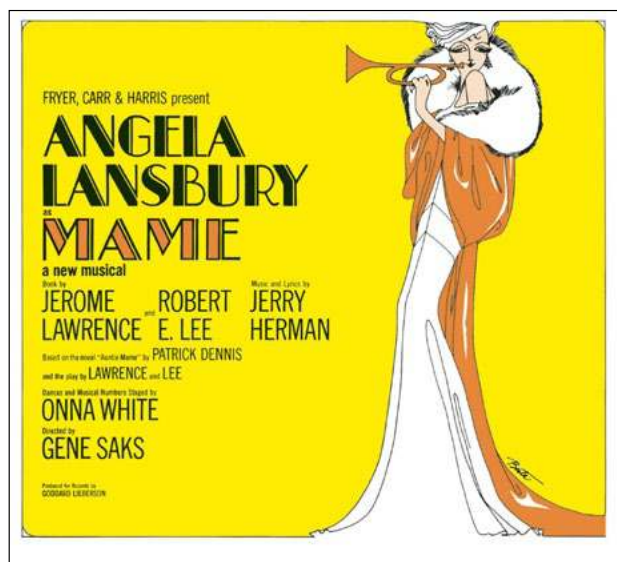
"Bernstein recording the Shostakovich 5th with the New York Philharmonic after the tour to the Soviet Union. That was so historically important, from the point of view of the Cold War. We had a New York orchestra conducted by Leonard Bernstein performing the Shostakovich 5th with Shostakovich in the audience – one of America's Cold War triumphs that had an impact on me as a teenager. The recording was my introduction to Shostakovich."



Above: Stravinsky conducts his 1910 score to The Firebird. On Columbia Masterworks ● MS 6328. Mauceri:

"Columbia's Stravinsky series, produced by Goddard Lieberson, was truly important to keep abreast with Stravinsky's latest works. These are really important documents, and it says something about Goddard that Columbia could underwrite these losing propositions. You could argue that the three recordings that Stravinsky made of The Rite of Spring tell you a lot. Anyone interested in performance practice would see that Stravinsky got better as a conductor and the orchestras got better. By 1960 he was conducting in a very schematic way."

Broadway



Left: "Mame", with Angela Lansbury in the title role. Music and lyrics by Jerry Herman. On Columbia Masterworks ● WAO-990. Mauceri:

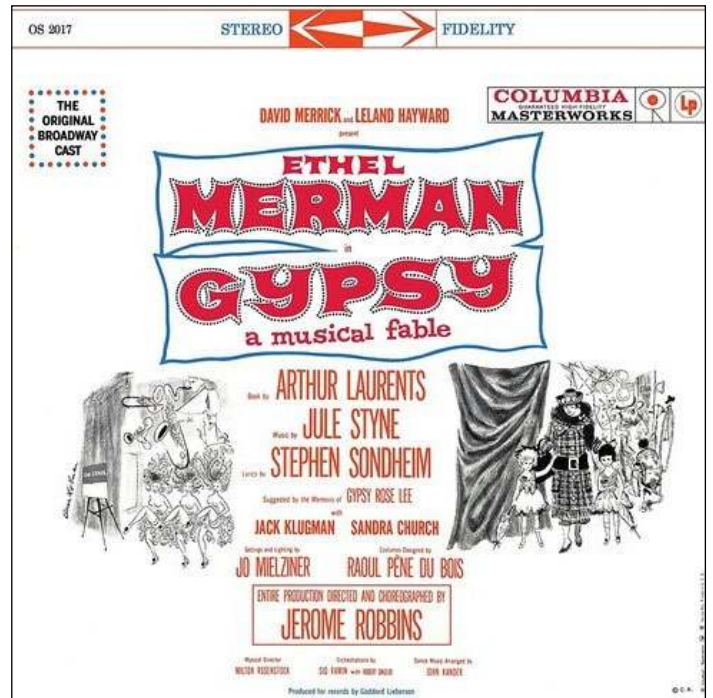
"This was maybe a less important show, but the quality of the orchestrations is amazing. The title number was done in one take, as a run-through. When you listen to it, it's jaw-dropping."

Broadway



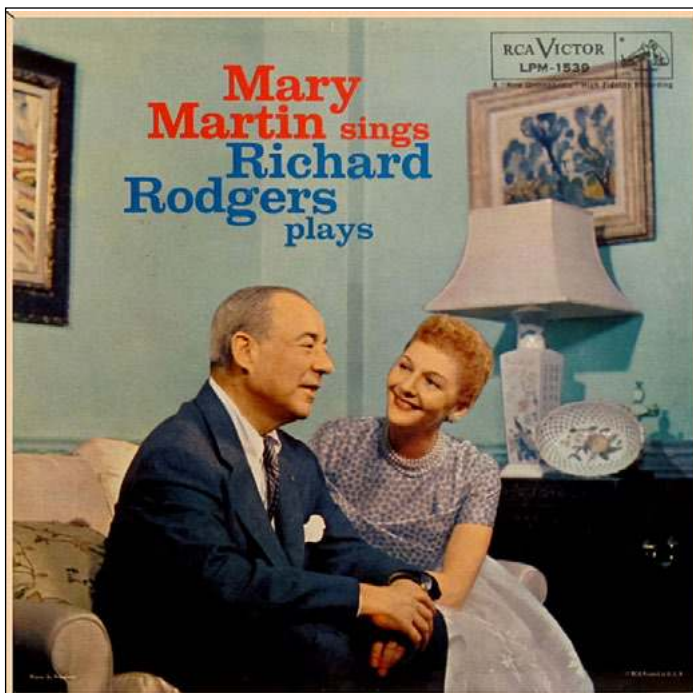
Above: Meredith Wilson's infectious "The Music Man", with the original cast on Capitol ● WAO-990. Mauceri:

"One of the great Broadway cast albums of all time. The performers, the orchestra, the engineering giving it all a brilliant reverberant sound – right from the get-go, you're engaged in something truly exciting."



Above: The incomparable Ethel Merman in "Gypsy". On Columbia Masterworks ● OS 2017. Mauceri:

"It's from 1959, in stereo, and it's perfect in every way. Winds and brass are to the right, strings are to the left, Ethel Merman is in glorious late voice, the orchestrations by Sid Ramin are perfectly captured. It's a document worthy of what the performances were like."



Left: Mary Martin sings Richard Rodgers, on RCA ● LPM-1539. Mauceri:

"The two of them would frequently perform at parties, and someone had the idea of recording them in a studio. They hired Robert Russell Bennett to do some little orchestrations. One song melds into another. The record would be the last thing I'd hear every night as a ten-year-old. Mary Martin was late in her career – it's like she's in the room with you, and you hear every consonant from her. It's pre-digital, LP engineering that is warm and wonderful."

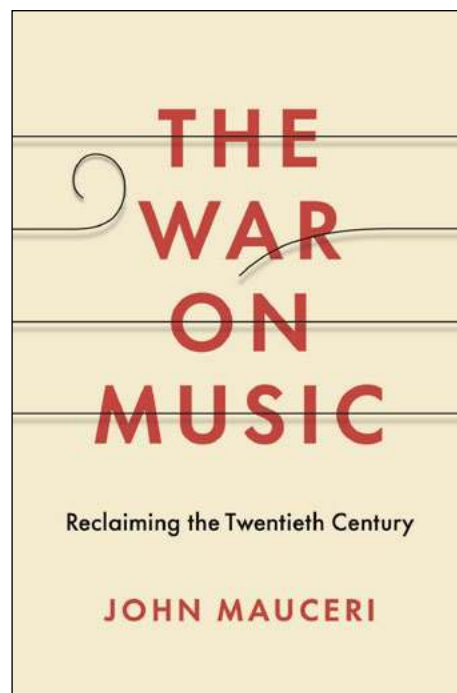
BOOK REVIEW

The War on Music: Reclaiming the Twentieth Century

By John Mauceri

218 pages, Yale University Press, 2022.

John Mauceri, without question one of the most extraordinarily versatile conductors of his generation, has devoted a substantial portion of his career to twentieth-century music, from the toughest symphonic scores to Broadway classics. In his newest book, he succeeds brilliantly in his aim to “reclaim” the century, examining classical music in terms of political events that severely affected what was played and why. At the same time, he reveals details on much music that eminently deserves revival. As a result, we have a book filling a need that has previously gone largely unaddressed.



In prose that speaks throughout with wonderful immediacy to both the layman and the scholar, Mauceri calls on a quite astonishingly broad cultural and historical frame of reference. He’s able to consider his material from a perspective that began as an audience member in his youth (with everything he gained from hearing all the greatest musicians of the 1950s and ‘60s) and continued as a participant – in many cases, an instigator – in any number of important performances over the past five decades, particularly as a passionate advocate of unjustly neglected repertoire.

The book presents a stupendously thought-provoking musical journey. Mauceri begins with what he calls “the twilight of two gods,” Wagner and Brahms – the master of the Gesamtkunstwerk, in contrast to the master of “absolute music.” He then moves into viewing two composers who initially based themselves in serious music’s two crucial centers of activity: Stravinsky in Paris and Schoenberg in Vienna. Their momentously influential works examined here – specifically, the former’s *Le sacre du printemps* and the latter’s *Pierrot Lunaire* – are viewed as “the artistic equivalent of the Big Bang, because music history is generally described as a journey toward ever greater density and complexity.”

Each of the horrific dictators who between them subjugated most of Europe – Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin – created regimes that had a truly cataclysmic effect on the progress of twentieth-century music. Mauceri looks at the impact of each, as it affected the composers who left Europe to resettle in the United States but also those that remained. He speaks, above all, of Hindemith, Schoenberg, Weill, and Korngold, making clear that in Europe during the Cold War years, the works of these composers – if performed at all – were restricted to what they had produced prior to their departure for America. Their American music was, as Mauceri eloquently puts it, “eliminated by the passionate feelings of the vanquished.” The overwhelming domination of modernism, i.e. as regards serial twelve-tone music, led to a generation of composers and critics who managed to virtually eliminate the music of those four men and so many others – both in Europe and America – from public and academic consciousness.

Mauceri notes that Hitler and his associates viewed Schoenberg’s methods as “part of a Jewish conspiracy to destroy German culture. As for the Mussolini period, no opera composer who refused to wear the Fascist pin could have his music played (the conductor had this confirmed in recollections of none other than Gian Carlo Menotti, who’d come to America in his teens). Italian opera was soon at a point where no work written after *Turandot* had any chance of entering the standard repertoire. In Russia, in the decades following Shostakovich’s controversial premiere of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* and the hair-raising early works of Prokofiev, each had his boldness castigated, and each was essentially

In Mauceri's book, the most astonishing content of all – so desperately needed in enhancing our own appreciation of twentieth-century music – is his fervent defense of the composers who chose to make their reputation in Hollywood. Among the greatest names are multiple Oscar-winners Max Steiner, Franz Waxman, and Miklós Rózsa, whose contributions to some of the greatest feature films in American history were monumental. Mauceri makes clear that these composers, whose brilliance was already evident during their early-career years in Europe, produced music that absolutely belongs in today's concert halls.

The War on Music is most certainly a strong call to action. That is directed very much to the administrations of orchestras and opera companies – to marketing directors, above all, who, together with their organizations' music directors, have the power to change the situation radically. One can only hope that Mauceri's words will be taken to heart, effecting a massive change in what is programmed by presenters of classical music internationally. Bravo, Maestro!

— Roger Pines

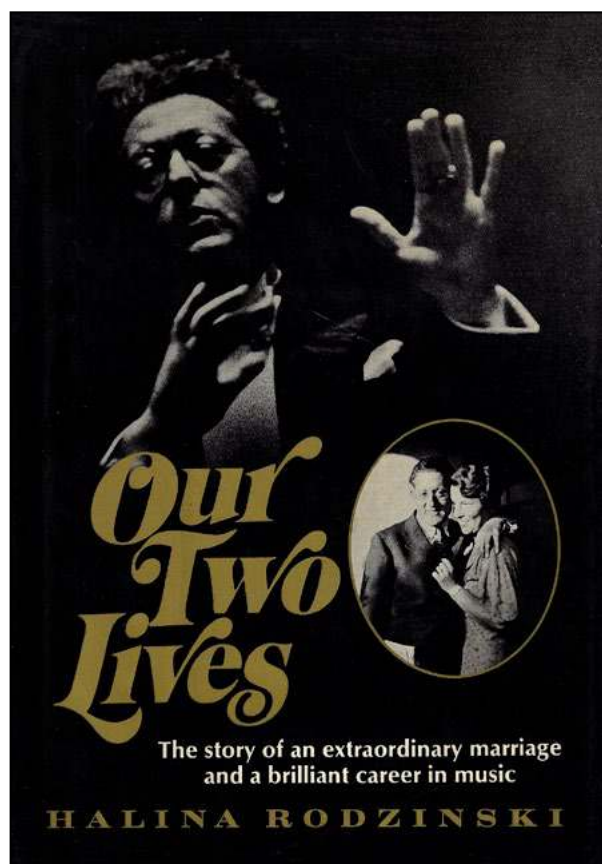
Book Recommendations

This section features book recommendations. Often they will be books that are out-of-print, but usually easy to find on the second-hand market.



Halina Rodzinski: Our Two Lives

The story of an extraordinary marriage and a brilliant career in music



published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1976.

403 pp, with photos, brief discography and index.

Halina Rodzinski was the grand-niece of Henri Wieniawski and a very accomplished individual in her own right, and took great pains to preserve her husband's legacy, not least with this richly informative and moving account of Artur Rodzinski's life and musical career and their life together. A full-fledged biography of Rodzinski is still much needed, but this volume well captures a bygone world and some of the extraordinary artists whose musical legacies we still enjoy to this very day.

Only two months before her death in 1993 at the age of 88 she received the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit, Poland's highest civilian award for her charitable work as President of the Committee for the Blind of Poland, an organization she lead for nearly 30 years beginning in 1959.

Interestingly, the Studs Terkel Archive in Chicago contains a 1976 hour-long interview with Halina Rodzinski on the subject of *Our Two Lives*, though it is not yet available to the public - click [here](#) for more details.