

KOUSSEVITZKY CONDUCTS BARBER



BARBER Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 14

(1939-40; revised 1948)

- 1 1st mvt. - *Allegro* (10:37)
- 2 2nd mvt. - *Andante* (9:45)
- 3 3rd mvt. - *Presto in moto perpetuo* (4:10)

Ruth Posselt, violin

Recorded at the concert of 7th January, 1949 in Symphony Hall, Boston

- 4 Broadcast introduction (Donald Lowe) (0:59)

- 5 BARBER Commando March (1943) (3:48)

From the broadcast of 12th February, 1944 at Hunter College, New York

BARBER Symphony No. 2, Op. 19 (original version, 1943-44)

("Dedicated to the Army Air Forces")

- 6 1st mvt. - *Allegro ma non troppo* (11:37)
- 7 2nd mvt. - *Andante, un poco mosso* (8:29)
- 8 3rd mvt. - *Presto, senza battuta* (7:07)

From the broadcast of 4th March, 1944 in Symphony Hall, Boston (world première)

Serge Koussevitzky · Boston Symphony Orchestra

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn

Recordings from the collection of Langdon F. Lombard

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Samuel Barber and Serge Koussevitzky

Total duration: 56:32 ©2010 Pristine Audio.

SARL Pristine Audio, Le Bourg, 24610 St. Méard de Gurçon, France - Tel. +33 (0)5 53 82 18 57 - Internet: www.pristineclassical.com

KOUSSEVITZKY CONDUCTS BARBER



SYMPHONY No. 2 (WORLD PREMIÈRE) VIOLIN CONCERTO - COMMANDO MARCH

RUTH POSSELT, VIOLIN

BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Obert-Thorn

PRISTINE
AUDIO

KOUSSEVITZKY CONDUCTS BARBER

Samuel Osborne Barber II (March 9, 1910 – January 23, 1981) was an American composer of orchestral, opera, choral, and piano music. His *Adagio for Strings* is his most popular composition and widely considered a masterpiece of modern classical music. He was twice awarded the Pulitzer Prize for music, for his opera *Vanessa* and his *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*.

In 1939 Philadelphia industrialist Samuel Fels commissioned Barber to write a violin concerto for Fels' adopted son, Iso Briselli, who had graduated from the Curtis Institute of Music the same year as Barber (1934). Barber accepted his advance and went to Switzerland to work on the concerto. The first two movements were presented to Briselli who was disappointed in the lack of virtuosic displays. Subsequently, following a delay of about 1 year, Barber delivered the third movement, a brilliant perpetual mobile, which Briselli declared unplayable and no match for the quality or substance of the first two movements. He tried to persuade Barber to expand it, and give it a more defined structure. Barber declined. At that point, Fels asked for his advance to be returned. Barber answered that he had spent the money on his composing trip to Switzerland. Barber had the work played at Curtis to show Briselli that third movement was playable. The work was not premiered by Briselli, but he did play it privately in later years; Barber and Briselli remained friends, although there are many contradictory accounts of their relationship.

Ralph Berkowitz, at that time the Curtis Institute's staff pianist, found a young violin student, Herbert Baume, in the Curtis Common Room. Baume was known to be an excellent sight reader, and Berkowitz asked Baume to study the finale for a couple of hours, then to join him in pianist Josef Hofmann's studio. After reviewing the music, Baume went to the studio to discover an audience of Barber (now teaching at Curtis), Gian Carlo Menotti, Mary Louise Curtis Bok (founder of the Curtis Institute), and a friend of Mrs. Bok...

Following its 1941 premiere, the Barber *Violin Concerto* has become one of the most frequently performed of all twentieth-century concertos.

Producer's Note

These three works comprise the complete recorded repertoire of Samuel Barber as conducted by Serge Koussevitzky. (There was also an earlier broadcast performance of the *Commando March*, but no commercial recordings of any of the works.) Koussevitzky was famous for championing contemporary American composers during his tenure in Boston, and he brought his customary passion and commitment to the scores we hear on this program.

The *Violin Concerto* is heard in the first performance of the revised version Barber prepared in November, 1948. The soloist, American violinist Ruth Posselt, was married to the BSO's concertmaster and assistant conductor, Richard Burgin, and holds the record for most appearances by a soloist with the orchestra. The concert from which this recording emanates was not broadcast, but rather was surreptitiously recorded using a microphone concealed in a ventilation grate above the stage, as were several other concerts during the 1948-49 season. The sound, relayed by telephone line and taken down on acetate discs at a local Boston recording studio, is nonetheless surprisingly well-balanced and immediate. (A couple bars in the finale that were missing on the original recording due to a skipped groove have been patched in from another performance.)

The *Commando March* and *Second Symphony* date from Barber's service in the U. S. Army Air Force during the Second World War. The broadcast of the symphony's world premiere features the original version of the work, which Barber revised in 1947 in part to jettison programmatic elements. One of the casualties of this was the removal of the electronic tone generator used in the second movement (starting at 5:34 in Track 7) to suggest the radio beam used for guiding flyers. Although Barber made a recording of the revised version in 1950, he withdrew the work from performance in 1964 and soon after destroyed all known copies of the score, keeping only the revised second movement which he renamed *Night Flight*. A copy of the orchestral parts of the complete symphony turned up in England after Barber's death and has been used as the basis for further performances.

Producer's Note by Mark Obert-Thorn - Notes from Wikipedia - Further notes online at www.pristineclassical.com

