MISUNDERSTANDING TOSCANINI

By Christopher Dyment

Joseph Horowitz does not like Arturo Toscanini or his recorded performances, and he has written a book* to rationalize--or more properly to exorcise--his feelings. It takes all of 490 pages because, to descriptions of those feelings, which loom large as authoritative assessments of Toscanini's recordings that they have no claim to be, he has added a mountain of dubious scholarship in the pursuit of an untenable thesis.

The second sentence of the book remarks that Toscanini was "high priest of the music appreciation movement of the thirties and forties." But he was not; he was no more--and no less--than, as Bruno Walter put it, a great high priest of music. This fundamental but sedulously fostered misconception is the thread on which Horowitz hangs his tale. The book has two purposes. The first is foreshadowed in its subtitle: to explain how Toscanini, as the alleged high priest of music appreciation, had a baneful effect upon critical attitudes and the attitude of the public towards classical music and the music business. Since Toscanini demonstrably did not occupy the position to which the author elevates him, and since he is able to present no convincing evidence that Toscanini had anything to do with the advertising puffery which surrounded him and every other major artist of that time (and ours), so far as the book deals with this theme it is of little value. Underpinning this is the book's secondary purpose, evident despite disingenuous denials on the author's behalf: to demonstrate that Toscanini's musicianship was at best more partial and restricted in scope than has been generally acknowledged. But since the author's evidence for this is founded on misconceptions and in any event is of little more substance than his own curious opinions writ large, this too is of little value.

Would it therefore suffice to cast this weighty tome aside without further comment? Early chapters do collect some interesting critical comment on the initial part of Toscanini's United States career not readily available elsewhere, albeit, as will be seen, slanted in anticipation

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* *UNDERSTANDING TOSCANINI:* How He Became an American Culture-God and Helped Create a New Audience for Old Music, by Joseph Horowitz, pp. xii and 492, Alfred A. Knopf, $30.00.

of the author's twin themes. Even so, one would be tempted very readily to forego further effort but for the garnering of the plaudits of certain musicians and critics who have believed what they read. This is enough to demonstrate that this tract for our hero-knocking times is not only of little value but a dangerous misrepresentation; and such an assessment demands justification, if only in fairness to an author conspicuously lacking that virtue.

The greater part of the book (nearly 300 pages) traces those parts of Toscanini's career in the United States with the principal purpose already mentioned. On the face of it, and according to the author himself, such delination of Toscanini's alleged place in U.S. musical life has no necessary connections with Toscanini's musicianship, consideration of which occupies a later and much shorter section of the work. But that is not quite how it works out. From the inception of Horowitz's examination of the critical reaction after his arrival on American shores in 1908 as musical director at the Metropolitan Opera it is clear that he is on the lookout for evidence of contemporary reservations about Toscanini's handling of the German repertoire, particularly Wagner and Beethoven which in his consideration of Toscanini's musicianship he is intent on devaluing. Thus, therefore, while the author's thesis here is of less interest to the archivist and record collector, its methodology and aims cannot be ignored.

The Career

The Metropolitan (1908-1915)

From the start, critical reaction to Toscanini's Verdi was unanimously enthusiastic; towards his Beethoven Ninth (at a Metropolitan concert in 1913), his Meistersinger, Tristan, and Götterdämmerung, avers Horowitz, it was with few exceptions more reserved. This seems to misread the evidence: there were, it is true, queries about Tristan, even on occasion Meistersinger, which later disappeared from international critical reaction. Here, for example, is the Musical Courier on Tristan in 1913[1] -

> His mental grasp and penetration of the composer's score were unusually fine. Of course, at times his Italian temperament made his tempi more impetuous than those of some Wagner specialists. Mottl, for instance, made [one of those attacked by Weingartner and others as dragging out in "slow-motion Parsifal time" much of the repertoire, including Wagner's operas contrary to the

composer's wishes] Tristan last for nearly an hour longer. Nikisch, Mahler and Richter had a very different conception of the breadth of Wagner's climaxes. Toscanini's animation in the Garden Scene...certainly differs from the stately magnificence of Mottl. The difference is one of temperament, not of merit, for both are superb.

Witness the valuable comparisons with the great Germans already familiar to New York. Yet here from the same source is the assessment of his Götterdämmerung in 1908[2] -

He brought out every one of the familiar effects...with unerring sympathy and insight, and exhausted all its emotional and dramatic possibilities on the stage and in the orchestra...This genius of the baton makes the other local conductors seem like musical hacks...With such phenomenal Wagner leadership at the Metropolitan, men like Herz and Mahler lag superfluous in that institution...

And here is the Courier on Meistersinger in 1912[3] -

What Nikisch is to the concert hall, Toscanini is to the opera stage. He makes all the other conductors ever heard at the Met. seem mere mechanics, journeyman directors, who follow the surface letter of the score but never divine the poetry and psychology...Instead of treating Meistersinger like a musical parchment to be expounded with cast-iron rigidity and pedantic heaviness, Toscanini sees...a tone-poem of ineffable beauty, and a piece of orchestration saturated with color and beauty of theme. Some of the unbending Wagnerians of the old school are sticklers for what they call the 'Teutonic spirit' of the Meistersinger...The real Teutonic spirit could not be realised more completely than Toscanini exposed it in his reading...

Again, it depends on who you read about that Beethoven Ninth. Richard Aldrich[4] thought that -

He revealed in the fullest measure the qualities of the great symphonic conductor...Mr. Toscanini met in an unusual degree Wagner's criterion of the melos, of keeping unbroken the essentially melodic line that underlies it. The orchestra sang throughout; and in all the nuances of his performance the melodic line was not interrupted;

> nor, in all the plastic shaping of phrase was the symmetry of the larger proportions of the organic unity of the whole lost sight of...A conservative reading without exaggerations or excesses. There were subtle and significant modifications of tempo, but never of a disturbing sort.

And the Courier[5] in similar vein thought he -

> portrayed the full sweep of the gigantic product as an organic whole, and with firm intellectual grasp and deep poetical insight fashioned a Beethoven interpretation whose bigness and grandeur were overpowering. Mahler's memorable conducting of the 9th, which had stood in local musical annals as the best ever heard here, was overtopped by Toscanini, for he drew his rhythmic lines less arbitrarily and substituted feeling in many instances where Mahler had seen opportunity only for the application of learning...

Now, this is taking up a lot of space. The two points I seek to make are that, first, while there was a spectrum of views, there was no such real division of opinion as Horowitz--with his ultimate aim in mind--finds; it all depends on who you quote (I fear this will be a refrain), and with what purpose. Secondly, and of greater significance, Aldrich and the Courier writer spoke as critics familiar with the great Austro-Germans who had played in New York--Nikisch, Muck, Weingartner, Mahler and others. If they had found something wanting in Toscanini's handling of the Beethoven Ninth, a central item of the German repertoire, they would undoubtedly have remarked on it. They did not: quite the contrary. Horowitz, however, who quotes none of these assessments, has begun as he means to continue.

The Philharmonic years (1926-1936)

But it is not until the author reaches the Philharmonic era (1926-29 jointly with Mengelberg, 1929-36 as sole head) that he shows his hand more clearly. Here are presented allegations about the effects of the Toscanini "juggernaut" upon the careers of his contemporaries, in particular the exclusion after 1926 of further participation by Furtwängler and the eventual departure of Mengelberg. The animus of Horowitz towards his subject matter surfaces here in his virtual exclusion from discussion of Furtwängler's disappointment at the cooler reception of the New York public and critics after exposure to Toscanini[6], and

Mengelberg's anti-Toscanini gossip to the orchestra itself, which understandably Toscanini refused to tolerate.[7] And from suppression the narrative passes to outright falsification in its resurrection of allegations that in Furtwängler's second season as Philharmonic guest in 1926 he had been promised a Beethoven Ninth which Toscanini overrode by feigning illness and threatening his non-appearance unless he were given it. These have been shown to be untrue, with full chapter and verse.[8] Why are they here repeated? Given the tone and tenor of the whole, the answer is clear and not to Horowitz's credit.*

Horowitz is on less rocky ground with the critics and in his prolonged dissection of the undoubted limitations of Toscanini's repertoire, but even here he exaggerates by careful exclusion. Toscanini's exploration of the Bruckner symphonies in the 1930's at a time when this was unheard of outside central Europe was noteworthy, and a reminder that he had undertaken this and much else by way of exploration back in the 1890's and early 1900's. Noteworthy too was his championing of Shostakovich's First Symphony, the Fourth of Sibelius at a time when this "difficult" work was not widely understood, and the not infrequent programming of works by a variety of contemporaries of or near the first rank, such as Honegger, Kodaly, Pizzeti and Roussel. Moreover, Horowitz chooses to overlook the guests who contributed to each season. Some of them got hell from the orchestra, but others did not: Kleiber, for example, received an inscribed plaque from them[9] and warmth from Olin Downes and Sargeant. During 1930-31 he programmed, among others, Hindemith, Berg, Krenek and Malipiero. Later Klemperer included Hindemith, Stravinsky, Janácek, Berg and Shostakovich. Bruno Walter also included Janácek in his guest programs, as well as Reger, Schreker and Prokofiev (the composer as soloist). To Toscanini's Bruckner Fourth and Seventh, the two last-named added the Fifth, Eighth and Ninth; and all three guests performed a substantial amount of Mahler. Beecham added his own variety of spice: Delius, Bax, Vaughan Williams, Holst

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*This is a far from isolated instance where Horowitz's reliance on a compromised source enables him to manipulate his text to present Toscanini's behavior in an unfavorable light, For example, there are varying accounts of the Toscanini-Furtwängler exchanges at Salzburg in 1937, some of which, in recounting a tirade by Toscanini about the other's politics, sound out of character. Horowitz relies on one of these but ignores the testimony of Burghauser, who was there, as to the brief exchanges which did take place: "The Vienna Philharmonic's Conductors 1919-1937", in B. H. Haggin's Music & Ballet 1973-1983, pp. 261-2.

and others. Lesser luminaries such as Golschmann and Rodzinski (who premiered excerpts from Shostakovich's Lady Macbeth) added their share of novelties. Horowitz may not think much of this, but others may beg to differ.

The Philharmonic critics quoted by Horowitz make odd reading today, with their prostration at the altar and concern for the social and musical atmosphere of the hall rather than Toscanini's musical operation; and what a falling off is here compared with the illuminating detail of the Metropolitan years. But again Horowitz is selective: the gushings of Gilman and Downes are here, but not the acuity of, say, Haggin, who at the time appreciated Toscanini's qualities less than in later years. Yet even the hero-worship has greater value than Horowitz would allow. How would today's critics react to exposure to someone of comparable stature? We do not know, for there is none such capable of making Toscanini's kind of impress, with the possible (and controversial) exception of Carlos Kleiber, the self-imposed limitations of whose repertoire these days make Toscanini seem catholic by comparison. The abasements quoted by Horowitz are a measure of the impact of Toscanini's performances upon individuals who, for all their abdication of responsibility to their readers, had taste and intellect. Is it just possible that the performances were indeed so extraordinary and comprehensive in their vision as to justify the encomiums? Horowitz provides his own answer in a later chapter, to which I return.

The NBC Years (1937-54)

Horowitz's account of the NBC years, occupying nearly 200 pages, adds little to widely published accounts in so far as Toscanini himself is concerned. What it does manage is a thorough exhumation of the publicity provided for those years by NBC and RCA and the popularized accounts of Toscanini's lifestyle and work which, because of his already acknowledged celebrity, understandably made their way into the popular press. To this is added much concerning the major luminaries of the radio and record industry, such as Sarnoff and Chotzinoff, and extensive quotation from some journeyman writers who, as in the Philharmonic years, revealed an undiscriminating enthusiasm and a none too comprehensive musical knowledge. From this hotch-potch Horowitz constructs his major theme: Toscanini's stranglehold on musical appreciation in the United States. A singular achievement for a retiring, almost reclusive septuagenarian making each year a limited number of mostly hour-long broadcasts. Would that it were true for the sake of the labor that is here.

In truth, however, all Horowitz preserves is the commercial operations of companies who found themselves handling one who throughout the musical world (whether Horowitz likes it or not) was recognized as pre-eminent in his art; not necessarily in all spheres of music; nor certainly the only great conductor. But few doubted his position. How could commercial corporations cope with such a phenomenon? Horowitz seems to resent not merely the acknowledged supremacy of his subject, which owed little to the extravagances of the popular New York journalists with whom he makes such play, but the fact that corporations had charge of Toscanini's appearances and acted as commercial operators with such an expensive property on their hands were bound to do: securing publicity with the widest possible claims made on behalf of their asset.

What is novel in Horowitz's analysis is his apparent belief that these claims were accepted at face value by anyone with musical awareness and thereby had a deleterious effect upon American musical life; and that Toscanini's preference for leaving others to explore modern music with which he had no sympathy was in itself largely responsible for its failure to enter the mainstream. These remarkable contentions are as unconvincing as the selective evidence adduced at enormous length in their support. The case is easily built if the evidence is drawn from advertising puffery; and this is the source of much of Horowitz's, right down to his photograph captions which regurgitate the efforts of corporate copywriters in the 1940's. But was this accepted as gospel by the musically knowledgeable any more than the excesses of the Karajan circus of the 70's, black leather jacket and all? How was Toscanini really seen at the time, not by the advertising executive and lower-grade journalists, but by the serious critic? Horowitz gives his own answer in his inordinate quotations from Theodor Adorno and Virgil Thomson, of whom more anon. But for the wider public one has only to turn to the more discriminating assessments of, say, David Hall in his respected Record Book[10] where we read on the one hand that the 1939 Leonore No. 3----which remained unreleased in the States--was "quite possibly the greatest performance" of the work he had ever heard but, on the other, that the 1938 Beethoven Eighth was hard-boiled and the Brahms First of 1941 overly tense and lacking in warmth. And of the Beethoven Violin Concerto with Heifetz and the Fifth Symphony, two sets much touted by Victor whose efforts are duly upheld to ridicule by Horowitz, Hall levelly remarks that the first was rather hard-driven by Toscanini and that, in the second, while the outer movements demanded to be heard, "his treatment of the two middle movements is rather

run of the mill, at least ... in comparison to the interest with which Furtwängler endows these parts of the symphony". Kolodin in his contemporary guide was similarly judicious; for example, he wondered whether the infusion of "l'elixir d'Arturo" in the Pathéthique (1947) did not have worse effects than the ilness it was intended to cure.

Such detailed quotation is necessary both to establish what were the reactions of some intelligent and influential critics and to provide a foil by their hard-headed assessments to the conceptual imaginings of Adorno and Thomson, Horowitz's chosen flag-bearers of musical sanity in the 1940's. I find it difficult to take seriously the lucubrations of the first, who would have us believe that Toscanini's interpretations were no more than an emanation of monopoly capitalism's reduction of musical performance to its lowest common demoninator for mass consumption, and whose description of Toscanini's operation is unrecognizable: "the performance sounds like its own gramophone record. The dynamic is so predetermined that there are no longer any tensions at all". And so on. Haggin had it about right[11] when he described Adorno's performance as "a method of demonstration by translation, which subjects an initial statement of fact to step-by-step verbal and conceptual translation into statements with new meanings which become increasingly remote from fact". Thomson's elegant writings are in general far more worthy of note, but in his remarks about Toscanini he too often fell into conceptual traps of his own devising; and since Horowitz relies much on him, this must be examined later more closely.

While it is little more than a shadow without substance for Horowitz to build his thesis upon the assumed effects of advertising puffery and the reactions of the popular press, it becomes a matter for greater concern when he maintains that his constructs are essential for "understanding Toscanini" and that the conductor was consciously an instrument of "music appreciation" in the constricting sense described by the author. "Transformed and disseminated by such practitioners as Toscanini, Walter Damrosch and Benny Goodman, music became a type of pabulum processed for effortless consumption." This and seemingly endless pages is more musical character assassination of a peculiarly vicious kind, for there is no evidence that Toscanini regarded himself as anything more--or more significantly in an era of purple emperors among conductors--as anything less than an "honest musician", or that his standard symphonic programming was any more than a reflection of his own long-established tastes. To portray his as having attributes and objectives in common with image makers such as Sarnoff and

Downes is a smear for which the sole evidence is the author's fervid imagination, made the more contemptible by the minimal attention given to those musicians who did set out to be what Horowitz alleges Toscanini to have been: Stokowski's exploits receive all of three lines; Kostelanetz and Arthur Fiedler are not mentioned.

Yet Horowitz surpasses himself by indulging in unsubstantiated comment which wilfully impugns the conductor's integrity. Until now, to take just one example, Toscanini's fund-raising concerts on behalf of the War effort have been regarded as wholly praiseworthy. For Horowitz, however, "Toscanini was now [1944] wrapped in the flag" and the Wagner-Verdi program, almost certainly of his own choice, for the fabled 1944 Madison Square Garden concert with the combined NBC and Philharmonic, was "purposefully rabble-rousing". The program book itself contained a full-page Toscanini profile "posed and shadowed to conceal a possible Christ-like growth of beard", the booklet as a whole having "less the effect of appropriating Toscanini for the war effort than of appropriating the war effort on behalf of Toscanini". In its unremitting hostility and offensive overtones this kind of writing can only call into question the author's motivation. It is overkill; it is also worthless.

<u>The Recordings</u>

That is a fair description, too, of Horowitz's chapter on the recordings, wherein he expends maximum effort to persuade the reader that Toscanini was by no means as great or important a conductor as many believe him to have been. In general Horowitz's operation here is not only selective but characterized by highly critical claims about Toscanini's interpretative approach which in their repetitive insistence will be mistaken as authoritative by those unfamiliar with his subject matter.

It is true that the illusion of authority is bolstered by occasional concessions that not all of Toscanini's legacy is wholly bad; and the unwary will thereby be induced to rely with the greater confidence on the perception of Horowitz's assessments. In particular, he concedes the power and truthfulness to the spirit of Toscanini's Verdi albeit with as much captious comment as can decently be incorporated about the late NBC opera broadcasts. But let that not fool anyone. To bizarre descriptive interpretations of what is to be heard on Toscanini's recordings, which is common form throughout his treatment of the non-Italian repertoire, he chooses to air here the

canard recently given credence on both sides of the Atlantic concerning Verdi's expectation that his singers should indulge in the preciosities to be heard in the earliest discs immortalising them. One had hoped that this had been given its quietus by Harvey Sachs' authoritative examination of the issue[12], but no. And to this is added what Haggin termed in a precisely equivalent context[13] the "intellectual impropriety" of quoting Ricordi's complaints about the young Toscanini's "rigidity" and "tyranny" without Sachs' explanation of the context: Toscanini's refusal to bow to Ricordi's request to perform his music and his disapproval of Toscanini's corrective innovations in the opera house so strongly championed by Boito in his reports to the composer. This is all so sad: one fears permanent suppression of the truth and, in consequence of bogus history, the reintroduction of those very indulgences which both Verdi and Toscanini wished to expunge. But enough of this, for Horowitz's greatest mischief lies elsewhere.

Specifically in his discussion of Toscanini in the non-Italian repertoire, particularly German repertoire where, as alleged by the author, the conductor's concentration upon line at the expense of depth, upon rhythmic exactitude and dynamic contrast at the expense of nuance and breadth of phrasing, together with frequent excessive swiftness of tempi, made for performances lacking in "inner space", only partially revealing the works' full stature. In Toscanini's latter years, Horowitz contends, to these shortcomings were added an invariable screwing up of tension which gave a sameness of profile to everything he conducted, characterized by Horowitz, in a phrase obsessively repeated, as an "all-purpose formula". His evidence for this caricature, as will be seen, is selective to a degree. Moreover, the explanation for the alleged lack of total comprehension on Toscanini's part is itself misconceived: Horowitz finds it in his refusal to acknowledge tradition, an almost wilful disdain for German performance practice, stemming to some extent from the musical isolation of Italy in his formative years as an interpreter; and hence to an inability to plumb the depths implicit for those to whom such practices were, so to speak, inbred. This is as inacccurate as his outline history of the development of the conductor's art in Germany. That concentrates on the increasing romantic exaggerations of Wagner's heirs, seen as widespread if not uniform until the corrective brake applied by Weingartner, followed by the acceptance in the 1920's of a non-romantic approach with which Toscanini's style to some extent fortuitously coincided and which itself, in turn, became the major influence.

Space precludes the needed corrective essay but, in

brief, conducting styles in Germany in the late 19th century were as diverse as could be, notwithstanding the influence of von Bülow. Among Weingartner's seniors Muck, for one, had nothing to do with these excesses. Richter's lofty, four-square approach, characterized by Archie Camden in conversation with this writer as resembling the latterday Klemperer ("but much greater") stood in extreme contrast with, say, Nikisch: witness the report of Brahms's eminent friend Mandyczewski from Richter's erstwhile Viennese stronghold about Nikisch's performances of Beethoven, Tchaikovsky (the Pathétique) and Wagner -

> In all of these Herr Nikisch presented to us, not so much the works as they actually are, but as what, in his opinion, they ought to be. It is impossible entirely to acquit this otherwise excellent conductor of the charge of undue and very inartistic exaggeration for the sake of effect ... he tears the tempi to pieces and deals with some passages in an outré fashion, which is really incomprehensible. Such deliberate exaggeration cannot be the outcome of spontaneous musical feeling, and is particularly out of place in the works of the classical masters...[14]

Such views did little to undermine Nikisch's acknowledged supremacy in the concert hall before the First World War, but are nonetheless significant as a corrective to over-simplified history wherein Toscanini refused to play a part.* For, in truth, Toscanini knew the work of almost all the great conductors of the time and drew on their differing approaches in accordance with his own predilections and experience. While late Verdi was the era in which he grew up, it was Wagner who was the overwhelming love of his early maturity, and he heard Richter's <u>Meistersinger</u> and other works in Bayreuth in 1899.[15] A hearing of Richter's <u>Eroica</u> was another early influence,[16] as was (as reported to him by Puccini) von Bülow's treatment of the Mozart G minor.[17] He marvelled at Steinbach's interpretations of Brahms and was profoundly influenced by them;[18] to the extent that when Steinbach himself conducted the Second Symphony at Turin he found little need to rehearse.# Nikisch he regarded as <u>the</u> great conductor of the time, though criticizing him for his rather showy manner and occasional lack of preparation.[19] The great von Schuch, Strauss's chosen interpreter at Dresden, moved Toscanini so much that he felt himself "transported", recollecting in particular the beauty of his <u>Oberon</u> overture[20] at a performance of the opera. True worth amongst colleagues was, contra Horowitz, something to which Toscanini responded with great warmth. And, for the record, many of the great

Central Europeans recognized Toscanini's own worth, specifically in German music. Steinbach's response has been mentioned; a generation later Bruno Walter remarked on Toscanini's "superlative rendering" of that same symphony, Brahms's Second, at Salzburg.[21] Nikisch remarked of Toscanini to the Gewandhaus Orchestra: "I have just come back from Milan, where I heard a performance of Siegfried conducted by a man named Toscanini that was the greatest performance of an opera I have ever heard."[22] And Strauss, the arch-disciple of von Bülow, observed of Toscanini's powers as a conductor that, after hearing him, any other conductor was tempted to break his own stick into little pieces and, of his Beethoven in particular, that "the interpretation of Beethoven by most of our younger conductors suffers from the lack of any genuine tradition and the fanatical correctness of his readings, makes a praiseworthy exception ... Other conductors impose personal conceptions on their performances before--as Bülow put it--they are able to read the score properly."[23]

The most superficial knowledge of Toscanini's recorded legacy will reveal the relevance of Toscanini's early exper-

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*Many years ago I asked Sir Adrian Boult, who before the Great War heard much of Richter, Steinbach, Nikisch, Weingartner, Muck and Fiedler, what he thought of the often expressed view that the "German tradition" was characterized by an attitude towards interpretation far more free than that to which we are accustomed today; and that the more literal attitude towards the score came about principally because of Toscanini's influence. His answer was crisp: " a lot of rot". It was, he said, "absolutely correct" that there was, at the turn of the century, a wide variety of styles embracing the extremes of Richter, very "correct", and Nikisch, very free.

#Serkin's story here is both amusing and illuminating: "In 1924 a performance of Brahms's Symphony No. 2 by Toscanini with his La Scala Orchestra in Zurich was for Serkin an `incredible revelation'; but Furtwängler, at a private reception after the concert, `embarrassingly and painfully told Toscanini in violent terms what he thought' about some things in the performance. Toscanini listened, in Serkin's words, `like a little boy'; then he answered: `When Steinbach came to Turin and conducted the Brahms Second Symphony, after the first rehearsal he turned to the orchestra and said: `I have nothing to do. Who is your conductor?' And the answer was `Toscanini'." B. H. Haggin, "The Vienna Philharmonic's Conductors 1918-37" in Music & Ballet 1973-1983, p. 227.

iences, refined in accordance with his own musical perceptions and preferences. There is virtually no recording, even in the later NBC years, in which there is not, for example, some elasticity of tempo, subtle modifications of the basic pulse, to respond in particular to the contrasting material of the great symphonic movements. Indeed, Toscanini's fine judgment in distending, say, the second subject material of the Eroica's first movement (a passage over which he agonized to find precisely the right degree of relaxation of tempo) provides a fascinating study in contrast with, on the one hand, Weingartner, where the pulse is yet more flexible, and on the other Kleiber and Busch, who barely acknowledge the change of character in the music with a change in pulse. Anyone familiar with the corpus will be able to multiply such examples ad infinitum; and they will also acknowledge that Toscanini responded to a lesser degree in this way in his later years--but rarely with the degree of atrophy implied by Horowitz's strictures.

It is a misconception of parallel magnitude to maintain, as Horowitz does, that Toscanini reached his conclusions merely by regard for the notes: in addition to being widely read in the literature of several languages, he was an omnivorous reader of anything which might illuminate the music he performed--Ernest Newman's recollection of how, on hearing him mention a book on the performance of Beethoven's symphonies which he had not seen, Toscanini could not rest until he could devour it himself, must stand here for many instances. Assertions to the effect that Toscanini was limited by his "literalism", assiduously propagated at intervals throughout Horowitz's text, do no more than perpetuate in new guise one of the oversimplifications peddled by the journalists whom he is so eager to scorn earlier in the book, and caricature Toscanini's real concerns. Some of his reported remarks seem, indeed, to support this view; perhaps best known is his retort to Mengelberg who traced his own approach to the Coriolanus Overture by musical ancestry from Beethoven -- "I get it direct from Beethoven--from the score." But such remarks have to be seen in context--on this occasion that of his general impatience at the time with Mengelberg's wordy pretensions. More revealing and more typical of his true concerns were his comments about the performance of Mozart--of how tedious the music could be unless the conductor knew what to do between a p here and the f eight bars later;[24] in other words, the precise way in which the music should be shaped to give enlivening inflection. Perhaps this was best expressed again by Ernest Newman[25]--

> Of course Toscanini does more than merely reproduce the score. He reproduces it with an exquisite sense

> of what the music means--the shape of a phrase, the colour of a tissue and so on. Once in Monte Carlo I saw the infinite trouble he took to get the orchestra to play [the pianissimo passage from measure 153] of the Egmont Overture as he wanted it. As a rule it means little or nothing in performance: what Toscanini made it mean, by the subtlest nuances of curve and intensity, is beyond description: and he made us feel that that, just that, was what Beethoven intended it to mean.

This, and the obsession with the utmost clarity of parts ("I try everything, but I 'm afraid I will never hear those bassoons" he remarked once of a passage in the Consecration of the House Overture)[26] were Toscanini's dominant concerns.

You would never guess this from Horowitz. How does he achieve his own conclusions? Apart from the major and fundamental inaccuracies and misconceptions already discussed, I discern five techniques worth exposure.

The first has already been mentioned: the technique of anamorphosis, presenting an image of the recordings so distorted that no one familiar with them could well recognize the result. One broaches this with some hesitation, for is not Horowitz entitled to his views on what he hears just as much as you or I? Indeed, but he cannot expect his advocacy--for that is all it is--to be taken seriously if it is supported by scholarship which is demonstrably false; or if the ear is revealed to be inaccurate or to draw inept conclusions form what is aurally verifiable. Let half-a-dozen of Horowitz's many examples serve to typify his methods.

To begin at the beginning, Horowitz maintains that the pre-electric Mozart 39th minuet and finale, among Toscanini's very first batch of recordings with the La Scala Orchestra in Camden during the winter of 1920-21, are "even more streamlined"* than his future recordings of Mozart, small, shortbreathed and callow. Actually, they exhibit a striking resemblance to the near-contemporary recording (1926) of Richard Strauss, regarded by many as the premier Mozartian of his time. Strauss's minuet, it is true, more closely resembles Toscanini's later and much faster

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*His 1929 Haffner and all of his G minors would be regarded as very romanticised today, more so in the latter symphony than say, Furtwängler.

performance of that movement in 1948, which is much in accordance with the latest research on the authentic tempi for Mozart's minuets;[27] but they both modify the tempo for the affectionately observed trio. And in the finale Strauss manages to knock a couple of seconds from Toscanini's already rapid tempo.

Toscanini's similarity of approach to Strauss here is a reminder of the comments on the Salzburg Magic Flute by Hugo Burghauser, pre-War chairman of the Vienna Philharmonic and its leading bassoon, who pointed out that Toscanini's tempi here were much the same as Strauss's and that its critical reception showed that people were not mature enough for a desentimentalised Flute[28]. Horowitz wreaks his own havoc with Toscanini's performance. I hesitate to assert that he thereby exhibits Burghauser's "immaturity"; there are indeed legitimate grounds for reserve about some aspects of the conception and more particularly the execution of the singers. But I do accuse him of a convenient manipulation of fact and evidence, first by omitting reference to Burghauser's entirely laudatory comments in Haggin's The Toscanini Musicians Knew, while from the same source emphasizing Kipnis's less admiring appraisal. Again, he maintains that in one of the Queen of the Night's arias, the singer is "momentarily abandoned; only when the orchestra begins collapsing does he consent to slow down and let her catch up." In fact, Julie Osváth, whose major break this was, was unnerved by the thought of her parents listening to her performance on the radio in distant Hungary and Toscanini responded instantly to her evident distress. The old pro saved the day; it remained for Horowitz to invert the facts. His comments on the accompaniment to "Ach, Ich fühls" is typically opinionated: an "obtrusive grid" of "iron bars" he pronounces; no mention of Toscanini's quite legitimate view that this was a real andante, not an adagio[30], nor of his supreme maturity in the orchestral postlude where, slightly accelerating at first, he then broadens out to finish in tempo primo--so avoiding any trace of sentimentality.[31]

Of Toscanini's most famous Philharmonic recording, the Beethoven Seventh of 1936, Horowitz believes that it has "the sheer agility of the big machine, combining the cruel power of the tank with the fleetness of a race car", Toscanini's changes of tempi being "so subtle that an illusion of relentless regularity" is maintained. His tempi in the allegretto and trio are unusually brisk because Toscanini took at face value Beethoven's dubious metronome markings, that of the latter being "one-third faster than the `normal' speed." Consequently "the separate identities of the movements, and of sections within each movement, blur

together." It all sounds "streamlined", lacking (quoting Virgil Thomson) "any sense of mystery to make the Beethoven fury seem interiorly dramatic"--typified by the opening chords which, unlike Furtwängler's "welling up from the depth", descend "like guillotine chops." The absence of any allargando before the recapitulation in that movement "forfeits articulating the cumulative strain of the development's harmonic migrations." The "once forbidding celebrity" of "this particular Toscanini document" is that of (I paraphrase) a period piece.

Well now. Horowitz never heard Toscanini live (neither did I), but those who did refer to his resilient sforzati, the recording process--in the United States, at least--always hardening the profile of his chording.[32] In the descriptive stakes Horowitz votes the opening chords "guillotine chops"; Furtwängler went for champagne corks popping out of bottles; I choose volcanic eruptions signalling the laval flow of the ascending scales which in Toscanini's hands "well up from the depth" with unsurpassed power and breadth.* How far you agree depends, as the Irish have it, on where you start from. Withouty doubt Toscanini himself started from Beethoven's staccato forte markings, beyond which all else is speculation having no authencity, however distinguised the cource. And what about "relentless regularity"? Tanks have no time for such delicacies as the hinted luftpauce at 185, intelligently modifying the habit typified by Klemperer of inserting a disruptive comma; or the caressing, dolce winds at 300; nor, indeed, (pace Horowitz) for the allargando at 275 which, after a stringendo at the end of the development, heralds the recapitulation at tempo primo, providing just what Horowitz wants without the need for distension. Absolute coherence, certainly, the first gift of a great symphonic conductor, but with a flexibility exceeding that of, say, Weingartner's similarly paced RPO recording (his VPO version is slightly slower), save only for the start of the coda where Weingartner famously slowed more than Toscanini. Again, it was Weingartner who, with his immensely influential recordings and writings, first took the allegretto tempo at face value, faster in his VPO recording than Toscanini, and pushing ahead still further in the A major and fugal episodes ("instability", "haste", says Horowitz, when

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*"This sounds very German" remarked an American critic with no special knowledge of Toscanini listening with me to the introduction to the newly-issued BBCSO Beethoven Seventh of 1935. Quite; and that version falls midway in approach between the NYPSO as originally issued and the slightly faster take used for its LP issue.

Toscanini does just that in his NBC recording). And whose pacing for the trio is "normal"? Toscanini's assai meno presto, fully a third less than the presto, makes sense not only of Beethoven's increasingly unproblematic metronome marks#, but of the tempo indication and relativities which it is the most basic duty of the conductor to solve.

Now, I make no claim that my own description will be thought more valid for others than Horowitz's. But an analysis which is to be adjudged anything other than second-rate journalism, unworthy of hard covers, must at least not mislead by factual inaccuracies or observably unverifiable assertions, especially if, as in the present case, it is designed to lead into an aside on the history of conducting and Toscanini's place in it. Is it surprising that the aside itself proves to be seriously inaccurate?

Briefly, the NBC examples. The Oberon overture (1952) is the occasion for extensive quotation from Antek's This was Toscanini (I return to this) and the observations that in rehearsal Toscanini was unconcerned with the opera or with the contour of the phrase, with the result that the performance is stiff-jointed, compressed and violent, with no "sylvan kingdom" evoked in its introduction. Actually, as we have noted, Toscanini knew the opera and his rehearsal technique did not, quite properly, admit irrelevancies. Nikisch was famed as an interpreter of the Weber Overtures and recorded several; and Toscanini's introduction seems as fully "sylvan" as Nikisch's with a delicacy and contouring of the phrase--achieved, as Antek indicates, by the stick and by that alone--unsurpassed by any other on record. La Mer in the 1950 recording is for Horowitz the least "wet" on record, its instrumental blending as atmospheric as "cactus in the desert". In fact, this performance, while less powerful or inflected than some of his earlier ones such as the BBC Queen's Hall performance of 1935 or the NBC of February 1945, is his most broadly conceived; and, in its careful instrumental delineation, the clarity of his reading was regarded by many French critics as second only in idiomatic representation to that of the composer's friend Inghelbrecht. Much the same could be said of Horowitz's comments on the Enigma Variations. For Sir Landon Ronald, Elgar's friend and distinguised interpreter, Toscanini's was the finest of all Enigmas save for the composer's; but, for Horowitz, Toscanini's "all-purpose formula's scouring denudes" it of its "familiar drizzle and fog, and also of its civilized whimsy." Drizzle and fog for this Englishman

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#See e.g. Roger Norrington's views in Opus, February 1987, p. 39; also Malloch's article at n. 27.

are not part of the Elgar make-up, while Toscanini's point and wit in this work, including the 1951 recording (less broad and loving though it is than the 1952 broadcast or the BBC performance of 1935), have always been one of its attractions. But never mind me; spare a thought instead for the American public, since for them, so Horowitz confidently asserts, Toscanini's "redundant" Beethoven, Weber and Elgar "were as instantly and effortlessly preoccupying as a drawn six-shooter at the movies or a three-and-two count, bases loaded, at the ballpark."

Such tawdry, sub-midcult stuff is itself redundant. Who could take seriously the rest of Horowitz's tunnel-visioned and scholastically ill-based value-judgments?

Horowitz's second technique, that of the <u>invidious comparison</u>, may be dealt with more briefly. For comparison with Toscanini, Horowitz invokes Nikisch and, more especially, Furtwängler. As regards Nikisch's 1913 recording of the Beethoven Fifth, which Horowitz holds up to favorable contrast with Toscanini's 1921 recording of the finale, it is sufficient to record the remarks to me about it by Sir Adrian Boult, a great but not uncritical admirer of Nikisch: after mentioning how shocked Richter had been by Nikisch's handling of the work, he observed of the records, "the first and last movements are perfectly ridiculous. I don't think he would have done that in London; he was more afraid of critics in London than he was in Leipzig."

And Furtwängler. In his justification for denying Toscanini "inner space" in German music Horowitz inevitably --given current fashions--brings this conductor to bear in evidence. Furtwängler has already made his appearance in earlier chapters, not only in the optimistic summary of his political stance in Nazi Germany (with a fresh euphemism coined to describe Furtwängler's reaction to Nazi excesses-- "more concealed, less concise" than Toscanini's), but in thumb-nail sketches of the antithetical characteristics of the two conductors; and these appear again in this chapter in expanded form. Expansion does not rectify the distorted images emerging from the earlier summaries. Here is the visionary artist, blue eyes uplifted, contrasted ad libitum with the unambiguous, down-to-earth Italian journeyman, a caricature having only an intermittent contact with reality. For to deny the visionary element in Toscanini's musical make-up is a manifestation of either parti pris or limited acquaintance with his legacy. In the controlled inferno of his <u>Eroica</u> Funeral March, in particular in 1939*; in the introduction to the Beethoven Fourth, a world in microcosm suspended in the void (for Horowitz, "idiosyncratically extroverted"), which contrasts so sharply with the

Brucknerian ruminations of Furtwängler; or most significantly in his worship of the late quartets and (like Furtwängler) his orchestral performance of movements therefrom--in these and countless other examples integrated with impeccable taste into coherent shapes, Toscanini's musical vision is infinitely wider than Horowitz's black and white antithesis would permit. The unsophisticated "child of nature" label predicated for so widely informed and comprehensive a musician as Toscanini is amongst the silliest misconceptions of many in this chapter on the recordings. In Horowitz's looking-glass world of monsters and caricatures he may justly claim it as all his own invention.

Horowitz does not, however, stop with the comparative sketches: pages are expended in a description of the two conductors' approaches to the Prelude to Act I of Lohengrin with, not surprisingly, summations which reflect the caricatures. And this brings me to the next technique: Horowitz's choice of atypical or inferior renditions among Toscanini's legacy upon which to found his contentions. Much play is made with some of Toscanini's least attractive NBC recordings, where self-parody indeed seemed not far distant. With unerring lack of sympathy we have here wheeled forth in evidence the coarsely played Beethoven Seventh of 1951, but not the fine Brahms Second or Fourth of that period. Much play is made of the strenuous and scrappy Haydn Surprise of January 1953#; but not of the extraordinarily effervescent and graceful Schubert Fifth of March that year or the pointed and wittily inflected Clock with the New York Philharmonic in 1945. The limitations of performances such as these were evident to all at the time of issue, notwithstanding RCA puffery on which so much of the edifice occupying earlier chapters is constructed. Yet much of that which is most fine in the NBC legacy is virtually ignored: you will search in vain for anything of significance about the Strauss tone-poems, or the Brahms, or the Schubert, Mendelssohn, Berlioz, and the studio Wagner.

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*Toscanini's pacing was probably the broadest of his era: the NYPSO in Berlin in 1930 took 20 minutes, the BBCSO in 1935 19 minutes, and the extant Stockholm Radio recording of 1934, with some two minutes-worth of music missing, over 17 minutes.

#Although its disputable minuet is now shown to be much in accordance with Haydn's probable intent: see Malloch's article (n, 27) in Opus, August 1985, p. 20.

But of the televised Wagner concert of 29 December 1951 there is much. In some of the most distasteful pages of the book Horowitz gives his reactions to the TV screen image of Toscanini; and his unbridled hostility here is a measure of his own obsessions and preoccupations about his subject matter, for among serious students or music lovers only those sharing his preconceptions would be likely to agree that the most memorable impression to be derived from this telecast was the conductor's smile of thanks to the orchestra at its close.

More significantly, however, Horowitz's detailed consideration of Toscanini's late Wagner and his comparisons with Furtwängler derive from the performances in this broadcast. So we learn of the *Lohengrin* Prelude's "distinctly mobile" character; of the "high strung" pacing of the *Tristan* Prelude; of the "relentless clamp" of the *Liebestod*; and of the "satanic declamation" of the Funeral March which, evoking no funeral, is "incoherent", so much sound and fury signifying merely (quoting Virgil Thomson) "an intense condition of purely auditory excitement"; all of which is explicable by the "exigencies of the NBC-period all-purpose formula".

Actually, Toscanini's performances in this broadcast were to a large extent atypical of his Wagner both in other broadcasts and in his late recordings, as the following table may help to indicate--I have extended it back as far as recordings go for comparative purposes.

	Death	Fun'l	Lohen.	Prel.	Tristan	Prel.*	Lieb.
1934 VPO		8:42	1936 NYP	8:35	1938	10:50	6:10
1945 NYP	3:31	8:23	1938	8:46	1943	9:45	6:06
1952 (r)	4:25	8:46	1941	8:59	1952 (r)	11:15	6:54
1953	4:34	9:16	1951 (r)	8:28	1953	10:35	6:23
1951 TV	4:21	8:37	1951 TV	7:40	1951 TV	10:29	5:58
F1950	3:33	(6:38)**	1954 VPO	9:48	1954	10:58	6:43

F -- Furtwängler recording of stated date

All Toscanini performances NBCSO except where stated

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*The figures for the *Tristan* Prelude mislead to some degree: the earlier performances are very broad at the start and sharply accelerate at the belebend marking; the TV performance, like the 1952 recording, is more consistent in pacing, albeit much faster. Cf. Haggin, *Conversations*, pp. 97-98.

This shows clearly, first, that Toscanini constantly changed his mind over the pacing of Wagner; secondly, that there was no neat progression towards greater velocity in the later NBC performances; and, thirdly, that the TV performances were among the most swiftly paced of Toscanini's career, and may well have been the most inflexible. Why that should have been so is not crystal clear. But it was obviously not caused by long absence from the opera house, for the earliest recording, of the Götterdämmerung Funeral Music from Vienna, has the same pacing as his later performances. Nor, certainly, by the application of an all-purpose formula; for there was none, the commercially issued recordings from 1951-52 being in many instances the broadest of all--indeed, more expansive in most instances than contemporary performances by Furtwängler. My own view is that the swift pacing was caused by nothing more fanciful than the intense heat and discomfort of the TV lights, which by the following year had Toscanini shaking and mopping his face during the course of the carelessly played and overly rapid Beethoven Fifth. For the most part the actuality of Toscanini was better served by the earlier telecasts, particularly the Beethoven Ninth in 1948 and Aida in 1949. The exception is the hieratic and heroic Death and Funeral Music, of massively greater breadth and weight in its climactic moments than Furtwängler, in contrast to the Lohengrin Prelude, where it was Furtwängler who in all their performances was consistently broader. And so, because the pacing here cannot be criticized, Horowitz attacks in terms which are meaningless. There is room for an informed and sensitive overview of the great Wagner performances of Furtwängler, Toscanini and others, but Horowitz's animus towards his subject precludes any such from his pen. There can be no greater indictment of his scholarship.

Now for the fourth and fifth interlinked techniques, those of the misleading reference to source and the compromised source. In discusssing Toscanini's musicianship Horowitz advances beyond the selectivity of reference noted elsewhere to achieve conclusions frequently opposite to those upon whom he draws. Take, for example, his quotation from the Russian-American composer Lazare Saminsky, part of whose 1932 analysis of Toscanini Horowitz quotes as an indication of how "modern" he then sounded in rejecting romantic excess. What Saminsky said, in greater part, was:

**The Furtwängler Götterdämmerung timings from the La Scala Ring. His Funeral Music lacks, of course, Toscanini's concert ending which in the TV performance adds 46 seconds to that part of the music played by both conductors--the common timing therefore being: Toscanini 7:54, Furtwängler 6:38. The Furtwängler Tristan excerpts from DG CD 415 663.

his exceptional gifts alone ... an incomparable mastery of the orchestra rising from a union of power and lucidity that mark his genius, would in themselves entitle him to the cognomen given to Palestrina: a Prince of Music. But, of course, it is the superior order of his musical instinct, his inborn artistic sagacity and an intense aesthetic individuality that create for him a unique place in music. There are still people who compare him to his disadvantage with the masters of the romantic and coloristic school, with Nikisch and Furtwängler, for example. Some do not realise that Toscanini's nature is priestly and Hellenic to the loftiest degree. He reaches out for nothing but the soul of the work to be rekindled by him. He sacrifices everything--color, brilliance, sonority, emotion too direct and crudely manifest--to the spiritual line of the music he is bringing to life.

Toscanini's genius is best embodied in his extraordinary touch that illuminates the contour and the kernel of the composition ... He is faithful to everything that the music breathes, its inner dynamics, its rhythmic pulse, its spiritual essence. Not only his conscious self but the remotest recess of his instinct loathes all that tastes of over-emphasis, the perfumery, the visible or veiled 'acting' that mark the inflated ego of today's deified conductor-emperor ... One marvels at the range of his interpretative grasp. It embraces the perfection of style in his reading of Mozart, the volcanic flaming credo ... of the Ninth Symphony, the lofty intensity of his Wagner readings ... Then one recalls the noble engraving in his re-creation of Ravel's _Daphnis_, the torrential sound orgy evoked in Honegger's _Pacific 231_, the light and radiant silhouette of 'his' _Till Eulenspiegel_.

One is subjugated by this protean clairvoyance.

In Toscanini's general predilections or in his technique, one may sense an affinity with the masters of the past. But _in purely tonal taste he is entirely a musician of our day just as much as a Hindemith, a Bartók, or a Prokofiev. His very aversion for adorning music, for inflating it with meaning, with extra-musical content, for emotionalizing what is but pure line and form, is the aversion of today's musician. He is bewitched_

by the very flesh of music, by its sonority and rhythmic flex; their plan and balance entrance him. In this he is a true neo-classic musician, both Hellenic and modern.... At times an incredible attention is demanded from the orchestra by Toscanini's gesture, in the execution, for example, of the orchestral recitativo that opens the finale of the 9th Symphony. But we must bow before a superhuman will that achieves everything it desires, and with any means it may choose ...[33]

This remarkable testimony to what Toscanini meant to an intelligent musician (not one of Horowitz's facile critics) a generation or more ago makes clear that, for Saminsky, he was a conductor uniquely universal and penetrating in his understanding of different stylistic requirements; but he involuntarily assists Horowitz, who quotes only the underlined part, in demonstrating Toscanini's rejection of tradition (in itself false, as we have seen) and hence his limitations as an interpreter of German music.

Among observers of Toscanini at work it was, indeed, the breadth and catholicity of his musicianship--notwithstanding the limitations of his repertoire--which was constantly emphasized. Horowitz does his best to disguise this. I have mentioned his quotations from NBC violinist Antek's *This was Toscanini* in his comments on the conductor's interpretation of the *Oberon* Overture; and Horowitz's fragmentary excerpts from Antek's lengthy description of Toscanini's rehearsal of the work permit him to draw the conclusion that he "used no metaphors to convey the 'meaning' of the adagio", "his concerns were purely local: not the contour of a phrase, but the shape, volume, and energy-level of a given particle of sound", in consequence of which (inter alia) the introduction evokes "tangible tension" rather than a "sylvan fairy kingdom." In musical terms, and in terms of rehearsal technique, this is, as already mentioned, tendentious nonsense. But what does Antek actually say? Here are just a couple of extracts dealing with the rehearsal of the opening horn phrase -

> He would start an almost imperceptible upbeat that moved no more than an inch or two. In this breathless vacuum the sound of the horn seemed like an apparition--no cue, no indication of any sort had been given to the player. Toscanini would beat a very slow tenuous beat of four through the horn solo. It seemed as if the bar would never end, as if it were lost in space .... His gesture in that opening bar, with an undulating sinuous movement, covered an area of but a few inches. A wonderful,

> eerie and magical atmosphere was created in seconds; the mood for the whole introduction was set .... I have spoken of the extraordinary mood Toscanini achieved [here]--the eerie, langorous, sylvan stillness, the quiet of nature that seems to roar in your ears with its silence; Toscanini conducting with his minimum of movement; the absolute sparseness of his beat, the utter lack of accent, direction and cue; the slow, weighted beat like spiraling incense [34]

What need of a conductor to indulge in spoken metaphors when he has such a stick at his command? The witness of Antek as to Toscanini's methods is at once the most reliable and most fascinating. When it is used by another it deserves respect on that account. The above is but a short extract; nonetheless perhaps sufficient for the reader to decide for himself whether in Horowitz's own conclusions he has not deliberately misled as to its purport.

My own indebtedness to the late B.H. Haggin will have been evident; Horowitz's barely at all, unless you scan his references, for Haggin is roundly abused as a "diehard cultist" and his efforts to correct the record of lies and distortions by some of the venal writers upon whom Horowitz relies labelled "fulminations" by the "bitterest of the cult's dregs." Now certainly in his earlier work Haggin was among the most acute commentators upon the great performers active from the late 1920's to the 1950's, the years covered by Music in the Nation and Music Observed, for his observations were founded on the accurate perceptions of an honest pair of ears, which always kept strictly in focus the object of observation unencumbered by the literary fancies of, say, a Virgil Thomson. To this in his Conversations with Toscanini he added accuracy of reportage of illuminating material. For Horowitz, though, this, like the discriminating albeit sometimes inaccurate Toscanini and the Art of Orchestral Performance by Robert Charles Marsh, was just an "essay in dour effusion." Horowitz concedes that Haggin's The Toscanini Musicians Knew was his best book; but note how he uses it. Detailed quotation from Kipnis, already mentioned, about the difficulties which he said the Salzburg singers had with Toscanini's conception of the Magic Flute. But in Horowitz's lengthy outpourings about the alleged shortcomings of Toscanini's Wagner, no mention of Kipnis's reaction to Toscanini and Muck at Bayreuth, where in their respective contributions to the Siegfried Wagner memorial concert (1930) Toscanini's Siegfried Idyll was the most beautiful he had ever heard. bringing the audience to tears, while Muck's Funeral Music seemed old, like a piece of parchment, or dusty scenery by

comparison with the "unbelievably " beautiful Idyll; or, as regards Toscanini's Tristan, the most lyrical he had ever heard and, like Furtwängler's, not Teutonic; or his Tannhäuser, which was "not Italian; it had its German character, but in this character it was lyrical."[35] Horowitz, as ever, is intent on devaluing Toscanini's approach to both Mozart and Wagner; and so he borrows Haggin's painstakingly collected evidence with convenient selectivity.

Finally, to the compromised source. The frequently invoked Virgil Thomson was, as earlier noted, one of Horowitz's favoured critics of the 1940's. He uses a passage from Thomson's article "The Toscanini Case" in effect, to sum up his own views; a passage memorable for such observations as "Toscanini's conducting style ... is very little dependent on literary culture and historical knowledge. It is disembodied theatre ... it produces a temporary but intense condition of purely auditory excitement ... The Maestro is a man of music, nothing else references in his interpretations is significant ... of a certain disdain for the general culture of his individual listeners"; and so on. Every one of these statements is either meaningless as a comment upon musical performance--how on earth can any interpretation possess "poetical allusion" (in presumably a literary sense) or, more ludicrous still, "historical reference"?--or, as demonstrated elsewhere, false. All this is a consequence of Thomson's schematizations and inventions in impressive-sounding language the whistle upon which was blown with devastating accuracy by Haggin many years ago.[36]

But it is convenient for Horowitz to invoke Thomson, or to quote extensively from the discredited Intimate Portrait of Chotzinoff;[37] convenient--to pluck a final example of an almost endless possible number--for him to mention on several occasions Aldrich's 1921 comments upon Toscanini's Brahms Second ("small" and "short-breathed") rather than the witness of Steinbach, Serkin, and Bruno Walter; convenient because it is consistent with the Toscanini of his imagination who is described in the chapter on the recordings: a Toscanini cribbed, cabinned and confined by limitations of aesthetic outlook and experience which he did not have; and a Toscanini of limited understanding inconsistent with what is verifiable from the legacy itself. Throughout this chapter virtually all of Horowitz's examples, whether literary or musical in derivation, are capable of detailed refutation by reference to properly authenticated sources and to the recordings. Horowitz's own constructions demonstrate--to put them in the most favorable light--limitations in his own ear, perception and taste

which, when combined with the fundamental shortcomings in scholarship, produce material so flawed as to negate his case; for case it remains, and nothing so exalted as an objective examination of an artistic and musical phemonenon.

The Influence

Horowitz's remaining chapters cover the "collapse of the cult" and the diminution of Toscanini's influence after his death. "Cultists", it should be noted, constitute a vast international conspiracy, suborned by American corporate publicists, ranging from uncritical worshippers during Toscanini's lifetime to those who continue to believe that Toscanini's legacy contains material of unique and permanent value. With the transient nature of the performing artist's appeal to the mass public, it is inevitable that there should be fewer of either brand around today than there were in Toscanini's lifetime and, to judge from the language in which this commonplace is chronicled, which one would be tempted to label the sneer writ large if that were not so apt for the whole, it may be deduced that Horowitz rejoices in that and the parallel diminution of musical influence. Horowitz ascribes the cause for both largely to the increasing availability of recordings by Furtwängler. This is nonsense: the Furtwängler fashion did not begin to make itself felt to a significant degree among that limited segment of the public which follows "historical" recordings until a decade after Toscanini's death, but memories of him had by then already faded. As those musically cognisant at the time will recollect, the primary cause was the advent of commercial stereo recording which Toscanini so narrowly missed. No sooner had he departed the scene than RCA got busy with Munch, Reiner _et al._, in stereo, and Toscanini sales plummeted. As simple--in the 1950's and early '60's--as that. Fashions will no doubt change again, and the real lessons to be learnt from the legacy--as distinct from the superficial ones absorbed by generations of faceless conductors of the classics who, whether they pay homage to Toscanini or Furtwängler, are still too much with us--may yet come to be recognised.

I draw no conclusions--and certainly no comfort--from this critique of scholarship betrayed, save only to sound the danger signals for the unwary. Mendacity and invention have been the lot of too many books about Toscanini; to those characteristics this one adds calculated malice. The most unfortunate consequence for the future would be if discussion of the subject were to be conducted in the author's terms, of "cultists" versus those sharing his views; for critical comment from those with any familiarity with Toscanini and his period will be concerned more with

fundamentals, with setting straight the historical record after the gratuitous deflection from established fact which it has received from Horowitz. Any attempt to do so, such as this review, must inevitably be selective as to the issues and endless points of detail to be controverted and the range of material drawn upon for the purpose; for, as a distinguised biographer of Toscanini has remarked to me, a detailed refutation of Horowitz's contentions would be nearly as long as the book itself. It is not worth it. Much better to listen--with ears properly attuned to the often restricted and defective sound--to Toscanini's legacy. You, too, may then be "subjugated by his protean clairvoyance."

NOTES

1. Musical Courier, 29 January 1913.

2. Ibid., 16 December 1908.

3. Ibid., 10 April 1912.

4. Concert Life in New York 1902-1923 (Putnam, 1941), pp. 396-397.

5. Musical Courier, 16 April 1913.

6. B. H. Haggin, "The Vienna Philharmonic's Conductors 1918-37", Music & Ballet 1973-1983, (Horizon, 1984), p. 227.

7. B. H. Haggin, Conversations with Toscanini, 2nd ed. (Horizon, 1979), p. 87.

8. Harvey Sachs, Toscanini, (Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1978), pp. 184-5, commenting on Gillis, Furtwängler in America.

9. John Russell, Erich Kleiber, A Memoir, (Deutsch, 1957), p. 136.

10. International Edition (Durrell, 1948), pp. 294, 296, 301, 306 and 381.

11. B. H. Haggin, Music in the Nation, (1949, rep. 1971 by Books for Libraries), p. 93.

12. Sachs, op. cit., pp. 68-70, 79-82.

13. Haggin, Music & Ballet, 1973-1983, p. 199.

14. *Musical Times*, 1 June 1901.

15. Sachs, *op. cit.*, pp. 72 and 79.

16. Haggin, *Conversations*, p. 38; Barblan, *Toscanini e la Scala* (1972), p. 72.

17. Taubman, *Toscanini* (Odhams, 1951), pp. 300-301.

18. Sachs, *op. cit.*, p. 109; Barblan, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

19. Haggin, "The Vienna Philharmonic's conductors, 1918-37" in *Music & Ballet*, p. 231.

20. Haggin, *The Toscanini Musicians Knew* (Horizon, 1967), p. 173.

21. Bruno Walter, *Theme and Variations* (Hamish Hamilton, 1947), p. 341.

22. Haggin, *The Toscanini Musicians Knew*, p. 175; the opera may have been *Meistersinger*, for at the period mentioned by Wallenstein,who tells this story, Toscanini appears not to have performed *Siegfried* at La Scala.

23. *Recorded Sound*, No. 24, p. 110.

24. Haggin, *Conversations*, p. 47.

25. *Sunday Times*, June 1937.

26. Haggin, *Conversations*, p. 63.

27. See Malloch, "Towards a New (Old) Minuet", *Opus*, August 1985, p. 14.

28. Haggin, *The Toscanini Musicians Knew*, p. 171.

29. At pp. 66-67.

30. Haggin, "The Vienna Philharmonic's conductors 1919-37", p. 259.

31. Here I differ from Spike Hughes, *The Toscanini Legacy*, 2nd ed. (Dover, 1969), pp. 157-158.

32. See e.g., Denis Matthews, "Toscanini and Beeethoven", *The Gramophone*, March 1957, pp. 361-362.

33. Saminsky, *Essentials of Conducting*, (Dobson, 1958), pp. 57-60.

34. At pp. 143-144, 147.

35. At pp. 62-64.

36. Haggin, "Toscanini and his Critics" in *A Decade of Music* (Horizon, 1973), pp. 70-73.

37. See e.g. Sachs, *op. cit.*, pp. 256 and 324; Haggin, *Conversations*, pp. 169-177.