
HUGH PETER COURT

Dec. 15, 1920 – Jan. 6, 1972

Early in the New Year collectors and preservers of recorded sound lost by premature death a prince among their number, Hugh Peter Court of Ross, Court & Co. of Toronto and of Rococo Records, whose extensive catalog of LP reissues from treasured recordings of the past has been justly coveted by collectors the world over.

Philip L. Miller tells the story of Peter Court's career in the realm of recorded sound:

“Along with his brother, Len, and his uncle by marriage, Andre Ross, Peter was known to many who had never met him as a part of Ross, Court & Co., first of Brighton, England, and after 1950 of Toronto. This is a family that has always done things together; and it is hardly possible to speak of Peter without Len and Andre. Their enthusiasm for early recordings led to the establishment of the Rococo label, and along with their shop, they have put limitless time and energy into giving new currency to the rarities they have collected. From 1957 to 1961 they also produced a collectors' magazine, *Record News* with authoritative articles, reviews, and discographies.

“My own relations with Ross, Court go back to the Brighton days. With the move to Canada, the family became my friends, their home my stopping place in Toronto. I can look back to many an evening listening to Peter's latest prizes and hearing of his plans. Those of us who attended the Music Library Association meeting in Toronto in February, 1970 will remember as a high spot Peter's party for the ARSC members on hand. As a collector of rare enthusiasm and a producer of high gifts and imagination, he will be sorely missed.”

But it is his partner, Andre Ross, now Curator of the Handleman Institute of Recorded Sound at the University of Miami, who understandably offers the most poignant memories of Peter Court the human being and the activist in the realm of Theatre:

“He was a *bon viveur* – enjoyed good food, fine drink, and congenial company. Together we had our vacation last summer in Austria, ferreting through book and record stores, for several weeks visiting the Vienna Opera almost every day, and traveling through the Vienna Woods, stopping evenings to eat cheese, drink Heuriger, and chat with strangers who soon became friends.”

“And yet I could still say – and with truth – that Peter was very quiet in his demeanor, often withdrawn into himself, reticent in airing his views, shy with women, not addicted to gossip or sudden confidences, and intensely, often even it seemed to me, foolishly loyal.”

“As for his career: He reached Int. Bachelor of Science at London University before World War II terminated his studies. Thereafter he did experimental engineering in a British factory. Later he became a Master Printer; and still later an expert in phonograph records. He was also a Licentiate of the London Royal Academy of Music, Speech and Drama – eventually becoming the beloved Director of the North York Little Theatre in Toronto, as well as for several years teaching elocution in evening classes. As Chief Editor of Record News, he specialized in articles on talking records and in discographies: the one of Lotte Lehmann is still considered the best of its kind.

“He was a patron of art and of sports, being in the latter connection a member of the Oakville Cricket Team in Ontario.”

“But for all these manifold activities, I could say that outward success was for him only the shadow of a life whose substance was contentment and inner harmony.”

“He was the youngest member of our partnership, the hope of us all. With his death the light went out of our lives.”

