

With a demanding solo career, chamber music was everpresent in Artur Schnabel's life (1882-1951). From his earliest years he performed with an eminent singer, Therese Behr (1876-1959), whom he'd soon marry. Her judgment played a profound role on his art: when initially rejecting some advice, Schnabel would soon make use of it! Their son Karl Ulrich also attested to her immense musicality and insight on his life as well.

The performances heard here attest Schnabel's artistry in chamber music a duo recital with violinist Joseph Szigeti (1892-1973) and an ensemble with Szigeti that featured the cellist Pierre Fournier (1906-1986). During a 1947 series held in London and in Edinburgh they performed numerous sonatas, trios and quartets of Schubert, Mendelssohn and Brahms.

Schnabel did not record any Mendelssohn and when this Piano Trio came to light, we hear a freedom of conception, that of a unique ensemble attuned to detail, expression and nuances. Schnabel's Schubert is equally as compelling as his extensive Beethoven recordings: these three works played on the radio had not been recorded and enrich our contact with his Schubert, a composer suggested by his antagonistic teacher Leschetizky who urged Schnabel to learn the then-overlooked late Sonatas.

Publication of a Frick Collection recital was of great concern to Joseph Szigeti and Karl Ulrich Schnabel. In the basement of Schnabel's house in Como, Italy came a discovery in 2018 of correspondence that reveals years of intensive efforts to seek its publication. By following their trail we are drawn into a musical espionage caper that seeks access to a lost musical treasure. Its first release lacked the Mozart Sonata and with new restoration,

more details in their playing come forth.

The quest is supplemented with excerpts from Schnabel's letters that cover the resumption of musical life after World War II. His comments on Furtwängler and Gieseeking depict a cultural abyss that highlights their moral shortcomings, as Schnabel indicates how unaware they were of its having damaged them.

Artur Schnabel to Mary Virginia Foreman (in English): 9 VI 1947

London On Saturday I finished my recording work. It was trying. When making music, one is, by the very nature of the music, an idealist, by the very character of the machines, a perfectionist. To be both demands twofold concentration, keeps one in a dilemma, threatens the coherence of a performance. The results were, this time, as good as possible – in my case. Kinderszenen will be a charming disc. Beethoven's A Major [Cello and Piano] Sonata also a joy.

1947 VI 13 London

Recording with Fournier was a joy. He is a supreme artist, and a noble, simple, and attractive person. How different from the Carnegie Hall galaxy!

29 VII 1947 Sils Maria, Switzerland

Last night Furtwängler and his wife came to see me. It was partly pleasant, partly the opposite. So far it seems to me that these Germans cannot be helped nor can they help themselves. He demonstrated the same old blending of arrogance, cowardice and self-pity. After the first "world war" the German

leaders circulated as facts what obviously had been fake. For instance, that they had lost the war because the home front had stabbed the army in the back. The peace treaty of Versailles was officially labeled “disgrace treaty.” The Germans had no guilt whatsoever in the outbreak of that war: that was another of their extremely baseless catch- phrases. Now Furtwängler went as far last night (he got terribly excited, hysterical, shouted and roared), as to say that he had never known any Nazi. And that Germans and Nazis are not only absolutely different beings but hostile to each other. That millions of Germans are now being murdered daily, and that the whole world shows its decadence by its total lack of charity. He admitted, however (without having been asked) that he had quite a good time during the “regime.” What a confusion! Poor creature; he would love to do away, with some magic, with that whole spook –after it had failed– Certainly we Americans are not equipped to handle

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these Germans, and whether we whip or we caress them, they don't like it.

5 VIII 1947 Maria, Switzerland

Szigeti is wonderfully prepared, was however a bit nervous (more than a bit, a good bite!), probably anticipating to find me rather “difficult.” But already after the first try he felt visibly relieved. And the full enjoyment of music's beauty meets no obstacle.

24 VIII 1947 Edinburgh, Scotland

I am in a crowded city. Festival ostentation everywhere. Every ten minutes

someone calls me or knocks at the door. So far I had no time for sightseeing. Rehearsals and concerts. Last night was our first performance. Big and exemplary audience. We were fairly satisfied with our work. Never before have I collaborated with such real, such willing artists. Rehearsals sheer pleasure.

1948 VI 11 London

Tuesday, the 15th, my recordings shall begin. Fournier may not come, because of a friction between him and Walter Legge (H.M.V.). Very stupid of Fournier.

22 VI 1948 London

Fournier is a sheer delight. Wonderful player, attractive human being.

8 VIII 1948 Sils Maria

I heard a recital of Backhaus. Old-fashioned. He never had fire and imagination. Yet, compared with the new breed of showmen virtuosos, under managerial compulsions, his presentations were satisfyingly clean and simple. Fournier played marvelously last night. An incorruptible artist – I hope.

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10 IX 1948 Menaggio, Italy

In the afternoon I listened to my new recordings. Those for piano solo and those with Fournier are satisfactory. Those with orchestra are not.

1 VI 1949 Los Gatos, California

Fournier writes me that a Jewish veterans committee in the U.S.A. has warned all concert arranging organizations here not to engage him, for he was a collaborator. Whether the veterans Piatigorsky, Schuster, and Kurtz have had their brilliant hands in that sordid affair? (Flagstad brings big money. That kills any objection. There are also not so many Isoldes.)

15 VII 1949 Los Gatos, California

Fournier wrote me another excited desperate letter. One day one will have to abandon the classifications of persons according to their evident or only alleged behavior during the war. The door to this escape (of the self-righteous) should be closed now.

1950 VII 21 Axenstein, Switzerland

Your collision with Giesecking is amusing. He is, always was, a very primitive bulk (played many things beautifully), and later a passionate beautiful Hitlerian. (Goes easily with stupidity.)

Pierre Fournier to Therese Behr Schnabel (in English) *29 VI 1957 Buenos Aires* My dear Therese, Only today in Buenos Aires, arrives your letter of May 31st. I am sorry to answer it so late. I shall tell you, frankly, the reason why I cannot give my agreement for the re-issue of our Beethoven recordings with Arthur [sic]. You know the respect, affection and admiration I attach to his wonderful achievements, but, since 1947, I have changed myself and I am

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convinced that my recordings of these past times cannot serve happily my future, this future I have to protect.

I am completely dissatisfied now with the balance of sound of these recordings. And a balance of sound cannot be improved by modern technical treatment!! In 1947, with the enthusiasm of recording with Arthur, but with a certain indifference of

both Arthur and [Walter] Legge taking not enough notice of the importance of the dialogue and of the balance of sound between the two instruments, I had to conceal my personal objections, as a young artist has always to do with an old master. Now, when I hear these recordings, I find the cello tone weary, feeble and far back from the intensity and the brilliancy of the piano tone. –And don't forget, dear Therese, that the 2 first sonatas has never been published! If they had been good, there would have been no reason not to publish them in 10 years time!! The memory of Arthur will always be present, even without the re-issue of our Beethoven performances and, even more, if I cannot agree with their new publication, it is entirely because I want to protect my reputation as both cellist and interpreter. – I am an anxious person, as you know, and you must understand both, also, my evolution and my self-criticism.

– I want to remain your friend, and I shall even be, needless to say, the most fervent admirer of Arthur. Don't forget it, dear Therese – with kindest wishes, yours very affectionately, as ever – Pierre.

Therese Schnabel to Fournier (in English) n.d. . . . It would be so very sad if just now, when the new edition of Artur's records is brought out and seems to be such an enormous success, the records you made together would be lost – because of some silly, malicious gossip.

I have heard the new edition of Artur's Beethoven concertos now. It is really wonderful what these engineers have done – they sound so much more beautiful than the old ones. They don't sound at all like records made a long time ago.

The records you made with Artur will also sound so much better and you will be very happy with them. I still have your letter in which you write with so much enthusiasm about them

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and ask Artur to see that they are released soon. I know that you will be as disturbed about this untrue gossip as I am. I think it would be a good idea if you write a letter to His Master's Voice, telling them how you really feel, then there can be no harm. And please let me hear from you. With heartiest greetings and best wishes to Lydia and yourself,

Yours as always Therese

Correspondence between Karl Ulrich Schnabel and Joseph Szigeti

Szigeti to Karl Ulrich Schnabel 9 I 1961 *Baugy, Clarens* I was wondering whether you were able to pursue the matter of "Off the Air" recordings with your Father. I met Bicknell* in Genoa and mentioned the matter to him: he seemed very interested and promised to look me up here should he come to Switzerland. Are you going to America this winter again? In this case could you try and see Peter Bartok and talk to him about what his exigencies would be in the event of a publication of these records (which he took off the air). Walter Legge wrote to him but of course Peter doesn't answer letters! Should

you be coming to Switzerland please look us up in the delightful home of ours. *p.s.* Could you tell me whether I am mistaken in my vague recollection that your Father spoke to me about Robert Musil around 1947 or so? In reading his great work I had this very uncertain feeling. **David Bicknell (1906–88) impresario & recording manager of EMI International Artists Division*

Schnabel to Szigeti 21 I 1961 *New York* I last talked in December to a representative of Pathé-Marconi about the tapes taken of your

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duo-concert with my father. Pathé-Marconi is the branch of HMV-EMI in Paris who have handled all reissues of my father's recordings. The representative told me that they would be very interested, but that it would be absolutely necessary for them to have a copy of the tape before they can make any decision.

I was going to discuss this matter with César Saerchinger* and will now also try to see Peter Bartok. I hope I will succeed in meeting him: I have very few days in New York this year as, most fortunately, we have a lot of concerts in America. We expect to be in America until March 31st, then go to Europe again.

**César Saerchinger (1889-1971), author of a Schnabel biography.*

Szigeti to Schnabel 28 I 1961 *Baugy, Clarens* I just heard parts of your Bizet *Jeux d'enfants* recording which is really excellent, though the recording seems to me somewhat over percussive. Judging what Mme. Furtwängler

recently told me, it is Mr. [Jacques] Leiser of Pathé Marconi who is interested in my recorded recital with your Father. Could you give him my address and telephone number, and ask him to look us up on one of his trips to Switzerland, so that I can play him the records that I played to you in New York. As you know I have no tapes and I suppose it will be a long procedure (and a long fight) to obtain these from Peter Bartok*. My question about Robert Musil was whether this monumental book** was in your Father's library and whether you remember his ever having mentioned it to you or others. *Peter Bartok (1924-) son of the composer Béla Bartok, recording engineer, founder of Bartok Records, author and editor. ** Robert Musil (1880-1942) author of The Man Without Qualities

Schnabel to Szigeti 25 IV 1961 Lovenno di Menaggio, Lago di Como The fact that I am answering your letter so very late does not mean that I was not active about

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your recorded recital with my father. I made all the necessary investigations and the situation is quite clear now. But I was immensely busy and had to travel so much that I was forced to neglect all correspondence until now. It is indeed Mr. Leiser of Pathé Marconi whom I tried to interest in the recorded recital. He stated that all would depend on the quality of the tape; unless he could hear the tape. He believes me that the musical quality is superb.

I contacted Peter Bartok through our mutual friend Robert Blake. Peter Bartok said that he would very gladly permit me to make a tape-copy of the tape and we agreed that Robert Blake, who is one of America's best

recording engineers and has done much work with Peter Bartok, would make the copy for me. Under these circumstances the copy would be of the same (if not superior) quality as the original tape.

However, while the original tape is in the hands of Peter Bartok, the “rights” on this reproduction are not his, but belong to Mr. Victor Bator*, who originally engaged Bartok to make the tape. Bartok and Bator are now in a violent legal fight against each other (about other matters, concerning property and rights of Béla Bartok), and therefore Peter Bartok can not risk copying of the tape without permission by Bator, and Bator would never permit Bartok to copy the tape.

On Bartok’s advice I called Mr. Bator and told him about your and our great interest in having HMV make a record from this recital: that there were good chances, but I could not proceed without a permission to reproduce his recorded version of the recital. Of course I neither mentioned Bartok’s name (which would have been fatal) nor the word “tape.” Bator was very charming and promised to send me a written statement giving me the rights of reproduction. But he never sent me the statement. I was, after this, only a few days in New York, and tried to call Bator again, but could not reach him.

Now it will be necessary to approach him by letter. I do not know him personally. In case you know him well, it might be more effective, if you write to him. If you do write, please do not mention Bartok, but simply restate our interests in publication by HMV and ask him for the

rights of reproduction, without specifically mentioning the tape (which would remind him of Bartok). Otherwise I will write. As soon as we have a statement from Bator, I can send it to Blake: Bartok is willing to give the tape for copying to Black upon seeing such a statement. And when the copy is made it can be sent to Leiser.

**Victor Bator (1891-1967) founder and director of the Bartok Archives, author.*

Szigeti to Schnabel 11 V 1961 Baugy, Clarens I must hand it to you that your intervention in N.Y. was more efficient than any undertaken all these past years! Thank you ever so much. As you see I have written to Dr. Bator as per enclosed carbon and now let us hope and pray, because as you know any negotiation with this gentleman is in nature of a gamble. Since receiving your letter I am a little more hopeful about the whole affair. In my amateurish unlegalistic opinion it is a very doubtful question whether the fact of Dr. Bator having paid for the air of the recording by Peter confers any right on him. I think that if I or Pathé-Marconi refunds this little sum to Dr. Bator this would give him still less of a "right" to oppose a publication. After all, theoretically speaking, many other persons may have made a recording off the air on this Sunday afternoon!

Szigeti to Schnabel 4 VII 1961 Baugy, Clarens At last I had a reply from Dr. Bator and happily it is a positive one. In fact he writes "As to the Schnabel-Szigeti Sonatas recording, the letter that accompanies this will explain to you why I had not done anything that would have required personal or any other contact with Peter Bartok. Now that he has been badly licked, I do not feel

inhibited from talking to him about affairs which do not involve my personal feelings or controversial matters. Hence, I am now willing to help you in this project in whatever way I can. As far as clearance is concerned, for now and thereafter, everything is cleared for your personal use. I certainly have no objections

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against the publication of the record.” Do you think it would be safer to let Bator give Peter Bartok the go-ahead sign directly? A false move on our part might jeopardize the whole project as Bator is, as you know, very touchy.

Schnabel to Szigeti 2 XI 1961 *Loveno di Menaggio, Lago di Como* It is wonderful to know that the tapes are finally available! I consider it highly inadvisable to use the original and only tapes for shipping. Besides the danger of loss, the slightest damage in any one place would mean that one whole sonata is lost. And that could occur not only while they are on the way, but also at Pathé-Marconi. I think it would be foolish to take such risks where the cost of copying is not so great. Also, the quality of reproduction can be improved when making a copy, provided it is done by a first rate man. I still think Blake should copy the tapes and I tend to agree with Dr. Bator that it would be best to wait for your arrival in New York. It is not long until then. I can contact Leiser in the meantime – actually I hope to see him, because unfortunately he rarely answers letters.

Szigeti to Schnabel 15 XI 1961 *Baugy, Clarens* Yes, we'll see about making a copy through Blake and go on from there. But you should tell Leiser that we will play the tapes to him in April! Is your Father's book a reworking of

his Chicago Univ. lectures "Music & the line of most resistance."?

Szigeti to Schnabel *12 XII 1961 Baugy, Clarens* Just a word to tell you that the tapes have safely reached me. They are on big professional reels (which I can't play on my 7 1/2, inch equipment). So I would now ask you to "alert" Leiser and ask him to contact me in view of an audition of the tapes (perhaps at Radio Lausanne?). I would also suggest that we don't entirely bank on Leiser, but that you tell Saron of Philips about this. It would be good to have two rivals interested in our project.

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Schnabel to Szigeti *26 XII 1961 Loveno di Menaggio, Lago di Como* I had been under the impression that we agreed the original tapes would stay in America to be copied there. So I do not understand your announcement of their arrival in Europe. I still am convinced that it is too great a risk to ship the original tapes around and have them played before they are copied. Concerning Leiser, I have tried unsuccessfully since a long time to make contact with him by mail – it seems to be impossible. But I have hopes that before I go to America he will come to Milan and I will see him there.

The book of my father's which was just now published in England is based on his 1945 Chicago University lectures and discussions, but has nothing to do with his "Music and the line of most resistance."

Szigeti to Schnabel *7 V 1962 Baugy, Clarens* Not having heard from you these last several months, I assume that Jacques Leiser remains silent and non-committal. I think you will agree with me if I now suggest that we no

longer remain in the expectative, but do something about it. I happen to know the legal advisor of Pathé-Marconi, Maitre Roger Hauert and I feel that if we offered him a fee for his intervention, we could hope for results. How would you feel about such a step? The coast is clear now and all we need now is some action. I don't think we would risk much in considering payment to M. Hauert as an "on account" expenditure on the royalties that we could count upon.

Schnabel to Szigeti 12 V 1962 *Loveno di Menaggio, Lago di Como* It would certainly be wonderful, if by the intervention of someone like Maitre Roger Hauert results were obtainable. But unfortunately we could not afford to make any payments for such interven- tion, especially because the estate of my father is still blocked.

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However, in case you feel that it would be worthwhile if you take the risk of paying for a promotion fee, we would gladly agree to turn over our share of the royalties received from this record to you, up to one half of the amount of the promotion fee; provided that there would be no claim in case the royalties never reach that amount or the recording is not issued.

Szigeti to Schnabel 2 V 1964 *Baugy, Clarens* You're a wise man to have saved yourself all the aggravation, time, energy and money I spent on trips to Paris, phone calls to London and Paris, lawyer interviews, hours spent at Pathé Marconi's studios, near Paris and to have let me do all this single-handed . . . I wouldn't go through this gain for anything in the world!! My lawyer made an appointment with Macleod and De Jongh in the Fall of 1963,

they were enthusiastic and so was Bicknell and it ended over a year later in – nothing. Anyway I have decided never to go near the EMI–Pathé Marconi bunch of smiling virtuosos – liars, so if you want to write unanswered letters to Monsieur Leiser or put in phone calls to EMI, while the gentlemen are “out of the office” you are welcome to do so. I have had very good experiences with Seymour Solomon [Vanguard Records] and my friendly advice to you is: say yes! PS. I forgot to say that I spent a pleasant hour on this matter with the smiling liar of CBS records who was most enthusiastic about the idea and wrote to Mr. Burkat at Columbia, New York, who presumably also was most enthusiastic, but . . . (They didn’t even ask for the tapes to listen to!) Oh, I forgot to tell you: that nice Mr. Bicknell asked me to procure him a release from Columbia USA which I promptly obtained from the Corporation lawyer. He needed this in order to be cleared of any liability vis à vis Columbia, as to my part in these records!! So you see: in 1963 “it was in the bag” and in 1964 it was out of the bag. . .

EMI to Schnabel 29 V 1964 Hayes: *International Artistes Dept.* Some time ago Mr. Szigeti supplied us with a tape of this performance and after listening to

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it very carefully we advised him that we did not wish to produce commercial records from it as, in our opinion, the quality was not of the standard which we regard as marketable. We did promise Mr. Szigeti that we would consider releasing our rights in these specific recordings if a major company showed any particular interest in including such a record in their normal release

schedule.

Schnabel to EMI Management Accountant 2 II 1976 New York From friends who are record collectors I heard that recordings of my father, Artur Schnabel, playing together with Joseph Szigeti were issued under the Columbia label (the records are of Beethoven Violin-Piano Sonatas). I imagine that they were issued under license from you. If that is true, I would greatly appreciate your sending me a copy of such records. You used to let me know generally about new issues of my father's recordings and send me copies of them, but since some time I have not heard or received anything. I would be most grateful if you let me have this information and copies of the new issues again. Possibly, your department does not concern itself with matters like this. If that is so, would you kindly relay my letter to the right department? ©2019 Arbiter of Cultural Traditions

Our gratitude to the Schnabel Music Foundation for enabling this project.

The Schnabel Music Foundation was created to illuminate the musical contributions of the entire Schnabel Family – a legacy of creativity that began with Artur and Therese, continued through Karl Ulrich and Helen, and found its ultimate expression in their great-grandson, Claude Mottier.

<http://schnabelmusicfoundation.com>