

Nicolas Slonimsky's Role in the
Musical Modernism of the Early Twentieth Century

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Submitted to the graduate degree program in Musicology and the Graduate Faculty of the
University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music.

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Date Defended: 1 March 2013

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Date approved: 18 April 2013

Abstract

The musical modernism movement of the early twentieth century began with much resistance, but blossomed into a period of inspired experimentation and development. Nicolas Slonimsky played an active role in the midst of this era. He was a composer, pianist, conductor, and writer. Examining the more personal aspects of his relationships with figures that were hallmark examples of this movement reveals Slonimsky's widespread influence. The most significant relationships that are focused on in this thesis include Charles Ives, Henry Cowell, Edgard Varèse, and Léon Theremin. To these men, Slonimsky offered great support, trusted advice, and recommendations to publishers, and he wrote beneficial articles regarding their music. He collaborated with them on their work, encouraged them, and pushed them to new heights. Nicolas Slonimsky was a champion of many musicians during his lifetime, promoting and supporting them, even at his own expense. Slonimsky made significant contributions to the developments of modern music during its growth in the twentieth century.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank, first and foremost, my professor Paul Laird, for guiding me through this thesis adventure and detailed process. I am indebted to him for the hawk-eyed editing, patient correcting, and constant encouragement he offered me. Thank you to all of my professors who supported my project and fellow graduate students who endured with me. I owe gratitude to all of my family who joined in enthusiastic interest of my research and aided in many steps along the way, especially the Townsend family for their hospitality on my research trip to Washington D.C. Jayton Williams, thank you for your never-tiring-listening ear and encouragement. Krishna Bell, thank you for pushing me towards excellence and never letting me settle for less. Mom and Dad, I could not have made it this far without you both and your unrelenting support.

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Introduction

Nicolas Slonimsky is best known as a musicologist and thorough lexicographer. I intend to explore the relevance of Slonimsky's part in the development of contemporary music through his early conducting career and personal relationships with individuals significant in musical modernism, particularly Charles Ives, Henry Cowell, Edgard Varèse, Igor Stravinsky, Léon Theremin, Sergei Koussevitsky, and Joseph Schillinger. To a lesser extent, this will also include consideration of his influence on the professional development and establishment of Carl Ruggles, Percy Grainger, Robin Milford, Ernest Bloch, Paul Horgan, Arthur Honneger, Arthur Bliss, Ernst Krenek, John Cage, and Dmitri Shostakovich through a variety of events and circumstances.

This thesis will uncover more information about the meaningful relationships Slonimsky had with many figures of the movement as well as unveil the considerable significance that Slonimsky had on other aspects of avant-garde musical development. Slonimsky's influence occurred through his personal support and endless efforts made on behalf of musicians, artists, and numerous passionate intellectuals he met, an impact reaching far beyond what has been previously credited to this multi-talented and spirited individual.

Chapter 1

Early Years in Russia, Kiev and Constantinople

In order to grasp Nicolas Slonimsky's role as a key supporter to many important musicians, one must apprehend the vastness of this man's genius. Slonimsky was born in St. Petersburg, Russia in 1894, to a family with a long line of scientists, musicians, and brilliant inventors. Before reaching the age of three, the family had confirmed that Nicolas acquired the gift of "perfect pitch." His aunt, Isabella Vengerova, began to teach him piano, which he mastered quickly, becoming known as a *Wunderkind*. Notable to his future relationships with musicians, Vengerova later became a famous piano pedagogue who taught at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, after her own immigration to the United States in 1923. With the support of his aunt, Slonimsky made an astounding entrance as a young pianist with a rare capability to memorize works with ease,¹ in addition to his advanced technical skills. Alexander Glazunov, the director of the St. Petersburg Conservatory, eagerly admitted Slonimsky to the school with hopes he would follow in the footsteps of the beloved predecessors, particularly those of the esteemed Rimsky-Korsakov. Slonimsky had the privilege of studying composition with Vasiliy Kalafait, a student of Rimsky-Korsakov, and the first composition teacher to Igor Stravinsky. Along with his training in composition, Slonimsky also studied physics, astronomy, and mathematics.

¹ As a teenager Slonimsky memorized long texts and poetry to impress people. In high school he memorized the entire text of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* and the table of logarithms simply to "amaze the innocents." Nicolas Slonimsky, *Nicolas Slonimsky: Perfect Pitch*. ed. by Electra Slonimsky Yourke (New York: Schirmer Trade Books, 2002), 19.

At the age of twenty, he obtained a summer position as resident tutor to a prosperous family living in the town of Kursk, south of Moscow. He instructed the three young girls in music, mathematics, literature, and other academic subjects. Following this summer of 1914, Slonimsky spent the next few years in the company of a couple, Zinaïda Gippius and her husband, Dmitri Merezhkovsky, that belonged to the group called the Symbolists; they were leading poets and writers of an artistic movement in Russia. Out of the theologies of the Orthodox tradition, the Symbolists applied the belief of divine inspiration, the act of experiencing an elevating influence upon the intellect or emotions resulting in a inspired message void of all defects, in their case most often through forms of art.² As a non-poet and observer more than a zealous Symbolist, Slonimsky participated in their many adventures, but usually was charged to duties that “did not require plenary inspiration.”³ He was appointed secretary of the Religious Philosophical Society of St. Petersburg, a group of philosophers founded by the Merezhovskys and committed to mystical phenomena. Slonimsky contributed essays and reviews to their monthly publication, and enjoyed the fellowship from intellectuals of varied fields.

Slonimsky’s family faced misfortune during this time because of illness. Slonimsky’s younger brother Vladimir died of tuberculosis in 1916; his father died in Petrograd in 1918. Slonimsky attempted to dodge the Russian military draft by claiming he suffered from constipation. He was assured this would “be cured very quickly the moment you get under fire.”⁴ Slonimsky found himself assigned to the music section of the Preobrazhensky regiment, with which he travelled to Rostov in the summer of 1916. He played piano with the regimental

² D. S. von Mohrenschildt, “The Russian Symbolist Movement,” *MLA Notes*, vol. 53, no. 4 (December 1938): 1199.

³ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 41.

⁴ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 44.

orchestra and enjoyed opportunities to perform as soloist, including Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto and a funeral march for the Russian revolutionary leader, Georgi Plekhanov's burial service.

After the execution of the czar and his family in July 1918 the situation in the city of Petrograd deteriorated quickly. Slonimsky, like all of the Russians in the city, suffered from severe poverty. He recalled having hallucinations brought on by starvation, imagining food in cupboards that always turned up empty.⁵ It was in the autumn of that year that Slonimsky decided to leave Russia. Following many other immigrating Russians, he attempted to reach Paris. He first found his way to Kiev, where his family had friends. One friend included Balakhovsky, a friend of the composer Alexander Scriabin. (Balakhovsky took in Scriabin's widow and three children after Scriabin's passing in 1915.)

Slonimsky gained employment at the Kiev Conservatory as the accompanist to the vocal department. He also enjoyed the opportunity to study composition with Reinhold Glière, and accompany the famous tenor Nikolai Figner, a friend of Tchaikovsky. Slonimsky remained in Kiev through the defeat of Germany in November 1918, observing the arrival of the Bolsheviks in 1919. The White Army judged Jews by their ethnic heritage rather than religious affiliation; though Slonimsky's passport listed him as Greek Orthodox, he was aware of the possible threat due to his genetic birthright. He moved to a small cottage in a Kiev suburb, and still barely skirted near doom with the visit of Cossacks demanding to be made aware of any Jews. Thanks

⁵ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 48.

to his Russian host, with “authentic” Russian blonde looks who claimed there were no Jews there, the Cossacks passed by and did Slonimsky no harm.⁶

Slonimsky’s mother joined him in Kiev and obtained permission for both of them to travel to Kharkov via train. After weeks of travel they arrived to settle in Yalta, where they quickly found friends from Petrograd and Kiev. Slonimsky connected with several singers whom he had accompanied in Kiev. In Yalta, many intellectuals, professionals, and educators who previously pursued successful careers were forced to learn menial and laborious work in order to survive. A ten-day journey across the Black Sea took Slonimsky to the city of Constantinople, Turkey. Russians monopolized the music business there; Slonimsky quickly found an accompanying job in a dance studio. He also worked as a pianist in restaurants and silent movies, earning enough to afford decent clothing, “real toothpaste, real soap, and Brilliantine to grease my hair as to have the part clearly delineated.”⁷ Slonimsky managed to celebrate his first published composition during his short time in Constantinople, the “Valse Bosphore,” named after the Bosphorus strait in Turkey which connects to the Black Sea, dividing Europe from Asia. Dance tunes such as this and others like the foxtrot were extremely popular. Several of the pieces he wrote there were published in his collection of *Minitudes*, 59 years later.⁸ These efforts were all a means to place himself as a famous concert pianist, composer, and writer — his primary goals in life.⁹ This was not to be a reality in the political unrest the Russian territories suffered during the 1920s.

⁶ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 53.

⁷ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 61.

⁸ Nicolas Slonimsky, *51 Minitudes for Piano: 1972-76* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1979).

⁹ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 62.

It was at this time that Slonimsky lost contact with his mother because of the Bolshevik occupation of the Crimea. They suppressed all communication between Russia and the outside world. He heard only briefly of her from a friend, assuring that she was alive and well. Slonimsky's aunt Isabelle Vengerova had survived the poverty of Petrograd from concertizing income. She made valuable relationships with students and military officials, enabling her to immigrate to Vienna, where she had been educated as a youth and mastered fluent German. After discovering the affair of her lover with one of his female pupils, Vengerova left Vienna and went to Berlin. There she successfully established a studio of piano students. In 1923, she was invited to join the faculty at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.¹⁰ She took the chance to get to America and settled in Philadelphia. It was not until years later that she would reconnect with her nephew in the United States.

¹⁰ David Wright. "Vengerova, Isabelle." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed October 24, 2012, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.www2.lib.ku.edu:2048/subscriber/article/grove/music/42463>.

Chapter 2

The 1920s: From Paris to America

Slonimsky reached Paris in late 1921. He renewed his acquaintance with the Russian bass, Alexander Mozzhuhin, whom he had accompanied in Kiev. During an intermission of Mozzhuhin's recital, the pianist was approached by Sergei Koussevitzky. The up-and-coming conductor offered Slonimsky a job playing piano reductions while he practiced conducting. They had lunch the following day and Slonimsky began his employment. This was the beginning of a profitable relationship for Slonimsky's future career. While working for Koussevitzky, he served stints with the Diaghilev ballet company as rehearsal accompanist. He joined Koussevitzky for a summer in Biarritz, working to master conducting *Le Sacre du printemps* by Igor Stravinsky. This was Slonimsky's first encounter with a truly modern work. He enjoyed the challenges of the rhythmic difficulties and harmonic discords. It was immediately evident to Slonimsky that Koussevitzky did not have the ability to tackle the many complexities of the score. With mathematical methods, Slonimsky attempted to show Koussevitzky how these metrical fractions could be connected without sacrificing a single beat, but Koussevitzky dismissed his ideas as incorrect. Stravinsky spent much of that summer in Biarritz as well, coming to Koussevitzky's house nearly every day. Slonimsky spent the evenings playing poker with Stravinsky and Koussevitzky, though as the paid help he was never allowed to pay out his losses. Slonimsky took the opportunity to discuss fellow composers that he found talented in hopes that his companions would take notice of them. One in particular for which he voiced great support was the young Polish composer, Alexandre Tansman, whose scores he brought with him to Biarritz.

This introduction later resulted in Tansman's well-received biography on Stravinsky.¹¹ In his autobiography Slonimsky reflected on their relationship:

Who could foresee that Tansman would become one of Koussevitzky's favorite composers and a worshipful friend and biographer of Stravinsky? Tansman showed his appreciation for my efforts in his behalf by inscribing one of his scores to me, "A mon accoucheur."¹²

To Koussevitzky's embarrassment, the rehearsals of *Le Sacre* in Paris failed miserably. He humbly enlisted Slonimsky's help to understand the score. After Slonimsky's attempt to explain the simple mathematics of combining measures by adding fractions, Koussevitzky still could not understand and asked him to re-bar the score. Slonimsky completely re-barréd the entire "Danse sacrale." Koussevitzky was the first, but not the last to use this re-barréd version in order to conduct Stravinsky's difficult movement. As many as sixty years later, the esteemed conductor Leonard Bernstein sent Slonimsky a note regarding this score:

Dear Nicolas, Everytime I conduct *Le Sacre*, as I did most recently two weeks ago (and always from Koussy's own score with your re-barring.) I admire and revere and honor you as I did the very first time. Bless you, and more power to you! Lenny B. April '84.¹³

In his autobiography, Slonimsky shared other instances of personal clashes in correcting a master musician or conductor. For instance, during a rehearsal where Stravinsky was conducting *Ragtime*, his own composition, while at the piano (as substitution for the Hungarian cimbalom), Slonimsky discovered that the scoring for the left hand was in the wrong clef. If it

¹¹ Alexandre Tansman, *Igor Stravinsky, the Man and His Music* (New York: Putnam, 1949).

¹² Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 69. "A mon accoucheur" translates as a male obstetrician. Tansman was jokingly referring to Slonimsky "giving birth" to his professional accomplishment as a way of thanks.

¹³ Leonard Bernstein, Letter to Nicolas Slonimsky, April 1984. Nicolas Slonimsky Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

were played as written the hands would be crossed the whole performance. He brought it to Stravinsky's attention during an intermission, who argued that it was correct. Slonimsky went on to play "in effect transposing the piece in the double counterpoint of the thirteenth, right under Stravinsky's nose, and he was never the wiser for it."¹⁴

Situations such as these arose most often in his working relationship with Koussevitzky. He took on secretarial duties along with accompanying, translating Koussevitzky's poor French and managing paperwork for his many engagements. Both Koussevitzky and Slonimsky found their way to the United States with professional appointments. Slonimsky was offered a position at the Eastman School of Music in 1923 and Koussevitzky became the music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1924.¹⁵ The offer was thanks to Slonimsky's close friend, Vladimir Rosing, an operatic tenor whom he had accompanied on tour through France, Belgium, and Spain. Rosing met George Eastman while on a transatlantic liner and proposed that Eastman fund an opera company as an extension to his school. With a quarter-million dollar initial funding from Eastman, Rosing was put in charge of hiring the staff and developing this company. Slonimsky took the position of opera director and coach with the newly-structured American Opera Company at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. Slonimsky was joined by Rouben Mamoulian, Paul Horgan, Albert Coates, and Eugene Goossens as stage directors and professors. He earned a generous salary and made additional money playing privately for George Eastman, who enjoyed having music during his breakfast. He accompanied Rosing on a successful tour through Canada. Unfortunately Rosing's administrative skills proved

¹⁴ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 71. It possibly could have been an error between bass and treble clef in the notation.

¹⁵ José A. Bowen. "Koussevitzky, Sergey." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed 24 October 2012, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.www2.lib.ku.edu:2048/subscriber/article/grove/music/15431>.

less developed than his performing abilities. The company gained some popularity and positive attention but failed financially. Many businesses suffered this fate after the stock market crash of 1929. In 1930, Eastman dissolved the American Opera Company and relocated the staff under the umbrella of the school.¹⁶

Slonimsky and Horgan maintained a close friendship, particularly due to their shared interest in literature and writing. Slonimsky convinced Horgan to let him send one of Horgan's stories to a Russian émigré paper published in Paris, which became his first published writing. He went on to become a multiple Pulitzer Prize winner and best-selling author. In his memoirs, he gave Slonimsky credit for launching him into his literary career.¹⁷ With the mutual support of Horgan and Mamoulian, Slonimsky continued his work at Eastman. It was here that Slonimsky wrote his first ballet, *The Prince Goes a-Hunting*, which was performed under the direction of Mamoulian with the story written by Horgan and orchestration assistance from Vittorio Giannini.¹⁸ Albert Coates shared his conducting skills by training Slonimsky in the basics.

Slonimsky

During the summers at Eastman, Koussevitzky enlisted Slonimsky to work with him in Paris. Though they had taken different professional paths, they maintained their relationship on arrival in the United States. After multiple offers from Koussevitzky to join his staff in Boston. In 1925, Slonimsky decided to leave Eastman at Rochester, on good terms, to experience the challenges of a new city. The summer of 1925 he was able to reconnect with his mother and

¹⁶ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 75-79.

¹⁷ Paul Horgan, *Tracings: A Book of Partial Portraits* (New York, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux), 1993.

¹⁸ Ann T. Keene, "Horgan, Paul," In *American National Biography: Supplement 2* edited by Mark C. Carnes (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005), 269.

sister. While in Europe, Slonimsky was appointed to recruit Russian musicians to come to Boston as “young blood” for the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

While working for Koussevitzky as assistant conductor, Slonimsky grew fond of living in Boston. In retrospect, he referred to it as his true hometown.¹⁹ He made friends with members of the local intelligentsia, including one Isaac Goldberg, the literary critic and author. Slonimsky shared stories of them exchanging witty verse and satirical writings for their own entertainment. It was at the home of the Goldbergs where Slonimsky met his future wife, Dorothy Adlow. Another prominent figure that Slonimsky met while accompanying Koussevitzky was the renowned pianist, Sergei Rachmaninoff. As soloist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra Rachmaninoff performed his composition, *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*. Slonimsky was entertained that Rachmaninoff corrected Koussevitzky during rehearsal, who uncharacteristically conceded to the rebuke. In a private conversation later that week, when conversation turned to Koussevitzky, Rachmaninoff said to Slonimsky, “You are a professional musician, so you know very well that Koussevitzky is a mere amateur.”²⁰ This was just one of many awkward instances magnifying Koussevitzky’s weaknesses and Slonimsky’s musical abilities, resulting in a strained professional relationship. Another meaningful acquaintance, Aaron Copland, was seen often during Slonimsky’s employment under Koussevitsky. Many of Copland’s pieces were performed by the orchestra, increasing Slonimsky’s knowledge of American musical culture.

One of Slonimsky’s many duties under Koussevitsky was to handle press releases, program notes, logistics of performance announcements and publications, along with remedying

¹⁹ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 86.

²⁰ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 88.

regular errors made by Koussevitzky. The conductor often misspoke to the local press, fellow musicians, publishers, and concert hall owners. Slonimsky, capable of translating multiple languages, helped to explain many errors. The regularity of corrections made during rehearsal, as well as other professional engagements, continued to damage their rapport. Slonimsky admitted, “I continued to irritate Koussevitzky, not so much by correcting errors in the music as by my lack of tact in announcing them.”²¹ Knowing his welcome in the position had nearly expired, Slonimsky sought additional outlets for his musical talents. In 1927, Slonimsky left the orchestra, never to see Koussevitzky face to face again.

Koussevitzky worked the rest of his career in Boston, where he died in 1951. During his life Koussevitzky made his own impact on the development of modern music. Koussevitzky did a great deal to support new music and perform modern works during his conducting career. He premiered and commissioned many new works, including Alexander Scriabin’s *Prometheus: The Poem of Fire*, in Moscow, 2 March 1911; Sergei Prokofiev’s First Violin Concerto in 1923, Second Symphony in 1925 and Fourth Symphony in 1930; Béla Bartók’s *Concerto for Orchestra* in 1944; and Samuel Barber’s *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* in 1948.²² The Koussevitzky Music Foundation was created in 1942 in support of new music. This foundation assisted composers by commissioning new works and underwriting the performance costs. New works created with the foundation's support include: Benjamin Britten's opera *Peter Grimes* and Béla Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra*, among many others.²³

²¹ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 93.

²² David Metzger, “The League of Composers: The Initial Years.” *American Music* 15, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 45–69.

²³ José A. Bowen. "Koussevitzky, Sergey." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed 21 June 2012, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.www2.lib.ku.edu:2048/subscriber/article/grove/music/24459>.

Reaching the age of thirty-three in the spring of 1927, Slonimsky found himself unemployed and undecided which of many career paths he might take. He returned to the stage as a concert accompanist, mainly for individual singers. Slonimsky memorized all of his accompaniments just as the singers memorized their pieces, which he credits to the “aversion of being upstaged.” Slonimsky quickly earned himself a popular reputation as a masterful pianist, mentioned in reviews as often as the soloists he accompanied. In a review of a concert with the Russian tenor, Maxim Karolik, Slonimsky’s accompanying is described as “sensitive, discriminating and brilliant.”²⁴ After another song recital by Karolik, Slonimsky’s role at the piano is portrayed as “discerning interpretations and deft performances of the piano-parts of Mr. Karolik’s songs contribute substantially to the pleasure of the latter’s recitals.”²⁵

Reviews from this period include many compliments for Slonimsky’s technique, style and mastery at the piano. From the *Boston Evening Transcript* within a somewhat harsh review of the Pierian Sodality performance was a brief complimentary moment about Slonimsky’s performance of the first movement from Rachmaninoff’s Concerto, No. 2, Op.18: “Mr. Slonimsky played the fleet arpeggios with the utmost ease, finding not a little satisfaction in the feeling of mastery which the import of the music and his own command over the piano afforded.”²⁶ In review of the same concert, published in the *Boston Globe*, Slonimsky was praised as a pianist “well endowed with easy, fluent and unostentatious technique, combined with a warmth and grace of style unusually free from extravagance while ceaselessly flexible and

²⁴ See Appendix A, Article 6.

²⁵ See Appendix A, Article 7.

²⁶ N. M. J., “The Pierian, Assisted.” *Boston Evening Transcript*. Boston, April 14, 1927.

expressive.”²⁷ Similarly reviewed from the *Boston Post*, Warren Smith wrote, “Mr. Slonimsky, who heretofore has been heard in this city as pianist only in the accompaniments of his own songs, proved himself last evening a virtuoso of no small attainments, playing with authority, with technical skill, and with the rhapsodic warmth and breadth of style that this music requires.”²⁸ Slonimsky made a name for himself rapidly amongst the Boston public and an expanding circle of musicians.

Correspondingly, as Slonimsky gained respect performing dozens of concerts and recitals, he continued writing and publishing, offering positive reviews and promotion of modern composers of the day. His opinions were validated by his skill as a musician, which gave more authority to the favorable assessments he offered modern composers. In a review from 1928 (*Boston Evening Transcript*) titled “Young Modernists Hoe Their Own Row,” Slonimsky referred to Aaron Copland and Roger Sessions as “energetic and gifted young musicians.”²⁹ About Copland’s *Rondino* from the “Two Pieces for String Quartet,” Slonimsky offered that the work featured “free interplay of rhythms, yet in conformity with the austere requirements of the form, melodic invention of poesy and humor, imparted that balance of musical pulsations that is too rarely achieved by creative musicians.” Regarding Sessions’ Sonata for Piano in four movements he wrote, “Sessions shows himself a persistent and scholarly searcher for a new style that is to supplant the combustion and ruin of the shattered system of polytonality.” Slonimsky also affirmed the sold-out attendance of the concerts and the awakening of support for new

²⁷ “Pierian Sodality in Annual Concert.” *The Boston Globe*. Boston, 14 April 1927.

²⁸ Smith, Warren Storey. “Pierians in First Concert.” *The Boston Post*. Boston, 14 April 1927.

²⁹ Nicolas Slonimsky, “Young Modernists Hoe Their Own Row.” *Boston Evening Transcript*. Boston, 11 May 1928.

music.³⁰ It was articles like this that educated the public about new names in the music scene and confirmed the positive response they were generating. Slonimsky's written promotion was a valuable tool to many musicians during the twentieth century.

³⁰ Slonimsky, "Young Modernists Hoe Their Own Row."

Chapter 3

The Boston Age

The period when Slonimsky lived in Boston marked dozens of significant beginnings for his personal and professional growth. Slonimsky had the pleasure of meeting George Gershwin, in 1925, after attending his performance of *Rhapsody in Blue*; in their conversation, Slonimsky explained that he had played the song “Swanee” on many occasions in Constantinople back in 1920. Slonimsky recalled how amused Gershwin was that his song had traveled such a distance. On another occasion, Slonimsky had the satisfaction of introducing Aaron Copland to George Gershwin during an intermission at one of Koussevitzky’s New York concerts.³¹

He enjoyed profitable musical relationships with other performers such as Gertrude Ehrhart and Maxim Karolik and most significantly, he became conductor of the Harvard University student orchestra called the Pierian Sodality, in 1929. This orchestra was Slonimsky’s first challenging conducting engagement. It was here that he experimented with techniques to best engage, teach, and lead musicians in an ensemble setting. Slonimsky conducted three successful seasons with the Pierian Sodality, awarded with compliments from past members such as Walter Piston and Clarence A. Grimes for directing with such precise tempos and accurate tuning, almost like that of a professional orchestra.³² The first concert he programmed with this amateur group included Mendelssohn’s *Fingal’s Cave* Overture, Schubert’s “Unfinished” Symphony, Beethoven’s *Egmont* Overture, Sibelius’s *Finlandia*, and Tchaikovsky’s *Nutcracker*

³¹ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 106.

³² Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 101-102.

Suite.³³ Conducting the student orchestra energized his hopes to organize his own chamber orchestra one day. He also enjoyed the opportunity to perform large solo piano works with this student orchestra.

While leading the Pierian Sodality Slonimsky received financing from his professional manager to organize the chamber orchestra he had been dreaming about. Slonimsky headed up a new organization named the Boston Chamber Orchestra, beginning performances in 1927. The first concert took place on a Thursday evening, 20 December 1927. The first half consisted of three original arrangements of classical pieces by Scarlatti, J.S. Bach, and Handel, and the premiere of a piece by Heinrich Gebhard, *Divertissement for Piano and Chamber Orchestra*, with Gebhard at the piano. The second half included the premiere of Robin Milford's *Suite for Chamber Orchestra*, the American premiere of Lazare Saminsky's *Litanies of Women*, a set of songs for soprano and chamber orchestra, and the world premiere of Frank Martin's *Chamber Foxtrot*. Slonimsky received a very poor review from H. T. Parker in the *Boston Evening Transcript* of this first performance. However, word spread about the new orchestra that promoted modern music.

This first concert set the standard for successive programs that would feature modern works. It gave opportunities to those attempting to earn their place in the professional field of composition. Martin, Saminsky, Milford, and Gebhard all held significant roles in the history of modern music. Heinrich Gebhard was a noted American pianist and composer, celebrated as a great interpreter of impressionist music. Gebhard also was a well-respected piano teacher, with

³³ See Appendix A: December 11, 1927.

such famous pupils as Leonard Bernstein, and was author of the book *The Art of Pedaling*.³⁴

Lazare Saminsky was an active American composer, conductor, and an internationally published writer on music. He was a pupil of Lyadov and Rimsky-Korsakov at the St. Petersburg Conservatory in composition and conducting. After settling in New York in 1920, he helped found the League of Composers and served as director for twenty years.³⁵ Frank Martin, a Swiss composer, had an unorthodox compositional beginning, never learning counterpoint or attending a conservatory. He was active as a pianist and harpsichordist and lectured on chamber music. His works spanned the genres of sacred, vocal, piano, organ, chamber works, opera, and scenic oratorio to large-scale instrumental works, usually derived from non-traditional combinations of instrumentation. He explored extended tonality techniques and applied the twelve-tone method in a fashion contrasting that of Schoenberg.³⁶ Martin's experimentation with sound combinations and tonality were perfected into his signature style while in Paris, 1920 to 1926, where he joined the modernist movement.³⁷

Percy Grainger also successfully premiered modern works with the Boston Chamber Orchestra. Grainger's *Youthful Rapture*, a rhapsody for cello, pianoforte, harmonium, and chamber orchestra had its American premiere with Beatrice Harrison as the cellist on 9 December 1929. Grainger was first established as a concert pianist and teacher, but also made a lucrative career as a composer and arranger of folk song settings. He sought to pioneer "free

³⁴ Maurice Gerow and Allen R. Lott, "Gebhard, Heinrich." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed 21 June 2012, <http://oxfordmusiconline.com.www2.lib.ku.edu:2048/subscriber/article/grove/music/10802>, 1.

³⁵ Nathan Broder and Barbara A. Renton, "Saminsky, Lazare." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed 21 June 2012, <http://oxfordmusiconline.com.www2.lib.ku.edu:2048/subscriber/article/grove/music/24459>.

³⁶ Bernhard Billeter, "Martin, Frank." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed 21 June 2012, <http://oxfordmusiconline.com.www2.lib.ku.edu:2048/subscriber/article/grove/music/17895>, 2-4.

³⁷ Nicolas Slonimsky, ed. *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, Fifth edition (New York: G. Schirmer, 1958), 1035.

music” which included the liberation of rhythmic, harmonic and formal relations. This could be achieved on many traditional instruments, but not easily on wind, brass and keyboard instruments because of their pre-set key intervals. This led him to his compositions using the Theremin and other electronic music machines to help eliminate aspects of human intervention that can be limiting in live performance.³⁸ Grainger influenced the idea of a distinctly Australian style of composition and his skill in setting folk music was noted by later composers, particularly Benjamin Britten. With such a noted influence on American band music, Gilles and Pear describe his importance as such, “Grainger's innovations in scoring and instrumental balance have a vibrant legacy in American band music written after 1940.”³⁹ Although Grainger’s concept of “free music” did not have a profound influence on composers at the time, he was a participant in the experimental processes that many others were exploring during the twentieth century.

Another figure in modern music that Slonimsky programmed regularly was Arthur Honegger. This Swiss-French composer was a member of the well-known French group, *Les Six*. Honegger’s musical aesthetic was outside the others in the group, but his reputation amongst them helped to advance his career. He developed unusual musical and dramatic forms in large-scale works for voices and orchestra. His compositions are essentially tonal but colored by a highly individual use of dissonance. Honegger was often inspired by extra-musical sources, but his pieces are not always programmatic. His free expansion of form, combinations of forces, and

³⁸ Gillies, Malcolm and David Pear, "Grainger, Percy," *Grove Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed 6 August 2012, <http://oxfordmusiconline.com.www2.lib.ku.edu:2048/subscriber/article/grove/music/11596>. For further information see: John Bird, *Percy Grainger* (London: P. Elek, 1976), and Percy Grainger, *Self-Portrait of Percy Grainger*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

³⁹ Gillies and Pear, "Grainger, Percy."

unconventional vocal settings, particularly French text setting, made Honegger's music innovative on many levels.⁴⁰

On multiple occasions, the Boston Chamber Orchestra also programmed *Four Episodes* for chamber ensemble by Ernest Bloch,⁴¹ a piece that won the Carolyn Beebe Prize of the New York Chamber Music Society in 1926. Bloch's compositions exemplify a fusing of his cultural heritage, Judaism, and modern musical ideas for which he is best known. Bloch wrote in a diverse range of styles including neo-classical works written with quarter tones.⁴² Bloch's work attracted many prestigious students including Roger Sessions, Douglas Moore, Quincy Porter, Bernard Rogers, Frederick Jacobi, and Henry Elwell.

Frederick Delius's *Serenade* had its individual world premiere, 9 December 1931, with the Boston Chamber Symphony under Slonimsky's baton. *Serenade* comes from the set of incidental music Delius wrote to James Flecker's play *Hassan*. It was the last score sketched in his own hand, having suffered from syphilis for many years; Delius's style had reached the most unconventional of all his compositions. Early pieces included the traditional genres of sonata, concerto, and string quartet.

⁴⁰ Geoffrey K. Spratt, "Honegger, Arthur," *Grove Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed 6 August 2012, <http://oxfordmusiconline.com.www2.lib.ku.edu:2048/subscriber/article/grove/music/13298>. For further information see: Arthur Honegger, *I am a Composer* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966), and Harry Halbreich, *Arthur Honegger*; translated by Roger Nichols (Portland, Or.: Amadeus Press, 1999).

⁴¹ See Appendix A, Table: Selected Programs and Premiere Performances.

⁴² David Z. Kushner, "Bloch, Ernest," *Grove Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed 6 August 2012, <http://oxfordmusiconline.com.www2.lib.ku.edu:2048/subscriber/article/grove/music/03287>. For further information see: Robert Strassburg, *Ernest Bloch, Voice in the Wilderness: A Biographical Study*, (Los Angeles, CA.: The Trident Shop, 1977).

His harmonic treatment combined Wagnerian lyricism with continuous melodies of the Romantic era. The rates of harmonic change fluctuated greatly, could be used as support under a short, repeating melody, and always affected a work's structure.⁴³ The harmonic development and release of tension generated a piece's overall form. Delius's innovations in harmony and form made significant steps from the Romantic era's lyricism and harmonic idiom towards the modern era's unrestrained musical creativity.

Another figure of the modern movement that Slonimsky programmed with his Boston Chamber Orchestra was Arthur Bliss. In the 1920s, Bliss was outspoken in rejecting traditional idioms and forms, particularly those of German tradition. He associated himself with those who followed Stravinsky, Schoenberg, and the younger French composers' new ideas on composition. In his vocal music, Bliss experimented with instrumental uses of the voice, like wordless vocalization and nonsense syllables along with other jazz idioms that can be heard in his instrumental music. Bliss composed using music as a vehicle of depiction, illustrating an event or scene. This approach drastically varied from the period of Romanticism that had preceded him, centered on individual expression. Bliss' style was best represented in his film and ballet scores that matched dramatic and visual situations.⁴⁴

Ernst Krenek was a highly prolific composer of the twentieth-century. Elements of jazz in Krenek's music made famous his opera, *Jonny spielt auf* ("Jonny Strikes Up"), which caused a sensation at its Leipzig premiere in 1927, and also secured Krenek's financial situation and

⁴³ Robert Anderson, et al., "Delius, Frederick." *Grove Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed 6 August 2012, <http://oxfordmusiconline.com.www2.lib.ku.edu:2048/subscriber/article/grove/music/49095>. For further information see: Peter Warlock, *Frederick Delius*, (London: Bodley Head, 1923), and Thomas Beecham, *Frederick Delius*, (New York: Vienna House, 1959).

⁴⁴ Andrew Burn and Hugo Cole, "Bliss, Sir Arthur," *Grove Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed 6 August 2012, <http://oxfordmusiconline.com.www2.lib.ku.edu:2048/subscriber/article/grove/music/03281>. For further information see: John Sugden, *Sir Arthur Bliss* (London: Omnibus Press, 1997).

composing reputation. Ashley describes the complexity of Krenek's compositions and the difficulty of codifying his complex idiom: “combining jazz with Puccinian lyricism, it marks a drastic simplification of Krenek's harmonic idiom.”⁴⁵ Slonimsky's ensemble performed orchestral excerpts from *Johnny spielt auf* on 3 March 1931. Still a new work and a recently exposed composer, Slonimsky's performance in the United States helped spread the awareness of Krenek's music. Krenek's repertoire spans classical forms with jazz idioms, neo-Romantic, serial influenced, twelve-tone opera, and electronic music.

Slonimsky also led works by the composers at the forefront of Russia's modern musical identity. The Boston Chamber Orchestra performed Sergey Prokofiev's *Overture on Hebrew Themes* along with pieces by Tchaikovsky, Borodin, Saminsky and Stravinsky. Prokofiev's music took the bold and colorful strokes of the nationalists in the nineteenth century and incorporated twentieth-century idioms, his personal wit, and spectacular characterization. “Like Walton and Poulenc, he was fundamentally a romantic melodist and his style is formed like theirs from a reconciliation of the two strains in his personality, the tough, astringent modernist and the lyrical traditionalist.”⁴⁶

Slonimsky's ensemble performed the lesser-known works by Stravinsky. For instance, Stravinsky's *A Soldier's Tale* is a theatrical work to be read, played, and danced. The libretto is based on a Russian folk tale, a parable about a soldier who trades his fiddle to the devil for a book that predicts the future of his country. Written and first performed in 1918, Slonimsky's

⁴⁵ Tim Ashley, "Krenek, Ernst." *Grove Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed 6 August 2012, <http://oxfordmusiconline.com.www2.lib.ku.edu:2048/subscriber/article/opr/tl114/e3775>. For further information see: John L. Stewart, *Ernst Krenek: The Man and His Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

⁴⁶ "Prokofiev, Sergey," *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, Oxford University Press, accessed 6 August 2012, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.www2.lib.ku.edu:2048/subscriber/article/opr/t237/e8170>. For further information see: Harlow Robinson, *Sergei Prokofiev: A Biography* (New York, N.Y.: Viking, 1987).

performance in 1931 of selections from this hour-long production continued to make this modern composition available to listeners. Stravinsky's output spanned almost every important genre, style and modern tendency of twentieth-century music. This made his output a rare and significant study for future composers and a wide-ranging selection for performers of twentieth-century music.⁴⁷

Other composers that had music performed by the Boston Chamber Orchestra were Jean Sibelius, Henry Gilbert, Robin Milford, and Carlos Salzedo. Composers from all over sent new scores to Slonimsky in hopes of performances. Henry Cowell was amongst them. Cowell had just launched the magazine called *New Music Quarterly* with the goal of publishing solely modern compositions when the men first corresponded. The connection was obvious and their friendship immediate. Cowell proposed a performance of his chamber piece, *Sinfonietta* (at the time called *Marked Passages*), by the Boston Chamber Orchestra. Slonimsky recalls their first professional endeavor together:

Cowell gave me the score of his *Sinfonietta*, written in dissonant counterpoint and ending with a tone cluster consisting of dissonantly arranged and closely arrayed notes. Such procedures, common in the wilds of California, I thought, might not be acceptable in the musical corridors frequented by proper Bostonians. So much the better, I decided; I liked to shock people.⁴⁸

In correspondence between Cowell and Slonimsky during the rehearsal phase, mutual respect and admiration grew. Cowell was pleased with the quality of musicians that Slonimsky secured for the task of difficulties proposed by works such as his own. After first receiving the

⁴⁷ Stephen Walsh, "Stravinsky, Igor," *Grove Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed 6 August 2012, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.www2.lib.ku.edu:2048/subscriber/article/grove/music/52818>. For further information see: Igor Stravinsky, *Igor Stravinsky: an Autobiography*, (New York: Norton, 1962), and Alexandre Tansman, *Igor Stravinsky: The Man and His Music*, (New York: Putnam, 1949).

⁴⁸ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 105.

score Slonimsky responded, “Your harmony is quite interesting, particularly in concluding passages, and your skill in accumulating sonorities is quite remarkable. Even those whose ears will be jarred by your relentless sounds, the perfection of form will be the redeeming feature.”⁴⁹

This performance of *Marked Passages* took place in Jordan Hall on 28 April 1928. Also on the program were the first performances of Henry F. Gilbert’s *Suite for Chamber Orchestra*, the Boston debuts of Ercole Pasquini’s *Canzona Francese*, Baldassare Galuppi’s *Adagio e Giga*, and Varèse’s *Offrandes* for voice and orchestra. On 30 April 1928 Slonimsky wrote to Cowell reporting on the concert:

Your piece went brilliantly and with much gusto (according to my impressions). There was insistent applause from some quarters of the well-filled hall. The majority kept a sneering attitude. I am glad to report, however, that such a broad-minded man as Dr. Isaac Goldberg (he is on the jury!) thought that your piece was resourceful, clearly designed and admirably orchestrated. The critics—even those willing to swallow Varèse—were hurt and wrote you up accordingly. The printer of the Post ran amuck, apparently overwhelmed by violent epithets. I enjoyed the concert tremendously. I cannot wait until you come to play the Banshee with the Chamber Orchestra. In the meantime I am composing a sketch about you for the Boston Transcript. I am sure Parker [H.T. Parker] will take it.⁵⁰

Cowell reciprocated this subsequent performance, offering a place for one of Slonimsky’s current compositions in his publication. Letters eventually led to their meeting in person and a professional partnership aimed to advance modern music. Slonimsky expressed that it was about this time that he abandoned his past compositional style of mainly Russian orientation and “began to speculate along modernistic lines.”⁵¹ The first compositional product demonstrating

⁴⁹ Nicolas Slonimsky, Letter to Henry Cowell, 2 March 1928, Nicolas Slonimsky Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. See Appendix B.

⁵⁰ Nicolas Slonimsky, Letter to Henry Cowell, 30 April 1928, Nicolas Slonimsky Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. See Appendix B.

⁵¹ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 105.

Slonimsky's approach to devising new kinds of music was the piano suite, *Studies in Black and White*.⁵² Many composers of the day wrote music that intentionally ignored rules of consonance and dissonance, what he called "an orgy of dissonance as protest against the academic prohibition of unresolved discords."⁵³ His desire was not to follow the trend, as was often the case with Slonimsky, so he wrote this piece using only consonant counterpoint. The complication is that the right-hand plays solely on the white keys and the left-hand on the black. This eight-minute suite demonstrated something of the twentieth-century mentality towards musical composition: past formalities could be used as a springboard to create a drastically different set of effects and sounds when paired with new compositional techniques. Cowell published *Studies in Black and White* in the August 1928 *New Music Quarterly*.⁵⁴ On 27 April 1931 Slonimsky became a U.S. citizen, officially joining the ranks of American musicians.

The next significant concert performed by the Chamber Orchestra of Boston was 11 March 1929. With Cowell at the piano, they premiered his Suite for Solo String and Percussion Piano with Chamber Orchestra, which took place in Jordan Hall. The suite was made up of three movements: "The Banshee" (which also existed as a solo piano version), "The Leprechaun," and "The Fairy Bells."⁵⁵ The concert also included two movements from Mozart's Serenade No. 7 in D Major, and two movements from the Divertimento for Two Horns and String Quartet, an overture by K.F. Abel, two arias by Scarlatti, a chamber piece by Arthur Bliss, and a concerto by Colin McPhee, a musicologist and student of Edgard Varèse. Cowell's music attained the most immediate reaction from the audience. These pieces for "string piano," as he referred to his

⁵² Nicolas Slonimsky, *Studies in Black and White* (Los Angeles: New Music Edition, Cop., 1929).

⁵³ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 105.

⁵⁴ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 105.

⁵⁵ See Appendix A, 11 March 1929.

instrument, featured techniques outside the realm of classical piano training. Cowell would reach under the lid of the piano and pluck, sweep, or scrape the strings with one hand while playing chords on the actual keys with the other, while using the damper pedal for a blending affect. Slonimsky recalled there was a “gasp in the audience when Cowell got under the lid and began to tickle the naked strings.”⁵⁶

One of Cowell’s greatest contributions to the advancement of modern music was the organization of the New Music Society of California, an institution similar to the International Composers' Guild and the League of Composers in New York, the only two societies aimed at the interest of composers existing in the United States. Cowell’s society focused on benefiting modern composers, reaching around the globe they attempted to publish and perform new music. Slonimsky must be credited as a figure of importance to the New Music Society, as one of its primary conductors of performances.

Cowell included a chapter about Nicolas Slonimsky in his book *American Composers on American Music*. Regarding Slonimsky’s compositions he wrote, “He received much criticism because of the light nature of his works. This giddiness, however, is his much-prized specialty! Where others pompously assail the depths and heights, arriving at bombastic conclusions, Slonimsky sophisticatedly aims to glitter—to please for the moment, to be clear, amusing. And he succeeds!” Cowell describes Slonimsky’s inclusion of humor and satire not only in his music but in his writing as well. He concludes with giving Slonimsky credit for a “great service to American music as a whole through having produced and conducted more works by original

⁵⁶ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 107.

Americans than almost any other conductor... through America and Europe.”⁵⁷ Cowell’s 1933 endorsement of Slonimsky was just another demonstration of the friendship and partnership in their extensive association as musicians.

It was through this flowering friendship with Henry Cowell that Slonimsky found himself at the home of Charles and Harmony Ives. It was 1928; Ives was a frail 54 years old. Ives had nearly ceased composing after suffering a heart attack in 1918 and a number of other ailments. Slonimsky described Ives as “endearingly old-fashioned in his way of life.”⁵⁸ He admired the selflessness and general faith in the goodness of mankind Ives exhibited in his “natural wisdom.”

As for Ives's connection to modern society: “He removed himself from the ephemeral concerts of the world at large. He never read newspapers. He did not own a radio or a phonograph, and he rarely, if ever, attended concerts.”⁵⁹ Allegedly the only modern music Ives ever heard was Stravinsky’s *Firebird* and maybe Debussy’s *La Mer*.⁶⁰ Ives was a transcendental political rebel, but never participated in active campaigns. Slonimsky recalled informing Ives of the rise of the Nazi regime and what Hitler was doing. Ives was so removed from any knowledge of this occurrence, he was shocked and responded, “Then why does not someone do something about this man!”⁶¹ Slonimsky confirmed what other personal accounts state: “The most

⁵⁷ Henry Cowell, *American Composers on American Music* (Stanford University, California: Stanford University Press, 1933), 107-109.

⁵⁸ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 108.

⁵⁹ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 108.

⁶⁰ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 108

⁶¹ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 108-109.

disparaging word in his vocabulary was ‘nice.’ This especially applied to his aesthetic tastes in music. To him, it signified smugness, self-satisfaction, lack of imagination.”⁶²

It was the advent of a long and prosperous bond when Slonimsky asked Ives if there was a piece he would be willing to let the Boston Chamber Orchestra perform. Ives offered *Three Places in New England*. Slonimsky recalled the moment he looked at the score:

I experienced a strange but unmistakable feeling that I was looking at a work of genius... The score possessed elements that seemed to be mutually incompatible and even incongruous: a freely flowing melody derived from American folk songs, set in harmonies that were dense and highly dissonant, but soon resolving into clearings of serene, cerulean beauty in triadic formations that created a spiritual catharsis. There were rhythmic patterns of extreme complexity... The polytonalities and polyrhythms in the Ives score seemed incoherent when examined vertically, but simple and logical when viewed horizontally.⁶³

Plans unfolded to perform *Three Places in New England*, but with some proposed revisions after the first rehearsal. In a letter from Ives to Slonimsky on 30 December 1930, Ives gave advice and permissions to Slonimsky for edits.

At “O,” p. 39, do as you think best. Perhaps if the V.s [violins] & piano could pound the waltz out somewhat it might do. I used to find if 2 counter tunes in about same register were played by 2 brass instruments the contrast was sometimes lost. However the quality of the trumpets seems different today than when I played one. But do anything in this or other places you think advisable.⁶⁴

⁶² Nicolas Slonimsky, *Nicolas Slonimsky Perfect Pitch*, 108. Ives once recalled leaving a piano recital “with a vague but strong feeling that even the best music we know, Beethoven, Bach, and Brahms (played at this concert) was too cooped up— more so than nature intended it should be, or at least needed to be — not only in its chord systems and relations, lines, etc., but in its time, or rather its rhythms and spaces — blows or not blows — all up and down and even little compartments, over and over — 2 or 3 (prime numbers and their multiples), all so even and nice all the time—producing some sense of weakness, even in the great.” John Kirkpatrick, ed. *Charles E. Ives Memos* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1972), 100. For more examples of Ives’s perspective on music see Raymond H. Geselbracht “Evolution and the New World Vision in the Music of Charles Ives.” *Journal of American Studies* 8, no. 2 (August 1974): 214-215.

⁶³ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 109.

⁶⁴ Tom C. Owens, ed. *Selected Correspondence of Charles Ives* (London: University of California Press, 2007): 174.

With some re-scoring to fit the forces of the Boston Chamber Orchestra, *Three Places in New England* was performed for the first time at Town Hall in New York on 10 January 1931, conducted by Slonimsky. A rare occasion, Ives attended this performance.

Slonimsky worked with Ives to arrange the publication of *Three Places in New England*.

Slonimsky described this event:

I asked him about *Three Places in New England*. I proposed him that I should arrange with C.C. Birchard publishing company in Boston. So I went to C.C. Birchard, I knew personally... At first he hesitated. "It's a totally unknown name. Do you think there will be any performances?" So I said, well there will be a performance by me anyway, a world premiere given twenty-five years after its composition. So Birchard agreed to have this published, needless to say Ives paid all bills for publication.⁶⁵

Slonimsky and Ives worked together in finalizing details before publication. They struggled particularly with how to best notate the march movement, which exploits duple versus triple meters simultaneously. Slonimsky proposed there be an engraving with these parts together in the polymetric section for ambidextrous composers, such as himself, who could conduct the two separate meters with the separate hands. It was agreed in compromise that this would be printed as an *ossia* part in smaller notes.

Ives to copyist: Please don't correct: the wrong notes are right! Keyes says these notes are O.K. he is the best critic for he doesn't know one note from another... First Orchestral Set, on A New England Symphony, Three Places in New England (1903-14) I: The "St. Gaudens" in Boston Common (1911-12). Quoted Old Black Joe, The Battle Cry of Freedom, Marching Through Georgia. "This man can never get along with stickin' to one key and steady rhythm or time beats — this St. Gaudens can never be played or made sense to anyone. Measure 53: Franklin Carter Esq. asked me to whistle this measure- no smile. II: Putnam's Camp. The

⁶⁵ "Thin Air: Nicolas Slonimsky at 76." Interview by Robert Commanday and Charles Amirkhanian, 27 February 1971.

British Grenadiers, Marching Through Georgia, Hail Columbia, Semper Fidelis (Sousa), (1912) ... III: The Housatonic at Stockbridge (1903-12) "River Mists, leaves in slight breeze, riverbed — all notes or phrases in upper accompaniment should interweave in uneven way, riverside colors, leaves and sounds — not come down on main beat" "This is to picture the colors one sees, sounds one hears, feelings one has, of a summer day near a wide river- the leaves, waters, mists, etc. all interweaving in the picture and a hymn singing in church away across the river."

In December of 1933, Charles Ives wrote to Nicolas Slonimsky with finite publishing details for *Three Places in New England* that Slonimsky mediated for Ives's publisher.⁶⁶

More proofs mt. I. 1. Stems bow marks it for div. strings – (my fault. I thought this had be done when parts were made)- as there are already so many double stems (up and down) ... / 2. Last meas. P19- harm but 2nd cello part in 1st bars (this is better I think- sometimes a cello sounds too loud and scratchy down there) / 3. Would have title and name only on cover and title page and not so every songs print. / 4. On page 15- would put meters at 80= [eighth note]- as 72 ... / 5. P17- meter marks changed a little / 6. P19- bottom corner- date in very small print [1911] Henry C. thinks all dates should go in. / 7. P14- memo over RH piano in small print suggesting- 2 players ad lib. / 8. Opposite P19 last music page of I)- would put Verse (program) in small print- would have the programs at end and not at beginning of movements. Rather not feature the programs etc. before the music. / 9. Think that whatever conductors instructions (over) should go in a note printed on separate sheet and be sent out when parts are sent and not in score. I think your note about featuring in 2 rhythms is excellent and well but even as it stands, if it gets before men of your genius, brains and courage! But where are they? Most conductors, if they should be told to beat 2 together would fall over in a nice looking swoon and give up the whole job- Can't give them another excuse for not playing any of it ... And from some experience, asking most men to do a new way, only makes them do it worse. / There are 2 or 3 other points that might go into conductors notes- for instance- ... the piano at places is optional 2 ... My corrections etc. are not any too clean, and if you or engraver can't make some out, let me know- there's no great hurry about its job exactly is there? We might as well take our time and do it as well as possible - CI⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Charles Ives. Letter to Nicolas Slonimsky, December 1933, Nicolas Slonimsky Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

⁶⁷ Charles Ives. Letter to Nicolas Slonimsky, December 1933, Nicolas Slonimsky Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

This performance should not only be noted for its introduction of a piece that would become influential to modern composition in the twentieth century, but also for bringing the instrumental music of Charles Ives to life for the American public. For Ives, scores and sketches had mainly gained height and dust on his private desk up to this point. The only works known to the public thus far were from his collection, *114 Songs*, published by his own funding in 1922. A review from a 1932 performance of Ives' *Three Places in New England* stated, "Ives's score has melodic interest and the composer's intention of sublimating the merry-making of American youth to the noble actions of their Revolutionary ancestors was fascinating."⁶⁸

In 1938, another noted performance took place, with John Kirkpatrick at the bench for Ives Piano Sonata No. 2, the *Concord Sonata*.

And almost suddenly about 1930, Ives' music came to light... The veritable discoverers were the enthusiastic spirits Henry Cowell and Nicholas Slonimsky; and through their propaganda and performances, together with other recent events, there dawned upon the observant the fact that a promise had been beautifully fulfilled. Though American music still was the inferior of American literature, American architecture and American painting, America had to all appearances become a nation musically equipped.⁶⁹

The friendship of Slonimsky and Ives blossomed during this time. They spent many visits together during one or the other's travels, including some times with their wives in company as well. They regularly wrote letters to each other, not only musical and professional discussion but also about the events in their lives and families. Letters became more difficult for Ives as he aged because of the shakiness of his hands. This did not stop their communication. His wife Harmony

⁶⁸ Isabel Morse Jones, "American Composers Featured in Concert." *Los Angeles Times*, 31 December 1932, A.: 1.

⁶⁹ Paul Rosenfield, "The Advance of American Music." *The Kenyon Review* 1, no. 2 (Spring 1939): 187-188.

often wrote or typed Charles Ives's letters in dictation, with her own added notes as well. Ives used personal and friendly titles in the headings of letters to Slonimsky, such as "Dear Columbus et Vespuccius," then signed, "your rustic friend." Other familiar names used were "very good Eddie," "Columerica," "Mr. Ambassador," "Americaine," "N.S.A." (meaning "Nicolas Slonimsky Ambassador"), "Buona Bonaparte de Baton," "Padre," "Pater-familias," and more.⁷⁰

Ives often shared his gratitude for Slonimsky's friendship and support in their personal letters. For example in July 1932 Ives wrote, "I appreciate deeply all you have done, your interest help and above all your friendship—which will last through eternity even to the day after the '4th of July.'" ⁷¹ As individuals, Cowell, Ives, and Slonimsky made significant contributions to the advancement of new music. As a coalition, they promulgated avant-garde music around the world.

⁷⁰Tom C. Owens, ed. *Selected Correspondence of Charles Ives* (London: University of California Press, 2007): 114, 178, 191, 199.

⁷¹Owens, *Selected Correspondence of Charles Ives*, 192.

Chapter 4

International Tours as Conductor

The introduction of American modern music to Europe swiftly followed. In discussing the project, Ives, Cowell and Slonimsky decided to pursue travels in Europe, seeing that hiring an orchestra in New York would be expensive. With the dollar at a mighty rate exchanged for French francs and German marks, the venture would be cheaper overseas. Ives sent Slonimsky to Paris with \$1500 in April 1931.⁷²

In Paris, Edgard Varèse joined the pack promoting modern and new American music. He arranged the press releases and interviews, and introduced Slonimsky to influential people. With the Orchestre Straram, they performed two concerts, one with full orchestra and one with chamber orchestra. Thanks to the already dedicated following of Varèse, the 6 June 1931 performance entertained a full audience. The second concert with reduced orchestra included Riegger's canons, which posed a challenge in meter. Two sets of instruments were separately set in 5/8 and 2/8, respectively. Slonimsky's ambidextrous conducting was, for him, the easiest and clearest solution to guide the instrumentalists. Both concerts received generous reviews and positive attention, especially the leadership of Slonimsky. In the article "Decouverte de l'Amérique," André Coeuroy wrote,

We have just discovered America, thanks to a Christopher Columbus resident of Boston. This Christopher Columbus is called Slonimsky... It is that of a young

⁷² Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 111.

musician astonishingly gifted, inventor of a new aesthetic code of piano technique in which each hand follows its own scale, and a conductor of a promising future. Not only does he possess a specific gift for conducting, authority, *puissance* (power), *envol* (flight), but also a finesse of pitch perception that the most consecrated aces of the baton in Europe might well envy. One had to watch him at the rehearsal stopping the orchestra, embroiled in an almost inextricable maelstrom of sounds in an atonal score bristling with accidentals and convulsed by multiple rhythms, to point out to the second oboe or the third French horn, “*Monsieur, vous jouez un la bemol, c’est un la naturel!*” (Sir, you play an A-flat, not A natural.) This does not seem unduly important, but this delicacy of aural perception in the midst of an inhuman uproar, this sovereign assurance in bringing order out of chaos, impresses an orchestra. This is why one can predict without fail an assured career to this young conductor.⁷³

In addition to the reviews of Slonimsky, the press shared a variety of reactions to the music itself and its exciting American composers. Some viewed them as “extreme radical composers” seen by the Parisian conservatives as “wild-eyes anarchists.”⁷⁴ Others heard the music as a “ray of sunshine through the fog”⁷⁵ bringing joy and hope to Paris, particularly those of Russian heritage. Henri Prunières published reviews in the *New York Times* about the concerts that Ives “knew his Schoenberg... but hadn’t applied the lessons as well as he might.”⁷⁶ Much to Ives’s irritation, he responded to Robert E. Schmitz that he “had never heard nor seen a note of Schoenberg’s music.”⁷⁷ In common suit, Philip Hale wrote an editorial making similar assumptions that Ives had been influenced by the music of Hindemith, which Ives clarifies in his memoirs that he had completed and ceased composing several years before Hindemith even started composing, though this seems highly unlikely. Many attempted to make immediate sense of Ives’s music. In later years of study, musicologists uncovered that Ives’s technique was

⁷³ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 112. Presumably translated by Slonimsky.

⁷⁴ Philip Hale, “Mr. Slonimsky in Paris,” *Boston Herald*, 7 July 1931.

⁷⁵ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 114.

⁷⁶ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 114-115.

⁷⁷ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 114.

primarily influenced by the teachings of his father combined with the natural gift of his ear and characteristic desire to challenge or “stretch the ear.”⁷⁸

It was this same summer that Nicolas Slonimsky and Dorothy Adlow joined their lives together in marriage. A small ceremony held in Paris, with Varèse as the best man, Slonimsky recalled as Dorothy taking “me under her protective wing.”⁷⁹ They had met through their work with the *Christian Science Monitor*, where she was the head of its art department and a critic.

As soon as they returned to the United States, more plans were made to tour Paris, Berlin, and Budapest. With the Orchestre Symphonique de Paris in February 1932, Slonimsky conducted Béla Bartók’s First Piano Concerto, with the composer himself at the piano. This program included three short pieces by Ives, *Appositions* by Cowell, *Vers le Réel* by Dane Rudhyar, and *Three Cuban Dances* by Caturla. To soften the blow of so many modern pieces Slonimsky included a Mozart serenade, and *Night on Bald Mountain* by Mussorgsky. The second concert in Paris included Arthur Rubinstein as soloist in the Second Piano Concerto of Brahms, which was received enthusiastically, as well as the premiere performance of *The Sun-Treader* by Ruggles and Varèse’s *Arcana*.

Slonimsky recalled Berlin as one of the most magical experiences for him as a conductor, working with a collection of virtuosic players, and cooperative and capable professionals. These concerts included *Three Places in New England* by Ives, *The Sun-Treader* by Ruggles, *Synchrony* by Cowell, *Arcana* by Varèse, and *La Rebambaramba* by Amadeo Roldán. This

⁷⁸For more information on Ives and his music see the following: Frank R. Rossiter, *Charles Ives and His America* (New York: Liveright, 1975); Henry Cowell and Sidney Robertson Cowell, *Charles Ives and His Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955); Jan Swafford, *Charles Ives: a Life with Music* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996).

⁷⁹ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 116.

collection of modern and complex pieces earned Slonimsky first-rate appraisals. Alfred Einstein wrote in the *Berliner Tageblatt*, “This is a talent of the first rank, of a quite elemental capacity to convince orchestra and audience alike.”⁸⁰ Heinrich Strobel wrote, “No word of praise is too high for the conductor Slonimsky. With astounding knowledge of the scores and astounding energy he set out to promote his fellow Americans.”⁸¹ Paul Schwerts, in the *Allgemeine Musikzeitung* wrote, “Astounding was the performance of the conductor Nicolas Slonimsky, who mastered the complex scores still in manuscript with exemplary skill and penetrating musicianship.”⁸² Amongst others, H. H. Stuckenschmidt praised, “Technically Slonimsky is a highly gifted conductor who maintained the beat even in the most intractable rhythms with perfect ease.”⁸³

The scores themselves received a variety of reactions. Paul Schwerts’s remarks on Cowell’s *Synchrony* as beginning “with a silly little solo of the muted trumpet. The bone-cracking trills of this milk-dripping introduction aroused irrepressible hilarity among the listeners. This screechy and banging piece of so-called music is nothing more than an explosive tonal enema.”⁸⁴ Also about Ruggles’s *The Sun-treader* Schwerts remarked, “(it) should have been titled *Latrine-treader*, which describes more precisely the nature of the music. I for one had a distinct feeling of bowel construction in an atonal Tristanesque ecstasy.” He called Varèse’s *Arcana* a “tonal monster” that “transforms peaceful concert goers into wild hyenas.”⁸⁵ An article on *The New York Sun* reported about the Paris performance:

⁸⁰ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 118.

⁸¹ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 118.

⁸² Paul Schwerts, *Allgemeine Musikzeitung*, Berlin, 18 March 1932.

⁸³ Heinrich Strobel, *Borsen-Courier*, Berlin, 1 March 1932.

⁸⁴ Paul Schwerts, *Allgemeine Musikzeitung*, Berlin, 18 March 1932.

⁸⁵ Paul Schwerts, *Allgemeine Musikzeitung*, Berlin, 18 March 1932.

The general verdict was that these “advanced” composers are behind the times, the French vanguard having long outdistanced them. On the other hand, it is considered that Mr. Slonimsky was ill-advised in grouping the American compositions together instead of interpolating more classical pieces.⁸⁶

Slonimsky’s program notes describing Varèse’s music as “sounding geometry” was also used in derision in some reviews of his music. Avant-garde music faced cultural adversity during the rise of the German Nazis into power. After the federal election of 1932, the Nazis had become the largest political party in government position. During this time Slonimsky suffered criticism for his “impudent exhibition” due to his obvious shoulder movements revealing him as “one hundred percent Polish Jew.” This demoted him to an “an experienced time beater, projecting clear geometric images in space. That is all.”⁸⁷ Regardless, Slonimsky was able to enjoy the companionship of Roger Sessions who was in Berlin on a Carnegie Fellowship at the same time.

Slonimsky referred to this period as the height of his conducting career. After mastering the basics required for leading an ensemble effectively, Slonimsky experimented with what he called realization of “music in motion.”⁸⁸ With his own physical movements he was able to deliberately affect the articulation, mood, tone and direction of music with spatial movements, contrasting gestures, and projecting actions. Slonimsky also possessed an incredible gift of accurate frequency perception, not just “perfect pitch” but identifying the frequency level to the exact Hertz of any given sound. This talent enabled him to deal more thoroughly and correctly

⁸⁶ Philip Hale, “Mr. Slonimsky in Paris,” *Boston Herald*, 7 July 1931.

⁸⁷ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 118.

⁸⁸ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 120.

with the new compositions he performed and conducted. He was able to identify microscopic mistakes of pitch and rhythm thanks to his acute hearing.

Slonimsky's first engagement as guest conductor of a major American orchestra was with the Los Angeles Philharmonic in December of 1932. In describing his strategy for programming the concert, Slonimsky wrote, "So as not to antagonize the untutored Californians with splashes of unrelieved dissonance, I seasoned my program with the mellifluous sounds of Mozart, the dreamy harmonies of Sibelius, and the rousing sonorities of Mussorgsky. It was my hope that these euphonious offerings would offset the impression produced by the rough harmonies of *Three Places in New England* by Charles Ives."⁸⁹ The program was extremely successful. José Rodríguez wrote an exposition on the concert recounting the modern pieces on the program as "three shots in the arm of the old lady,"⁹⁰ which described the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

For the first occasion in a long, long time, the audience had something to dispute about as it left the hall. The three shots were: the local premiere of Charles Ives's orchestral set, *Three Places in New England*, the local premiere of Roy Harris's Overture from *The Gayety and Sadness of the American Scene*, and the conducting of Nicolas Slonimsky.⁹¹

Slonimsky's conducting was the main focus of José Rodríguez's article.

He approaches the rostrum diffidently, holding his baton like a balancing stick. His bow is reticent. But once on the stand, he takes command with astonishing authority and assertiveness. Like a riding-master who founds a spoiled, fat thoroughbred, he made the Philharmonic go through tricks of phrasing, tonal nuance and virtuosity that most of us did not believe were still in the old horse. We need more conductors like Slonimsky. More men of his imagination, his

⁸⁹ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 124.

⁹⁰ José Rodríguez, "An Old Lady Gets Three Shots in the Arm," *Bob Wagner's Script*, 7 January 1933.

⁹¹ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 124.

suppleness, his vivacity, his musicianship, and what is even more important, his courage.⁹²

Soon thereafter the preparation for the world premiere of Edgard Varèse's *Ionisation* was in progress. *Ionisation* (1929-1931) is one of the earliest pieces written for percussion ensemble. Slonimsky had to go forth with the construction of this performance alone, as Varèse was occupied in Paris. Varèse's explanation of the musical conception came from the process of ionization, in which "an atom liberates an electron and assumes a positive electric charge. The harmonic tremor of these subatomic events is reflected in the score," especially with its "world of infinitesimal particles," rendered as extremely complex rhythms.⁹³ Not only was Slonimsky proud to be trusted with the premiere of this landmark composition, but even more so for its dedication made to him by Varèse.⁹⁴ In his autobiography, Slonimsky described the challenges of leading this piece even with professional performers.

Ionisation presented considerable problems to musicians unaccustomed to differential calculus. The metrical divisions were simple, but the rhythmic segments within them were asymmetric, and the players had a difficult time in encapsulating groups of five sixteenth notes within the metrical unit of a single quarter note, particularly where Varèse inserted sixteenth-note rests to replace certain notes in the quintile.⁹⁵

The program was held at the Carnegie Chapter Hall on 6 March 1933. Few reviews of this concert can be found. Fortunately, however, with Varèse's return to New York, a single disc recording was made by the Columbia Recording Company. To master the difficult rhythms in the piece, they called upon fellow modern composers to participate in performance. For them,

⁹² Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 124.

⁹³ Jose Rodriguez, "An Old Lady Gets Three Shots in the Arm," *Bob Wagner's Script*, 7 January 1933.

⁹⁴ Edgard Varèse, *Ionisation, for Percussion Ensemble of 13 Players* (New York: G. Ricordi, 1958).

⁹⁵ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 125.

Slonimsky said, “the Varèsian asymmetry was child’s play.”⁹⁶ This star-studded ensemble included Carlos Salzedo on the Chinese blocks, Paul Creston at the anvils, Wallingford Riegger on güiro, while Henry Cowell “pounded tone clusters on the piano keyboard,” William Schuman pulled the cord of the lions roar, and Varèse was in charge of the sirens.

Together Cowell, Slonimsky and Varèse submitted plans to record an album of important American works to multiple recording companies, with no success. Instead, they organized themselves with the backing of the Pan-American Association of Composers, an organization of which they all were members. They made recordings of the “Barn Dance” from *Washington’s Birthday* by Charles Ives and a movement from *Men and Mountains* by Carl Ruggles, which were distributed by Cowell’s *New Music Quarterly*. Slonimsky recalled the particular discouragement and dismay expressed by Varèse, who spoke of abandoning composition for a career in mathematics and engineering. Facing the challenges of reception to the modern style, these men worked to expose the public to new music.

Slonimsky pressed on with the task of exhibiting the distinctive modern compositions that he believed the public should hear. Thanks to endorsement from the members of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Slonimsky was engaged to conduct the eight-week season of the Hollywood Bowl. This engagement turned out to be the end of Slonimsky’s conducting career. In a letter to his wife, Slonimsky described the attempts of players and others to remove some of the advanced pieces from the program, particularly the American premiere of Schoenberg’s *Begleitmusik zu einer Lichtspielszene* (Accompaniment to a Cinematographic Scene). Slonimsky ignored most requests. These choices did not end well for Slonimsky: “After this

⁹⁶ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 125.

morning's rehearsal, the chairman of the orchestra said that in my own interests I must take the Harris piece off the program because it was 'ill chosen' for the Hollywood Bowl," he wrote to his wife.⁹⁷ Slonimsky argued against the removal of the piece and had it reinstated for the program. These Hollywood concerts were broadcast on radio, along with short lectures by Slonimsky during intermissions. The broadcasts were the subject of many letters from listeners, most of whom detested the modern pieces.

John Cage shared his thoughts on Slonimsky's programming selections at the Hollywood Bowl, in an interview from his home in 1987:

Those concerts in the Hollywood Bowl were instrumental in changing my life. They gave such a wide and rich view of twentieth-century music and the twentieth century was quite young then. You see those concerts were not popular. They were rather, statements of belief. People who attended them, who wanted to attend them. Who were hanging on each sound, waiting for each sound.⁹⁸

Interviewed in 1986, Slonimsky described the motivation for his relentless support of modern music during a time that his musical contemporaries were often misunderstood:

I saw it as an attempt to persuade people at large that this is new music, and it's a new language, and it has some extraordinary revelation in it. Of course, I and my colleagues won out, but at that time it didn't seem possible that people would ever recognize the greatness, the genius of Charles Ives and of Edgard Varèse and of Henry Cowell. I saw in them the creation of new music. If I can make a comparison, I would say that Einstein's theory of relativity, which could not be accepted by a traditional physicist, became a theory of science. I believe this is the same as happened in music when not only Ives, Varèse, and Cowell but their followers or even their contemporaries all over the world began to write a

⁹⁷ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 127. See Appendix A for letter, 21 July 1933.

⁹⁸ John Cage, John Cage at His Home in New York, Fall 1987, Filmed by Alan Edelstein, Film Rescued by John Huszar, Cage and Slonimsky Clowing with Mobius Strip, Videotaped by Kate Yourke, 7 March 1987, Los Angeles, 1987.

different kind of music, which was based on the emancipation of dissonance and an emancipation of scale, progressions, and melodic lines.⁹⁹

During a radio interview from 1971, Slonimsky recalled the Hollywood Bowl and his awkward exit in the middle of the 1933 season.

The *Los Angeles Times* led a regular campaign against me as some kind of monster coming out of darkest Russia to confound and to corrupt the musical mores in southern California. Then a woman, I forgot her name, the one who held the purse strings, she simply told the manager, said pay him off for the entire season and get rid of him because he will ruin the Hollywood Bowl and everything. It is very interesting now to hear the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Hollywood Bowl all play the works I performed there for the first time. It is simply fantastic when I see these programs, and they are hits!¹⁰⁰

In *Perfect Pitch*, Slonimsky describes the end of his conducting career:

I was paid off and not very delicately told that my further services were not required. The word spread that I was a dangerous musical revolutionary who inflicted hideous noise on concertgoers expecting to hear beautiful music... an inglorious end to my conducting career.¹⁰¹

On 21 September 1933, Nicolas and Dorothy Slonimsky were blessed with the birth of their daughter, Electra. Slonimsky documented Electra's every move, often being at home with her while Dorothy travelled for work with the *Christian Science Monitor*. With time to stay home, he enjoyed teaching Electra to speak Latin, conditioning her to listen to dissonant music, teaching her to read and write in neumatic notation, and how to compose using the medieval modes. During this time, Slonimsky published several articles for the *Christian Science Monitor*

⁹⁹ Ev Grimes, and Nicolas Slonimsky. "Conversations with American Composers: Ev Grimes Interviews Nicolas Slonimsky," *Music Educators Journal* 72, no. 7 (March 1986): 43.

¹⁰⁰ "Thin Air: Nicolas Slonimsky at 76." Interview by Robert Commanday and Charles Amirkhanian. *Sound Recording*, 27 February 1971.

¹⁰¹ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 127.

on the subjects of varied musical artists, on orchestration, as well as compositional and theoretical techniques such as fugue and figured bass.

Chapter 5

Scientists, Mathematicians, and Engineers

Nicolas Slonimsky and Léon Theremin met in 1929, through their individual friendships with Joseph Schillinger in New York. Schillinger, as a representative of the Leningrad Association of Modern Music to Western Europe and America, had come to the United States as a lecturer on contemporary music in 1928. Thanks to Slonimsky's connections simultaneously with Schillinger and Theremin, these great minds came together. Schillinger joined Henry Cowell, Joseph Yasser, Otto Kinkeldey, and Charles Seeger in founding the New York Musicological Society (later the American Musicological Society and the American Society for Comparative Musicology). Schillinger and Theremin worked hand-in-hand studying problems related to science and music, as well as designing and constructing electronic instruments. Schillinger and others then composed works to be performed on the instruments Theremin could engineer.¹⁰²

Theremin's first successful electronic instrument was named the Thereminovox, originally the product of Russian government-sponsored research into proximity sensors, completed in October 1920 after the outbreak of the Russian Civil War. It was activated by a movement of the hand; this caused the alteration of frequency and change of pitch. The electric signals from the instrument were amplified and sent to a loudspeaker. After positive reviews at

¹⁰² Warren Brodsky, "Joseph Schillinger (1895-1943): Music Science Promethean," *American Music* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 49.

Moscow electronics conferences, Theremin demonstrated the instrument to Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin. Lenin was so impressed with the device that he began taking lessons in playing it. Lenin then commissioned 600 of the instruments for distribution throughout the Soviet Union, and sent Theremin on a trip around the world to demonstrate the latest Soviet technology and the invention of electronic music. After a lengthy tour of Europe, Theremin went to the United States, where he patented his invention in 1928.¹⁰³

Slonimsky introduced Theremin to the composer, Henry Cowell; once acquainted with this circle of scientists and intellectuals, Cowell excitedly joined the men on their voyage to bridge the divide between “noise” and “music.” They shared interest in solving the imperfections of human capabilities to generate asymmetrical and cross-rhythms accurately. Cowell devised the challenge to generate complex rhythms perfectly, beyond what was humanly possible. The result was a design for the Rhythmicon, which is described best as a calculating rhythm machine that projects at multiple pitches.

Each of its sixteen keys, when depressed, sounded its own specific rhythm—from one to sixteen equal divisions of a beat—on a pitch that corresponded to the same number in the overtone series. The lowest pitch (or fundamental) sounded one note per beat, the second harmonic (the next adjacent key) sounded two notes per beat, the third harmonic (and next key) sounded three notes per beat, and so on, up to the sixteenth harmonic with sixteen divisions to the beat, the whole instrument spanning a four-octave range... it could play any number of rhythms (depressed keys) simultaneously. Essentially it was an early prototype of the drum machine.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Albert Glinsky, *Theremin Ether Music and Espionage* (Urbana-Champaign, IL: Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, 2000), 26.

¹⁰⁴ Glinsky, *Theremin Ether Music and Espionage*, 136.

After the blueprint was completed by Theremin, the cost of production was quoted to Cowell and Slonimsky for the Rhythmicon project. Slonimsky explained the intention and capabilities of the proposed project, which successfully convinced Ives to fund the project in full.¹⁰⁵ Slonimsky was given possession of the Rhythmicon to use for performances in Paris of Cowell's pieces written specifically for its use. The Rhythmicon was publicly premiered 19 January 1932 by Cowell and Schillinger at the New School for Social Research in New York.

In a letter to his wife on 29 September 1933 Slonimsky described the other fantasies that he and Theremin entertained:

Theremin seems to be more prosperous than previously. He builds advertising machines worked by radio: you come near the mirror and it lights up and talks back to you extolling the qualities of the advertised product. I asked Theremin about automatic feeding for my baby-sitting with Electra. When she cries for food, the cry is picked up by a sensitive microphone, is magnified and relayed to the refrigerator, or better still, to the thermos bottle, and starts a current, which is automatically switched off the moment the milk reaches the desire temperature. The nipple is sterilized by the vapors from the boiling water. The bell rings as soon as the milk is ready, or else the bottle is automatically picked up and carried over a wire system into the crib.¹⁰⁶

Slonimsky described Theremin and Schillinger as kindred spirits. They both believed that music ought to be based on scientific principles and performances are best electronically controlled. They both struggled financially and summarized life's priorities consisting of having a roof over one's head, the company of a woman, and food.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Tom C. Owens, ed. *Selected Correspondence of Charles Ives* (London: University of California Press, 2007), 178.

¹⁰⁶ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 139.

¹⁰⁷ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 139.

Schillinger's attitude toward his own theories was a mixture of cynicism and megalomania. He earnestly believed that he held the key to the evolution of music according to mathematical principles. He used to say, quite seriously, that Bach missed a chance to write really great music because of his lack of knowledge of the theory of combinations and permutations. He dismissed Chopin, Schumann, and Verdi as mere amateurs... He taught harmony and counterpoint using graph paper, in which each unit corresponded to a given interval. Jazz players loved it, and Schillinger became a sort of musical guru. George Gershwin, among others, came to him for contrapuntal "therapy."¹⁰⁸

Joseph Schillinger was best described as a renaissance man. He was trained as a conductor and composer, who studied philosophy, Slavic mythology, and Eastern religions; he spoke Russian, Hebrew, German, French, English, and Italian. He held numerous Russian posts as a dean, professor, conducting and lecturing. He researched and recorded native Georgian tribal music, and organized the first Russian jazz orchestra. His impact on American modern music was the result of his philosophy that "in an age of technology, art forms should be engineered and executed with the same scientific rigor and formulas as the building of bridges or skyscraper—taking advantage of the latest scientific tools."¹⁰⁹

Within the circle of members of the Pan-American Association of Composers, Varèse also took interest in the potential of electronically generated sound. He wrote a piece designed for electronic instruments between 1932 and 1934, *Ecuatorial*. It was scored for two fingerboard Theremins with a high range, similar to that of violins, along with four trumpets, four trombones, organ, piano, percussion, and a bass vocal soloist. The Theremins were featured for their long sustained notes, not possible on other instruments, their ability to glissando for such a large distance of pitches and a timbre that was fitting for the "incantatory" style mimicking remote

¹⁰⁸ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 140.

¹⁰⁹ Glinsky, *Theremin Ether Music and Espionage*, 131.

mountain tribes. On 15 April 1934, Slonimsky conducted his last undertaking at the stand at New York's Town Hall, with works by Ives and Varèse, including the premiere of *Ecuatorial* with the Pan-American Association of Composers.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Glinsky, *Theremin Ether Music and Espionage*, 157-158.

Chapter 6

A Jailed Friend

The series of events surrounding Henry Cowell's arrest and prison sentence severed the trio of modern musical promoters: Ives, Cowell and Slonimsky. Slonimsky maintained his relationships with both Cowell and Ives, but after the incident Ives and Cowell would never see each other face to face again.

In 1987, Slonimsky reflected on his memories of the incident that occurred subsequent to Cowell's arrest:

You see, Henry was an extremely liberal and wonderful person, and he had let some kids in his neighborhood use his shack and his jalopy. There were complaints from neighbors, so the police came and chased the kids away. This was in 1939, and anybody who had liberal notions at that time was considered a Red. The police were interested in Cowell because he had contributed articles to liberal magazines. He was never a Communist or anything of the sort, but the authorities decided to go after him. They found one of those young boys, who incidentally had served a term in reform school, pressured him to say that Cowell had been too "friendly" and arrested Cowell.¹¹¹

Whether Slonimsky's recollection of the events was accurate, it was true that the district attorney told Cowell to plead guilty and suffer only a couple months in jail. The judge, however, then sentenced him with three to fifteen years in the San Quentin State Prison in California. After

¹¹¹ Howard Reich, "Classical Secrets." *Chicago Tribune*. Chicago, Illinois, 26 April 1987, sec. L.

Cowell was convicted and incarcerated, Ives, Cowell, and Slonimsky would not actively champion modern music together again. Ives had strong personal feelings of condemnation towards homosexuals,¹¹² which he could not set aside after the accusations made against Cowell. Ives's and Cowell's relationship was never the same after the incidents surrounding Cowell's arrest and charges. Cowell and Slonimsky continued to discuss music during his years of imprisonment. While Cowell served his prison sentence he continued to compose, rehearse groups, and perform as possible within the jail walls. He organized a set of ten music classes for inmates, he studied Spanish and Japanese, he wrote his treatise on melody and other various articles, and composed about sixty new musical works.¹¹³

Slonimsky maintained regular correspondence with Cowell during his imprisonment. Even on the day his sentence was pronounced, 16 July 1936, Cowell wrote to Slonimsky, telling him the news and sharing that he would attempt to continue publishing *New Music*.¹¹⁴ They discussed personal and musical matters alike. Dealing at first with the loss of his relationship with Ives, Cowell wrote to Slonimsky on 27 June 1936: "I am sure that Ives has not seen or read anything. Even I missed the item [article on his conviction], and was told about it by a newspaperman two weeks later... As you know, Ives never reads the papers." Again on 14 August 1936 Cowell wrote: "I have heard not a word from Ives. Do you have any news of him? It does not seem in the least like them to turn against me, as to remain silent on account of the

¹¹² Leta E. Miller, and Rob Collins, "The Cowell-Ives Relationship: A New Look at Cowell's Prison Years," *American Music* 23, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 474.

¹¹³ Miller and Collins, "The Cowell-Ives Relationship: A New Look at Cowell's Prison Years," 473-474.

¹¹⁴ Henry Cowell, Letter to Nicolas Slonimsky, 16 July 1936, Nicolas Slonimsky Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

present condition, and so I worry for fear he is very ill.”¹¹⁵ Ives avoided all contact with Cowell, other than an annual Christmas card sent in the mail.

Cowell continued his usual musical endeavors. Many friends offered support and assisted with publishing and dissemination of his new works. Slonimsky was a primary source of assistance to Cowell, as seen in requests made by Cowell in his letter from 28 August 1936:

I asked Strang to send you an article I wrote in Redwood Jail, introducing my new quartet; it has the germ of a new idea which I think may prove of import. It is an entirely new approach to musical technic. When you have read it, I would welcome your reaction. I wish you would send it to Charles Seeger... with a request for him to send it on to Arthur Cohn... when he is through. I wish Seeger to see it, and Cohn is to use the quartet so he needs to know it.¹¹⁶

Requests such as these were common from Cowell to Slonimsky over the course of his imprisonment. Slonimsky aided in the continuation of Cowell’s musical compositions, writing, and publishing endeavors. Cowell was also able to remain current on modern musical issues thanks to the assistance of Slonimsky. Cowell was pardoned after serving three and one-half years.

Cowell supplied numerous ideas, concepts, and inventions to the development of modern composition: the tone cluster, the use of designed polytempo or polymeter, the calculated sliding tone, the investigation of new structural possibilities (both integral and indeterminate), and innovations in extended piano techniques. But even more relevant, the aspect of his career spent promoting unpublished and unknown works was recognized as pivotal. “Henry was one of those who made possible the relatively comfortable state of contemporary music in the United States

¹¹⁵ Miller, and Collins. “The Cowell-Ives Relationship: A New Look at Cowell’s Prison Years,” 478.

¹¹⁶ Henry Cowell, Letter to Nicolas Slonimsky, 28 August 1936.

today.”¹¹⁷ As true as this may be, acknowledging the importance of the financial support from Ives and the emotional and professional support of Slonimsky to the greatness of Cowell’s influence seems significant.

¹¹⁷ Richard Franko Goldman, “Henry Cowell (1897-1965): A Memoir and an Appreciation.” *Perspectives of New Music* 4, no. 2 (Spring-Summer 1966): 25-26.

Chapter 7

The Sleuth Goes to Work

Slonimsky's first published endeavor compiling dates, names, and events in chronology was his book *Music Since 1900* (1937).¹¹⁸ In three parts the text offers a descriptive chronology of musical events, a concise biographical dictionary, and a group of sources including letters and manifestos, all cataloguing music and musicians of the first third of the twentieth century. *Music Since 1900* was immediately recognized as a useful tool formatted with Slonimsky's innovative categories of style, genre and musical descriptions. Definitions for new terms, such as "pandiatonicism," offered more effective ways to discuss twentieth-century compositions. Known for its accuracy and clarity, this text was not intended as a complete collection.

In 1939, Slonimsky began professional work as a publishing lexicographer. He became a contributor and associate editor of Oscar Thompson's *International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians*. His compulsion for correction was germinated here, finding multiple entries for a single person under incorrect names, inaccurate birth and death dates, among a plethora of other blunders. Robert M. Stevenson reported, "Most importantly for the future it (Slonimsky's sleuthing) exposes the ideals of thorough investigation and precision which distinguish the compilation at hand."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Nicolas Slonimsky, *Music Since 1900*, (New York: W.W. Norton): 1937.

¹¹⁹ Robert M. Stevenson "Nicolas Slonimsky: Centernarian, Lexicographer and Musicologist." *Inter-American Music Review* 14, no. 1 (March 1994): 153.

Writing about Russian music and important Russian figures was a central theme throughout Slonimsky's career. Most often his writings came in the form of articles, some of which carry great significance. For instance, his 35-page article published in 1942 on Dmitri Shostakovich examined a variety of his works in detail. The article showed the array of styles Shostakovich composed and achieved success in, while addressing how he managed to survive the political and economic challenges that were faced as a musician in the U.S.S.R.¹²⁰ His other publications on Russian music include "Development of Soviet Music," (1937), "Soviet Music and Musicians," (1944) and dozens of others included in the collection, *Nicolas Slonimsky Writings on Music, Volume 2: Russian and Soviet Music and Composers*, compiled and edited by his daughter Electra Yourke.¹²¹

Slonimsky's first research journey was thanks to a retired Philadelphia businessman named Edwin A. Fleisher. Slonimsky was offered a grant to travel through Latin America to collect symphonic scores for the Free Library of Philadelphia. Having already experienced a touch of Latin culture in his conducting tours of Cuba, he was eager for the adventure to explore and learn of the Latin American nations. In July 1941, Slonimsky boarded the S. S. Uruguay, at the time still a passenger cruise liner, on its way to Rio de Janeiro. "Rio de Janeiro was the city of Villa-Lobos, who possessed a truly tropical imagination," Slonimsky wrote. Villa-Lobos had outrageous tales of his musical feats, including seducing a cannibal tribe with his cello playing, which spared his life because they believed he must be divine. While having gained a popular

¹²⁰ Nicolas Slonimsky, "Dmitri Dmitrievitch Shostakovich," *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 28, no. 4, (October 1942), pp. 415-444.

¹²¹ Nicolas Slonimsky, *Nicolas Slonimsky Writings on Music*. Edited by Electra Slonimsky Yourke. Vol. 2: Russian and Soviet Music and Composers. 4 vols. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 54.

reputation, Villa-Lobos served as the director over the government office of music education in Rio de Janeiro. As a composer, Villa-Lobos considered himself a musical scientist. Slonimsky described Villa-Lobos' invention of "graphical millimetration," where he converted visuals such as diagrams, landscapes, and photographs into melodies.

He readily agreed to "millimetrize" a picture of my family at breakfast. Busy as he was, he sat down and patiently drew on graph paper a curve corresponding to the outlines of myself, Dorothy and Electra, and made them into a tune... The resulting melody was rather angular and difficult to sing: my family was apparently not photogenic.¹²²

While in Brazil Slonimsky experienced two of the current Brazilian operas, one by Oscar Lorenzo Fernández, with whom he stayed with in Rio and the other by Eleazar de Carvalho, who later enjoyed a successful career as a symphony conductor. Slonimsky referred to his desire to learn Portuguese as motivated by his "incorrigible desire to amaze people." His attempt to combine his knowledge of Spanish and Latin with a little help from generous friends resulted in what some called a more "archaic form" of the language, though most could understand him.¹²³

While continuing his work collecting scores, Slonimsky conducted his own research on Latin American composers. He was struck by the similarity between the melodic patterns of Brazilian and Russian songs, considering the geographical distance that separated the two cultures. Slonimsky decided to compose a piece that would combine these two musical styles. It was called *Modinha Russo-Brasileria*. When he played it on the piano for his Brazilian friends "they were sure it was a local folk song."¹²⁴ When he later played it for a group of Russians they

¹²² Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 157.

¹²³ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 157. All quotations in this paragraph are found in the same source.

¹²⁴ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 157.

claimed it was a Russian gypsy song. The piece still survives in multiple arrangements and has been recorded.¹²⁵ During his time there he also composed *Silhouettes Iberiennes* and *Variations on a Brazilian Tune*. *Modinha Russo-Brasileira* and *Silhouettes Iberiennes* both achieved success in their arrangements for classical guitar by Laurindo Almeida.¹²⁶ *Variations on a Brazilian Tune* did not make great success as a piano piece, but he later arranged it for orchestra, which can be heard performed at youth concerts.¹²⁷

His travels took him through Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Nicaragua, Panama, Mexico, Peru, and Ecuador. Slonimsky found many interesting Chilean works in folk and cosmopolitan styles. He described Peruvian music as “pentatonic and austere,” and native Ecuadorian music as “even more severe.”¹²⁸ He reached the conclusion that music from Brazil and Argentina exuded more tropical influence, injected with Italian and Portuguese folklore and exhibited lyrical melodies with fast and lively dance forms, in contrast to that of the west coast that were infused with aboriginal Indian folklore. Slonimsky made the personal observation that “musical feuds are common in every country, but in Latin America they reach fever pitch.”¹²⁹ First- and second-hand events offered him a glimpse into the intimate but often public conflicts that took place between musicians that had to battle for their own reputation, publication opportunities, and regional pride of representation.

¹²⁵ Laurindo Almeida, Nancy Bramiage, William Kraft, Nicolas Slonimsky, and Cal Arts Ensemble. Slonimsky, N.: *Piccolo Divertimento No. 1 / Studies in Black and White / Minitudes / Gravestones at Hancock* (The Composer at the Piano) (Kraft). Lomita, CA: Cambria Master Recordings, 2009.

¹²⁶ Laurindo Almeida, Nicolas Slonimsky, and Deltra Eamon. Slonimsky, N: *Modinha Russo-Brasileira / Silhouettes Iberiennes* (arr. for 2 Guitars) / *5 Advertising Songs / Minitudes* (Almeida, Eamon, Slonimsky). Orion, 1973.

¹²⁷ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 158.

¹²⁸ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 159.

¹²⁹ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 162.

. As part of his research for the Free Library of Philadelphia, Slonimsky hosted lecture-recitals and participated in shared recitals at most of the stops that he made. Some were greeted with fascination, others with disdain and discord. The trip provided him the material needed to write his book, *Music of Latin America*, published in 1945. The book was met with mixed reviews, but also established Slonimsky among many scholars at the “authority on Latin American music,” at the time. However, not every critic was pleased.

My excellent friend, the German-Spanish-Mexican musicologist, Otto Mayer-Serra, had an expressive word for some of the music I collected: “basura,” garbage, and for the lower category, “basura de la basura.”¹³⁰

Other reviews praised Slonimsky’s survey of Latin American music:

This book is particularly remarkable from several points of view. It is an entertaining book, the report of a skillful and expert observer, a fact-finding traveler to the countries of Central and South America. With humor, understanding and sympathy he describes to his readers the results of his investigation of the status of music in those regions of the world. But beyond this interesting reportage the book has prime importance as basic re-search of a new, so far hardly known object.¹³¹

The next major project also sprang from Slonimsky’s musical curiosity. He explored the combination of the twelve semi-tones from the Western, equal-tempered scale to compile a list of all possible scalar patterns and chords. The first combinatorial discovery he made was an expansion on the *Mutterakkord*, a column of notes first arranged and titled by the Hungarian theorist Fritz Heinrich Klein. The *Mutterakkord* arranged twelve different notes in a column

¹³⁰ Nicolas Slonimsky, *Nicolas Slonimsky Writings on Music. Vol. 3: Music of the Modern Era*, Ed. by Electra Slonimsky Yourke (New York: Routledge, 2004), 34.

¹³¹ Hugo Leichtentritt, “Review: Music in Latin America by Nicolas Slonimsky,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 5, no. 3 (March 1947): 229.

using eleven different intervals. Slonimsky “could not believe that the *Mutterakkord* was unique,” and it was not.¹³² He expanded on this idea with what he called the *Grossmutterakkord*; the chord was constructed with all twelve tones of the chromatic scale, all intervals available in Western music and completely invertible, by placing the self-inverting tritone in the center. This was just one of the intellectual exercises included in the *Thesaurus*. The bulk of the text is a methodical and systematic exploration of what is likely every scale and pitch pattern possible with 12 semi-tones, published in his *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns* (1947).



Figure 1: Slonimsky's *Grossmutterakkord*

This theoretical text received positive reviews. It quickly became a tool for composers such as Aaron Copland, Virgil Thomson and Eugene Goossens, all of whom wrote to Slonimsky giving credit to his text as their compositional inspiration or asking permission to use his scales.¹³³ A term that Slonimsky expanded on in his *Thesaurus* was "pandiatonicism," which refers to the technique of using the diatonic scale without the limitations of functional tonality. Pandiatonic music usually exhibits dissonant combinations of diatonic pitches without conventional resolutions and disregard to standard chord progressions. For example, Copland's pandiatonic idiom in *Rodeo* and *Appalachian Spring* was codified and expanded in Slonimsky's

¹³² Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 169.

¹³³ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 171.

writing. Cowell recounted Slonimsky discovering one of the scale patterns in Arnold Schoenberg's *Ode to Napoleon*, by sheer melodic creation.¹³⁴ He then wrote it into a palindromic canon and sent it to Schoenberg.¹³⁵ Schoenberg responded that he was impressed with the "mental gymnastics," but that as a composer he would depend on inspiration rather than mechanics.¹³⁶

A review two years after publication describes Slonimsky's *Thesaurus* as a practical tool for systematic practice of scales and patterns for instrumentalists, and for an educator as a summary of contemporary trends, including melodic and harmonic idioms. "For the composer it suggests a wealth of material for creative use, some of which has already been used by Scriabin, Shostakovitch, Busoni, Schoenberg and Hanson to mention only a few composers."¹³⁷ It is praised for its organization and thorough description of new terms. More than a dictionary of scales, its comprehensive set of pitch combinations using all 12 semi-tones in the Western system is a quick-reference resource to the contemporary composer. Some of the terminology from Slonimsky's *Thesaurus* is still used by theorists, particularly in analysis of twentieth-century music such as "interpolation, infrapolation, and ultrapolation," as well as his definition of scale and pattern. From an article on pitch-class set multiplication in theory and practice, Slonimsky's techniques are used in the analysis of Boulez's *Le Marteau sans maître*. Stephen Heinemann explains, "The sequences forming the bulk of Slonimsky's *Thesaurus of Scales and*

¹³⁴ Henry Cowell, "Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns, by Nicolas Slonimsky." *MLA Notes* 4, no. 2, March 1947, 172.

¹³⁵ See Appendix C, Letter 1.

¹³⁶ Schoenberg letter to Slonimsky, 8 February 1949, Nicolas Slonimsky Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

¹³⁷ Howard A. Murphy, "Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns, by Nicolas Slonimsky," *Music Educators Journal* 35, no. 3 January 1949, 36.

Melodic Patterns constitute perhaps the earliest substantial and systematic application of simple multiplicative principles.”¹³⁸

The *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns*, unexpectedly to Slonimsky, took on popularity with jazz musicians. They used it as a means to build scales and cadenzas for their own improvisations. In a letter from David Demsey at the University of Maine at Augusta, he informed Slonimsky of the use of his scales in John Coltrane’s music:

The Ditone Progressions contained in your *Thesaurus* are very similar in structure to ‘three-key’ cycles in Coltrane’s compositions ‘Giant Steps’ and ‘Countdown.’ I have interviewed McCoy Tyner, Coltrane’s pianist for a number of years, and he directly confirmed Coltrane’s use of the book. (According to Tyner,) Coltrane carried the book with him constantly during the years 1957-1959... He always took it with him when he travelled on concert tours, and ... practiced it as part of his daily routine.¹³⁹

Articles discussing Slonimsky’s thesaurus demonstrated the musical community's remaining speculation on the musical experiments of the day.

Aren’t the commonly accepted scales, major and minor with a few variants; the older “modes”; the whole-tone scale; a few special scales of folk-music, and the “twelve-toned scale” of Arnold Schoenberg, with its negation of traditional harmonic relationships, the principal scales in the running?... The matter is not so simple, and the composers have been getting restless... These “patterns” are systematized in a manner designed to be of service to composers in search of a wider vocabulary... Mr. Slonimsky, seated at the piano, can himself turn a curiously looking pattern of notes into a thing of glamorous sound. So can other informed and ingenious musicians with a cultivated harmonic sense.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Stephen Heinemann, “Pitch-Class Set Multiplication in Theory and Practice,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 20, no.1, Spring, 1998, 77.

¹³⁹ Richard Kostelanetz and Nicolas Slonimsky “Conversation with Nicolas Slonimsky about His Composing.” *The Musical Quarterly* 74, no. 3 (1990): 466.

¹⁴⁰ Olin Downes. “Slonimsky Puts Together Provocative Book.” *New York Times* (1851-2008), 22 June 1947.

With its minute detail and precise calculations, this publication spurred him on to more work involving lists, dates, collective data, and accurate records. He continued writing for dictionaries and encyclopedias, fulfilling his passion for compiling tedious details and stories together. In 1952, he published the *Lexicon of Musical Invective*,¹⁴¹ which reveals many humorously poor reviews and critiques of famous musicians. It challenges the idea of artistic criticism by collecting contemporary writings on composers and musicians that are now loved and cherished, though hardly understood or accepted by some of their contemporaries. Jacques Barzun's review of the *Lexicon of Musical Invective*, in 1953, philosophizes how "we shall probably fall into the same trap the next time something really new invades our ears: it will feel exactly as those poor idiots said Strauss and Bartók felt. There is no avoiding this, statistically speaking, except by giving up criticism."¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Nicolas Slonimsky, *Lexicon of Musical Invective* (New York: Coleman-Ross Company, Inc., 1965).

¹⁴² Jacques Barzun, "Lexicon of Musical Invective: Critical Assaults on Composers Since Beethoven's Time by Nicolas Slonimsky." *MLA Notes* 10, no. 4, September 1953, 620.

Chapter 8

Travels, Teaching, and Reflection

Following World War II the dynamic of relations between the United States and Russia altered due to post-war establishments of security and occupation. This was the beginning of the Cold War, a standoff of political and military powers between the Communist world and the West. In the United States an era of interest in Russian culture was launched. This afforded many Russians new opportunities for employment. Slonimsky accepted a position at Harvard University teaching a class in advanced Russian combined with Soviet songs and ballads, offered to him by a friend, Professor Samuel Cross, who was the head of the Slavonic Department. Unsatisfied with the Russian manual offered him as a guide for his class, he compiled a text of his own for his students. It included his personal concoctions of puns, gimmicks, and semantic tricks to better assist students in understanding the Russian language.

Demand for translators of Russian literature, correspondence, and live mediation was great. Slonimsky served as a simultaneous translator for a network broadcast meeting between American and Russian composers for the *New York Times*. He translated a three-volume edition of Russian songs, proudly preserving the original rhythms with the English translation. At personal request before his passing, Alexander Gretchaninov, an esteemed Russian composer, asked Slonimsky to translate his memoirs into English.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ Alexander Gretchaninov, *My Life*, Translated by Nicolas Slonimsky (New York: Coloman-Ross, 1952).

Eric Blom commissioned Slonimsky to write the first of his articles on American music for the fifth edition of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* in 1950. Slonimsky recalled numerous circumstances submitting corrections to Blom, some of which inadvertently may have caused the publication trouble. One such incident involved a professional concert violinist, Marie Hall, who was said to be deceased in the dictionary. Slonimsky uncovered that Hall was actually alive and performing. Hall's solicitors sued the publication for the loss of her trade due to their misprint. Regardless of the occasional inconvenience that his accuracy may have revealed, Slonimsky was well respected and admired for his passionate pursuit of knowledge and his ability to locate information. In 1958, Slonimsky was appointed editor-in-chief of the fifth edition of the *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, published by G. Schirmer, Inc. Once unveiled, the fifth edition received exceptional reviews. Slonimsky remained the senior editor for the *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians* until 1992.

It supplies a useful catalog of traditional misinformation perpetuated by earlier editions of Baker's and other dictionaries which Mr. Slonimsky's sleuthing has corrected. Most importantly for the future, it exposes the ideals of thorough investigation and precision which distinguish the compilation at hand.¹⁴⁴

Slonimsky's research and writing spanned a wide variety of musical figures. Some of his best-known writings were his entries on modern musicians in dictionaries and encyclopedias of music. A 1994 profile from the *Inter-American Music Review* described Slonimsky as bearing "extensive comparison with François-Joseph Fétis, because both composed, wrote prolifically on the widest possible variety of musical topics, both never hesitated to offer their personal

¹⁴⁴ Brooks Shepard Jr., "Review: Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians by Baker; Nicolas Slonimsky," *MLA Notes* Vol. 16, no. 2 (Mar., 1959), 240.

opinions, and both are now especially valued for their biographical articles having to do with close contemporaries.”¹⁴⁵

Due to the combination of Slonimsky’s heritage, international relationships, and publications regarding modern interests in art and other such developments, he was falsely accused of socialist involvement in 1953. Slonimsky was investigated and interviewed extensively by FBI agents who found that there was no need for concern for the government regarding Slonimsky’s activities. Following these accusations, he was surprised when the U.S. State Department asked him to join the panel of the Office for Cultural Exchange in 1959. Its purpose was to send American artists, composers, and performers abroad. His task would be to distribute American musical scores and records to the “proper institutions in the USSR.” In 1962, Slonimsky was sent on a journey to the USSR, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Israel. During the course of his travels, Slonimsky entertained the company of composers, gave lectures on modern American music, and attended musical performances whenever possible. After returning to Boston in the summer of 1963, he and Dorothy spoke at a dual engagement on modern art and modern music. They both continued to lecture in their own areas of expertise. In an announcement of her talk for the Society for Contemporary American Art in 1950, it was written, “Miss Adlow has a reputation in her field as an authoritative analyst of contemporary American art.”¹⁴⁶

Over the course of two decades, Nicolas Slonimsky lost the three most important women in his life. His mother died on 6 January 1944, his aunt Isabelle Vengerova died on 7 February

¹⁴⁵ Stevenson, “Nicolas Slonimsky: Centenarian, Lexicographer and Musicologist,” 150.

¹⁴⁶ “Contemporary Art Group to Hear Talk by Dorothy Adlow.” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 4 December 1950, D6.

1956 and most dismaying was the loss of his wife, Dorothy Adlow, on 11 January 1964.

Slonimsky felt the only way to continue on would include leaving Boston, “which had become for me the City of Death.”¹⁴⁷

Fortunately, in 1965, the relocation came in the form of a teaching job at the University of California, Los Angeles. Slonimsky moved to Westwood Village in Los Angeles where he taught music classes for two years. He was forced to retire because of the regulations that limited a lecturer from teaching past the age of seventy. Regardless of the requests of the dean and chairman of the music department to make an exception, he had to “join the ranks of the unemployed.”¹⁴⁸ However, he was able to maintain regular engagements as a guest lecturer, continued composing, and compiling dictionaries. Slonimsky had no difficulty staying busy. His work allowed for many travels, including back to his homeland. Even he was amazed at the interest expressed in Russia concerning experimentalists such as John Cage and the recognition of Charles Ives in the 1970s.

Frank Zappa, a well-established American composer, singer-songwriter, electric guitarist, record producer and film director, called Slonimsky in the spring of 1981. Zappa had been a long-time admirer of Varèse, composing orchestral works using Varèse’s principles. Zappa was interested in Slonimsky’s book of scales, his other musical inventions, and theoretical ideas. Zappa’s Hollywood Hills mansion was adorned with expensive musical instruments and equipment. He had learned all his compositional and musical skills through his own private study of scores.

¹⁴⁷Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 227.

¹⁴⁸Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 230.

After playing some of his own works for Zappa at the piano, Slonimsky was invited to play at his concert at the large coliseum in Santa Monica. They briefly rehearsed his piece the afternoon before the concert. "Zappa dictated to his players the principal tonalities of my piece, and they picked up the modulations with extraordinary assurance," Slonimsky said. He described his first engagement as a soloist at a rock concert on 11 December 1981:

Balancing a cigarette between his lips, Zappa introduced me to the audience, referring to me as "our national treasure." I pulled out the earplugs and sat down at the electric piano. With demonic energy, Zappa launched us into my piece. To my surprise, I sensed a growing consanguinity with my youthful audience as I played. My fortissimo end brought out screams and whistles the likes of which I had never imagined possible. Dancing Zappa, wild audience, and befuddled me: I felt like an intruder on a mad scene from *Alice in Wonderland*. I had entered my Age of Absurdity.¹⁴⁹

Slonimsky continued to write dictionary entries and complete new books and supplements to past publications. In 1988, he produced a concise version of *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians* and completed his compilation of articles in his book *Lectinary of Music. Perfect Pitch*, his autobiography was also published in 1988, following his translation of the Boris de Schloezer's biography of Scriabin from the original Russian in 1987.

During the mid-1970s, Slonimsky was a frequent guest on Ara Guzelimian's weekly program on KUSC-FM, Los Angeles, sharing many of the fascinating stories and classical music lore he had accumulated over the years. Slonimsky appeared on the Doug Ordunio show, heard over KFAC-FM, Los Angeles. Slonimsky contributed a three-minute interview in the "Aging"

¹⁴⁹ Slonimsky, *Perfect Pitch*, 239.

segment of the 1989 Emmy winning PBS Series, *The Mind*.¹⁵⁰ Slonimsky entertained audiences with his appearance on *The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson* on 6 May 1986, where he “performed Chopin by rolling an orange over the piano keys with his right hand while his left hand played its usual part.”¹⁵¹

Slonimsky spent the remainder of his life travelling to schools, conferences, and to any open hall that would hear him speak, lecturing and sharing the adventures of his personal relationships with many fascinating characters in musical history. On 25 December 1995, the witty writer, composer of miniatures, conductor of masters, dictionary detective, proud father and humble supporter of endless artists went to his final resting place. He died in the UCLA Medical Center in Los Angeles, California.

¹⁵⁰John Hylan Heminway, *The Mind*, New York, NY : Educational Broadcasting Corp.; Alexandria, VA : PBS Video [distributor], 1988, VHS tape.

¹⁵¹Carolyn Ayon Lee, “Slonimsky Still Has That Perfect Pitch,” *The Seattle Times*, 19 July 1990.

Conclusions

Nicolas Slonimsky made a significant impact on the professional development of many musicians during the course of his life, especially his relentless support of the modern movement, which generated an array of challenges. Slonimsky's natural ease at memorization gave him advantages that not only benefitted his personal music performances and conducting, but enabled him to recall names, musical pieces and their details, to freely speak and write about them at any given notice. Slonimsky's gift of perfect pitch enriched the sound production capabilities of those who performed with him at the podium. He was able to detect if the written dissonances were played properly and difficult rhythmic passages were accurate. In addition to, Slonimsky's unusual conducting skill of simultaneously beating two different time signatures offered a rare advantage for ensembles that faced the challenges of Ives, Cowell, Varèse, and others. Slonimsky's rehearsing and conducting abilities were valuable to those attempting to hear their modern works realized for the first time. The high-caliber performances that Slonimsky produced helped spread awareness of pieces that may have suffered at the hand of poor quality performances due to their difficulty.

More than just his impressive conducting skills, Slonimsky participated in the modern movement as a performer and composer. As a pianist, Slonimsky performed as a working parlor musician in Kiev and Paris. He accompanied highly acclaimed operatic singers on the concert stage, and enjoyed solo performances with symphonic engagements. All of these earned him a reputation for technical skill and sensitive musicality. Slonimsky's compositions were miniature works, mainly for piano and voice. He wrote several chamber pieces in a variety of styles. All of his works exhibit modern ideas of individualism combined with his own personal wit. He wrote

pieces inspired by personal experiences and observations, including a song cycle, *Gravestones* to texts from tombstones in an old cemetery in Hancock, New Hampshire, and jingles off texts of advertisements from the newspaper. He added personal innovations to each of his musical concoctions. His unusual tactics paralleled other experimental compositions of the time. Even though Slonimsky's compositions did not acquire a mainstream popularity, they drew attention from those interested in avant-garde techniques.

Among Slonimsky's many talents, he was a master of the written word. Slonimsky composed reviews, criticisms, and articles with a fair and generous perspective to most. His writing was respected due both to his own personal success as a musician and conductor, and to his connections with so many well-known individuals. But it was not merely his reputation that made his writing so popular. Slonimsky's scholarly and journalistic work, even biographical in nature, always included a dose of humor, wit, and a pinch of sarcasm that entertained even those not deeply interested in the musical endeavors he described.

Slonimsky's formula of consistent engagement with progressive musical ideas through personal relationships with interested intellectuals impacted the blossoming of modern musical composition and theoretical exploration. This personal influence combined with his own musical gifts, mathematical understandings, and unusually astute hearing aided in pristine performances of complex and complicated compositions. Additionally, Slonimsky's witty mastery of multiple languages facilitated the numerous publications he wrote promoting dozens of artists and explaining the contemporary, innovative concepts pioneered throughout the century. All this resulted in a momentous influence on the development of modern music in the twentieth century.

Appendix A

Selected Programs and Premiere Performances

Table 1: Boston Chamber Orchestra Programs and Premieres under Slonimsky's Conducting

<i>Date</i>	<i>Composer/Arranger</i>	<i>Piece(s)</i>	<i>Premiere</i>	<i>Details</i>
December 20, 1927	Scarlatti/Michele Esposito	Three Pieces: Prelude-Pastoral-Scherzo	Boston Premiere	
	J.S. Bach/Michele Esposito	<i>Wachet auf</i> No. 4 of Cantata 140	Boston Premiere	
	Handel/W. G. Whittaker	Ballet Scene from the Opera <i>Alcina</i>	American Premiere	
	Heinrich Gebhard	Divertissement for Piano and Chamber Orchestra	World Premiere	Composer at piano
	Robin Milford	Suite for Chamber Orchestra	American Premiere	
	Otto Straub	<i>Revolte</i>	World Premiere	
	Lazare Saminsky	<i>Litanies of Women</i>	American Premiere	
	Frank Martin	<i>Chamber Fox Trot</i>	World Premiere	
January 18, 1928	Handel/Whittaker	Ballet Scene from the Opera <i>Alcina</i>		
	Brahms	Two Waltzes		
	Beethoven	Turkish March from <i>The Ruins of Athens</i>		
	Richard Wagner	<i>Dreams: Siegfried Paraphrase</i>		
	Heinrich Gebhard	Divertissement for Piano and Chamber Orchestra		Composer at the piano
	Robin Milford	Suite for Chamber Orchestra		
	Frank Martin	<i>Chamber Fox Trot</i>		
	Percy Grainger	<i>In a Nutshell</i>		1. Gay and Witsful 2. Gum-Suckers March
	A. P. Borodin	<i>Polovtzian Dances</i>		
March 15, 1928	J. S. Bach/ Michele Esposito	<i>Wachet auf</i> No. 4 Cantata 140		
	Scarlatti/ Michele Esposito	Two Pieces: Pastorale- Scherzo		
	Handel/ W. G. Whittaker	Ballet Scene from the Opera <i>Alcina</i>		
	Heinrich Gebhard	Divertissement for Piano and Chamber Orchestra		
	Robin Milford	Suite for Chamber Orchestra		
	Richard Wagner	<i>Dreams</i> , Version for Violin and Chamber Orchestra		
	Percy Grainger	<i>The Tune from County Derry, Molly on the Shore</i>		
	Frank Martin	<i>Chamber Fox Trot</i>		
	A. P. Borodin	Finale from the <i>Polovtzian Dances</i>		

April 28, 1928	Wilhelm Friedemann Bach	Sinfonia	American Premiere	
	W. A. Mozart	<i>A German Dance</i>	Boston Premiere	
	W. A. Mozart	<i>Minuets with Country Dances</i>	Boston Premiere	
	Henry F. Gilbert	Suite for Chamber Orchestra	World Premiere	1. Prelude 2. Spiritual 3. Fantasy
	Henry Cowell	<i>Marked Passages</i>	World Premiere	1. Larghetto 2. Presto 3. Allegro non troppo-Presto
	Edgard Varèse	<i>Offrandes</i>	Boston Premiere	1. Chanson de La-Haut 2. La Croix Du Sud
	Ercole Pasquini	<i>Canzona Francese</i>	Boston Premiere	
	Baldassare Galuppi	<i>Adagio e Giga</i>	Boston Premiere	
March 11, 1929	W. A. Mozart	Serenade in D Major, No. 3		
	Karl Friedrich Abel	Overture in B flat Major Op. 14		
	Scarlatti/Allen	Two Arias: <i>Son tutta duolo, Spesso vibra</i>		Gertrude Ehrhart, Soprano
	Colin McPhee	Concerto for Piano and Eight Wind Instruments		Composer at the piano
	Arthur Bliss	<i>Three Conversations</i>		1. The Committee Meeting 2. In the Woods 3. In the Tube at Oxford Circus
	Henry Cowell	Suite for Solo String and Percussion Piano with Chamber Orchestra		1. The Banshee 2. The Leprechaun 3. The Fairy Bells
	W. A. Mozart	<i>A Musical Joke, K.522</i>		Allegro-Minuetto Maetoso e Trio- Adagio Cantabile-Presto
November 17, 1929	Mendelssohn	<i>Fingal's Cave Overture</i>		
	Edward MacDowell	<i>Woodland Sketches</i>		1. To a Wild Rose 2. From an Indian Lodge 3. Uncle Remus
	Puccini	"Un bel di vedremo" from <i>Madame Butterfly</i>		Gertrude Ehrhart, Soprano
	Arthur Honegger	<i>Suite Napoleon</i>		
	Saint-Saëns	Selection from <i>Samson and Delilah</i>		
	Tschaikovsky/ Tellam/ Boccherini	String Quartet		
	Schubert	Songs for Soprano		1. Who is Sylvia? 2. Standchen 3. Hark, Hark the Lark!
	Richard Wagner	<i>Dreams</i>		
	Tschaikovsky	<i>The Nutcracker Suite</i>		1. La Danse Arabe 2. La Danse Chinoise 2. La Danse Russe

December 9, 1929	Karl Johann Stamitz	Sinfonia in D Major for Chamber Orchestra		
	Haydn	Concerto in D Major for Cello and Orchestra		Beatrice Harrison, Cellist
	Herbert Hughes	<i>The Bard of Armagh</i>		Beatrice Harrison, Cellist
	Delius	<i>Melody</i>		Beatrice Harrison, Cellist
	Charles G. Dawes	<i>Melody</i>		Beatrice Harrison, Cellist
	Herbert Hughes	<i>The Blackbird Reel</i>		Beatrice Harrison, Cellist
	Ernest Bloch	<i>Four Episodes for Chamber Orchestra</i>		1. Humoresque Macabre 2. Obsession 3. Calm 4. Chinese
	Percy Grainger	<i>Youthful Rapture</i> - Rhapsody for Cello, Pianoforte, Harmonium and Chamber Orchestra	American Premiere	Beatrice Harrison, Cellist
	Sammartini/ Joseph Salmon	<i>Suite Ancienne</i>		Beatrice Harrison, Cellist
January 25, 1930	Mozart	<i>A Musical Joke, K.222</i>		
	Charles Ives	<i>Three Places in New England</i>		1. Boston Common 2. Putnam Park 3. Housatonic at Stockbridge
	Robin Milford	Suite for Chamber Orchestra		
	Arthur Honegger	<i>Suite Napoleon</i>		
	Alessandro Caturla	<i>Three Afro-Cuban Dances</i>		
	Paul Allen	<i>Montezuma</i>		
January 10, 1931	Mozart	Symphony No. 1 in E Flat Major		
	Charles Ives	<i>Three Places in New England</i>		1. Boston Common 2. Putnam Park 3. Housatonic at Stockbridge
	Carl Ruggles	<i>Men and Mountains</i>		1. Men 2. Lilacs 3. Marching Mountains
	Robin Milford	Suite for Chamber Orchestra		
	Henry Cowell	<i>Marked Passages</i>		
	Mozart	<i>A Musical Joke, K.522</i>		
February 7, 1931	Henry Bryant	Variations for Chamber Orchestra		
	Carl Ruggles	<i>Men and Mountains</i>		1. Men 2. Lilacs 3. Marching Mountains
	Charles Ives	<i>Three Places in New England</i>		1. Boston Common 2. Putnam Park 3. Housatonic at Stockbridge
	Henry Cowell	<i>Marked Passages</i>		
	Alejandro Caturla	<i>Three Afro-Cuban Dances</i>		
	Mozart	<i>A Musical Joke, K.522</i>		

March 3, 1931`	Prokofiev	<i>Overture on Hebrew Themes</i>		
	Arthur Honegger	<i>Suite Napoleon</i>		1. The Trumpet Call 2. Chaconne of the Empress 3. Romance of the Violin 4. Children's Dance
	Carl Ruggles	"Marching Mountains," Third Movement of <i>Men and Mountains</i>		
	Robin Milford	<i>Suite for Chamber Orchestra</i>		
	Ernst Krenek	Orchestral Excerpts from <i>Johnny spielt auf</i>		
	Stravinsky	Three Pieces for Clarinet Solo		
	Stravinsky	<i>A Soldier's Tale</i>		1. Soldier's March 2. Soldier's Violin 3. Tango, Valse, Rag
	Mozart	<i>A Musical Joke, K.522</i>		
April 1, 1931	Colin McPhee	Concerto for Piano and Eight Wind-Instruments		Composer at the piano
	Edgard Varèse	<i>Hyperprism</i> for Wind-Instruments and Percussion		
	Carlos Salzedo	Concerto for Harp		
	Igor Stravinsky	<i>A Soldier's Tale</i>		
December 9, 1931	Karl Johann Stamitz	Sinfonia in D Major for Chamber Orchestra		
	Haydn	Concerto in D Major for Cello and Orchestra		
	Herbert Hughes	<i>The Bard of Armagh</i>		
	Delius	<i>Serenade</i>	World Premiere	
	Charles G. Dawes	<i>Melody</i>		
	Herbert Hughes	<i>The Blackbird Reel</i>		
	Ernest Bloch	Four Episodes for Chamber Orchestra		
	Percy Grainger	<i>Youthful Rapture</i> - Rhapsody for 'Cello, Pianoforte, Harmonium and Chamber Orchestra		
	Sammartini/Joseph Salmon	<i>Suite Ancienne</i>		
November 16, 1931	Nicolai	<i>Overture Merry Wives of Windsor</i>		
	Sibelius	<i>Valse Triste</i>		
	Nevin	<i>Suite Romantique A Day in Venice</i>		1. Dawn 2. Gondoliers 3. Venetian Love Song 4. Good Night
	Saint Saens	Selection from the Opera <i>Samson and Delilah</i>		
	Pierné	<i>March of the Little Tin Soldiers</i>		
	Slonimsky	Four Compositions for Young People		1. Little Overture 2. Dreams and Drums 3. Music Box

Appendix B

Selected Programs

The Moses Greeley Parker
Lectures

CONCERT
— BY —
THE HARVARD UNIVERSITY ORCHESTRA
Pierian Sodality of 1808
NICOLAS SLONIMSKY, Conductor
Assisted By
GLADYS deALMEIDA, Soprano

PROGRAMME

I.	Triumphal March	-	-	-	<i>Beethoven</i>
II.	Fingal's Cave	-	-	-	<i>Mendelssohn</i>
	The Orchestra				
III.	Stornellata Marinana	-	-	-	<i>Cimara</i>
	Un Moto di Gioia	-	-	-	<i>Mozart</i>
	Si j'avais vos Ailes	-	-	-	<i>Message</i>
	A Knight of Bethlehm	-	-	-	<i>Thomson</i>
	At the Well	-	-	-	<i>Hageman</i>
	Miss deAlmeida				
IV.	Egmont Overture	-	-	-	<i>Beethoven</i>
	The Orchestra				
INTERMISSION					
V.	Unfinished Symphony	-	-	-	<i>Schubert</i>
	(a) Allegro moderato				
	(b) Andante con moto				
VI.	Sainte Marguerite	-	-	-	French Canadian Folk-Song
	La Colomba	-	-	-	Tuscanian Folk-Song
	Estrellita	-	-	-	Mexican Folk-Song
	No quiero casarme	-	-	-	Spanish Folk-Song
	Popoulas	-	-	-	Portuguese Song
	Corre, corre, Cordelinho	-	-	-	Portuguese Folk-Song
	Miss deAlmeida				
VII.	Selection—Hit the Deck	-	-	-	<i>Youmans</i>
	The Orchestra				
VIII.	Popular Excerpts	-	-	-	Selected
	FAIR HARVARD The Orchestra				

Howard Slayton, Accompanist for Miss deAlmeida
The Piano is a Steinert

Lowell Memorial Auditorium
NDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1927 Three O'Clock

Program 1: Harvard University Orchestra, 11 December 1927

JORDAN HALL, BOSTON


FIRST CONCERT

THE
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
OF BOSTON

NICOLAS SLONIMSKY, *Conductor*

SOLOISTS

GERTRUDE EHRHART *Soprano* HEINRICH GEBHARD *Piano*



Tuesday Evening, December 20, 1927

At 8.15

FIRST SEASON

1927-1928

Management: A. H. HANDELY
162 Boylston Street, Boston, Massachusetts

The date of the second concert will be announced later. The program will include first performances of works by Walter Pater of Harvard University and Nicolas Oboukov of Paris.

Program 1: Chamber Orchestra of Boston, First Program 20 December 1927, pg. 1

FIRST SEASON
NINETEEN HUNDRED TWENTY-SEVEN AND TWENTY-EIGHT
FIRST PROGRAMME
Tuesday Evening, December 20, at 8:15 O'Clock

PERSONNEL

<p>Gaston Klees, Concertmaster Boris Kreinin, First Violin Paul Cherkassky, First Violin Einar Hansen, Second Violin Paul Fedorovsky, Second Violin George Fourel, Viola H. Droughmans, Violoncello Alois Vondrak, Double-Bass</p>	<p>George Bladet, Flute Jean Devergie, Oboe Edmond Allegra, Clarinet R. Allard, Bassoon W. Valkenier, Horn Gustave Perret, Trumpet Joannes Rochut, Trombone Max Polster, Percussion</p>
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Clifford Kemp, Piano

NICOLAS SLONIMSKY, *Conductor*

DOMENICO SCARLATTI THREE PIECES (arranged by Michele Esposito)
Prelude—Pastorale—Scherzo
(First Performance in Boston)

J. S. BACH WACHET AUF (Sleepers Awake) No. 4 of Church
Cantata 160 (arranged by Michele Esposito)
(First Performance in Boston)

G. F. HANDEL BALLET SCENE FROM THE OPERA "ALCINA"
(arranged by W. G. Whittaker)
Entry of the Pleasant Thoughts (Largo)
Entry of the Unpleasant Thoughts (Adagio-Allegro)
Entry of the Frightened Pleasant Thoughts
(Moderato)
The Fight between the Unpleasant and the Pleasant
Thoughts (Allegro furioso)
(First Performance in America)

HEINRICH GEBHARD DIVERTISSEMENT FOR PIANO AND CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Andante con moto—Allegro
(The Composer at the Piano)
(First performance)

INTERMISSION

ROBIN MILFORD SUITE FOR CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Prelude—Air—Minuet and Trio—
Quick Dance
(First Performance in America)

OTTO STRAUB "REVOLTE"
(First performance)

LAZARE SAMINSKY LITANIES OF WOMEN
(Five songs for Soprano with Chamber Orchestra)
(First performance in America)

FRANK MARTIN CHAMBER FOX TROT
(First performance)

SOLOISTS
GERTRUDE EHRHART, *Soprano*
HEINRICH GEBHARD, *Piano*

The MASON & HAMLIN PIANO is the Official Piano of the Chamber Orchestra
of Boston

Mr. Gebhard Plays the BALDWIN PIANO


Program 2: Chamber Orchestra of Boston, First Program 20 December 1927, pg. 2

JORDAN HALL, BOSTON

SECOND CONCERT

THE
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
OF BOSTON

GERTRUDE EHRHART, *Soprano*
NICOLAS SLONIMSKY, *Conductor*



Saturday Afternoon, April 28, 1928

At 3.00

FIRST SEASON

1927-1928

Management A. H. HANDLEY
162 Boylston Street, Boston, Massachusetts

Program 3: Chamber Orchestra of Boston, Second Program 28 April 1928, pg. 1

FIRST SEASON
 NINETEEN HUNDRED TWENTY-SEVEN AND TWENTY-EIGHT
SECOND PROGRAMME

Saturday Afternoon, April 28th, at 3:00 O'Clock

PERSONNEL

Gaston Elcus, Concertmaster
 Boris Kreinin, Violin
 Paul Cherkassky, Violin
 Einar Hansen, Violin
 Paul Fedorovsky, Violin
 Daniel Eisler, Violin
 Albert Bernard, Viola
 H. Droeghmans, Violoncello
 Alois Vondrak, Double-Bass

George Bladet, Flute
 Jean Devergie, Oboe
 Edmond Allegra, Clarinet
 R. Allard, Bassoon
 W. Valkenier, Horn
 Gustave Perret, Trumpet
 Joannes Rochut, Trombone
 Max Polster, Percussion
 Elizabeth Allen, Harp

NICOLAS SLONIMSKY, *Conductor*

WILHELM FRIEDEMANN BACH

SINFONIA

Adagio—Allegro e Forte (Fugue)
 (First time in America)

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

A GERMAN DANCE

TWO MINUETS WITH COUNTRY DANCES
 (First time in Boston)

HENRY F. GILBERT

SUITE FOR CHAMBER ORCHESTRA ***

1. Prelude
2. Spiritual
3. Fantasy
 (First Performance)

INTERMISSION

HENRY COWELL

MARKED PASSAGES

1. Larghetto
2. Presto
3. Allegro non troppo—Presto
 (First Performance)

EDGAR VARÈSE

OFFRANDES

1. Chanson de La-Haut
2. La Croix Du Sud
 For Voice and Chamber Orchestra
 (First time in Boston)

ERCOLE PASQUINI

CANZONA FRANCESE

(First time in Boston)

BALDASSARE GALUPPI

ADAGIO E GIGA

(First time in Boston)

SOLOIST

GERTRUDE EHRHART, *Soprano*

The MASON & HAMLIN PIANO is the Official Piano of the
 Chamber Orchestra of Boston

*** Performed with the permission of the Library of Congress.

JORDAN HALL BOSTON, MASS.

THIRD CONCERT — SECOND SEASON

Monday Evening, March 11th, 1929

at 8.15

THE

CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

OF BOSTON

GASTON ELCUS, <i>Concertmaster</i>	PASQUALE AMERENA, <i>Flute</i>
BORIS KRIVIN, <i>Violin</i>	GASTON BLADET, <i>Flute</i>
PAUL CHEKASKY, <i>Violin</i>	JEAN DEVERGIE, <i>Oboe</i>
PAUL FIDRICH, <i>Violin</i>	EDMOND ALLEGRA, <i>Clarinet</i>
EDGAR HANSEN, <i>Violin</i>	RAYMOND ALLARD, <i>Bassoon</i>
GEORGES FOCREL, <i>Viola</i>	WILLEM VALKENIER, <i>Horn</i>
JACQUES LANGENDOEN, <i>'Cello</i>	GUSTAVE PERRET, <i>Trumpet</i>
HIPPOLITE DRUGMANS, <i>'Cello</i>	JOANNES ROCHUT, <i>Trombone</i>
ALDIS VONDRAK, <i>Bass</i>	MAX POLSTER, <i>Percussion</i>

(Members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra)

NICOLAS SLONIMSKY, CONDUCTOR

Assisted by

GERTRUDE EHRHART, *Soprano*

HENRY COWELL, *Composer-Pianist*

COLIN McPHEE, *Composer-Pianist*

Management: A. H. HANDLEY,
162 Boylston Street, Boston, Massachusetts

Program 5: Chamber Orchestra of Boston, 11 March 1929, pg. 1

CONCERT
BY
Chamber Orchestra of Boston
(Members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra)
NICOLAS SLONIMSKY, Conductor
Gertrude Ehrhart, Soprano

Programme

Overture Fingal's Cave - - - *Mendelssohn*
Woodland Sketches - - - *MacDowell*
 (a) To a Wild Rose
 (b) From an Indian Lodge
 (c) Uncle Remus

Aria for Soprano
Un bel di vedremo from Madam Butterfly *Puccini*

Suite "Napoleon" - - - *Honegger*
 (a) Napoleon
 (b) Chaconne de l'Imperatrice
 (c) La Romance de Violine
 (d) Danse des Enfants

Selection from Samson and Delilah *Saint-Saens*

String Quartet
 (a) Andante from Quartet - - *Tschaikowsky*
 (b) En Sourdine - - - *Tellam*
 (c) Minuet - - - *Boccherini*

Soprano
 (a) Who is Sylvia? - - - *Schubert*
 (b) Standchen - - - *Schubert*
 (c) Hark, Hark the Lark! - - *Schubert*

Dreams - - - *Wagner*

The Nutcracker Suite - - - *Tschaikowsky*
 (a) La Danse Arabe - - -
 (b) La Danse Chinoise - - -
 (c) La Danse Russe - - -

Under the auspices of the
**Social Union of the
Massachusetts Agricultural College**
BOWKER AUDITORIUM
Sunday, November 17, 1929, 3-30 P. M.

Program 7: Chamber Orchestra of Boston, 17 November 1929



Monday Evening,
December 9th at 8:15

John Hancock Hall
St. James Ave. Boston, Mass.

BEATRICE
HARRISON
Famous English 'Cellist
WITH
CHAMBER ORCHESTRA OF BOSTON
NICOLAS SLONIMSKY, *Conductor*

PROGRAMME

1. Sinfonia in D Major for Chamber Orchestra . . . *Karl Johann Stamitz*
Allegro—Andantino
Minuet—Presto
2. Concerto in D Major for 'Cello and Orchestra . . . *Haydn*
Allegro Moderato, Adagio, Allegro
3. a) The Bard of Armagh (Founded on an old Irish tune)
Herbert Hughes
b) Serenade (First Performance) . . . *Delius*
c) Melody . . . *Charles G. Dawes*
d) The Blackbird Reel . . . *Herbert Hughes*
(Cello and Orchestra)

INTERMISSION

4. Four Episodes for Chamber Orchestra . . . *Ernest Bloch*
Humoresque Macabre . . . *Obsession*
Calm . . . *Chinese*
5. a) "Youthful Rapture"—Rhapsody for 'Cello, Pianoforte,
Harmonium and Chamber Orchestra . . . *Percy Grainger*
(First Performance in America)
b) Suite Ancienne (Harmonized by Joseph Salmon) . . . *Sammartini*
Allegro, grave, vivace
(Cello and Orchestra)

—STEINWAY PIANO—

Tickets, 75c to \$2.00. Now on sale at office of
Manager A. H. HANDLEY, Steinert Hall, 162 Boylston Street, Boston
Telephone Hancock 5488. Mail orders now.

Program 8: Chamber Orchestra of Boston, 9 December 1929

HALL NEW YORK
 113 West 43rd Street
 Saturday Evening, January 10th, 1931, at 8.30

The Chamber Orchestra of Boston
 (Members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra)

NICOLAS SLONIMSKY, Conductor

PROGRAM

MOZART Symphony No. 1, in E Flat Major
 I. Allegro Molto
 II. Andante
 III. Presto

CHARLES IVES "Three Places in New England"
 I. Boston Common
 II. Putnam's Camp, Redding,
 Connecticut
 III. The Housatonic at Stockbridge

CARL RUGGLES "Men and Mountains,"
 I. Men
 II. Lilacs
 III. Marching Mountains

ROBIN MILFORD Suite for Chamber Orchestra
 I. Prelude
 II. Air
 III. Minuet and Trio
 IV. Slow Dance
 V. Quick Dance

HENRY COWELL Marked Passages (Sinfonietta)
 I. Larghetto
 II. Presto
 III. Allegro non Troppo

MOZART A Musical Joke (Ein Musikalischer
 Spass, Koech. 522)
 I. Allegro
 II. Minuetto e Trio
 III. Presto

— STEINERT PIANO —

A. H. HANDLEY, 162 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass.,
 Manager of the Chamber Orchestra of Boston

Tickets, \$2.00, \$1.50, \$1.00, 75c. Loges, \$2.50. Now on sale at box-office.

This concert under the direction of Recital Management
 ARTHUR JUDSON, Steinway Hall, New York

Program 9: Chamber Orchestra of Boston, 10 January 1931

THE NEW SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

66 West 12th Street, New York City

PRESENTS

The Chamber Orchestra of Boston

NICOLAS SLONIMSKY, Conductor

Saturday Evening, February 7, 1931, at 8.30

PROGRAM

-
- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| HENRY BRANT | Variations for Chamber Orchestra |
| CARL RUGGLES | "Men and Mountains,"
I. Men
II. Lilacs
III. Marching Mountains |
| CHARLES IVES | "Three Places in New England"
I. Boston Common
II. Putnam's Camp, Redding,
Connecticut
III. The Housatonic at Stockbridge |
| HENRY COWELL | Marked Passages (Sinfonietta)
I. Larghetto
II. Presto
III. Allegro non Troppo |
| ALEJANDRO CATURLA | Bembé, Afro-Cuban Movement |
| MOZART | A Musical Joke (Ein Musikalischer
Spas, Koech. 522)
I. Allegro
II. Minuetto e Trio
III. Presto |
-

Management, A. H. HANDLEY, 162 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass.

Program 10: Chamber Orchestra of Boston, 7 February 1931

TUESDAY AFTERNOON MARCH 3, 1931

The Smith College Department of Music
presents
The Chamber Orchestra of Boston
NICOLAS SLONIMSKY, *Conductor*

PROGRAM

- PROKOFIEV. Overture on Hebrew Themes
- HONEGGER. Napoleon, A Film Suite
I. The Trumpet Call
II. Chaconne of the Empress
III. Romance of the Violin
IV. Children's Dance
- RUGGLES. "Marching Mountains," Third Movement of
"Men and Mountains"
- MILFORD. Suite for Chamber Orchestra
I. Prelude
II. Minuet and Trio
III. Quick Dance
- KRENEK. Orchestral Excerpts from "Johnny Spielt Auf"
- STRAVINSKY. Three Pieces for Clarinet Solo
EDMOND ALLEGRA, *Soloist*
- STRAVINSKY. Story of a Soldier
I. Soldier's March
II. Soldier's Violin
III. Tango, Valse, Rag
- MOZART. Ein Musikalischer Spass, Koech. 522
I. Allegro
II. Minuet and Trio
III. Presto.

Management: A. H. HANDLEY, 162 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass.

Program 11: Chamber Orchestra of Boston, 3 March 1931

WORCESTER ART MUSEUM

WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

Sunday Afternoon, January 5, 1936

at 3 o'clock

Concert by

THE BOSTON CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

NICOLAS SLONIMSKY, *Conductor*

P. CHERKASSKY, <i>Violin</i>	A. VONDRAK, <i>Bass</i>
P. FEDEROVSKY, <i>Violin</i>	L. SPEYER, <i>Oboe</i>
H. SAUVLET, <i>Violin</i>	A. BATTLES, <i>Flute</i>
C. KNUDSON, <i>Violin</i>	R. MAZZEO, <i>Clarinet</i>
H. ERKELENS, <i>Violin</i>	B. PILLER, <i>Bassoon</i>
G. FOUREL, <i>Viola</i>	G. MAGER, <i>Trumpet</i>
J. LANGENDOEN, <i>Cello</i>	W. VALKENIER, <i>Horn</i>

(Members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra)

PROGRAM

Fragment from Chorus to the
Orestes of Euripides *Circa 330 B. C.*
In the Enharmonic Mode (with quarter tones)

Prelude and Fugue in C Minor *Bach*
Pastorale *Scarlatti*

Symphony No. 1, in E Flat Major, Koech. 16 . . . *Mozart*
Allegro molto *Presto*
Andante

L'Arlesienne, from Suite No. 1 *Bizet*
Prelude *Le Carillon*
Minuetto

Dreams *Wagner*
On Youth, from "The Song of the Earth" . . . *Mahler*
March, from "Love for Three Oranges" . . . *Prokofiev*

Golden Gate of Kiev, from
"Pictures at an Exhibition" *Moussorgsky*
Piano Solos, Mr. Slonimsky

From the Suite "Napoleon" *Honegger*
Napoleon *Children at Play*
Chaconne of the Empress

Three Rumanian Folk Songs *Bela Bartok*
Three Russian Melodies *Slonimsky*

Concert Management

A. H. Handley

162 Boylston Street, Boston

Program 12: Boston Chamber Orchestra, 5 January 1936

The New Music Society of California
 Box 356, San Francisco
 Henry Cowell, Director
 Presents:

at
 Community Playhouse
 Mason and Sutter Sts.
 San Francisco
 Thursday evening, September third
 at eight-thirty

Performing musicians _____
 under the direction of NICOLAS SLONIMSKY, _____
 conductor of the Boston Chamber Orchestra; _____
 Violins: Dorothy Dunyon, Betty Marino, Modesta Mortenson,
 Carol Weston. _____
 Violas: Marian Nicholson, Marie Weiler. _____
 Celli: Rebecca Haight, Doretha Ulsh. _____
 C. Basses: E. Hernandez, A. Linden _____
 Flute: T. Bacher; Oboe: L. Schivo; Horn: H. Trutner III;
 Bassoon: M. Baker; Trumpet: A. Linden; Trombone: V.
 Cimino; Percussion: F. Peckham. _____

PROGRAM
 I

a. Three Canons (for four woodwinds) _____
 WALLINGFORD RIEGGER

b. L'Histoire Du Soldat (for 7 instruments) _____
 IGOR STRAVINSKY

Part 1: The Soldier's March	Three Dances _____
Music to Scene One	(Tango, Waltz, Ragtime)
Music to Scene Two	The Devil's Dance _____
Music to Scene Three	The Little Choral _____
Part 2: The Soldier's March	The Great Choral _____
The Royal March	Triumphal March of the
The Little Concert	Devil _____

Intermission
 II

a. Washington's Birthday (for strings, Bells, Horn, and Flute) _____
 CHARLES IVES

b. Kammer-symphonie (for five strings and five woodwinds)—
 ADOLPH WEISS

I Moderato-Allegro _____
 II Andante _____

c. Overture on Yiddish Themes (for Piano, Clarinet, and
 String Quartet) (Nicolas Slonimsky at the piano)
 SERGEI PROKOFIEV

Admission \$1.00 and \$1.50 (New Music Society Members free)

Program 13: Boston Chamber Orchestra under the New Music Society of California, 3 September 1931.

THE NEW SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH
 PRESENTS AN ALL RUSSIAN CONCERT BY
THE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF
NICOLAS SLONIMSKY
 CONDUCTOR OF THE BOSTON CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

P R O G R A M

I. OVERTURE ON HEBREW THEMES . SERGE PROKOFIEV
 II. BALLAD FOR PIANO AND
 CHAMBER ORCHESTRA . VLADIMIR DUKELSKY

INTERMISSION . EIGHT MINUTES

III. QUINTET FOR WIND
 INSTRUMENTS NICOLAS BERESKOWSKY

IV. SERENADE FOR VIOLIN,
 CLARINET AND BASSOON . IGOR MARKEVICH

V. RAGTIME IGOR STRAVINSKY

AT THE NEW SCHOOL AUDITORIUM
 66 WEST 12TH STREET · NEW YORK
 TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8TH AT 8:30 P.M.
 ORCHESTRA SEATS \$1.50 MEZZANINE BOXES \$2.00

Program 14: Chamber Orchestra of Boston under The New School for Research, 8 December, 1931.

Appendix C

Selected Articles and Reviews

AMERICAN COMPOSERS FEATURED IN CONCERT

(Reprinted from Friday's late edition)

BY ISABEL MORSE JONES

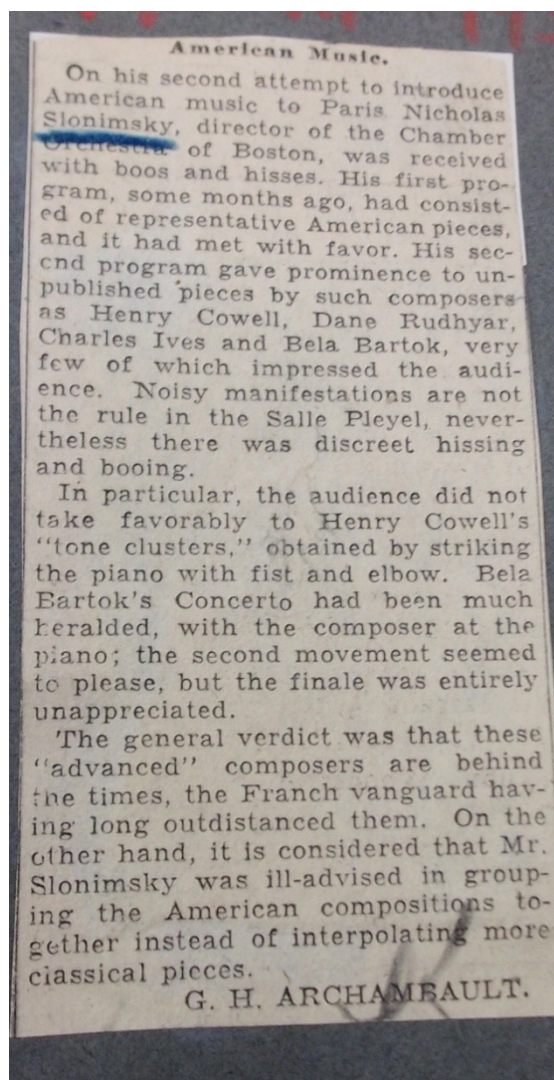
Music and musicians of the left wing had their night at the Philharmonic concert last evening. Two American composers, Charles Ives and Roy Harris, were privileged to be presented by a young intellectual prominent in the music world which has evolved since the war, Nicolas Slonimsky. He also earned enthusiastic approval for a Mozart Serenade, "En Saga," by Sibelius, and "Pictures at an Exhibition," by Moussorgsky. The Sibelius work, having a first hearing at the Philharmonic Orchestra concerts, pleased the audience most.

Of the two controversial American numbers, Overture by Harris and "New England," by Ives, the newer Harris work proved the most acceptable example of modern musical thinking. Ives's score has melody, interest, and the composer's intention of sublimating the merry-making of American youth to the noble actions of their Revolutionary ancestors was fascinating. Unfortunately for the listener, this score was written some thirty

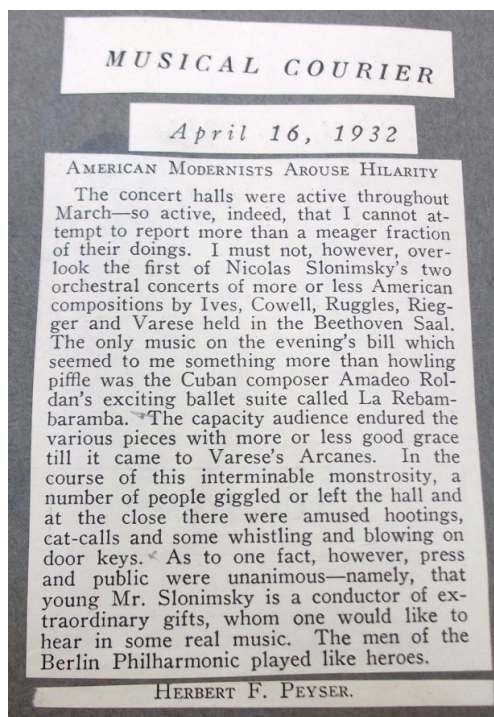
years ago and although remarkably enough it parallels Stravinsky unintentionally, the composer has not cared to write and rewrite his score in order to eliminate much that is superfluous. A score as "thickly orchestrated" as this one does not "sound"—it numbs and bewilders.

The orchestral work of Roy Harris, as expressed in this recently written overture to the "Gayety and Sadness of the American Scene," is emerging from creative chaos. It is not yet fully born. It has sincerity, definite and convincing ideas and it speaks in the contemporary idiom of life as it is today. Whether we like it or not, there is truth in it. Harris was personally applauded.

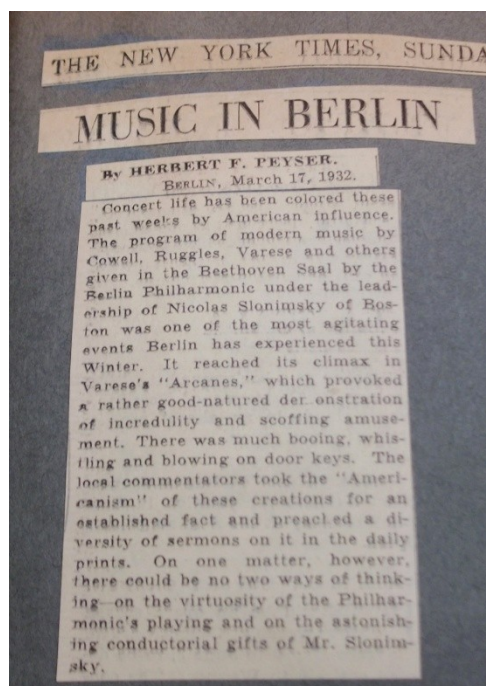
Outside of the amazing feats of conducting performed by Slonimsky in the Ives and Harris works, he demonstrated superior ability in the sparkling Mozart Serenade No. 3, in which a small but very effective orchestra was used. Power without loss of suavity and beauty was had in the Sibelius "En Saga" and the "Pictures" (more of Ravel than Moussorgsky) achieved the climax of an unusually interesting concert which will be repeated today.



Article 2: *The New York Sun*, 14 March 1932



Article 2: *Musical Courier*, 16 April 1932



Article 3: *New York Times*, 17 March 1932

The Boston Globe
April 14, 1927

PIERIAN SODALITY IN ANNUAL CONCERT

The Harvard University Orchestra, Pierian Sodality of 1908, gave last night its annual Spring concert in Jordan Hall, with George Sidney Stanton, '27, as its conductor. It was assisted by Gertrude Ehrhart, soprano, and Nicolas Slonimsky, pianist and guest conductor.

The orchestral program, which opened and closed with the Harvard march, "Our Director," and "Fair Harvard," respectively, contained also the Rakocsy March from Berlioz' "Damnation de Faust" and other, less endurable things, but to overshadow these there were fortunately Haydn's Symphony No. 12, in B flat, and the first movement of Rachmaninoff's piano concerto, op 18.

Very finished playing can hardly be expected from an amateur orchestra of university undergraduates, such as this is. All that can be done is to applaud the evidence of good intentions and conscientious preparation, and such evidence was abundant, both in the symphony and, to an even greater extent, in the colorful orchestral part of the concerto. The piano part of this work was delightfully played by Mr Slonimsky, who showed himself a pianist well endowed with easy, fluent and unostentatious technique, combined with a warmth and grace of style unusually free from extravagance while ceaselessly flexible and expressive.

Mr Slonimsky also conducted the orchestra in the accompaniment to the "Recit et air de Lia" from Debussy's "Enfant Prodigue,"—sung with much charm, if possibly insufficient emotional depth, by Miss Ehrhart—and played the pianoforte parts of two of his songs, "Fuite de la Lune" and "Shouettes."

In these songs, which very strongly confirmed the favorable impression created by them earlier in the season, Miss Ehrhart was more successful, singing with much beauty of tone, phrase and diction. As encore she sang Deems Taylor's pleasant "May Day Carol."

There was generous and prolonged applause for all concerned—orchestra, conductor, and soloists.

Article 4: *Boston Globe*, 14 April 1927

The Boston Post
April 14, 1927

PIERIANS IN FIRST CONCERT

**Harvard Orchestra As-
sisted by Soloists**

BY WARREN STOREY SMITH

At Jordan Hall last evening the Harvard University Orchestra, the Pierian Sodality of 1808, of which George Sidney Stanton is the present conductor, gave its annual spring concert. It is not to be expected that a university orchestra would attain to the standards of a university chorus, inasmuch as the mastery of instruments is a matter vastly different from the use of the voice in choral singing. The mantle of charity, then, must be thrown over the performances of last evening, especially that of the Symphony of Haydn, since these 18th century pieces require the utmost finish and "finish" is the one thing that a university orchestra may scarcely offer. In far better fashion went the orchestral portion of the first movement

of Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto, in which Nicolas Slonimsky was the soloist. Mr. Slonimsky, who heretofore has been heard in this city as pianist only in the accompaniments of his own songs, proved himself last evening a virtuoso of no small attainments, playing with authority, with technical skill, and with the rhapsodic warmth and breadth of style that this music requires.

Karolik Sings at Symphony Concert

By MOSES SMITH

Maxim Karolik, Russian tenor now resident in these precincts, gave his second concert of the season yesterday afternoon. In line with similar trends in the world of business, the price of tickets had been scaled down to a fraction of the usual charge. Yet, by some coincidence, the audience, of fair size, did not even approach the numbers who heard Mr. Karolik earlier in the season.

Assisted by the sensitive, discriminating and brilliant Nicolas Slonimsky at the piano, the tenor gave a most musical program consisting of two groups of Russian songs, a Gluck aria and three songs in French, and four numbers in Italian, one of which was the improvisation from Giordano's "Andrea Chenier."

Mr. Karolik's voice, of pleasing quality normally, seemed lighter than ever yesterday and quite unsuited to any outbreak of dramatic power, which, however, the singer refused to recognize. As a result there was much straining in the more vigorous works and some faulty intonation. Despite its limitations, however, the voice gives considerable pleasure. And almost exactly the same thing may be said of Mr. Karolik's singing style. Its very sameness tends to establish a sort of unified mood for the concert.

The singer was happiest, of course, in lyrical numbers, like one or two of the Italian songs, or in such a satiric piece as Borodin's "Concert."

The audience applauded the singer heartily, and heard him sing several extra numbers.

Karolik Song Recital

Maxim Karolik, tenor, familiar figure in Symphony Hall, reappeared there yesterday afternoon, singing to an audience of moderate size. As usual, Mr. Karolik was accompanied by Nicolas Slonimsky, whose discerning interpretations and deft performances of the piano-parts of Mr. Karolik's songs contribute substantially to the pleasure of the latter's recitals.

Mr. Karolik's programme of yesterday, like many which he has prepared, began with songs by his Russian compatriots, in this case Rimsky-Korsakov, Rachmaninoff and Tchaikovsky. More Russians brought the end, while between came airs from operas of Gluck and Giordano, songs by Debussy and Respighi and by other modern French and Italian composers.

NICOLAS SLONIMSKY
238 HEMENWAY STREET
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

February 7, 1949

Dear Mr. Schoenberg,

For my various writings I need the exact date of your naturalization as an American citizen. Mr. Dorian gave me the date as November 1, 1941, but there is no absolute certainty. I am very anxious not to allow inaccuracies in dealing with events in your life, and that is why I am bothering you with this inquiry. I enclose a self-addressed post card for your reply.

Did you ever receive a copy of my Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns which my publisher was supposed to send you last year? Naturally I am very much interested in your opinion of this book. Among other things, I have reproduced in it a palindromic canon on your Napoleon theme.

With cordial regards,

Nicolas Slonimsky

Letter 1: Nicolas Slonimsky to Arnold Schoenberg, 7 February 1949.

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