

has none of the arbitrary disc divisions that have plagued other CD cycles.

Tieni Burkhalter's video direction of the Zurich cycle manages to show many details that were probably hard to catch from the audience. Zurich is a smaller theater and doesn't have the technical capabilities of the Met, La Scala, or Covent Garden. The curtain comes down during the scene changes, and the camera shows us the cramped orchestra head (this happens during the *Götterdämmerung* finale too and is a little disappointing). Sound is clear and detailed, subtitles in multiple languages.

If you're a Ring aficionado, you will probably love Hagen's production. I haven't revealed many of the other details of his work. The cycle works together very well. I enjoyed it till I don't know how often I'll return to it.

REYNOLDS

BOOKS

I Knew a Man Who Knew Brahms
by Nancy Shear
Regalo Press, 318 pages, \$32

The title is perhaps misleading; this is not a book about Brahms. She simply met a man in the Philadelphia Orchestra who as a child had met Brahms. He was not a Brahms pupil; nor did he learn anything from Brahms.

Instead, this is a book about Stokowski. It traces his life and deeds and ideas from the time she met him (about when I did in the 1960s) until he died in 2007. She was a librarian with the Philadelphia Orchestra in the years I attended their concerts, though I never met her. I wish I had.

She served Stokowski as his personal librarian for many years, even while she was officially employed by the Philadelphia Orchestra. In that period Stokowski conducted the Philadelphians once or twice a year. She met and comments briefly on many of the guest conductors I saw in Philadelphia in the late 1960s. Always her comments are perceptive. She was not fond of Eugene Ormandy, but she proclaims that he led one of the greatest orchestras ever.

I saw Stokowski in New York as well as in Philadelphia. I thought his Carnegie Hall concerts with the American Symphony Orchestra (which he founded) were often eccentric—more so than anything I saw him conduct in Philadelphia. Like many great

conductors, he gave the musicians of a great orchestra a lot of leeway; he respected them and wanted them to express themselves. People who played solos were given a great deal of freedom. Anything he conducted in Philadelphia was an expression of the whole orchestra, not just the conductor.

Yet he was not "friendly" and never called musicians by their names or asked about their families. He was a quiet person and subdued.

Stokowski led with his eyes more than his hands, though that may not have seemed as obvious to the audience as to the musicians. He hardly spoke in rehearsals, and musicians like that—hate listening to conductors pontificate. He also believed very strongly that you cannot judge a piece of music by its score. It had to be performed to be actually known and understood. So he gave more than 1000 premieres (US and world). Composers were inclined to say "why didn't I think of that?" when they heard some of his tricks.

Some people think Stokowski exaggerated things, but he seldom called for a big, loud sound. He wanted subtlety. He might emphasize a phrase by softening it, but almost never by blasting it. He resisted the American tendency to be loud and crude.

Late in the book she takes up with Rostropovich (she was also a cellist, and he had taken up conducting) and contrasts him with Stokowski. Stokowski was the introvert, immersing himself in the music almost to the exclusion of the public. Rostropovich was a pure extrovert who wanted everything to be bigger than life. Exaggeration was his game—not so Stokowski. Rostropovich projected the music out into the audience; Stokowski simply inhabited it, lived it in all its beauty. And a lot depended on his mood: the same piece would change from one performance to the next. I thought of Bernstein, whom I also saw conduct many times. And Stokowski liked Bernstein's way with music.

I spent 3 or 4 evenings immersed in this book. It is as fascinating as its main subject (Stokowski), and she is a terrific writer and sensitive to the people she deals with. I think any reader of ARG would enjoy this book as much as I did.

VROON