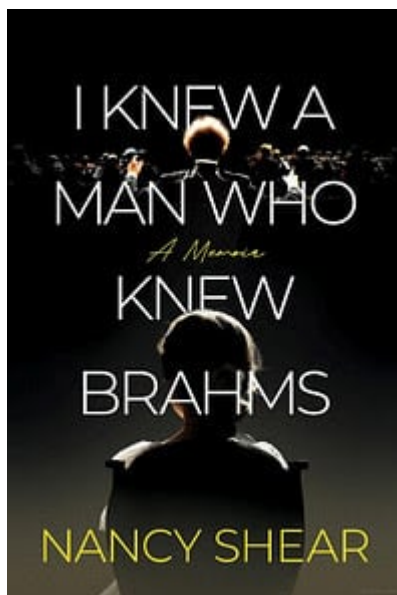


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RUTH LEON BOOK REVIEW – I KNEW A MAN WHO KNEW BRAHMS – NANCY SHEAR

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Norman Lebrecht

July 05, 2025

I Knew a Man Who Knew Brahms

<https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/I-Knew-a-Man-Who-Knew-Brahms/Nancy-Shear/9798888456620>

I don't review books on *Ruth Leon's Theatrewise* but I want to bring this one to your attention because I've just read it myself and became absorbed into the life of the classical music world that it opened for me.

Nancy Shear was a music-mad teenager escaping from a difficult home life when she skipped school to go to concerts in a nearby town.

Music became her life as she became a music librarian for the Philadelphia Orchestra and music assistant to one of the world's greatest conductors, Leopold Stokowski.

This opened the door to the world of classical music and its foremost interpreters, and she grew to become a force in the music industry.

I Knew a Man Who Knew Brahms takes readers into the homes, studios, and minds of legendary artists with whom Shear shared close personal relationships, including Stokowski, Mstislav Rostropovich, Eugene Ormandy, and members of the Philadelphia Orchestra. Many of these brilliant and talented artists were also outrageous, egocentric, and tyrannical.

I had to ration my reading of this book because I couldn't put it down. If you are a classical music lover you can't fail to be enthralled as I was by a puff of the rarefied air that outsiders rarely get to breathe.

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