

that is all too common among contemporary biographers. His contextualization of Toscanini's voracious carnal appetite is limited to a single footnote: "By today's standards, Toscanini would be considered a sexual predator...By the standards of his own day, he was merely promiscuous."

Before the obligatory exploration of the Toscanini genealogy, Sachs's biography opens with a two-page flashforward to 11 May 1946 as the revered, aged maestro prepares to take the stage at the postwar re-opening of Teatro alla Scala. This brief fragment stays with the reader as Sachs chronicles the young maestro's rise to fame at La Scala, his service to his country as an impecunious band-leader on the frontlines of World War I, his defiance of Mussolini's orders to perform the fascist hymn *La giovinetta* and the resulting physical assault by fascists in Bologna, his banishment from Italian theaters, and his self-imposed exile from Nazi-controlled Bayreuth and the Salzburg Festival. When the moment recurs, almost 800 pages later, it is as the defining instant of both his musical and political life. After the demise of both Hitler and Mussolini, Toscanini, among the first public figures to denounce fascism, and one of the few non-Jewish musicians to boycott fascist-controlled theaters, stoically returns as an icon of liberty.

The sole disappointment of this book unfortunately is the physical book itself. It is no secret that the standards of book construction have been falling for many years, but it still came as a surprise when, in the middle of its first reading, the book's binding broke neatly in half. Harvey Sachs's extraordinary efforts, (not to mention Toscanini's legacy) deserve a sturdier vessel. ||

BUILDING BRIDGES WITH MUSIC: STORIES FROM A COMPOSER'S LIFE

By SAMUEL ADLER [AMERICAN MUSIC AND MUSICIANS, 2017]

by Mark Zuckerman

American composer Samuel Adler will turn 90 next year. Having retired from a full teaching schedule, he set down events from his rather eventful existence in *Building Bridges with Music: Stories from a Composer's Life*.

The events are told chronologically as a series of connected anecdotes written in an unassuming, breezy manner from a seemingly prodigious memory for happenings and their details.

Adler was born in Mannheim, Germany just before the rise of Hitler. His father, Hugo Adler, was a cantor in the German Reform Jewish tradition and a composer. Adler had his formative musical experiences with his father, who worked with him daily to explore a wide variety of music to supplement Adler's violin study. All this was abruptly interrupted in November, 1938 with Kristallnacht, the pogrom against Jews promulgated by the Nazi regime after many years of governmental measures circumscribing Jewish existence. Adler relates how he (just 10 years old) and his father stealthily entered his father's bombed-out temple shortly afterward to rescue sacred books while evading discovery by the armed Nazis guarding the ruins.

Kristallnacht was the signal for a large number of German Jews that it was time to leave Germany. The Adler family was in this group despite their having lived in Mannheim for centuries. Their exit to the United States was facilitated by a fluke with U.S. immigration quotas but impeded by the post-Kristallnacht roundup of Jewish clergy that led to Hugo's arrest and incarceration in a concentration camp. The U.S. government's protest over this roundup led to Hugo's release and the Adler family's emigration. They eventually settled in Worcester, Massachusetts, where Hugo was offered a pulpit.

It seems likely that this escape was a strong force in encouraging Adler to adopt the attitude to (in his words) "live

every moment of my life as fully as possible..." True to this motto, Adler's stories show him eager and energetic to find and take advantage of opportunities and, as his book's title suggests, to build lasting and rewarding relationships.

Adler went to school in the Boston area and ultimately wound up at Harvard, where he studied composition with Walter Piston and Paul Hindemith. He also sought out Aaron Copland, who reluctantly took him on as a student. Hindemith persuaded him on the value of identifying and mastering technique; Copland taught him to work until he loved every note. Both of these lessons Adler apparently took to heart his entire career, during which he has been remarkably prolific; his music is characteristically both well-crafted and convincing.

Drafted in 1950, Adler was trained as an artilleryman and sent to Germany as part of the army of occupation. Through a combination of happenstance and initiative, Adler was assigned a variety of musical tasks and, because of his German heritage, served as liaison with local populations. In the latter capacity, Adler organized and conducted a number of choirs and instrumental ensembles as part of an army outreach program. It's remarkable that Adler's attitude toward the locals was apparently unaffected by his family being forced to flee a hostile Germany just 12 years before or by the German nation's annihilation of a third of the world's Jews in the interim. Rather, he was intent on repair (following *tikkun olam*, the Jewish concept of repairing the world), even between local groups with ancient mistrust, such as Protestants and Catholics. In the process, he encountered some locals who had fond memories of his family, his father in particular.

Adler's chief accomplishment in the army was organizing the Seventh Army Symphony Orchestra. With the examples of his local musical enterprises, he managed to persuade the high command to

allow him to recruit players from the entire occupation army roster and to provide the means for him to conduct concerts of American and German music. (Would that some modern day American orchestras adopt this programming philosophy by adding some American music to their predominantly German repertoire!) Despite Adler's matter-of-fact description, this was an amazing achievement, not just because the army is not noted for imagination and flexibility, but more because of what Adler had to overcome on his own behalf: he was merely a corporal and there was residual anti-Semitism in the army. Reading between the lines, it must have taken considerable drive and diplomacy to pull it off.

After the army, Adler took a position as music director of Temple Emanu-El in Dallas, Texas, where he built musical institutions to support worship and wrote music for them. These musical forces became impressive enough for Leonard Bernstein's publisher to offer Adler the American premiere of Bernstein's Chichester Psalms. (This Adler refused, a slight Bernstein never forgave, leading to a cruel hazing of Adler later on.)

Following his sojourn in Dallas, Adler entered the traditional academic track: he spent nearly 30 years teaching at Eastman, where he headed the composition faculty, and then almost another 20 at Juilliard. He authored a number of instructional texts, including one on sight singing and a widely-acclaimed book on orchestration. The latter is remarkable for the breadth of musical examples (the book was accompanied by recordings, originally issued on disc but now available to stream) and its comprehensiveness (also its price: over \$100 on amazon.com). He taught hundreds of students, some of whom became significant composers in their own right.

He also composed a ton of music of all kinds, from solo works to operas. The bulk of the book consists of stories about

his experiences bringing this music to life and about his life in music, replete with people he encountered and worked with and places where all this happened.

The stories about people and places are perhaps of the greatest interest to the general reader. Adler describes encounters with figures from popular culture – pop singer Eddie Fisher and movie star Audrey Hepburn—whose narcissistic behavior was directly at odds with their public image. There are composers behaving badly, too, like Iannis Xenakis

him to compose a piece for them and he had to inform them that there was a fee expected for this service. (He suggested they find a business sponsor who would underwrite this. They called him back the next day to tell him they had found such a sponsor for not only this commission, but for commissions in future years. So not only was Adler himself eager – he typically says he agreed “readily” to opportunities— he was fortunate to have found people to work with who were equally as motivated. Reading between the lines

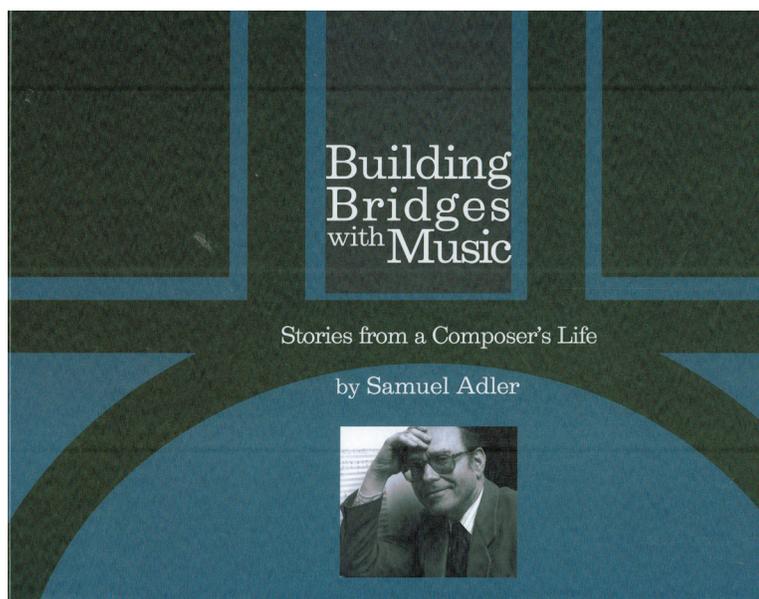
again, perhaps this was evidence of Adler's mastery of the art of persuasion.)

Appendices follow the autobiography. Here the focus is likely to appeal more to those with a professional music interest. The first two are closely related: a paper entitled “Composing for Worship,” delivered at a 1989 symposium at Westminster Choir College, and another surveying “Music of the Synagogue,” published initially in 1964 but updated in 2001. Both are scholarly in tone, in contrast with the autobiography's informality, and both provide knowledgeable and experienced insights. The latter paper includes many illustrative musical examples.

The third appendix is the transcript of a 2008 interview on the subject “Teaching Composition in Twenty-First Century America” that touches on the current state of composition and the musical world in general as well as the stated topic. After reading the autobiography, there are few surprises here; but the presentation is concise, compelling, and down-to-earth.

All in all, *Building Bridges with Music* is an engaging read. If only the book itself weren't so unwieldy: it has the form factor and heft of a coffee table book, making it difficult to read except at a desk—but worth the effort. ||

Occasionally Adler provides a glimpse into practical issues related to the business of being a composer. For example, in describing his retirement from teaching at summer programs, he mentions in passing that the program had expected him to bring his own students. In another instance, a German orchestra asked



who proved himself a boor at a festival in Israel. By and large, though, Adler found himself in the role of diplomat or peacemaker, as with his managing an awkward situation with an alcoholic colleague at Eastman and an uncomfortable presentation at Eastman by composer David Diamond. There are anecdotes about places, too, like trying to find a plumber in status-conscious Vienna (accomplished only after Adler identified himself as a professor) and experiencing such naked anti-Semitism in Poland that he decided never to return.

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