

Elissa Fuchs:

We were now on our way to Dallas. The murder of John Garris had been confirmed. As I said, it was drugs and homosexuality and blackmail. We arrived in Dallas and were preparing for a weekend of performances. The first night went without incident. The next day, I woke up fairly early not feeling well at all, and then noticed that I was bleeding profusely from the vagina. Peter called down, ordered an ambulance and I was taken to a Dallas hospital. I was operated on and the bleeding was stemmed but not completely stopped. I was held through Sunday and when the company was to leave on Sunday for California I was told that I was not able to travel on a train. If I wanted to get to California I would have to fly.

Peter made arrangements. The Met paid our flight for both of us with the understanding, of course, that we would reimburse them. I got on the plane. We flew. It was a few hours. When I arrived in Los Angeles I was again bleeding. I was met by an ambulance that was ordered from Dallas and taken to Cedars of Lebanon Hospital. There, I met a very nice doctor, a doctor Boris, whom I became friends with and later found out that he was quite a noted golfer. Doctor Boris took over my problems, operated again and this time he felt that he had stopped the bleeding completely. Of course, I was very upset because I knew in my own heart that this was not a miscarriage. Peter and I had not had relations. We had been very close to each other, but by mutual decision, we decided to not to do anything until we were married.

His daughter
Elissa Fuchs
said, "What about having children?" He said, "There would be no problem," according to [inaudible 00:04:02] that I might have problems conceiving because, surprisingly, to me, he said I was rather small in the pelvic area but as far as any medical problems he said, "No." Of course, by that time, my family had been contacted and I had contacted Muriel, who was in California.

She had remained there but she was no longer connected with Todd. They had split up. Todd was still in the movie business, but Muriel had married just recently to a business man, Owen Palmer. When she found out I was in the hospital, she and Owen came and Owen contributed to the blood bank for me. He was a lovely man and she seemed very happy. I was released after a few days but told I was not to dance or have any kind of relations of any kind for at least a week. By that time we would be in Denver. It was okay, Doctor Boris said, for me to travel by train and once we got into Denver I could start, if I was careful, to get back into condition and resume my dancing, which I did.

The only problem wasn't only for me, when we got to Denver, Denver is a mile high city and breathing was very difficult. Not only for the dancers but for the singers. By that time, I was feeling more like myself. The next stop was St. Louis. In St. Louis, Peter and I gave a small party in our hotel room honoring, particularly, the members of the chorus and the controller and anyone that had donated blood for

me. We had a very nice time. Then, from St. Louis we went right on back to New York. By that time, we were moving into our new digs. It was a duplex apartment, two full apartments. One occupied by Mariquita Moll and her husband, Sam, who had served as Peter's best man and they were renting out the other duplex to us.

We weren't to stay there very long because Peter had an engagement, re-engagement to go back to Central City. This time, I was to go with him. We had a car, it was quite a car. We named it Priscilla. It was a Chevrolet. Didn't look like much but it ran very well. Before I had left for [inaudible 00:08:11] I had taken driver's lessons from, strangely enough, Marina Svetlova's father, Mr. Hartmann, who had been a pilot in World War I fighting us, because he was German but a very nice man. As I said, Marina had ~~be~~ been extremely nice to us and very friendly. He had taught me well and I passed my exam on the first trial, which was usually not the norm for women at that time. *Colorado*

Then, we set out for Central City, leisurely driving. Of course, it was good for me because I could drive on the highway with Peter's supervision. We made stops on the way and one of the them was in beautiful Lake Tahoe. We spent the day and night there and then went on to Central City. Central City is a mile city, which at one time had struck gold way back in the 1800s and the early 1900s. They had found a lot of gold, so the people there were very rich. They built an opera house. As one of the attractions to the opera house, Jennie Lynn, the Swedish Nightingale. They also build a beautiful hotel, the Teller House, and next to it, or in it, was a famous bar with the face on the ballroom floor.

Of course, now it was a ghost town. Many rich people in Denver had decided to make it a summer opera company, hire the company and have come of opera for a month or so. Most of the singers were Metropolitan and the conductors and assistant conductors. We arrived at Central City in the early afternoon, got our digs, we had a very nice apartment and our neighbor was the famed soprano Regina Resnik, who kidded us that the noises she heard at night made her feel lonely for her husband. We went down to the Teller House to have a drink and down one drink at that altitude, remember, Denver was a mile high city but Central City was miles higher, so one drink could make you feel very tipsy.

Peter started working early the next morning. The opera's were Die Fledermaus and Cosi. Most of the singers were from The Met, as I had said. The conductor this time was not Emil Cooper that it had been the time before when Peter was conducting. This was a conductor by the name of Peter Herman Adler. We liked him right away, right from the beginning there was a feeling between us. He became a very, very good friend. A few years later he was my daughter's godfather. To get back to 1950. 1949, excuse me. The summer of 1949. The singers were very good.

There was a singer who was, during the role of Orlofsky in Fledermaus, Her name was Vera Brynner. We became very good friends and I found out very quickly that Vera had a very famous brother who had just made a tremendous hit on Broadway in the King & I with Gertrude Lawrence. He was Yul Brynner. They pronounce their

name differently. Another singer that we became very friendly with was a tenor ... I can't think of his name now. It will come. He was Hungarian and a delightful man. He was playing Alfred, the egotistical tenor in Fledermaus. He was not a egotistical, he was darling and he had a great deal of confidence.

He and Vera and Peter Herman and Peter and I became very friendly and we took side trips together into the mountains looking at the beautiful scenery. In all, this was a wonderful summer. I didn't do very much. I took it easy. I became interested in the ballet of Fledermaus and watched the rehearsals and got friendly with the choreographer but otherwise, I didn't work too much. I just enjoyed the summer. Then, when it was finished, we went back to New York, traveled back to New York and prepared for our 49-50 season, which would be a very upsetting one because it was the last year of Edward Johnson's reign and he was to be succeeded by a gentleman whose name I cannot remember. ~~But it was Bing~~

He was an Italian, well known in the opera field and he contracted to replace Edward Johnson. By the time we got back to New York, we heard that this gentleman had been in a fatal accident in the Alps with his family. He had been killed and several of his family very badly injured. I think one other was also killed. There had to be another appointment to replace Edward Johnson and that appointment was announced, Rudolph Bing. Rudolph Bing was an Austrian, a Viennese. He had made his name in opera sort of saving opera companies, going in when opera companies were in trouble and especially summer opera places like Glyndebourne. He had been very active in Glyndebourne and still was.

Bing's Glyndebourne was a summer opera festival financed by a very wealthy man by the name of Christie, who really started this because his wife was an opera singer and so he started it for her. It grew like [inaudible 00:17:20]. It was a very unusual summer opera with summer opera performances. It was done outside of London. You got on a train in London that went especially to Glyndebourne. Then you were taken to the opera house and for the first ^{or two} act ~~or so, you saw the first act~~, which started something like 5:00 or maybe 6:00.

Then you had dinner. You could have dinner in the hotels there, they ordered for you, they made reservations, but many of the Londoners would come from London, drive especially with their chauffeur and elaborate picnic baskets and sit on the lawn of Glyndebourne and have these fantastic picnics. It was wonderful. We went later and saw a Strauss opera. This was Rudolf Bing and he was to take over from Edward Johnson.

As soon as we got back into rehearsals in the fall of 1949 into '50, there was a feeling of restlessness in the opera company. People didn't know what was going to happen. This, of course, always is the case when a regime changes. As the season went on, we started rehearsals, Mr. Bing was everywhere. He was like a [inaudible 00:19:34]. Like a ghost. He was tall, thin, rather handsome man and you'd open the door and there he was, or you'd get in an elevator and there he was. You'd look in the wings when you were performing or rehearsing and there he was. He did not

make any kind problems. He was just was everywhere trying to absorb the whole situation.

He and his wife, a formal ballerina from Russia, lived in the Essex House. They had no children but they had a dog, Pip, and the dog was rather famous. We never really met Mr. Bing, not at that time anyway. As the season progressed, we found out there was going to be major changes. First, the ballet ^{Choreographer} Ramonoff was not to be rehired. All of the ballet was to re-audition. Then, we ~~were~~ found out that the new ~~people~~ ^{person} running the ballet would be Lucia Chase from the American Ballet Theater.

I don't know if i said anything about the American Ballet Theater. It was formed around '40 and it was now very well established. Three of the main dancers in the American Ballet Theater were Nora Kaye, Alicia Alonzo and Maria [inaudible ^{Ramlova} 00:21:32]. The three girls ^{had} that had been thrown out of The Met when I was taken as a dancer. Lucia Chase ^{had} been a dancer and danced for a while, minimum talent, but she came from an extremely wealthy family and married into a wealthy family. She was quite proud and ~~I don't know the word, but~~ not a terribly nice person. She ~~only was sort of the back up.~~ ^{sort of} The choreographer for the ballets would be Antony Tudor. A man ~~had~~ made his success with the American Ballet Theater doing original ballets and starring Nora Kaye and Alicia, particularly.

Nora had been featured in the Fall River Legend about a girl who told her mother with 40 wacks and then gave her father 41. It was called Fall River Legend and it had been a very interesting and well received ballet. Another one was Engagement Party. That was by Tudor. That was a fascinating ballet. It told a story of an engaged couple ^{getting off} their engagement party and to that party is invited the man in her past and the woman in his past. It is mainly about four people, two men and two women, and the interchange when they find out that each one was either losing or gaining a partner. It was a brilliant ballet. Nora was wonderful in it and so was Alicia. This was Lucia Chase and Antony Tudor.

As I said, the ballet was to be reorganized and everyone had to re-audition. Peter had found out that he was not going to be rehired. We were never really clear about why but there was some sort intrigue. He was rather upset at first, but you take this news and you live with it. We knew that he was not coming back, I resigned from the ballet and I gave notice that I was not going to be auditioning because I would go anywhere he was going. Unbeknownst to me, or when I found out later, that I had resigned and that made me ineligible for severance pay, which did come to some of us who had been at The Met more than eight years. I had been there 12 but the deed was done and I was going with Peter. ^{The severance}

The season went on. It was a fairly good season. There were a lot of tributes to Mr. Johnson. Then around the end of February, beginning of March, the auditions for the new ballet company were held. Of course, I didn't go anywhere near them. Afterwards I found out that they were a sham. They had been held by M^{rs}. Chase, and the choreographer, Antony Tudor, was not even present. It was only Lucia Chase and she literally threw the baby out with the bathwater. She got rid of nine-

tenths of the ballet, only a few remained and they didn't really stick. The aftermath was chaos. There were a lot of complaints called into AGMA. AGMA by that time had an executive secretary by the name of Hy Faine.

thinking clearly
I was on the board and I knew Hy quite well. Lawrence Tibbett was still president but he was no longer ~~sane~~. Blessing, he had an alcohol problem but he was still a wonderful man and I was proud to call him friend. The complaints ^{came} in to Hy Faine. He then called me and said, "Elissa, we have to do something. Mr. Tibbett agrees that this was a railroad. Mrs. Chase went in there without the choreographer." After all, she wasn't going to work with the dancers. Antony Tudor was going to work with the dancers and should have seen what was taken and what was not. He said, "We have to meet with Mr. Bing and get another audition." We, meaning Hy Faine, Lawrence Tibbett and me.

I was in shock but Peter said, "That's your duty. You have to do it." The meeting was set up ~~and it was set~~ for noon in Mr. Bing's made up offices. He had pseudo offices that he was using while he was still an errant manager. We met at Long ^{CAMPES} [inaudible 00:29:21], which was right across the street from the opera house. We met to talk about strategy. Hy Faine felt that our strongest card was the fact that Tudor was not included in the auditions. Anything else, he said, we could ad lib. Mr. Tibbett was sort of a third wheel. He was there for the benefit of his name and his presence. We walked over The Metropolitan Opera House, went up the offices, ~~of~~ office of Rudolph Bing. Introductions were exchanged and we sat down and Hy Faine said, "Mr. Bing, we'd like first to hear your feelings about why you're replacing Mr. Romanoff and the ballet," although we all knew why. He said, "Then we will talk about the possibly of another audition."

Mr. Bing went on for a while ~~about~~ ^{of} that he was not satisfied with what he'd seen ^{at} the ballet ~~with choreographers~~ ^{more with} the choreography and the feeling that was in the ballet more than actually the dancers. He wanted the ballet to be more important so he wanted a choreographer like Antony Tudor who might do individual performances on Sunday night when there were benefit performances. The singers would sing, the dancers would dance and it would be an opportunity for the ballet to put their best foot forward, figuratively speaking. When he finished, Hy Faine turned to me and he said, "Mrs. Minet would like to say a few words." ^{SS}

not that kind of you
So I started. I had been terribly nervous. I'd even forgotten to put water in the coffee when we had coffee in the morning. I sort of calmed down and the first thing I said was, "Mr. Bing, I absolutely agree with you. A ballet company is like a family. We have a father, a mother, or both. We have to trust them. We have to respect them. We have to perform from our heart. A lot of us ~~would not~~ ^{if} feel there was that kind of [inaudible 00:32:38]. We didn't feel like a company and we felt only we were just going through certain rituals without really feeling anything." "But," I said, "the fact that Mr. Tudor was not at the ballet auditions. Mr. Tudor is the one who is going to work with the dancers, not Mrs. Chase, and he may have seen in some of these dancers that were let go or fired, he might have seen

something that he liked and that Mrs. Chase did not see or want to see. That is what we're asking, only to be fair."

There was a silence and then Mr. Bing said, "You're absolutely right. You can have your re-audition. We will set it up. Mrs. Chase will be there. Mr. Tudor will be there," and he looked at me, "You will be there to see that everything proceeds well." I was delighted. I had a feeling that I really had accomplished something. Then before I could react, he said, "Tell me, ~~Mrs.~~ Minet," he called me Mrs. Minet, ~~always~~ ^{not} Fuchs. He said, "Why didn't you re-audition?" I said, "For a couple of reasons. Number one, I'm a new bride. I married Peter Paul Fuchs, who is not coming back to The Met as assistant conductor and conductor. And," I said, "I am just about at the end of my dance career but I am very, very interested in choreography and perhaps teaching. So I'll go with my husband and we'll see what comes from these ambitions."

He smiled at me and he said, "I wish you the best luck." We walked out of their in high dungeon, as they say. We had accomplished what we wanted to accomplish. The new audition was set up within about two weeks, even less. Mr. Tudor was there and I met him and at the time he said to me, off on one side he said, "I can't understand why some of these dancers were not taken because I know in particular there is one that I've seen and worked with, Audrey Keene, and she's a fine dancer. I don't understand why she was not re-engaged." That was all he said to me.

Then we sat down and about five minutes later in walks Lucia Chase looking daggers at me because, of course, she had found out that I was the protagonist in getting this new audition. The result was that some were taken back, not all, and Audrey Keene not only was taken back but later on became the ballet mistress of The Met and the right hand and favorite dancer of Antony Tudor. See how fate works?

I would like to go back now to two amusing incidents and enlightening for my mother. Early in 1950, before we knew that there would be any changes at The Met, my mother came up to stay with us for about a week. During that week, Peter had been asked by Robert Merrill, the famous baritone from The Met, to accompany him in a concert in Florida. While my mother was there, Bob came in to rehearse with Peter and mother put herself in the kitchen, with our blessing, with her ear pressed to the wall and spent almost an hour listening to the glorious voice of Robert Merrill.

^{a keener} She had always contended that Jewish singers, like Robert Merrill and like her idol Jan Peerce, whom she had heard at the Radio City Music Hall much earlier, had what she called a [~~in their~~ ^{in their} 00:38:35] in their voices. That's Yiddish for sob. She thought it was a very endearing trait and was found ⁱⁿ a lot in Jewish singers. Of course, she listened to Bob with tears in her eyes. He was greatly amused and she came out later and we introduced her.

A day or so later, we were in the apartment by ourselves and the phone rang. I had

Leopold
and was our
land baby
Wagnerian

my hands in dishwater so I yelled to mother, "Get the phone." Mother answered the phone and a few seconds later she came into the kitchen and she said, "Some damn fool says he is Stokowski on the phone." Well, I dropped everything, grabbed the phone. It was indeed Stokowski. Peter had been recommended to him by Mariquita Moll, a soprano that was working for him now. He was doing an [inaudible 00:39:55] program at Carnegie Hall with Mariquita and Eugene Conley, The Met tenor, and wanted Peter to assist him. Of course, I said I would have Peter get back to him just as soon as possible. As it happened, Peter could accept this engagement and it was truly a very interesting one. This was a nationally known man and I liked him very much. He was a kind conductor and Peter enjoyed working with him.

Now, back to the present. I would like to say that I think these two incidents cleared in my mother's mind just whom her daughter had married and why and made it much easier for a mother to understand and go forward with the relationship with her son-in-law. Before we went on tour, our last tour with The Met, there was another illuminating experience that I had as a member of the board of AGMA. The war was over and television had moved ^{Very big} and had become a very big commodity. All the unions that had been separate were now trying to fuse together so that the people that performed on television were actors, singers, all kinds of people and they all had their own unions, so we had to try to fuse these unions together, even with Hollywood Equity and so on. There was a huge meeting with all the heads of the organizations and the board of governors and that's why I was included.

The chairman of these meetings were two people. Ronald Reagan from Actors Equity and Ralph Bellamy from Broadway Equity. They were chairpersons. They would meet with each section of the unions. I got to meet both Reagan and Bellamy, of course, peripherally, but it was quite an experience. Bellamy immediately impressed me as a very intelligent man. I remember when my sister was in New York a few years before, Bellamy passed us on the street and I nudged my sister to notice that it was a famous actor because she always thought he was wonderful and had a crush on him. My sister ever had a crush on anyone. Bellamy was a lovely gentlemen, very handsome, in his 60s about that time. Had had quite a career on the stage and in the movies. He impressed all of us. He listened to us and commiserated with our problems.

On the other hand, Ronald Reagan was exactly the opposite. He didn't really listen to anyone. He spoke in just very simple words, not really meaning anything. He, as I said, he liked to hear himself speak and he really did not seem to understand our problems. There was a picture that I kept in my mind many years later when Ronald Reagan was running for president. I must add I did not vote for him. It was an interesting few days and accomplished what they wanted to do.

When we came home from the tour, Peter immediately had another job. He was to go to Cuba for an opera season there with many of the opera singers. [inaudible 00:45:58] was the stage director and he tried very hard to get me a job to go with

DeForest

him as a ballet mistress, but the union in Cuba and certain politics decreed that they use the dancers and the choreographer in Cuba connected with the government, so to speak, or with the people that were in charge. I had to stay home, Peter went to Cuba for two or three weeks. They were enlightening weeks and he enjoyed it, but I know that he missed me. Of course, when he came back, almost immediately he received an offer from the San Francisco Opera and that would start in August. This was already July.

Of course, our life was open. I wasn't going back to The Met. Peter wasn't going back to The Met. We were going to San Francisco but we didn't know what would happen afterwards. Wisely, we kept our apartment. Partly because Mrs. ...