

Elissa Minet F.:

... ~~in his life~~. He was getting older. He had always been dissatisfied with what he had accomplished, even downgraded it, no matter how hard I pointed out how far he had come from the man who had five dollars, a change of underwear, and a toothbrush. It still didn't convince him. It was the artist in him. He always wanted to accomplish more, even if he realized that it really wasn't in the cards. Also, he wanted time to compose. Music was always his love, his first love. He wanted to compose individual songs and chamber music. He had the idea of an opera in the back of his head. It was something that had started when he was in Czechoslovakia. He had ~~heard~~ <sup>seen</sup> a play, ~~he had gone to see a play~~, and it was called The White Agony. It also was Capek, C-A-P-E-K, a very well-known author in Czechoslovakia. He'd always been fascinated with the plot of the play and wanted to make an opera of it.

So here he was, <sup>free of all worry</sup> ~~four~~ <sup>00:01:50</sup> tenure, bills paid, both his children were now of age. Roy had been ~~20~~ <sup>30</sup> since 1960 or more and John after. So his only obligation financially was Louise. She was in California. John was also in California at that time or around it. He had been in Detroit for awhile working with cars but he sort of maneuvered his way to California and would ultimately go to UCLA and become a lawyer. Roy had married Jackie and he had two children, David and a girl. <sup>for a while</sup> For awhile, we were not in touch with John, but we were in touch with Roy.

So Peter was at sea and suddenly he got the idea that maybe when he retired and it would be around 1955 or '56 when his contract was finished, that we would pick up and go to Europe, particularly Vienna. Some of his friends who had migrated when he did were now back in Europe and doing quite well. So he began seriously talking with me about picking up and moving to Europe, particularly Vienna. I had very mixed emotions about this. First place, the language, but I could probably surmount that. I might even begin teaching dance again or even choreographing, but leaving my family, my friends, and starting over again at my age, which was just two and a half years younger than Peter, was something that terrified me. So in this frame of mind, fate intervened again.

Peter had made a lot of acquaintances. He belonged to a lot of organizations, musical organizations, was even president of one, and of course met a lot of people who became familiar with what he had done. Through one of these do-you-know things, he ~~was~~ received word from a man by the name of Sheldon Morgenstern. Shelly had been a tuba player. He'd also a graduate from the New England Conservatory and there were a lot of mutual friends. Shelly was now in his native Greensboro. He was conducting the Greensboro Symphony, but his main love was Eastern Music Festival. He created it in 1961. It was a music festival that brought students from the ages of 14 and up from all over the world to study music with some of the great names in music. The teachers made up the professional orchestra and the students made up the student orchestra and it was growing by leaps and bounds.

Shelly wanted to continue with the Eastern Music Festival, but resigned from his position as Greensboro Symphony conductor. So he was looking around for a

successor. He got in touch with Peter. At that time, we were going to Europe for the summer. As we had done many times, we would drive up to New York, stay over with Elie Siegmeister and his wife Hannah. Elie was the composer of an opera that Peter gave a world premiere to, *The Plough and the Stars*, and when Elie and his wife Hannah were in Baton Rouge, we took a journey down to New Orleans and introduced him to New Orleans jazz, Preservation Hall. You could see these two [long hairs 00:07:15], Shelly and Elie and Peter, swaying and smiling to the music of jazz and laughing at the toothless trumpet player whom they said could play anything better than anything they'd ever heard. We stayed with them in Long Island and left our car there, spent quite a few months in Europe traveling and also in Vienna and then got our car and drove back.

So Peter told Shelly he would come by way of Greensboro and talk to him further about the possibility of trying out for the Greensboro Symphony. We did just that, spent a night in Greensboro, met some very nice people, had a lovely dinner, and then to a performance and liked the atmosphere very much. Peter agreed to make a date to conduct as an audition the Greensboro Symphony, ~~which he did~~. He came back ... I did not go with him on this first trip. He came back glowing. He said the orchestra had great potential. He liked the people on the board, he liked Greensboro as a city and he was going back for another audition that would either give him the job or to one other contestant. There were only two contestants. I went back with him for the second audition. He scheduled Beethoven 9th and brought some of his singers with him. It was a great success. He was brought back once more. I went with him and he was named Greensboro Symphony conductor

On that visit, we decided to look for a house. We did for a couple of ... About a week. Peter wanted his own studio. He had had one built in Baton Rouge by the father of one of my students right in back of our house in Baton Rouge. It was just one room, but it was his. He'd go on a short walk and he'd sit down at the piano and study or have students or compose and wanted that in Greensboro also. So we finally decided on a house in a very nice neighborhood. It wouldn't have been my first choice as a house for me, but it suited his needs. It had a patio in the back and what was at one time a garage was made into a basement to keep things, store things and one room with a fireplace that could house at least two pianos if one was an upright and one was a spinet. That's what Peter wanted. It was just off the carport and beyond the patio so he could get out of my hair and I could remain in the house and get out of his. ~~He~~ <sup>we</sup> was still near enough to be man and wife but that little distance helped.

So in 1976 in the spring, I turned over my ballet company to Sharon and Molly and we had a lot of parties, partings, and Peter resigned from LSU and from Baton Rouge Symphony and Mrs. Fuchs by that time, I had said, was Baton Rouge. She closed up her apartment and moved with us. At the time, Debora was in Hofstra, but she also had a summer job in summer stock in Atlanta. So on the road to Greensboro, we were to stop and pay a visit to our daughter who was now 17 years old or 18, I forget which.

So here we were, packed up and on the road. Spent a night with Debora and then arrived in Greensboro. Of course, our furniture had not come to our house yet and Mrs. Fuchs had to find a place to stay, but I had a friend that I had discovered when I was in Greensboro, a former dancer who was now teaching at UNCG, Joseph Levinoff. ~~We became friends~~, we were very good friends, and had danced together at the Met. He was going to be away at the time we arrived in Greensboro, and he offered us his apartment to get settled and to try to find a place for my mother-in-law, which we did with the help of a very nice lady by the name of Doris. She <sup>Renee</sup> became Mrs. Fuchs's very good friend eventually. A few days, we moved into our house and a few days later, Mrs. Fuchs moved into her apartment.

Here we were now in Greensboro and I made a vow without Peter's assistance, I said that once I left Baton Rouge, I was to be a real symphony wife. Join the guild and help in any way I could to further his stature as the conductor. I did just that. I joined the guild, I started working with a group that called themselves the Chorus of the Greensboro Symphony. I worked with them and did little choreography while they sang popular songs. I gave them movement. We had a wonderful time. I did that for quite a few years.

Also, the Greensboro Symphony started at that time a ball on New Year's and it was a debutante ball. Debutantes from the members of the Greensboro Symphony guild and from all over the city would come and be debutantes. My job was to give them a figure to do. We would work on a simple figure just like, almost like soldiers marching in two and in four, circles. A little bit like choreography, but a little more structured like soldiers marching. I enjoyed that. This lasted for about a year<sup>if</sup> and then fate took over again.

Through Joseph Levinoff, I met a lady by the name of Leah Schosky<sup>ARSKY</sup>, who was the, Greensboro has a Civic Ballet head, the head of the Civic Ballet and also had a school and was subsidized by the Arts Council. Leah had been there quite awhile. She was now going to resign for personal reasons. And of course, Joe looked to me for help. I said I would help. What was at stake was that the Arts Council wanted the Civic Ballet to remain a school and without a teacher and without an artistic director it was very hard to do that and they were in danger of losing their sponsorship. So I agreed just to help with giving a couple of performances to tide over until they got a real teacher, artistic director. I was not going to take that again. I had had it for 26 years and I didn't want that responsibility. But of course, the drag of helping a ballet company to get on it's feet was little more than I could refuse. So I was trying to stay in the background while they hunted for someone to take the place of Leah Schosky<sup>ARSKY</sup>.

They finally found someone, Maryhelen Mayfield. We brought her, interviewed her. By this time, I was on the Civic Ballet board, so I felt she was very well qualified and within a few weeks, she was the head, the teacher of the Civic Ballet group and sponsored by the Arts Council. I was on the board and that was the way I thought it was going to finish. But again, I was wrong. Within a year or so, Maryhelen came to me ~~and said~~ ... She had been very cool toward me and I didn't really know why.

Then I found out when she finally talked to me that she thought I was angry at her because I wanted the job that she got.

I quickly let her know that this was absolutely wrong, that I never wanted the job, was even offered it and turned it down. Then tension was eased and she said, "Why are you on the board? Come and start teaching for me and doing choreography." Well, my good intentions went down the drain and with Peter's okay, I said, "Fine." I joined as teacher and choreography. Maryhelen ~~Mayfield~~ <sup>at UNCG</sup> she renamed the Civic Ballet and it became the Greensboro Ballet. So in 1981, or a little earlier, I started my tenure as Greensboro Ballet teacher and choreographer.

Peter also was quite happy with his orchestra. He kept trying to mold it into something better always. He had always been ambitious where orchestra and opera production were concerned. In Baton Rouge, the orchestra was fairly young, the players not too polished, but he challenged them. In Baton Rouge, they did the first Verdi Requiem and Peter was told it was a very risky undertaking because the musicians were not too honed yet. But he took that chance and it went very well. He also programmed Stravinsky and started touting Mahler, Gustav Mahler. At the same time in New York, his well-known friend Leonard Bernstein was beginning to do the same thing, push Gustav Mahler's works.

I was also with Peter with his opera. <sup>at UNCG</sup> He did the regular operas, that he introduced ... In the spring he did regular operas like Marriage of Figaro and so on, but in the fall, he would do little known to Baton Rouge. Menotti was a complete stranger and he did at least two Menotti works, Old Maid and the Thief and The Medium. The Medium particularly was a big success. I had some part in that. My former director Don Blakely was the deaf mute Toby who had to dance almost and choreographed for him ... Don Blakely, by the way, left LSU, went to New York and became a quite well-known director. One of his musicals was Carnival! and he did quite a bit of musical comedy and some drama. Unfortunately he died very prematurely, a great talent.

Back to Greensboro. Peter was also challenging his orchestra to do more, especially when it came to Mahler. He did several Mahler works and with some complaining by the board because they said he didn't sell tickets. But I'm proud to say he made quite a few converts and he kept pushing modern music as much as he could. There's also an instance when the Carolina theater in Greensboro went overhauling. They reconstructed much of the building. It had been a very old building that housed vaudeville so there was a lot of reconstruction. When it opened again, Peter's orchestra played at the opening and Peter had written a piece for piano and orchestra, dedicating it to the opening of the Carolina theater. Peter was the soloist at the piano so he not only played the solo parts, but he also conducted from the piano.

I, on the other hand, was beginning to blossom as a choreographer with the Greensboro Ballet. I did several pieces that were original. One to Strauss waltz music. Then I reconstructed the Anthony Tudor ballet gala performance using our

young dancers as the French ballerina, the Italian, and the Russian and we had a wonderful time doing it. Also at this time, Maryhelen began to think about a fundraiser and what would be better than Nutcracker at Christmastime? We had a board and we had a woman's guild and so we decided to do The Nutcracker our first time as a style show with all the music and some of the characters in Nutcracker. Our first performance was in a church. In the church auditorium and to our amazement, we had them hanging from the balcony. So we got ambitious and we started talking about the next Christmas we would go to the War Memorial or the Carolina.

One of our ladies, Kay Bryan Edwards who was a big contributor in money, warned us against this. "You cannot do this," she said. "Twenty minutes away in Winston-Salem, they are doing million dollar performances of Nutcracker and you can't compete with that." But we said, "We won't compete. We'll do our own kind of Nutcracker, a young version of Nutcracker, catering to the young people." So we went into the Carolina theater and we sold out. This lady, Kay Bryan Edwards, when she was proved wrong that we had made a success of our own Nutcracker, she sent both Maryhelen and I beautiful bouquets of flowers and on the card it said, "I was wrong."

The Nutcracker exists today and I think we started it around 1983. I remember also that Peter couldn't attend the performances because he was a guest conductor of the North Carolina Symphony in Charlotte. He later collaborated with the Symphony several times and his biggest collaboration toward the end of his tenure was collaborating with the North Carolina Symphony by playing ~~in and the~~ MAHLER'S TENTH ~~00-29-25~~, a huge undertaking. It was performed both in Charlotte and in Greensboro and with two conductors. The conductor of the North Carolina Symphony and Peter. It was quite an undertaking.

In 1983, another event that would be very important to our lives in Greensboro. Some people in the community had wanted to start an opera. Of course with Peter's background as opera conductor, it was talked about quite a bit and in 1983, it took place. We got a board together and after some talk about what we would do for the first performance, it was decided to do La Traviata and to get a fine soprano at least to sing. We got a soprano, June Anderson, from New York City Opera. She was wonderful. Marvelous voice, but a rather unhappy woman.

I recall to this day that she sat in my car and told me her troubles. She said she was not happy at the New York City Opera that had been founded by Julius Rudel and performed first in the Shrine Auditorium in New York. I had seen some of the performances. Of course the star of the New York City Opera was Beverly Sills, a soprano. June Anderson was a soprano and June Anderson felt that she was very much in the shadow of Beverly Sills as all sopranos would feel. So she sat in my car and told me her plans. She said, "I'm going to resign from the New York City Opera. I'm going to go to Europe and I'm going to make a name for myself in Europe." And that is exactly what she did. She finally after a few smaller companies, she joined the Paris Opera, made a tremendous success and was brought back to New York to



the Metropolitan Opera for many, many years. Now, remember, she told me she was going to do this sitting in my car in 1983.

La Traviata was a big success and plans were made to do a performance every year. Unfortunately, Peter was not happy, terribly happy with his board. They would agree on something at a board meeting. They would have a show of hands and agree to do something or what would be the next opera. Then some of the ladies on the board would go home and get on the phone, talk to each other, and say they weren't happy with this decision or that decision and they were going to change it. This did not bode well for the future of the opera. But from 1983 until ... The first part of 1982 or '83, Peter was connected with it and did some very fine performances, fought very hard to do Mozart Don Giovanni which was one of the real hits of the year, of one of our seasons.

Also brought in a controversial Carmen to do the title role of Carmen and with big success. I started out in La Traviata as the choreographer for the third act ballet and my leading ballerina was Maryhelen Mayfield who was still actively dancing at the time. One of my ... Her partner was Sandy [Blocker 00-35-03] who took lessons from me, a very fine dancer. Much later, Sandy's son Joe would be my student. Much later, don't get ahead of my story. So life went on, we were doing Nutcracker and a spring performance also and I was very active. I also was active doing choreography for the Symphony ball at Christmastime, the debutante ball. I brought my dancers to fit in the theme and did the choreography and also did the movement for the debutantes, the formations. They did formations and I worked with them on that. So these were busy times.

Our daughter was in Hofstra. <sup>W.I.</sup> When she graduated, <sup>she</sup> moved to New York, and was trying to be an actress. She had some success, but not enough to support her-<sup>SELF</sup> so she did as many other actresses and actors did, she was a waitress, but we supported her as much as we could. She also did some television work and some commercials which helped pay the bills.

Back in the early 70s, when we were still in Baton Rouge, Balanchine came on a short tour and came to Baton Rouge to watch my class. His aim was to see how former dancers were handling their careers as teachers. After this short tour, he decided to have a seminar the next year for former dancers to come work with him and bone up a little bit on better ways to teach. So that summer, Peter had been in Oregon doing some opera work. The next summer, he was asked to come to Colorado but I wanted to go to New York to take advantage of Balanchine's offer to take lessons and bone up on better ways of teaching. So Peter and Debora took the train out to Colorado while I took the plane to New York, did my work with Balanchine which was very interesting. I took classes with the dancers and one of the dancers, Melissa Hayden, was making a real name for herself, was taking classes despite the fact she was almost seven months pregnant. She did have a daughter and when I came in touch with her many, many years later, I told her about this experience.

Then I went to join Peter and took Mrs. Fuchs with me. We flew out to Colorado where Peter was teaching and helping produce opera. While I was there, there was an interesting course being offered in the university there, acting. So I thought it would be interesting to do that. And I did and fell into a very interesting situation as a guest actor. A well-known actor, I think his last name was Daly, his daughter was also quite an actress, Tyne Daly. This Mr. Daly gave instructions and demonstrations how stage actors adjusting to the acting in television. It was very interesting. Television was taking a tremendous hold and all actors were making decent livings if they could act in television. So he was giving instructions.

JAMES

One of the demonstrations was a scene from Death of a Salesman. ~~He~~ read the scene first and acted the scene as if we were on stage. But then he selected a few of us and I was lucky enough to do the wife of Willy Loman in this section of Death of a Salesman. She had a rather long speech. Instead of standing, Mr. Daly told me I should sit on a stool, use my hands as little as possible. He almost stood behind me and held my hands because I have not only in acting, but I have a habit of using my hands tremendously in speaking. He said, "Let your face do the expression that your lips are talking about and do as little histrionics as possible." It was very enlightening.

W.F.

Peter was also doing some work he loved with quite a few people that were well-known in the field. Then he received an invitation from Risë Stevens, who by this time had retired from singing, but was the head of a young Metropolitan Opera tour with young singers that the Met was looking at and they were touring quite a bit. She asked Peter if when he was finished in Colorado to come to Bloomington, Indiana, and work with her with these young singers. So we took the train, Debora, Peter, and I. Peter got off at Bloomington and we kept going to Baton Rouge.

His work with Risë was wonderful, she had always been a favorite of ours. I liked her very much and so did Peter. Later on in the year, this touring company that Peter had coached came to Baton Rouge so we invited quite a few of the singers to come after the performance to our house to have something to eat and meet some people. It was quite a lovely evening. All this should have proved to Peter how well-known he was in the field. It did momentarily boost his ego, but he always had that nagging feeling that he never really accomplished what he wanted to.

I reminded him also a few months before Debora was born, he was called to the famed Julliard School of Music in New York to coach and conduct, which was no lowly feat. Also, at UNCG, he had found a very good friend in Dr. Hart and I've already told you about the ~~Heinz~~ connection that Dr. Hart couldn't play the ~~[inaudible 00:45:12]~~ as fast as Peter Paul could. At UNCG, Dr. Hart hired Peter as a conductor. He would only take the more advanced students and therein lies a tale. I'll deviate for a few minutes.

LAWRENCE

ERLE KORENIG  
Basil Kern

ADRIAN McDONNELL

There was a young student from High Point who was a freshman. All he wanted to do was conduct and then he had heard Peter conducted his orchestra, Greensboro Symphony, and tales about him. He went to Dr. Hart and asked him if he could

study with Peter. At first Dr. Hart said no, Dr. Fuchs can only take graduate students. At the time, Adrian was 15 or 16 and a freshman. So he studied very hard. Dr. Hart helped him sort of speed things up and finally he got to study with Peter, ~~which was~~ <sup>BECAME</sup> a long time relationship. Adrian became like Peter's third son and my first. To this day, in fact, two days ago, he still visits me when he comes home to High Point. He is now doing very well as the conductor of the Paris Conservatory and an author of a book about orchestration and orchestra in general. He's now 60-some odd years. Very lovely man and quite handsome, also. He credits Peter with his success.

So all of these things were amounting up. Also at this time, connected with UNCG was a former tenor [Ralph Sanders 00:47:34], a former tenor from ...

Oh F