

Elissa Fuchs:

-was from Vienna. Had performed a great deal in Europe. ^{HE HAD} had a very fine career, even did some premieres. And ended up, ~~as went to see Leon~~, as teacher of boys and a stage director. He and Peter became very good friends, very quickly. To add to that, the Rolfs lived about a block or so away from us. We used to take these walks and these walks, ^{ROLF} take him by a simple visit ~~and~~ with both of us. And when the Greensboro Opera premiered "La Traviata," Peter asked and Rolf accepted to do the staging of "La Traviata" with June Anderson.

It was not a happy experience for Rolf. He helped, as Peter felt in his bones, but wouldn't stay. The bossiness, ^{was} some of the people on the board, not all of them, but some. So after the first performance, the first opera, Rolf no longer directed.

We got ^{of the bits in his} ~~the~~ very fine singer from school yards. First name's Bill, I'll come up with a last name. And he not only staged for a while, but he also sang. But Rolf's friendship remained until he passed away. ~~And he was~~ ^{he was} very fond of him. And he was a fine singer and fine teacher.

Also Peter was conducting "The Nutcracker." He did two separate years of "The Nutcracker." One was when money was short and he did it with a synthesizer and a very reduced orchestra in the Carolina theater, but it went off very well.

So those were two separate years of "Nutcracker." Also, we had taken the habit of going to Europe at Christmas. We'd leave right after "Nutcracker" and we'd get there in time for post-Christmas celebration with our friends. ~~And we're building up friends very fast there.~~

Leon Mueller and his wife, Tamiko Kamizawa ~~were~~, Leo had worked at the Met with both of us, so I knew him very well and was very, very fond of him. We also met Tamiko many times, but one time when Deborah was still a baby and Tamiko, of course, was Japanese. And she ^{had} ~~had her family~~, her family had been interred during the war and when when she finally got out of that situation, she found a coach, Leo ~~of~~ Mueller to help her with her career. And he certainly did and in the process got married.

I remember Tamiko in Vienna, she was there to sing one of her many "Madame Butterflies." Cio-Cio-San was of course a natural for her. I remember her taking Deborah ~~on~~ on her lap and singing Japanese songs to Deborah, very wide-eyes and very nice smile. Deborah was not quite two at the time when we were first in Vienna.

Also with the Muellers, he started out ritual of having New Year's Eve with them at an Italian restaurant, right in Vienna's "Neue Markt," German all around. It has a ^{ITALIAN} restaurant and the owner's, Maria and her husband, it was the name of the restaurant was "Maria." She and her husband reserved a table for us, a table for four. And we had many, many New Year's Eve celebrations. ~~And also with even~~

with, the owners toasting us and

on getting
started I ~~was~~ ^{get} ahead of my story. When Peter could no longer come with us, I just knew, I went one Christmas, just one, to Vienna to visit the Muellers and to have New Year's Eve and also to visit a friend Peter had, a conductor, that Peter had exchanged with, ~~Paul Randolph, Randolph~~, Paul Randolph. And his wife was Marlise.

to
And I went there, ~~the teachers would~~ have New Year's Eve with the Muellers. When we arrived at "Maria's", our table, our special table was set for four. We were only three, but Mueller had set the table for four and Peter was with us in spirit. Also, they would fix Italian specials for us and we loved them. But Peter was adamant, he liked spaghetti Bolognese, no matter what a restaurant we went to, under what circumstances, it was spaghetti Bolognese. And so it's memorable, New Year's Eve with only three of us and there's a side dish with spaghetti Bolognese.

Greensboro
Also, back in ~~Williamsburg~~, Peter had an auspicious encounter with a guest artist, Isaac Stern. Isaac Stern needs no introduction. I don't know if I have mentioned this, but Isaac Stern got his start in California, San Francisco, to be exact. Where a bunch of his buddies got together in a crap game and eventually won enough to start Isaac Stern on his career.

taken on
And when I was dating Max ~~Combe~~, one date. Max said, "I'm taking you to *where introduced* concert of a new artist." It was in a ~~play~~ *place* where ~~Ray introduced~~ new artists, this is way back in the 40s. And we sat there and ~~so that~~ a chubby, young man came out, played the violin like an angel. It was Isaac Stern and he went on from there.

Peter, also, ~~at home when things were~~, had a week-long Beethoven celebration. And finishing, of course, with Beethoven's Ninth and having UNCG pianists as his guests.

not of
The Greensboro opera, of course, was flying, doing really well. But there was always the tension of certain members of the board, fighting Peter and people who ~~what was~~ profession. And as I said, regardless of their lack of experience, they felt their money gave them the right to make decisions.

had temporary quarters on Elm Street by the railroad tracks
Ballet
Meanwhile, I was still teaching at ~~Greensboro Opera~~, Greensboro ~~Galley~~. For a while, we ~~prospered~~. We had three, we turning about initial studio ended up in ~~one studio with light in the very back of the road tracks~~. So we to hold onto the bars as the trains came through. We also had a form of a "Gut" church on downtown on Mueller's Chapel Road. And then, we got back into our original ~~place~~ *studios* at the Cultural Arts Center and that's where Greensboro Ballet still resides.

I did quite a bit of choreography, of course, my specialty became a big name, "Waltz of the Flowers." I did it my whole tenure, up until the time I resigned. It was quite successful. Also, during this time, our regular pianist, Gil, suggested, ~~tasked~~ *a new ballet* him ~~what he thought I should do~~, Maryhelen wanted me to do something in the spring performance. And I said, "You have any idea?" And he certainly did, he said,

*2nd floor
in Baton
Rouge*

MEDIUM

"You love opera, do a ballet version of the ~~Madea~~." And immediately I thought, "How that ~~Madea~~ I have done and that ~~made~~." I had done some choreography for it, ~~it told~~ me. So, I felt this really was a good idea. And I was proved right, as Gil was too.

MEDIUM

I set the ~~Madea~~ with five dancers and two singers and a pianist. The first pianist was Gil. He performed ~~over~~ the year, Carolina Theater, to rave notices, really excellent notices. So ~~he~~ performed it again and this time Peter was in the pit playing the piano And then, there was a third performance and that was in the Cultural Arts Center in their auditorium on the first floor. And Peter, again, played, was my accompanist. And ~~very~~ fine, also. And all three performances to rave reviews.

Deborah

~~Danner~~, meanwhile, was still in New York and acting, waitressing, doing Television and falling in love. And on one of ~~my~~ ^{our} visits to New York and Peter was going to one of his musical conferences, where he would always meet with Lenny and always get a hug or a kiss on the cheek. Oddly enough, Deborah and I never met the august Mr. Bernstein. We were both a little put-out about that.

Brooklyn

But on this special occasion, Deborah introduced us to her boyfriend. They both had graduated from Hofstra, but Arturo, his name was Arturo ~~Carate~~, as Italian as they come. And of course, Peter was delighted, only a little disappointed that Arturo didn't speak as much Italian as Peter did. ~~Cause I think he, and can be to teach him~~ *He and* Deborah, they had not met at Hofstra. Deborah was a few years younger, about two or three years younger, just like Peter and me. But they both lived in Greenwich Village.

And to hear Arturo tell it, he caught sight of Deborah before she knew who he was. And the story goes on from there. And they seemed very much in love. ~~She like~~ immediately and agreed to love him. And sure enough, in 1988 they married. They *wed* in Staten Island. Arturo's Mother still was living in Staten Island. His father had been an exporter of Spanish and Italian relics and art.

Unfortunately, Mr. Farratzi died at a fairly young age. Peggy, who is as Irish as the husband was Italian. Always told a "storieta" [~~phonetic 00:16:25~~], her marriage. *about* They made many toasts, the Italians always said, "figli ~~in~~ many sons. I can't remember what it was in Italian, but it meant "many sons." And Peggy followed that toast by having four, no daughters, only four sons. Arturo was the youngest.

Well, we met Peggy of course, and her daughter, ~~as everybody did~~. And she insisted that the wedding be held at her lovely home in Staten Island, which had a wonderful view of the Statue of Liberty and the Long Island Sound, especially from the second floor window. It was a lovely home, she had it catered. It was done beautifully. Of course, Deborah, who had only met her step-brothers intermittently, as we made very ~~little~~ *very* few visits to Louise, who ultimately moved from Long Island to Boston to be with her mother who had a prestigious business in Boston.

And every time we went there to see the sons. It was very strange visits. The sons only wanted presents. They didn't care particularly about their father or about their step-sister. Me? I didn't even expect anything. I was the witch that stole the father, which of course was absolutely untrue. The marriage was almost a ~~deaf~~ from the very beginning. And I think Louise knew that. And tried to see me a few days before my marriage, tell me all the bad things about Peter and her marriage. Well, as you know it didn't make any difference.

But Deborah, wanted her step-brothers to be at the wedding. By that time, John had married and divorced and had become a lawyer in Los Angeles, graduate of UCLA. At one time, he had been very interested in cars, but now he was a lawyer. And the other one, Roy, had married a Jewish girl, very Jewish. Had two children, Leslie and David. And lived in upstate New York. Connecticut actually, ~~Connecticut~~. So Deborah sent invitations. Johnny accepted immediately. Roy sent back, "We will come if we can bring our two children." They were very young, six or seven, four or five.

Johnny's minister?
And at home wedding, Arturo and Deborah had decided "no children." Arturo had even, had to turn down some of his friends' children, which they understood. Roy did not. He refused the invitation, didn't even send a present. So it was only John and John arrived a little late. As Deborah was already standing in front of non-dimensional, ah, non, ... what's the word I want, ~~reversal~~, Reverend pastor, because she was Jewish, Arturo's Italian-Catholic and they decided a neutral ceremony was necessary. John walked in just as it started and John and I eyes met and I sort of blinked, telling him I'm glad I was there and Deborah gave him just enough of a smile and went back to the business of being married. They became quite close and are still close today.

Unfortunately, the same thing is not true of Roy. ~~Roy~~, later on, John married and Peter was asked to be his best man and Roy one of his groomsmen. This was surely a large wedding, very lavish. John spared ~~no~~ absolutely no money. He spent on this wedding, he even had a limousine. And Roy and Jackie came to the wedding with their children. But again, John made arrangements and paid for babysitters for the children, when it wasn't really very acceptable to have children at certain of the parties with liquor is sold. At the rehearsal was different. And at the wedding was different. But Roy and Jackie could not accept that. *Had the rehearsal*

meal suggested
And after they were married, on one of the visits that Robin, ~~Adonis~~ ^{JOHN'S} new wife, and John made to New York. They had dinner and after dinner, Jackie and Roy stood up and said, "This is it. Have a good life. We're gone." They didn't even pay for the ~~check~~ and later on, they ~~refused~~, at least Roy did, from his father's life. He only paid ~~us~~ one visit to Greensboro. And then after that, he resigned from the family. And at no other occasion, happy, or at Peter's 80th birthday and at Peter's service, after he passed away. Roy was not there. I felt very strongly that it was Roy's weakness and Jackie's strength that caused this. Why she felt this way? I do not know. But that's the story.

Now somewhere David and Lesley, I'm sure are married, probably have children and I'm a great-grandmother and Peter was too, but we never knew.

Around the mid-80s, another occurrence, a couple of occurrences, very pleasant, took place. Peter had finally finished his opera, "The White Agony." He'd also finished, of course his first book was, not only finished, but it was required reading, "Psychology of Conducting," was required reading for music students in many universities and there were copies of this book, "The Psychology of Conducting" in Harvard Library. The Peter turned his attention towards finishing his opera, "The White Agony," by Chopik. Something he was wanting to do for a long time. His book on Felsenstein had finally been completed, got an editor and did very well. As far as I'm concerned, I think it's still on the market now. I'm not a 100% sure. But it did quite well.

So Peter was the good angel with everyone the "Komischer Oper," especially Felsenstein's crew. They were very grateful to Peter for writing the book and being there so often to watch rehearsals and so on. A little anecdote, Felsenstein was known to pull out rehearsals for a long time until he felt it was absolutely the best he could do. And he was doing "Carmen." And his conductor, a well-known man, kept asking him when the premiere was going to be. And Felsenstein said, "When it's ready." ~~When the conductor was asked the book was not ready for production, he replied "in what year?"~~ So almost a year went by and finally one of Felsenstein's helpers went by to the conductor's office and said, "It is ready for production." And the conductor said, "Yes, but which year?" So, but Peter's biography of Felsenstein was true and quite, quite complimentary. So he had a good foot in the door of the "Komischer Oper."

And on one of our many visits to East Berlin, he talked about this opera and when ~~he finished, he told them~~ *he told them* that it was finished. And they offered him a workshop performance in one of the big foyers in the "Komischer Oper." And Peter was delighted and this was the mid-80s. So, ~~he was to have~~ *it was to be a concert version* performance, no scenery, two pianos and some of the top singers from the "Komischer Oper."

So we enplaned, went there, had rehearsals. And another little anecdote, our friends in Greensboro, Dr. and Mrs. Hurdle, Marian and ~~Sala~~ *Sal*. Marian was German, born in Breslau and of course, thrown out when everybody else was. And she had kept track of a friend of hers, who was now living in East Germany. So she wrote to this lady and asked us to try and get in touch with her. And invited her to the performance of Peter's opera, a very small, insignificant act upon our part. But the joy and gratitude in this lady's eyes to be a part of this, was really ~~singing~~ *proport*. It was quite a success. And Peter was invited to come back the next year to repeat this kind of performance.

And as we were getting ready to go the following year, it then happened that was amazing to us how it happened at that particular time, "Perestroika." Gorbachev's

proclamation that the "iron curtain" was to come down. And this happened a few days before Peter's second performance of "White Agony" in Berlin. We flew to Berlin, the performance was on, nothing was changed. We flew to Berlin, after a couple of changes, the airplane looked like a "who's who" in music. There was Leonard Bernstein. There was Claudia Arrow, several other very famous pianists. The singer who had been "Salame" in Peter's first performance in Greensboro and the shocking dance and her husband, a very well-known stage director and others. Were all on the plane going to celebrate musically the fall of the "Iron Curtain."

courtesy of Peter Comichelle
~~When we arrived in our~~ we had a small apartment, ~~Comichelle who gave us an~~
~~apartment.~~ And we stayed there and of course, Peter had rehearsals. When we were driving into the city it was chaotic. There was jubilation and there were people tearing down buildings, tearing down Checkpoint Charlie. A lot of demonstrations in Anada [phonetic 00:32:44] were having been, people having been separated by the "Iron Curtain." Some of their family in West Berlin, some of the family in East Berlin. *finally could live together in one place*

And though this was a joyous occasion, there was frustration and anger. So the whole atmosphere was explosive. And I felt we were very, very fortunate to be a part of such a tremendous event in history. Bernstein put together Beethoven's Ninth with Spit and ~~and~~ And there were several performance, vocal and pianistic, some in the "Komischer Oper" itself. And Peter's performance went on. Of course, because of everything else going around, the audience as big as we would like it to have been. *not*

I kept, I kept big advertisements of Peter's opera with his name, but unfortunately it was lost when he was moved from one health care to another. But this occasion, in Berlin, Checkpoint Charlie disappeared. The wall, the visible wall was torn down and as I said, it was chaotic, but extremely exciting. And I was very happy that we had been a part of it.

Around this time, also, Peter resigned from the Greensboro Symphony. It had almost been 10 years, a very good 10 years. He was honored, he was made "Conductor Laureate" of the symphony. And the last performance they had a lot of kudos, et cetera, et cetera. Now he only had the opera.

I was continuing work with the Greensboro Ballet. But things were deteriorating there, also. Even before the recession. Certain operations were going by the wayside. A little earlier, we had had a professional dance group of about five professional dancers, all quite good. I used them when I did the "My life in Dance in the 20th century." *performed many times in Greensboro, NC, and other places*

When I received a stipend and did many performances, a ~~human~~ *stones* churches and synagogues and in retirement homes. And the type of thing I did, older people could relate because I started early with the, early dance, early part of the century. *Vernon*
I danced with a parasol and then, moving up into Irene and ~~Living~~ Castle and into the depression, Ella Fitzgerald, "Brother can you spare a dime?" And then war

had expired
fact he didn't do what he really to do. The same old story. He kept writing music.
And he had even a new idea for an opera. Based on the French story, "La ~~Revue~~ *Ronde*"
[phonetic 00:44:56].

Right after he resigned from the opera, the opera must have gotten a guilty conscience, because they decided to honor him with a workshop performance of excerpts of his opera, "The White Agony." And I was to direct this. Didn't have any dance in it, I just directed it dramatically. And it was a lot of fun for me and I loved every minute of it. It was done at Reeva Center in their auditorium there. The opera was semi-staged, it was on the stage at the Carolina Theater. Minimum costumes, but as, really, some scenery, minimum, but adequate. There was a dinner ~~at the~~ *after*, it was not at the Carolina, it was a Reeva Center. This was the last time we saw Peter's oldest son, Roy. But it was a very nice occasion. John and Robin came. Deborah, of course. And it was a nice occasion.

was
But after that, Peter began going downhill. He was a man ~~wanted~~ to work, especially wanted to conduct and teach and coach. And that was minimal. So, the next few years were not particularly either happy or productive.

One of Peter's great joys, going to Europe, practically every summer, especially after he got older and did not work as much, was to go to the Bayreuth, the festival in Germany that had been started by Richard Wagner, where he lived and produced opera-