



AMICA International Automatic Musical Instrument Collectors' Association Honor Roll

Abram Chasins was a composer, author, pianist, and teacher. He was educated at the Ethical Culture School and Columbia University, Juilliard and the Curtis Institute. He studied with Hutcheson, Godowsky, Hofmann, and Goldmark. He was a concert pianist, appearing in recitals and as a soloist with orchestras under the direction of Toscanini and Stokowski. He was a music consultant for the University of Pennsylvania and lectured at many universities. He had his own radio series between 1932-1939. He was on the faculties on the Curtis Institute (1926-1935) and the Berkshire Music Center (1940-41). He was the music director at WQXR (NY) between 1943 and 1965.

ABRAM CHASINS - HIS LIFE IN MUSIC

by Robert M. Taylor

Attending the program at the Manhattan School of Music in honor of Abram Chasins brought a flood of memories of my friendship with Abram over a period of about a decade. All that knew Abram know that he spoke directly (perhaps too directly at times) but one certainly knew where Abram stood.

The program was introduced by Abram Chasins' widow, the talented and lovely Constance Keene, who is on the piano faculty at the Manhattan School of Music. Connie reminded us that Abram's roots went back to the turbulent times at the turn of the century, with immigrants flowing into New York City and the excitement of growing up on the same block as the Gershwins. Abram began his classical studies with Ernest Hutchinson at the Manhattan School of Music.

Gideon Waldrop, the President of the Manhattan School of Music, acknowledged Abram's gift of a fund for maintaining pianos. He reminded us that Chasins was the musical director of the movie "Song Without End" which led quite naturally into introducing "the grand seignor of piano" Jorge Bolet.



Baldwin had very thoughtfully flown Jorge Bolet's personal piano from the west coast for this event. Bolet played four pieces for us:

Prelude and Fugue in E minor Op. 38 by Mendelssohn Introduction and Rondo Capreccioso Op. 14 by Mendelssohn Prelude in E flat minor Op. 12 No. 2 by Chasins Prelude in B flat minor Op. 12 No. 3 by Chasins.

It was the E flat minor Prelude that a generation came to know because Abram used it as the theme for his famous radio program "Piano Pointers".

The President of the University of Maryland at College Park spoke of the gift by Abram Chasins of his personal archives and papers to the University as an addition to the International Piano

Archives. We also learned that Abram created a prize in the Kappel Competition for the best American performer in the competition.

Then we heard Minoru Nojima play three Ravel pieces: Mirrors, Mournful Birds, and A Boat On The Ocean. When Abram and Constance Keene served on the Van Cliburn jury 12 years ago, they met Minoru and their friendship has grown over the years.

Wallace Smith worked with Abram Chasins during his years at the University of Southern California as they helped make KUSC the great station it is today. They took a campus rock station and in a few years transformed it into a classical station of great merit that currently has the largest audience of any public radio station in the United States. Smith said that Chasins brought integrity and credibility to the station. Because Abram would not compromise his goals and objectives, there were sometimes major disagreements, but Smith said "only friends can have violent disagreements and still come back together".

A fellow faculty member of Constance Keene's at the Manhattan School, Saul Braverman, spoke of Abram's impatience with imperfection. For those that knew Abram well, the description of Abram as a bridge partner was very amusing.

Telegrams and other communications were read from Martin Bookspan, Robert Sherman (of WQXR and Nadia Reisenberg's son), and Peter Nero.

The performance by Jimmy Roberts of a medley of popular songs composed by Abram Chasins showed yet another side of the talents that Abram was so blessed with. Before playing, Jimmy spoke of the long rich melodic lines, unexpected harmonies and likened these songs to those romantic songs of the 1940's. There was one based on a Faure theme, a waltz dedicated to Dorothy Field, and as we heard Jimmy play (and sing) we came to understand Jerome Kern's characterization of the "unusual harmonies" of the Chasins songs.

Under the able direction of Neil Ratliff and Morgan Cundiff of the International Piano Archives at the University of Maryland, we then experienced a "multi-media" production chronicling Abram Chasins life in music. It would be impossible to distill this down except to say that it would be worthy to have for a future AMICA Convention. The distinguished career at WQXR from 1943-1965 was filled with so many things that we now have come to assume as customary in classical music broadcasting, but it is only because Abram Chasins forged the path for us.

Finally, Constance Keene played the three Chinese Pieces that Abram's burst upon the scene with in the early 1920's: A Shanghai Tragedy, Flirtation In a Chinese Garden, and Rush Hour in Hong Kong. Little need be said except that Connie played them with the authority of one who knew without question just the way that made them most meaningful. Constance Keene is a gracious and lovely lady that it has been my pleasure to know for about eight years.

As the program ended, we all adjourned to the lobby for refreshments and a continuation of the celebration of Abram Chasins life in music.



Constance Keene (Mrs. Abram Chasins) and Neil Ratliff (Head of LP.A.) at the program in honor of Abram Chasins.

In ABRAM CHASINS - The New York Times

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From New York Times, Tuesday, June 23, 1987

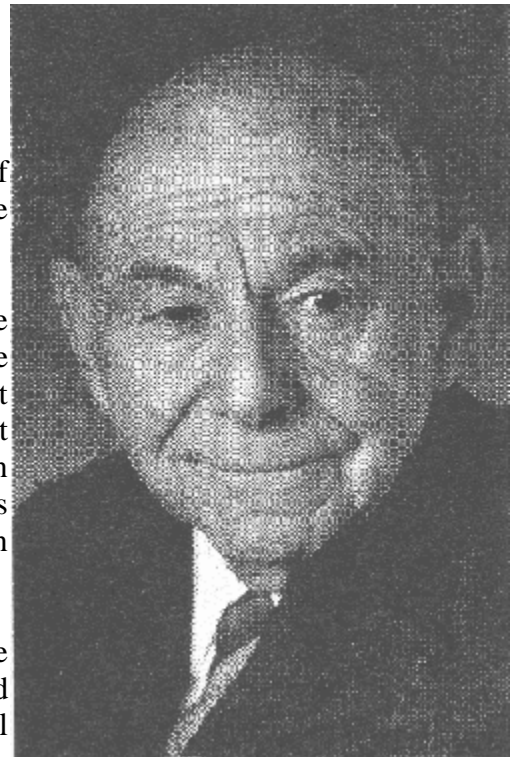
Contributed by Robert M. Taylor

From the AMICA, Sept/Oct 1987

Abram Chasins, a composer and pianist and the former music director of radio station WQXR, died of cancer Sunday at his home in Manhattan. He was 83 years old and had a second home in Los Angeles.

Mr. Chasins, who was associated with WQXR from 1941 to 1965, became the music director in 1946, two years after the station's acquisition by The New York Times. With his help, it became one of the country's most celebrated and emulated AMFM music stations. His appearances as host on major programs and his initiation of educational projects in conjunction with the New York public high school system earned numerous commendations, a large audience and a Peabody Award for excellence in broadcasting.

Mr. Chasins composed more than 100 piano pieces. His "Three Chinese Pieces" were particularly popular; Josef Lhevinne, Josef Hoffmann and other famous pianists included them in their repertory. An orchestral version of the work became the first American work to be conducted by



Arturo Toscanini with the New York Philharmonic, on April 8, 1931. His 24 Preludes for Piano (1928) have long *been* used as teaching pieces.

Following a 1972 lecture tour to promote his book "Music at the Crossroads," which took colleges and universities to task for not adequately preparing music students for the professional world, he joined the University of Southern California as musician-in-residence.

Recognizing the need for a non-commercial arts and information station on the West Coast, Mr. Chasins reorganized the student-run radio station KUSC into a channel for classical and modern music, and in less than five years, it became a nationally known broadcasting entity. He retired in 1977, a year after he had received the award of the National Federation of Music Clubs for "outstanding service to American music during the Bicentennial year."

Studied at Juilliard and Curtis

Mr. Chasins was born in Manhattan. He was a graduate of the Ethical Culture schools and took special courses at Columbia University Extension School. He also studied piano with Ernest Hutcheson and composition with Rubin Goldmark at the Juilliard School of Music in Manhattan and at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, where he taught piano from 1926 to 1935. In the summer of 1931 he took a course in musical analysis with Donald Tovey in London. His career as a pianist lasted from 1927 until 1947, when he retired from the concert stage.

A protege of Josef Hofmann, Mr. Chasins was the soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra for his first piano concerto in January 1929, and for his second concerto in March 1933 under the direction of Leopold Stokowski.

In 1960 he spent a month in Israel at the invitation of the government as special advisor on music festivals and education.

Mr. Chasins was the author of a number of books on music and musicians, including "Speaking of Pianists" (1958), "The Van Cliburn Legend" (1959), "The Appreciation of Music" (1966), "Music at the Crossroads" (1972), and a biography of Leopold Stokowski entitled "Stoki, the Incredible Apollo" (1978).

He is survived by his wife, Constance Keene, a concert pianist.