

League Donor Virtual Town Hall

March 24, 2026

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00:04:24.560 --> 00:04:42.669

Sarah Generes, League of American Orchestras: We're so glad to have the opportunity to welcome you today to this conversation. If you haven't read the book, *I Knew a Man Who Knew Brahms*.

10

00:04:42.670 --> 00:04:54.440

Sarah Generes, League of American Orchestras: highly recommend. But we're thrilled that we have, Nancy Schear, the author of this book, here with us. And with that, I am going to turn it over to the League's president and CEO, Simon Woods.

11

00:04:54.440 --> 00:04:58.459

Sarah Generes, League of American Orchestras: who is going to facilitate this conversation with Nancy. Simon?

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00:04:58.460 --> 00:05:15.170

Simon Woods: Thank you, Sarah. Great to see everybody. Thank you so very much for joining us, and thank you also on behalf of myself, thank you to all of you who... everybody here is a donor, or a volunteer, or a league board member, not only for us, but almost certainly for your orchestra, so...

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00:05:15.170 --> 00:05:21.050

Simon Woods: A big thank you to all of you for everything you do for orchestras, and we are... we are very grateful, and...

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00:05:21.400 --> 00:05:34.029

Simon Woods: One of the things that we're going to get to in this conversation is what makes orchestras special? Nancy and I were just chatting before you all joined, and we want to make sure we get to that topic, so...

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00:05:35.980 --> 00:05:49.830

Simon Woods: where to start? Well, Sarah, you know, I've got my copy of the book here as well. Everybody has the book. I knew a man who knew Brahms. The first I heard of this book, actually, was when Nancy emailed me out of the blue and said, I want to introduce myself.

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00:05:49.910 --> 00:05:57.840

Simon Woods: And, I've got this book coming out, and would love to talk to you about it. And of course, it immediately awoke my interest, because

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00:05:57.840 --> 00:06:10.130

Simon Woods: When I moved to this country, in 1997, I went to work for the Philadelphia Orchestra. I was Artistic Administrator of the Philadelphia Orchestra in the late 90s and early 2000s.

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00:06:10.130 --> 00:06:17.319

Simon Woods: And, you know, we're going to talk in a little minute about, you know, Nancy's introduction to orchestras via the stage door of

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00:06:17.320 --> 00:06:35.400

Simon Woods: the Academy of Music in Philadelphia, which was where I had my first introduction to American orchestras, and so I felt really connected with this, and Nancy very nicely invited me around to her apartment, and we had a very happy afternoon, with her, with her, talking about her experiences that she's going to share with you in a moment.

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00:06:35.480 --> 00:06:47.690

Simon Woods: And, to be honest, we could spend... Nancy just said, like, I said, we've got to make sure we get through all topics, and Nancy said, well, my only commitment is that I've got to be somewhere for 10pm.

21

00:06:47.690 --> 00:06:57.329

Simon Woods: And actually, I said to her, well, we've got to be done by 5pm, but actually, joking aside, we could actually probably have this conversation till 10pm. It's that fascinating.

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00:06:57.420 --> 00:07:05.630

Simon Woods: But I'm gonna start off just by... just by introducing you by reading, briefly Nancy's biography on the back. This is... this is what it says at the back of the book.

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00:07:05.980 --> 00:07:08.210

Simon Woods: Nancy shares remarkable background.

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00:07:08.320 --> 00:07:23.090

Simon Woods: includes 20 years as an orchestra librarian for the Philadelphia Orchestra and Curtis Institute, and privately for Leopold Stokovsky, Lauren Marzel, and others. Her articles have appeared in major outlets, and she's written a book called The Three Tenors.

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00:07:23.140 --> 00:07:36.789

Simon Woods: She's lectured for the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, and Caramel Festival, hosted broadcasts for the New York Philharmonic, New Jersey Symphony, Frick Collection, and Nuremberg Foundation, had her own interview programs on WNYC,

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00:07:36.790 --> 00:07:57.619

Simon Woods: and served as commentator for American Public Media. She's taught at New York University's School of Continuing Education, the Lillian Vernon Center for International Affairs at NYU, the New School, and has lectured at the Juilliard School, Manhattan School, and Manus School of Music. So, it's a... Nancy is an altogether fascinating person.

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00:07:57.720 --> 00:08:06.680

Simon Woods: So Nancy, welcome to... and thank you so much for joining us this afternoon, for this conversation. Can't thank you enough for that.

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00:08:06.680 --> 00:08:12.720

Nancy Shear: Well, I'm gonna use... I'm gonna use a word from... from youth, or childhood, or whatever. It's a real thrill.

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00:08:13.050 --> 00:08:22.810

Nancy Shear: To be with you all, because everything you read and everything that's... that's been part of my life in music has been out of love.

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00:08:22.920 --> 00:08:30.329

Nancy Shear: Passion, really, for... for music, but specifically for the sound of the orchestra.

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00:08:30.530 --> 00:08:39.069

Nancy Shear: And I said to somebody, we were talking about the whole concept of... of home, and I said, you know, home to me is a sound.

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00:08:39.070 --> 00:08:50.539

Nancy Shear: And it really is the sound of an orchestra, which remains, 60... 62 years after I was hired by the orchestra. It remains, just...

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00:08:50.600 --> 00:08:56.229

Nancy Shear: a miracle to me. It's a beautiful, the most beautiful part of my life.

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00:08:57.030 --> 00:09:06.179

Simon Woods: And that's ultimately why we're all here, right? That sound is something that once it gets into your ears, it's very hard to, for it not to be part of your life.

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00:09:06.240 --> 00:09:18.379

Simon Woods: So, but let's start at the beginning with your life, and I think that what we should really do, Nancy, is because I, you know, I'm not assuming that most people have read the book, I think what... oh, gosh.

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00:09:18.570 --> 00:09:22.950

Simon Woods: We have a dog joined us. Isn't that... is that not the greatest picture?

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00:09:25.490 --> 00:09:42.709

Simon Woods: Great. So, sorry for that, I was just a bit distracted. Let's start at the beginning. Let's start by doing a bit of storytelling, Nancy, about how you got to end up, at the stage door of the Philadelphia Orchestra, and what happened after that.

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00:09:44.210 --> 00:10:02.739

Nancy Shear: I was given a ticket, a free ticket, to a Philadelphia Orchestra concert. There was some kind of a fund, and I don't remember what the name was, I might recognize it, but it was an organization that provided tickets to concerts for school kids, and

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00:10:02.880 --> 00:10:06.820

Nancy Shear: I got... I guess it was around 19...

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00:10:07.270 --> 00:10:16.450

Nancy Shear: 62 or so, that I was given this ticket to the Philadelphia Orchestra, and I will never, ever forget

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00:10:17.080 --> 00:10:26.770

Nancy Shear: the first minute after the tuning, which fascinated me from the very beginning, I'll never forget the sound... the moment I heard that full orchestra play.

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00:10:26.960 --> 00:10:43.010

Nancy Shear: And I decided the experience was so visceral and so incredibly beautiful, I decided I had to go back the following week. And I lived... it's an hour's journey from where I lived in the Philadelphia suburbs, so...

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00:10:43.010 --> 00:10:55.819

Nancy Shear: Went all the way into town, it was walking in a bus, and the Frankfurtales, and then walking again, and I got to the box office, and I hadn't really thought about what it cost, financially.

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00:10:56.310 --> 00:11:10.120

Nancy Shear: And I said, I'd like a ticket to the concert today, and this very gruff woman said, I think it was either a dollar and a quarter or a dollar and a half, and I was shocked, I was stunned that I didn't have that kind of money.

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00:11:10.200 --> 00:11:23.159

Nancy Shear: And I didn't say a word, but she obviously could read in my expression that that wasn't possible. And very gruffly, she... she pulled out a little tiny pad of paper, maybe

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00:11:23.180 --> 00:11:43.080

Nancy Shear: 3 inches by 5 or 6 inches, and she scrolled something on it, and she signed it and handed it to me. She said, here, this is a pass for the concert, it's in the Amphitheater, which was the highest balcony in the Philadelphia... in the Academy of Music, which was the home of the Philadelphia Orchestra at that time.

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00:11:43.140 --> 00:11:48.879

Nancy Shear: And I went to that concert, and then, of course, I went back the following Friday for the matinee.

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00:11:48.960 --> 00:12:07.209

Nancy Shear: And, she kept giving me these passes until finally, she said, I can't... and she suddenly turned very sweet, and she said, I can't keep doing this, I'm gonna get into trouble. Why don't you stand in the lobby? So I went over to the, to the lobby, which was in front of the box office, and I stood there.

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00:12:07.240 --> 00:12:15.289

Nancy Shear: Because she said, these women buy two subscriptions, and as she put it, the husbands don't come.

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00:12:15.580 --> 00:12:18.400

Nancy Shear: So she said, maybe somebody will have an extra ticket.

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00:12:18.660 --> 00:12:29.659

Nancy Shear: And that worked for a couple of weeks, and then I was sitting in the most expensive seats. And then, that stopped working, and I thought, how can I penetrate that hole? How can I get in?

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00:12:29.930 --> 00:12:36.180

Nancy Shear: And I thought of an entranceway I had seen on my way from, from the train.

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00:12:36.300 --> 00:12:43.039

Nancy Shear: And, it was a doorway, and at that time, it had 3 very shallow steps or two up.

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00:12:43.090 --> 00:12:46.180

Nancy Shear: And, and it said stage door.

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00:12:46.210 --> 00:12:55.649

Nancy Shear: So I figured, I'm gonna stand there. Maybe somebody has an extra ticket they can give me. And I stood there, it didn't work for a couple of weeks, but

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00:12:55.670 --> 00:13:06.960

Nancy Shear: all the players in the orchestra stopped, and they'd talk with me. What are you doing here? And, you know, and I got to know some of them. And then, one day.

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00:13:07.030 --> 00:13:08.680

Nancy Shear: Eugene Ormandy.

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00:13:09.210 --> 00:13:17.079

Nancy Shear: walked up the steps, and he stopped, and he said, I hear... and he was very... he sounded very annoyed. He said, I see you here every week, what are you doing?

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00:13:17.320 --> 00:13:20.260

Nancy Shear: And I said, I love the orchestra.

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00:13:20.600 --> 00:13:22.780

Nancy Shear: And he said, do you have a ticket?

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00:13:23.000 --> 00:13:29.860

Nancy Shear: And all I said was no. I didn't say I couldn't afford it. And he said, come with me. So he took me back to his dressing room.

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00:13:30.010 --> 00:13:49.679

Nancy Shear: which I would find out years later, was very risky for a young woman to be alone with Eugene Ormandy in his dressing room, you know. Yeah, I found out about that. And also, he had done something very, very sweet, very nice, which was very unusual for Eugene Ormandy.

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00:13:49.810 --> 00:14:06.149

Nancy Shear: And but the great reward was not just the ticket to that concert, but it was getting to know the layout of the backstage area, because I realized then, if I could get past the guards.

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00:14:06.290 --> 00:14:23.680

Nancy Shear: I could... I could get to the doorway where I had bypassed ticket takers, and if I didn't have a ticket, and I could get through the stage door, I could get in, and I could sneak in, and I could find a seat that was empty. And...

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00:14:23.840 --> 00:14:30.179

Nancy Shear: I did that for about 2 years. And it really worked.

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00:14:30.850 --> 00:14:44.139

Nancy Shear: The great thing was that the guard had seen me come in with Ormandy, so I had... I had credibility. And I'd come in, and I'd kind of poke around backstage, and I'd open doors and look in.

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00:14:44.250 --> 00:14:50.429

Nancy Shear: And one day, there was a green metal door, and I opened that, and there were two men working.

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00:14:50.850 --> 00:14:56.030

Nancy Shear: I recognized them both. One was the assistant conductor, the other was the librarian.

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00:14:56.370 --> 00:15:04.230

Nancy Shear: And I quickly started to close the door, and the librarian said to me, four words that change your life.

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00:15:04.360 --> 00:15:06.859

Nancy Shear: He said, you may come in.

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00:15:07.790 --> 00:15:14.900

Nancy Shear: And I reopened the door, and I walked in, and he said, if you want to pull up a chair, I'll show you what I'm doing.

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00:15:15.160 --> 00:15:22.000

Nancy Shear: So I sat next to him, And... He started talking about Boeings.

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00:15:22.160 --> 00:15:25.210

Nancy Shear: I had played the cello for a couple of years.

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00:15:25.540 --> 00:15:30.120

Nancy Shear: But he showed me the more sophisticated Bellings that had put in by

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00:15:30.240 --> 00:15:34.830

Nancy Shear: Either the first chair player, or the concert master, or the conductor.

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00:15:35.070 --> 00:15:52.770

Nancy Shear: And he explained to me what he was doing. So, you know, by that time, as young as I was, I had already experienced kindness with somebody giving me a ticket to an orchestral performance. Another kindness in Ormandy taking me in.

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00:15:52.830 --> 00:15:56.369

Nancy Shear: And more kindness was somebody not saying.

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00:15:56.660 --> 00:16:03.040

Nancy Shear: get out of here, or letting me close the door, but saying, you... you are welcome here. Come in.

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00:16:03.260 --> 00:16:04.320

Nancy Shear: So...

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00:16:04.320 --> 00:16:09.199

Simon Woods: Remind me one thing, which year... roughly which year are we in right now?

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00:16:09.200 --> 00:16:12.399

Nancy Shear: 19... around 1962.

82

00:16:12.400 --> 00:16:27.430

Simon Woods: So, of course, it's worth just telling everybody here, you know, who doesn't have the history of the Philadelphia embedded in their minds. Eugene Almondy was music director forever there. I mean, he was music director from, like, I want to say, like, 1938 to 1980.

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00:16:27.750 --> 00:16:32.030

Simon Woods: So this was right in the middle of his tenure there, right?

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00:16:32.200 --> 00:16:36.769

Nancy Shear: Right, and... and... but the... the Stokovsky,

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00:16:37.220 --> 00:16:51.710

Nancy Shear: authenticity was still in the orchestra, because there were so many players. You know, Philadelphia and other great orchestras, they... their players are in the ranks of the orchestra for 30, 40, 50 years in some cases.

86

00:16:51.710 --> 00:16:59.289

Nancy Shear: So, a lot of those players from his era were still playing there, and that sound... that sound was still very much there.

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00:16:59.450 --> 00:17:13.369

Nancy Shear: So anyway, to come full circle with the story around... it was February 1964, and I showed up at one of the rehearsals, and, I saw the librarian. I said, how are you? We said, not so good.

88

00:17:13.579 --> 00:17:18.659

Nancy Shear: I said, what do you mean? What happened? He said, my assistant quit unexpectedly.

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00:17:19.099 --> 00:17:21.400

Nancy Shear: So I said, here I am.

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00:17:21.579 --> 00:17:29.259

Nancy Shear: Because I had, without realizing it, I had served an old-fashioned apprenticeship, and... and,

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00:17:29.380 --> 00:17:44.950

Nancy Shear: And he said, well, if we need you, we'll call you. He kind of made a joke of it, but the next day, my mother knocked on my door. He said, Mr. Tainton is on the phone from the Philadelphia Orchestra, and I'll never forget that sound, because when I picked up that receiver.

92

00:17:45.110 --> 00:17:55.899

Nancy Shear: I could hear the sound of the orchestra in the background, and what a thrill to hear that. So, he said, if you want a job, get back here.

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00:17:56.630 --> 00:18:00.269

Nancy Shear: And that's what happened. That's how I started to work for the orchestra.

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00:18:00.700 --> 00:18:06.029

Simon Woods: And so what was that first job, then? That way, you were working in the library? What were you actually doing there?

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00:18:06.890 --> 00:18:13.200

Nancy Shear: I was, marking... well, I started out just by doing some simple stuff like,

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00:18:13.790 --> 00:18:17.099

Nancy Shear: mending parts. They showed me how to

97

00:18:17.200 --> 00:18:32.740

Nancy Shear: to really get the corner of a page strong, because people don't think about this who aren't in the business, but page turns are very important. And if, in the heat of a performance, if any member of the orchestra

98

00:18:32.770 --> 00:18:40.270

Nancy Shear: Including the strings, who are covered because there's two to withstand, turns that page very quickly.

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00:18:40.400 --> 00:18:53.570

Nancy Shear: that page, sometimes, that corner of that page will come off in their hand, because these parts are very old. So they taught me how to kind of cross-fold scotch tape.

100

00:18:53.840 --> 00:18:56.490

Nancy Shear: And... and reinforce

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00:18:56.770 --> 00:19:05.210

Nancy Shear: the corner of the page. So I did a lot of mending, and because I had been studying cello with a great cellist, Elsa Hilder.

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00:19:05.410 --> 00:19:13.160

Nancy Shear: who was in the Philadelphia Orchestra, she was the first woman ever to be in a major symphony orchestra other than a harpist.

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00:19:13.340 --> 00:19:20.790

Nancy Shear: Stokovsky admitted her, in 19... Around 1935.

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00:19:21.510 --> 00:19:22.780

Nancy Shear: And,

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00:19:23.550 --> 00:19:37.740

Nancy Shear: Then... then Jesse Tayton said, well, do you know Boeings? And I said, well, I know the basics, and he said, well, I'll train you. So he soon had me marking Boeings, and then marking,

106

00:19:37.790 --> 00:19:46.029

Nancy Shear: Rehearsal numbers and letters, because, as we all know, the publishers don't put enough points in the published

107

00:19:46.160 --> 00:19:48.320

Nancy Shear: Parts, and score.

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00:19:48.560 --> 00:19:50.620

Nancy Shear: Where an orchestra can meet.

109

00:19:50.780 --> 00:20:09.529

Nancy Shear: or start after the conductor stops them at rehearsal. So I was doing all of that, and it... and, you know, I'm just doing some manual stuff, like wrapping paper... like, wrapping music that had to be returned to publishing companies, and brown paper, and taking it to the post office.

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00:20:09.530 --> 00:20:22.629

Simon Woods: By the way, quite a few aspects of that job have not changed that much. I mean, okay, we're gradually digitizing, but a lot of those things that you were doing, they're still the same things. You know, page turns still matter to musicians, you know?

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00:20:22.820 --> 00:20:23.730

Simon Woods: So...

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00:20:23.930 --> 00:20:35.089

Simon Woods: Nothing really changes. Let's fast forward a little bit, and okay, so Stokovsky, obviously, is the central figure in this book, and you had a remarkable relationship with him. How did you first meet Stokovsky?

113

00:20:35.690 --> 00:20:49.440

Nancy Shear: I wondered very much... he was my hero, because you have to understand, any music person, or who's remotely interested in music, growing up in Philadelphia in those days, Stokovsky was either

114

00:20:49.770 --> 00:21:08.559

Nancy Shear: God or the King of Philadelphia, take your pick. He was a monumental, highly respected figure, and also one of great mystery, because he liked to keep his... his life and his background shrouded in mystery. So I was

115

00:21:08.700 --> 00:21:22.630

Nancy Shear: not only fascinated with him and with his image, but my mother loved music, and she played a lot of recordings, among which were Stokovsky's recordings, and I noticed a difference, that whenever

116

00:21:22.650 --> 00:21:30.150

Nancy Shear: The music was extremely passionate, and expressive, and full of color.

117

00:21:30.460 --> 00:21:37.180

Nancy Shear: it was Stokowski, and I remember lying on the floor with the 78s and the early LPs.

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00:21:37.610 --> 00:21:44.420

Nancy Shear: looking at his image, and so, of course, when I started to go into Philadelphia Orchestra.

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00:21:44.540 --> 00:21:51.540

Nancy Shear: concerts, and I even got into the rehearsals. I wanted desperately to meet him.

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00:21:51.790 --> 00:21:59.720

Nancy Shear: and to hear how he made music. So, right after I got my job, he was going to conduct the Philadelphia Orchestra.

121

00:22:00.120 --> 00:22:01.600

Nancy Shear: And I asked

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00:22:01.910 --> 00:22:18.769

Nancy Shear: Jesse, the librarian, I said, do you think I can hear Stokovsky's rehearsals? And he said, no, you can't, because they are closed rehearsals, meaning the staff of the Philadelphia Orchestra, the families of the players, no one

123

00:22:18.920 --> 00:22:20.890

Nancy Shear: Was allowed into that hole.

124

00:22:21.060 --> 00:22:32.920

Nancy Shear: So I said, well, maybe I'll try. I mean, what do you have to lose by trying? So I waited outside the stage door, freezing cold weather, February after... morning, actually.

125

00:22:33.070 --> 00:22:37.179

Nancy Shear: And he got out of his taxi, and, you know, he was extremely...

126

00:22:37.600 --> 00:22:57.149

Nancy Shear: impressive looking, very, very tall, and he had this black coat on, and the white hair swept behind his ears, and I ran after him before he actually got into the doorway of the Philadelphia Orchestra stage door, and I said, Maestro, maestro, may I come into your rehearsal?

127

00:22:57.440 --> 00:23:01.100

Nancy Shear: And he stopped, and he motioned for me to go in before him.

128

00:23:01.250 --> 00:23:12.620

Nancy Shear: And, when we got into the... which in those days was the green room, in that entranceway, he said... he bent down, he said, why do you want to hear the rehearsal?

129

00:23:12.810 --> 00:23:19.589

Nancy Shear: And with my great memory, which is really almost like a video camera, I cannot remember my answer.

130

00:23:19.700 --> 00:23:23.469

Nancy Shear: But I do remember that he bent down and he sort of laughed.

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00:23:23.800 --> 00:23:26.740

Nancy Shear: And then he got very serious again, and he said.

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00:23:27.360 --> 00:23:33.800

Nancy Shear: I will allow you to come into this rehearsal on one... with one provision.

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00:23:34.720 --> 00:23:45.150

Nancy Shear: And I said, what's that? And he said, you must come backstage to my dressing room after the rehearsal ends and tell me your impressions.

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00:23:45.440 --> 00:23:48.579

Nancy Shear: Well, I took this very, very seriously.

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00:23:48.660 --> 00:23:58.159

Nancy Shear: So, after the rehearsal, which was amazing, it was a remarkable experience hearing the way he worked with the orchestra.

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00:23:58.230 --> 00:24:14.319

Nancy Shear: Where he chose to stop, the comments he made, the few comments he made, because he was more about conducting, making changes with his hands and with his eyes, than he was,

137

00:24:14.570 --> 00:24:25.789

Nancy Shear: to vocally, to use words, to talk to the orchestra. Some conductors just talk, talk, talk to the orchestra, and you know, you know as well as I do, they hate that.

138

00:24:25.890 --> 00:24:29.700

Nancy Shear: But Stokovsky did most of it through gesture.

139

00:24:29.880 --> 00:24:34.900

Nancy Shear: And, so I went backstage, and he was all alone in the dressing room, and...

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00:24:35.120 --> 00:24:41.320

Nancy Shear: And... and he said, what did you think of the rehearsal? And I said, it was remarkable. Thank you so much for letting me

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00:24:41.570 --> 00:24:46.440

Nancy Shear: listen to that, but I don't understand something you did in the Beethoven 7th.

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00:24:46.650 --> 00:24:48.289

Nancy Shear: There was one section.

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00:24:48.560 --> 00:25:07.609

Nancy Shear: I think it was in the first movement, where he slowed the orchestra, he just pulled back, and then surged forward, and I didn't understand why he did that. So, he opened his score, and he pointed to the music, and he talked to me a little bit, not too much, little bit.

144

00:25:07.890 --> 00:25:12.519

Nancy Shear: And then, I was dismissed. He was finished with me. That was it.

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00:25:12.630 --> 00:25:16.930

Nancy Shear: But the next... I believe there was a rehearsal that afternoon.

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00:25:17.050 --> 00:25:27.059

Nancy Shear: And I thought, why not take another chance, see if I can get into that, too. And when I showed up, got a big smile from him, and he waved.

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00:25:27.330 --> 00:25:34.849

Nancy Shear: And that was it. I was allowed in. So, working for the orchestra and hearing him conduct

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00:25:35.240 --> 00:25:40.599

Nancy Shear: once or twice a year, also at the Robin Hood Del Summer Concert Series.

149

00:25:40.700 --> 00:25:44.829

Nancy Shear: One day, at that point, we were becoming good friends.

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00:25:45.030 --> 00:25:52.689

Nancy Shear: And he said to me one day at an intermission at the Robin Hood Del, he said, would you consider coming to New York?

151

00:25:52.950 --> 00:26:08.269

Nancy Shear: to help me with my library. I said, I need an orchestra librarian part-time. You could come and work as much as your schedule will allow. So, here I was at 17, working for the Philadelphia Orchestra. At 18,

152

00:26:08.610 --> 00:26:12.410

Nancy Shear: Going to New York to work for Stokovsky, and

153

00:26:12.570 --> 00:26:16.270

Nancy Shear: The great... the thrill for me was...

154

00:26:16.530 --> 00:26:34.589

Nancy Shear: seeing what was in the orchestra parts and what was left out, because he did not believe in uniform bowings. He wanted free bowings. He didn't want all the bows going in the same directions. He didn't want them changing directions at the same time.

155

00:26:34.590 --> 00:26:41.399

Nancy Shear: Because if they do, there is an imperceptible gap in the sound. Most people wouldn't even hear it.

156

00:26:41.740 --> 00:26:46.220

Nancy Shear: He did, and that's part of the hallmark of the lush

157

00:26:46.400 --> 00:26:56.029

Nancy Shear: Philadelphia sound and the Stokovsky sound. Not so much Ormandy, because he does use uniform bowings, he's a... was a former violinist.

158

00:26:56.030 --> 00:27:08.160

Nancy Shear: So, that's... that was really the way that, that it all developed, and it was really incredible, because it was taking a young person and opening the door and saying.

159

00:27:08.240 --> 00:27:21.360

Nancy Shear: you may come in, and I just hope that orchestras today are doing that with young people. I know with security, it's more difficult to get in through the stage door, but I just hope that young people feel

160

00:27:21.520 --> 00:27:23.589

Nancy Shear: That door is unlocked.

161

00:27:24.330 --> 00:27:33.029

Simon Woods: Well, it's just a... it's a wonderful kind of reminder for us that... how transformational that experience of one young... for one young woman was.

162

00:27:33.030 --> 00:27:44.940

Simon Woods: And how much it changed your life. We should always remember that, that when we're bringing people into our concert halls, sometimes you never know how you're changing somebody's life in that one introduction to a new experience.

163

00:27:44.940 --> 00:27:48.349

Nancy Shear: So, of course, talking about the future of symphonic music.

164

00:27:48.560 --> 00:27:49.170

Simon Woods: Yeah.

165

00:27:49.360 --> 00:27:59.920

Simon Woods: For sure. I want to ask you a little bit about how your relationship with Stokovsky evolved, because he had a reputation for being very inaccessible, mysterious, difficult.

166

00:27:59.960 --> 00:28:19.389

Simon Woods: And, you know, he is, in some ways, when we think about the history of conductors, you know, we think about, Leonard Bernstein, or, you know, many of the other, you know, famous conductors of the past, and we know much more about them, really, than we do about Stokovsky. I mean, I'm quite a, you know, an aficionado of old recordings, and I love Stokovsky's recordings, but

167

00:28:19.500 --> 00:28:22.430

Simon Woods: I feel like I don't have a sense of who he was as a person.

168

00:28:22.920 --> 00:28:28.210

Simon Woods: And so I'm interested to hear a little bit of color about him as an individual, and also.

169

00:28:28.630 --> 00:28:37.130

Simon Woods: How you got his trust, how you got the trust of this man who was, you know, you were, by then, what, 18, 19?

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00:28:37.260 --> 00:28:40.439

Simon Woods: He was... what was he, 60 years older than you?

171

00:28:40.680 --> 00:28:41.380

Simon Woods: He was sick.

172

00:28:41.380 --> 00:28:43.040

Nancy Shear: 64 years my senior.

173

00:28:43.040 --> 00:28:44.320

Simon Woods: 64 years, you'll see that.

174

00:28:44.320 --> 00:28:45.500

Nancy Shear: In his 80s, yeah.

175

00:28:45.500 --> 00:28:50.200

Simon Woods: And yet, you somehow captured his trust. How did you get there? What was that journey?

176

00:28:50.330 --> 00:29:00.139

Nancy Shear: Well, first of all, just to back up to your first point about not knowing who he was, this mystery surrounding him, that was ex... Simon, that was exactly what he wanted.

177

00:29:00.300 --> 00:29:15.269

Nancy Shear: He didn't want you or anybody else to know about his background. He wanted to be a mystery, and of course, you know, he had a long... well, it was about a year, but for him that was long... relationship with Greta Garbo, who was the

178

00:29:15.300 --> 00:29:26.100

Nancy Shear: image of, of, of, of femininity, and... and people were... that she was the most famous actors of her time. And,

179

00:29:26.110 --> 00:29:33.200

Nancy Shear: He wanted to marry her, but the point was that she had also that... that mysterious

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00:29:33.200 --> 00:29:50.449

Nancy Shear: unknown quality about her, and that's what he wanted. He wanted it for a number of reasons. I think he felt that it would... it would work well for his image, because in those days, conductors had images. You didn't call them by their first name, and you didn't know what their

181

00:29:50.450 --> 00:29:55.129

Nancy Shear: family life was like. I'm not saying that's wrong. It was a different era.

182

00:29:55.430 --> 00:30:05.069

Nancy Shear: So, this mystery about Stokovsky that... that worked in his favor, because it got him a lot of interesting press.

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00:30:05.370 --> 00:30:14.720

Nancy Shear: And an image was very important in those days, but he did not open up to people. He had... his accent was...

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00:30:14.950 --> 00:30:16.690

Nancy Shear: not authentic.

185

00:30:16.890 --> 00:30:22.640

Nancy Shear: That... that very interesting, somewhere middle European accent, he made that up.

186

00:30:22.960 --> 00:30:26.660

Simon Woods: But wait, did he make... did he still do that when you were with him one-on-one?

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00:30:26.660 --> 00:30:27.560

Nancy Shear: Oh, he.

188

00:30:27.560 --> 00:30:27.950

Simon Woods: what are you?

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00:30:27.950 --> 00:30:28.380

Nancy Shear: Yeah, literally.

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00:30:28.380 --> 00:30:29.090

Simon Woods: When you saw his...

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00:30:29.090 --> 00:30:29.720

Nancy Shear: died.

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00:30:30.140 --> 00:30:32.929

Simon Woods: Right? Oh, so that became his persona.

193

00:30:32.930 --> 00:30:34.870

Nancy Shear: Oh, totally.

194

00:30:34.870 --> 00:30:41.949

Simon Woods: No one never heard his original, you know, you never heard his original voice from how he would have heard from the East End of London, right?

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00:30:41.950 --> 00:30:46.630

Nancy Shear: Only once did I... did he sound a little British to me.

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00:30:46.630 --> 00:30:47.390

Simon Woods: Rally.

197

00:30:47.390 --> 00:31:02.780

Nancy Shear: Yeah, and it was, he, he called my home one day, and he said, I need your help, could you please get me, bone collar stays? You know, the things that made men's collars stand up?

198

00:31:03.210 --> 00:31:19.620

Nancy Shear: back when. And he said, they can't, they can't be bone... they can't be metal or... or wood, they must be bone. Or plastic, they couldn't be... So, here, now, I got out the yellow pages.

199

00:31:19.770 --> 00:31:27.580

Nancy Shear: And every men's store in Philadelphia, I called them, do you have the bone collar stay? No, we don't.

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00:31:27.690 --> 00:31:43.569

Nancy Shear: So I ended up going into... all the way into Center City again, you know, it's an hour's ride, and going to every store whose name I couldn't remember, and none of them, not one, had phone collar stays. So now, I ended up

201

00:31:44.050 --> 00:31:49.250

Nancy Shear: at the, Barclay Hotel, where he was staying on Rittenhouse Square.

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00:31:49.580 --> 00:32:09.410

Nancy Shear: And I told... I told the guy at the desk, I said, I'm here to see Leopold Stokovsky. So he called... what's her name? Nancy. He says, oh, my... my friend Nancy is here. So he says, send her up. So I went up, and he answered the door, because he hadn't been expecting me. He was in a white terrycloth robe.

203

00:32:09.620 --> 00:32:13.539

Nancy Shear: And... and he looked a little bit embarrassed, and he said.

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00:32:13.840 --> 00:32:28.579

Nancy Shear: I've just had a bath with Epsom salts. Well, I mean, here I am, you know, this is my great hero, and he's in... he's in a white terrycloth robe, and he's telling me about having taken a bath. I mean.

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00:32:28.770 --> 00:32:33.660

Nancy Shear: for... I didn't know that gods took this, you know? I mean, it was like...

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00:32:33.850 --> 00:32:40.900

Nancy Shear: what's going on? But he... that was the only time I heard him sound a little bit English.

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00:32:41.080 --> 00:32:45.660

Nancy Shear: Yeah, it was fascinating, but, you know, in those days, conductors.

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00:32:46.060 --> 00:32:52.780

Nancy Shear: Where best, their careers were built on not just on being exotic.

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00:32:52.960 --> 00:33:07.329

Nancy Shear: but mainly European. And in Stokovsky's mind, he felt that if he identified as being English, British, which he was, both his parents were born in London.

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00:33:07.560 --> 00:33:19.179

Nancy Shear: that it would detract from the mystery that he needed to build his career. And of course, that was Victorian England. He was born in 1882.

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00:33:19.320 --> 00:33:35.220

Nancy Shear: So, you have to think about, it was not that easy to progress in life, to go from, from one station to another, to build a real career. And that's, I think, yet another reason why he came to the United States.

212

00:33:35.430 --> 00:33:47.829

Nancy Shear: As for the trust getting close to him, I'm finding out now that there was nobody else in his life who he confided in as much, or got close to, or talked about his

213

00:33:48.010 --> 00:33:51.929

Nancy Shear: Parents, and, you know, it was really... it was amazing, and it's...

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00:33:52.470 --> 00:33:55.980

Nancy Shear: I think what he picked up on was, number one.

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00:33:56.130 --> 00:34:03.409

Nancy Shear: I was associated with the city that had made him what he was. Philadelphia. Number two.

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00:34:03.580 --> 00:34:14.669

Nancy Shear: I was close to the orchestra that he had created, brought to world prominence, which had also brought him to world prominence. Number three, and I think this is

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00:34:15.090 --> 00:34:24.640

Nancy Shear: There's two more things. Number three is that I understood what he was doing musically. I got it.

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00:34:25.110 --> 00:34:33.520

Nancy Shear: I got it. I could hear the difference in his super romantic.

219

00:34:33.639 --> 00:34:42.010

Nancy Shear: I hate to use the word lush, because it wasn't always. It served the music. It served the music, whatever style he needed.

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00:34:42.639 --> 00:34:51.769

Nancy Shear: So I understood him as man and as a musician. And number four, truth of it is, I never wanted anything from him.

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00:34:52.389 --> 00:35:01.180

Nancy Shear: I didn't... I didn't want career opportunity, I didn't want money, I didn't want anything. I just wanted access

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00:35:01.290 --> 00:35:02.300

Nancy Shear: to him.

223

00:35:02.430 --> 00:35:09.080

Nancy Shear: And I wanted to be recognized by him. So, as I got older, and I knew him for

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00:35:09.410 --> 00:35:16.310

Nancy Shear: 15 years, that relationship continued to develop, and

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00:35:16.850 --> 00:35:25.889

Nancy Shear: oh, what I heard musically, you know, I mean, I'd work with him on the scores, then I'd go to the rehearsal, sometimes to the recording sessions.

226

00:35:26.090 --> 00:35:36.530

Nancy Shear: And it was... it was astonishing what he could do with... with his hands and with his eyes. It was... it was aston... just astonishing.

227

00:35:37.590 --> 00:35:50.339

Simon Woods: Well, let's... let's just kind of go to the next real, I suppose, chapter. I mean, we could talk about Stokovsky. Well, by the way, was it... was it true that he always said my name doesn't rhyme with cow? Is that... Yes, he does.

228

00:35:50.340 --> 00:35:54.989

Nancy Shear: No, no, no, he'd say, there's no... there's no cow in my name.

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00:35:54.990 --> 00:35:57.890

Simon Woods: There's no carry living, right? I knew there was something about that.

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00:35:57.890 --> 00:35:59.860

Nancy Shear: Yeah, but you know, there are people today, and you.

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00:35:59.860 --> 00:36:00.210

Simon Woods: Here's the...

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00:36:00.210 --> 00:36:02.629

Nancy Shear: Who have never heard the name pronounced.

233

00:36:02.630 --> 00:36:03.120

Simon Woods: Yeah.

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00:36:03.120 --> 00:36:14.640

Nancy Shear: And, you know, Fantasia, was just shown in New York. In fact, I really had an honor of introducing the film down at Film Forum, and

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00:36:14.960 --> 00:36:23.729

Nancy Shear: And, you know, you'll hear, when Mickey Mouse walks up the steps and tugs on Stokovsky's pants leg, and he says something about.

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00:36:23.780 --> 00:36:37.379

Nancy Shear: Congratulations, Mr. Stokowski! You know, but a lot of people today, especially young people, haven't heard the name pronounced, so they look at it, S-T-O-K-O-W-S-K-I, it's Stokowski.

237

00:36:38.430 --> 00:36:38.940

Simon Woods: Yeah.

238

00:36:38.940 --> 00:36:41.459

Nancy Shear: But, no, he did say there's no cow in my name.

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00:36:41.460 --> 00:37:01.360

Simon Woods: That's great. Okay, so let's jump on then, just, you know, briefly. We can't even remotely do justice to this, but you went on, obviously, through the relationship with Almondy, to have a great relationship with Almondy, and then afterwards with Rostopovich, and with many, many other people, you know, of great, great names of music. Give us a...

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00:37:01.360 --> 00:37:09.469

Simon Woods: Give us a kind of a sketch of the... your life with, you know, getting to know some of these great musicians other than Stokowski.

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00:37:09.470 --> 00:37:16.939

Nancy Shear: Yeah, Jesse, the librarian, came into the library in 196... April of 1967,

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00:37:17.330 --> 00:37:30.430

Nancy Shear: and he said, because I was, you know, playing cello badly, okay? I was not a cellist, I was a cello student, there's a big difference. And he said,

243

00:37:31.170 --> 00:37:38.980

Nancy Shear: I... you really should hear a cellist who's going to be rehearsing with us in another couple of hours.

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00:37:39.260 --> 00:37:42.610

Nancy Shear: And he said, come to... and they were recording.

245

00:37:42.950 --> 00:37:49.540

Nancy Shear: So, after the recording session, trying to remember the name of the conductor.

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00:37:50.440 --> 00:37:55.570

Nancy Shear: I'll think of it. They were rehearsing for a performance at the May Festival.

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00:37:55.990 --> 00:38:02.270

Nancy Shear: of the Dvorzhak Cello concert a couple weeks later, but the orchestra, And conducted...

248

00:38:02.270 --> 00:38:04.290

Zak Vassar: I know. I know.

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00:38:05.900 --> 00:38:06.360

Nancy Shear: Excuse me?

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00:38:06.360 --> 00:38:06.980

Zak Vassar: Excuse me?

251

00:38:08.100 --> 00:38:15.100

Simon Woods: Can everybody just make sure you mute yourself, please? We're just getting some echoes there. If everybody can mute themselves, that'd be great. Thanks. Sorry, go on next.

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00:38:15.100 --> 00:38:24.300

Nancy Shear: So my boss came up to me, he said, you really should hear this remarkable cellist. He said he can do things I've never heard any other cellist do. He said.

253

00:38:24.440 --> 00:38:32.999

Nancy Shear: come in another 2 hours when we finish the recording session before we start this rehearsal. And he said, bring the music with you.

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00:38:33.170 --> 00:38:35.340

Nancy Shear: So... I...

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00:38:35.650 --> 00:38:45.539

Nancy Shear: showed up at... at... at the hall, at which was a... the, ballroom of a broken-down old hotel on North Broad Street.

256

00:38:45.930 --> 00:38:49.920

Nancy Shear: and... And I didn't know the name Rostropovich at all.

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00:38:50.490 --> 00:38:59.240

Nancy Shear: And, this... this very youthful, kind of boyish guy, Ran over to my side.

258

00:38:59.730 --> 00:39:08.800

Nancy Shear: and he grabbed the music out of my... in my hands. I thought, who is this? Oh, and he had a cello under his... like, in the crook of his arm. And...

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00:39:08.930 --> 00:39:24.130

Nancy Shear: And I thought, oh, I guess this is Rastropovich's assistant. So he... so then he looks at the music, he goes, you give... you give to me! So he stood next to each other in the elevator, and he stood so close that it was uncomfortable.

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00:39:24.300 --> 00:39:32.749

Nancy Shear: So I... I felt I should make conversations, so I said, what kind of a cello is that? He says, it's Russian cello!

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00:39:32.770 --> 00:39:48.060

Nancy Shear: You know, which, you know, everybody in the elevator, members of the orchestra, just broke up, because Russia wasn't known for its great cellos. Then, my boss rushed over, actually the assistant conductor, and he said.

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00:39:48.170 --> 00:39:51.869

Nancy Shear: Mr. Rostropovich, I'd like you to meet Nancy Schear.

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00:39:52.090 --> 00:39:59.890

Nancy Shear: she works in our library, and that's when that moment of recognition, when I realized that this was

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00:40:00.060 --> 00:40:09.450

Nancy Shear: the great cellist Rostropovich, And, he took the music and literally threw it at my boss, because Rostropovich

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00:40:10.140 --> 00:40:20.519

Nancy Shear: you know, I mean, all exuberance, he was just exploding with love and energy and love of music and people and life.

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00:40:20.990 --> 00:40:21.720

Nancy Shear: And...

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00:40:21.960 --> 00:40:28.130

Nancy Shear: And, and then he took me by the hand. He took his cello out of the case and tuned it.

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00:40:28.390 --> 00:40:40.640

Nancy Shear: And then took me by the hand and sat me on the floor, with a wooden floor, in front of the little platform where he would sit with his cello and...

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00:40:40.750 --> 00:40:45.779

Nancy Shear: And then he sat down and formally tuned the instrument.

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00:40:47.160 --> 00:40:58.429

Nancy Shear: And I gotta tell you, hearing the Dvorzak Cello Concerto with the Philadelphia Orchestra, with him, only...

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00:40:58.780 --> 00:41:08.710

Nancy Shear: maybe 2 or 3 yards away, to the point where when he drew that bow over the strings, I actually felt the vibrations in my chest.

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00:41:10.100 --> 00:41:11.730

Nancy Shear: It was extraordinary.

273

00:41:12.100 --> 00:41:19.329

Nancy Shear: I felt, after that rehearsal, I needed to just come to terms with what I had just heard, the poetry.

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00:41:19.640 --> 00:41:23.320

Nancy Shear: And the drama of his playing were remarkable.

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00:41:23.330 --> 00:41:29.819

Nancy Shear: So I decided I was going to walk back to the Academy of Music, which was a number of blocks away. When I got to the door.

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00:41:29.830 --> 00:41:46.160

Nancy Shear: there was Slava, as he liked to be known, with his cello, and he took my hand again, and there... we walked down on North Broad Street, there was a taxi, and he pushed me into the taxi. He got in next to me and brought the cello over both our laps.

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00:41:46.310 --> 00:41:51.230

Nancy Shear: And that was the beginning of a real, serious friendship.

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00:41:51.410 --> 00:41:59.590

Nancy Shear: And, you know, it's interesting, because I got to admire him, not just for his musicianship.

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00:41:59.810 --> 00:42:10.789

Nancy Shear: Just as I had admired Stokovsky for his bravery in choosing repertoire that other people didn't want. It was all... a lot of it was

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00:42:10.810 --> 00:42:21.429

Nancy Shear: very modern. Some people didn't consider it music at all. He had done that from his beginnings in 1905 as organist at St. Bartholomew's Church.

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00:42:21.610 --> 00:42:36.890

Nancy Shear: But the courage was there, and with Rostropovich, of course, he also performed new works, a lot of them written for him. Not too many commissioned, most of them written for him, but eventually, I think he would commission some.

282

00:42:36.960 --> 00:42:46.470

Nancy Shear: But, the courage in taking on the entire Soviet government, when he wanted to stand up for artistic freedom.

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00:42:46.820 --> 00:42:52.169

Nancy Shear: When he defended Alexander Solzhenitsyn's right

284

00:42:52.480 --> 00:42:55.700

Nancy Shear: To write what he wanted to write.

285

00:42:56.090 --> 00:42:59.369

Nancy Shear: And the right of all artists to create

286

00:42:59.660 --> 00:43:04.509

Nancy Shear: in freedom. That was astonishing. So that's how that got started.

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00:43:04.510 --> 00:43:24.370

Simon Woods: You know, I remember... I have my own Slava story, because when I was working at the Philadelphia Orchestra, it would have been about 1998, he came to play there, and I... he... you know, he loved to talk, right? And he regaled me with long stories about, you know, the famous story about the smuggling of the parts out of the Soviet Union for the Shostakovich First Concerto.

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00:43:24.370 --> 00:43:26.000

Simon Woods: And when that was...

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00:43:26.000 --> 00:43:27.760

Nancy Shear: And the 13th, this 13th Symphony.

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00:43:27.760 --> 00:43:49.870

Simon Woods: 13th Symphony, yeah, so it was a fascinating time. Okay, so I'm just going to invite everybody, I'm sure you've got questions you'd like to ask Nancy, I'm going to invite you to put those in the chat, and I'm going to ask you one more question, Nancy, which I just want to talk about, which is, you describe in the book, you know, you say something along the lines of, you know, the second half of the 20th century was this kind of golden age for...

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00:43:49.870 --> 00:43:54.370

Simon Woods: For, you know, extraordinary music making, extraordinary artists.

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00:43:54.430 --> 00:44:00.799

Simon Woods: So let's kind of connect that with our experience today. What do you think has changed

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00:44:00.870 --> 00:44:07.089

Simon Woods: And what was unique about that era, for somebody who lived through this just remarkable

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00:44:07.090 --> 00:44:23.020

Simon Woods: history of extraordinary artists and extraordinary orchestras who had such individuality and personality. I mean, in those days, you know, you could never mistake the Philadelphia Orchestra for the Chicago Symphony, you know, it was... And so, what has changed for you, and what was special about that era?

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00:44:24.370 --> 00:44:35.359

Nancy Shear: you could identify orchestras. I'd turn on the car radio, and I could hear a bassoon of the Boston Symphony, I could hear the first horn of Cleveland, I could hear

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00:44:35.370 --> 00:44:49.399

Nancy Shear: strings of Philadelphia. I mean, there were very specific sounds associated with the orchestras that these people were in, but today, I think it's a little more homogenized, the sound, and

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00:44:49.630 --> 00:45:05.999

Nancy Shear: Conductors, what troubles me most of all, and it's probably where we've reached a point now where it's not going to turn around, but I do not feel that a conductor can do

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00:45:06.290 --> 00:45:11.279

Nancy Shear: An adequate job with being music director of 3 orchestras.

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00:45:12.140 --> 00:45:27.100

Nancy Shear: two orchestras and a festival, and they're breaking up their... their lives too much. The old thing about a conductor having... being director, music director of an orchestra, and devoting their whole lives to it. We're never going to see that again.

300

00:45:28.120 --> 00:45:33.690

Nancy Shear: But, there... there are benefits to it. There are, and...

301

00:45:33.830 --> 00:45:39.379

Simon Woods: Isn't it also true to say that, I mean, we're never gonna see that again? The other thing we're never gonna see again is...

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00:45:39.790 --> 00:45:49.419

Simon Woods: the kind of sheer force of will and personality and, like, I will use the word authoritarian, sort of personality. I mean, you know, if you think about how

303

00:45:49.510 --> 00:46:09.159

Simon Woods: an artist like Stokovsky, or Umudy for that matter, kind of imposed their will and their personality on the orchestra. That is so far from the consciousness today of what musicians in orchestras expect. You know, we live in a world now where the norms of behavior for conductors are, you know, much more on the collaborative end.

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00:46:09.300 --> 00:46:15.760

Simon Woods: There was something unapologetic about those big conductors, about standing up in front of the orchestra, and being very clear that, like.

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00:46:15.970 --> 00:46:22.529

Simon Woods: this was my vision. You're gonna help me get my vision out. That's what this is about. It's not about you, it's about my vision, right?

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00:46:23.090 --> 00:46:30.919

Nancy Shear: They were tyrants. Yeah. A lot of these musicians, Tuscanini was a tyrant, Stokovsky could be a tyrant.

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00:46:31.300 --> 00:46:32.450

Nancy Shear: And,

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00:46:32.750 --> 00:46:46.580

Nancy Shear: I would just hate to feel that that's necessary to make beautiful, wonderful music. And I think there are conductors today who have proven that it's not necessary. So I would divide that. I would say that,

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00:46:46.630 --> 00:46:58.619

Nancy Shear: beating people down, and insulting them, and hurting them, and threatening them, and making them feel insecure. I don't think that's the best way to create beautiful performances.

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00:46:58.960 --> 00:47:04.859

Nancy Shear: So, I think that's one thing from our past that I'm kind of happy to see that gone.

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00:47:05.980 --> 00:47:06.580

Simon Woods: Yeah.

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00:47:06.900 --> 00:47:08.660

Nancy Shear: But I'm not...

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00:47:08.660 --> 00:47:11.759

Simon Woods: By the way, did you ever meet Toscanini, by the way? You mentioned Toscani.

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00:47:11.760 --> 00:47:15.980

Nancy Shear: Oh, he died, I think... did he die in 1956?

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00:47:15.980 --> 00:47:18.340

Simon Woods: Yeah, that way he would... that was just a bit too early for you, right?

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00:47:18.340 --> 00:47:35.260

Nancy Shear: Yeah, so that was... he... he... I think I was 10 or 11 years old when he died, so no, no, but... but, you know, I know his work through the recordings. Nice. But no, but there, you know, there were so... there were... let's be honest, though, too, there were conductors

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00:47:35.270 --> 00:47:43.080

Nancy Shear: At that time, who were not tyrants. Bruno Walter, Dmitri Metropolis, Charles Munch, whom I did work with.

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00:47:43.710 --> 00:48:01.610

Nancy Shear: They were sweethearts, and the orchestras loved them, and... and they'd cooperate with them because they wanted to. They weren't... they weren't beaten down into fear. But Stokovsky was one of the people who used fear.

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00:48:01.730 --> 00:48:05.980

Nancy Shear: To elicit these incredible sounds from his orchestra.

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00:48:05.980 --> 00:48:09.090

Simon Woods: And did he... but the orchestra respected him despite that?

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00:48:09.270 --> 00:48:12.749

Nancy Shear: Tremendously. They respected him musically.

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00:48:13.030 --> 00:48:14.550

Nancy Shear: But they didn't like him.

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00:48:14.720 --> 00:48:29.309

Nancy Shear: Most of the orchestras that Stokovsky conducted did not like him, and I quoted Ellen Tafe Zwilik, the composer, who's a very dear friend of mine, who was a violinist in Stokovsky's American Symphony.

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00:48:29.610 --> 00:48:32.010

Nancy Shear: And she talked about the fact that

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00:48:32.320 --> 00:48:37.180

Nancy Shear: He... he was not nice to his players. They were expendable.

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00:48:37.280 --> 00:48:41.250

Nancy Shear: And, you know, one of the... one of the things he did

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00:48:41.700 --> 00:49:01.659

Nancy Shear: It's almost like when you're in the military, and they beat you down, and they don't let you have personalities, you're just part of the Army or the Navy, but Stokovsky, during a rehearsal, backstage, would never say, oh, Mary, or Mr. Panitz. He'd say, flute.

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00:49:02.310 --> 00:49:07.959

Nancy Shear: That's what he'd say. Flolin, viola, when he was talking to a specific human being.

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00:49:08.170 --> 00:49:18.979

Nancy Shear: And I think that was to make them feel interchangeable, that they really weren't needed as much. I mean, even with Tabuto and Kincaid.

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00:49:19.290 --> 00:49:34.649

Nancy Shear: You know? I mean, I saw... I saw... I was in the room when William Kincaid, the great, great, great flutist, too, with Marcel Tabuto, the oboist, they... I never met Tabuto, but I did know William Kincaid.

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00:49:34.740 --> 00:49:45.399

Nancy Shear: And I saw Kincaid walk into a dressing room... a reception room, and greet Stokovsky. Now, Kincaid had made the Philadelphia Orchestra, and Stokovsky

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00:49:45.400 --> 00:49:54.889

Nancy Shear: partly what they were was some of the most incredible flute playing in history. And I saw Stokovsky greet him and move him along, you know?

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00:49:55.200 --> 00:49:56.550

Nancy Shear: I don't like that.

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00:49:56.900 --> 00:50:02.369

Nancy Shear: I don't like that. That's not in the spirit of music, but we had that, especially years ago.

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00:50:03.130 --> 00:50:10.299

Simon Woods: So, do you think we've lost something from that era, as well? I mean, obviously, we gained a more respectful culture.

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00:50:10.660 --> 00:50:12.250

Nancy Shear: Yeah. There's a parallel.

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00:50:12.440 --> 00:50:17.389

Nancy Shear: And I was just talking, one of my closest friends is Maria Cooper Janice.

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00:50:17.570 --> 00:50:22.430

Nancy Shear: Who's married to Byron Janice, whose birthday you would have been 98 today.

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00:50:22.800 --> 00:50:34.620

Nancy Shear: And her father was Gary Cooper, the actor. And we were just talking about the fact that even actors, famous actors and actresses today, you don't have that glamour

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00:50:34.750 --> 00:50:51.159

Nancy Shear: You don't have people treating them almost like gods, trying to know who they're having relationships with, and what they wear, and what they eat. We don't have that today. These actors and actresses are very much like us.

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00:50:51.890 --> 00:51:00.470

Nancy Shear: Like us. There's... there's no really special quality. They're not up on pedestals or podiums.

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00:51:00.590 --> 00:51:10.379

Nancy Shear: So, yeah, I think we've lost something. It's... I think it's... people really love to look up to somebody else, but not fear them.

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00:51:11.010 --> 00:51:21.919

Simon Woods: For sure. So, I don't see anybody putting chats in the question, unless in the chat, but I'm just going to invite you to go on doing that, otherwise I'm just going to go on talking with Nancy here. So,

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00:51:22.910 --> 00:51:29.159

Simon Woods: Look at orchestras, with a lifetime of experience seeing orchestras from the inside.

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00:51:29.450 --> 00:51:36.299

Simon Woods: When you look at what's going on in orchestras today, what do you celebrate about what's going on?

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00:51:36.540 --> 00:51:40.359

Nancy Shear: Oh, that's... that's such a great question.

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00:51:40.480 --> 00:51:54.409

Nancy Shear: You know, after all these years, 60 years of working with orchestras, orchestral music, orchestras, everything about the symphonic life is a miracle, and I'm not exaggerating.

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00:51:54.560 --> 00:52:11.419

Nancy Shear: From the music itself, the way it's composed, the way the parts fit together, the blend of the orchestra, the creation of color and expression, but most of all, most of all, it's a non-musical.

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00:52:11.580 --> 00:52:29.789

Nancy Shear: feeling today, because we're living in such divided times, and I was explaining to a non-musician the other day about what orchestras are, and why they are miracles to me, because, with Republicans being against Democrats, and this one being against...

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00:52:30.170 --> 00:52:34.760

Nancy Shear: Said, here you have 100... basically 100 people.

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00:52:35.070 --> 00:52:44.359

Nancy Shear: They are from different cultures, different families, different religions, different philosophies, totally different backgrounds.

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00:52:44.560 --> 00:52:51.209

Nancy Shear: And for 2 hours, plus, of course, the rehearsals, they put their differences aside.

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00:52:51.870 --> 00:52:54.569

Nancy Shear: For the sake of the music.

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00:52:55.160 --> 00:52:59.309

Nancy Shear: And I... I just think it's exquisite.

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00:53:00.030 --> 00:53:05.069

Nancy Shear: It's exquisite. For human beings to decide

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00:53:05.580 --> 00:53:10.670

Nancy Shear: To forego everything else and create beauty in the world.

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00:53:10.900 --> 00:53:23.940

Nancy Shear: I know it may sound corny, but it's not... it's very heartfelt for me. And I think that's astonishing. I remember there was a flute... a principal flute, principal over who didn't talk to each other.

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00:53:24.160 --> 00:53:26.320

Nancy Shear: In one of the big orchestras.

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00:53:27.410 --> 00:53:30.930

Nancy Shear: They put those differences aside, and they blended

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00:53:31.030 --> 00:53:43.089

Nancy Shear: Their interpretation, they blended their phrasing, they matched their phrasing, they blended their tones with other people in their orchestras whom they may have disagreed with.

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00:53:43.260 --> 00:53:50.129

Nancy Shear: About some very basic, important things, but it was all for the benefit of the music, for their art.

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00:53:50.470 --> 00:54:08.310

Simon Woods: You know, and that's funny, that hasn't really changed. I mean, it is still, you know, there are... it is inevitable that when you have, you know, 100 people on stage with all those different

personalities, as an audience member, you go to a concert, and you see this harmonious exterior, this beautiful.

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00:54:08.390 --> 00:54:19.019

Simon Woods: collective action that... that... that we love about our field. And yet, as we all know, the relationships on stage, even today, can be very... can be...

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00:54:19.170 --> 00:54:22.269

Simon Woods: Complicated would be putting it mildly, right?

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00:54:22.650 --> 00:54:37.670

Nancy Shear: Absolutely. Absolutely. And also, too, they may not like the conductor, and today, it's a little bit different. I know there's... there's a kind of a chumminess that I'm not used to. I was at an orchestra rehearsal a while ago.

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00:54:37.700 --> 00:54:50.979

Nancy Shear: And the musicians, you know, are calling their... their conductor and music director by his first name, and I'm thinking, I can't, you know... for me, this is... you have no idea how far in this is.

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00:54:51.170 --> 00:55:03.960

Nancy Shear: But also, they may not like the conductor, but they agree that they are going to give that conductor what he or she is asking for. And it's, again, for the benefit of the music.

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00:55:03.960 --> 00:55:04.600

Simon Woods: Yeah.

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00:55:05.030 --> 00:55:11.599

Simon Woods: So, you know, as we wrap up here, thinking about, you know, people who might read this book.

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00:55:11.870 --> 00:55:13.400

Simon Woods: What do you,

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00:55:13.830 --> 00:55:26.979

Simon Woods: What do you hope that a... that a 15-year-old like you, who might think of sneaking into a stage door, what do you... what do you... what do you hope that somebody like that reading this book would... would take away from...

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00:55:27.230 --> 00:55:30.809

Simon Woods: From the book and from your own life experience.

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00:55:31.540 --> 00:55:51.050

Nancy Shear: Well, on a general level, not even with just music, I think it does put the idea into young people's heads, or maybe older people, too, that they don't always have to take no for an answer. No, you don't have enough money for a ticket. No, I can't give you a pass. No, you can't go in through the stage door. Try it!

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00:55:51.270 --> 00:55:56.919

Nancy Shear: try it. You know, I said to somebody, There wasn't a door

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00:55:57.120 --> 00:56:01.530

Nancy Shear: or a lock strong enough to keep me out of the Academy of Music.

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00:56:01.890 --> 00:56:07.540

Nancy Shear: I would have gotten in there one way or another. I would have probably climbed up to the balcony.

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00:56:08.230 --> 00:56:19.620

Nancy Shear: walked in through the window. I don't know, I had to get in there. But I think that's one thing to take away from the book, and also just surviving, because I had a very rough

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00:56:19.740 --> 00:56:23.179

Nancy Shear: I had a rough childhood, and the music helped get me through it.

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00:56:23.300 --> 00:56:25.609

Nancy Shear: And that's another thing, you can survive.

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00:56:25.910 --> 00:56:38.220

Nancy Shear: Third thing, if my parents had had a lot of money, I may not have had the great life that I've had, because I would have been able to afford to buy a ticket, I would have been legitimate, but of course,

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00:56:38.420 --> 00:56:43.969

Nancy Shear: for the rest of my life, even at this age, when I go to a concert and I have a ticket.

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00:56:44.130 --> 00:57:00.339

Nancy Shear: I still... I see the ushers coming up the aisle, and I think, oh my god, you know, is somebody gonna take my seat? So that... that has stayed with me. But I also hope, just with the music, that it will be a real invitation to a young person

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00:57:00.380 --> 00:57:05.720

Nancy Shear: Come on in, and try this, and listen to this, and...

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00:57:06.680 --> 00:57:16.059

Nancy Shear: Come in and take a chance on this magnificent art form, and if it speaks to you, lucky you. And if it doesn't.

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00:57:16.310 --> 00:57:17.720

Nancy Shear: It's okay.

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00:57:18.010 --> 00:57:25.749

Nancy Shear: And the most important thing is you don't need a degree in music, you don't need to know anything.

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00:57:25.890 --> 00:57:30.360

Nancy Shear: No prior knowledge necessary to come into that concert hall.

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00:57:31.330 --> 00:57:33.100

Nancy Shear: anybody who

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00:57:33.210 --> 00:57:43.410

Nancy Shear: is sitting in that concert hall and hears our orchestras. They belong there just as much as a professional musician or a music critic.

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00:57:43.660 --> 00:57:49.620

Nancy Shear: They belonged in that hole. So that's what I hope people will take away from reading the book.

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00:57:49.990 --> 00:57:53.630

Simon Woods: That's wonderful, that's a kind of a... we should just...

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00:57:53.930 --> 00:58:02.250

Simon Woods: Take that last paragraph you said and print that, because it's such an incredibly eloquent description of what we all hope for with this art form.

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00:58:02.320 --> 00:58:14.180

Simon Woods: So, thank you so much, Nancy. It's wonderful to speak to you, and, we're so happy that you, were kind enough to take some time here, and

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00:58:14.220 --> 00:58:27.759

Simon Woods: We are grateful for you, and we're grateful for the book, and I can't recommend the book strongly enough. I mean, it's really a riveting read, and there are many, many human stories in the book that we didn't even start to get to yet, so...

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00:58:27.960 --> 00:58:29.399

Simon Woods: So people will come to that.

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00:58:29.810 --> 00:58:31.399

Nancy Shear: Well, thank you, everybody, for being.

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00:58:31.400 --> 00:58:31.760

Simon Woods: Yeah.

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00:58:31.760 --> 00:58:38.890

Nancy Shear: Thank you, Simon, and also thank you to the League, which does such beautiful, wonderful work, much needed.

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00:58:39.580 --> 00:58:43.779

Simon Woods: We so appreciate that. Sarah, anything else we want to say as we wrap up here?

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00:58:44.400 --> 00:58:58.210

Sarah Generes, League of American Orchestras: I just want to echo everyone's thanks. We will, share out a link to the recording that'll be password protected after this, and if you haven't had a chance to read the book, highly recommend go grab a copy. Thank you all so much for being here.

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00:58:58.210 --> 00:59:03.630

Simon Woods: Wonderful. Great to see you all. We wish you a wonderful, wonderful rest of the day. Nancy, thank you so much, and we'll see you next time.

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00:59:03.630 --> 00:59:05.060

Nancy Shear: Thank you. Thank you. Bye.

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00:59:05.060 --> 00:59:06.889

Simon Woods: Take care, everybody. Bye now. Bye.