

LORD MENUHIN

*A personal appreciation by
Liveryman Professor Denis Stevens*

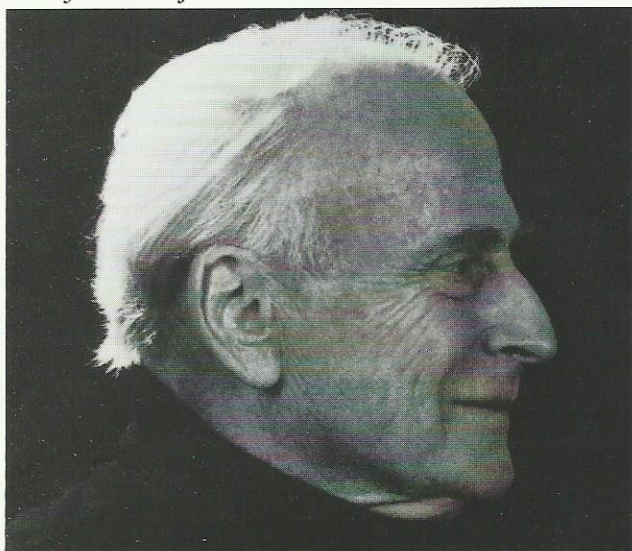


Photo: Virginia Schmidt

The phone rang one morning in mid-January just forty years ago. Would I come to an experimental session at Abbey Road to advise Yehudi Menuhin about Bach's Brandenburg Concertos? We spent several hours recording excerpts and discussing results, and a few days later a handsome and precious book came into my hands. Printed by Insel-Verlag in Leipzig, it was a facsimile of the manuscript of Bach's solo violin sonatas, bearing an elegant German Preface by Yehudi. Later he made preface writing a notable part of his widespread activities, and in time provided material for two of my own books. It began a firm friendship which went on until his death of a heart attack, in Berlin, on 12 March.

Obituaries have praised his world-wide efforts on behalf of many kinds of music, and rightly so for he never ceased to believe in the civilizing effect of good music on humanity. But the journalists forgot one aspect of his career - his deep interest in the history of the violin and its early repertoire. Shortly after the 1959 meeting, I was invited to a rehearsal of the Brandenburgs for Yehudi's festival in Bath, and in October 1960 he and Diana came to a launching party for the History of Music which Alec Robertson and I were editing for Penguin Books.

Speaking enthusiastically at that gathering, he was particularly pleased because we had included an introductory section on non-Western musics. On St Cecilia's Day I registered 'Accademia Monteverdiana'

as a business name in London and contacted Yehudi about a concert in his 1961 Festival. He agreed at once, and we made our debut on 4 June with Yehudi taking part, in the presence of his friend Nadia Boulatiger whose 1935 recordings had brought Monteverdi to world attention.

He loved our little group, and invited us again and again to Bath, London, Windsor and his own festival in Gstaad, Switzerland. Can you guess how difficult it is to correspond with an international virtuoso

linked to a punishing schedule? In Yehudi's case, he and faithful Diana kept lines of communication open no matter where travel led. We met in the service of music or camaraderie in twenty different towns in Europe, America and Asia, talking, listening, planning, and enjoying every minute together. Our correspondence continued unabated for forty Years, and he kindly came to my last concert this past St Cecilia's Day.

He was a miracle man who could make anything happen, and he usually said yes to a good idea. He left us as he would have wished, in the fullness of life and honours, still making music. That we joined him so willingly in those happy years is proof enough of our mutual regard and affection.

JEWISH MUSIC FELLOWSHIP

Recently a reception, presided over by our late Honorary Freeman, Lord Menuhin, was held to mark the transfer of the lectureship to the School of Oriental Studies. It was launched in 1993 in memory of the late Liveryman Joe Loss.

The event was hosted by Sir Tim Lankaster, Director of SOAS and the principal speaker was Professor Israel Adler, Emeritus Professor of Musicology at the Hebrew University a Jerusalem.

Music was provided by students of the Menuhin School and the Department of Music, SOAS.

COURT CHANGE

THE FIRST LADY TO BE ELECTED TO THE COURT:

ASSISTANT JAN LOWY

Born in Sutton Coldfield, Warwickshire, her working life began with a firm of insurance brokers, eventually taking the exams, becoming ACII and running the motor claims department in Birmingham.

In 1963, she came to London to marry her husband, Paul, who had a small company importing and exporting electronic valves, which, of course, at that time were what made TV's work. A highly successful business was developed, exporting at one time to more more than 100 countries. Paul was the entrepreneur and Jan was the administrator. "We had a lot of fun - and made some money too" she recollects with pride.

Her husband died in 1978 and in 1981 she went to work for the Musicians' Benevolent Fund. First of all, she was running just The Royal Concert, but with more time, having closed her business, she took over the whole of the Festival of St Cecilia and also the PR department, dealing with all the advertising and appeals. For most of the year this could be done part time, but much more than full time was required in the three months leading up to the Festival. She handed over the PR work in 1993 and eventually retired after the 1995 Festival.

Jan has always had a great interest in music, early on as a pianist, and in later years as an amateur singer. She is an enthusiastic opera lover and also attends symphony and chamber concerts regularly. From 1993 to 1998, she was Secretary of the Goldsmiths Choral Union and is now their Concerts Manager. She is also Administrator of our own Company Concerts sponsored by the Maisie Lewis Young Artists Fund.

In addition, she does a lot of 'twitching', though not birdwatching, both here and abroad, and very much enjoys the countryside, walking and swimming.