

Alan Shulman
(b.1915)
performed by
The NBC Symphony Orchestra

- 1** *Theme and Variations for Viola and Orchestra* (1940) (13:54)
Emanuel Vardi, viola; Frank Black, conductor
Studio 8H broadcast of March 11, 1941 (première)
- 2** *Rendezvous for Clarinet and Strings* (1946) (4:49)
Alfred Gallodoro, clarinet; Samuel Antek, conductor
Carnegie Hall concert of December 30, 1946 (not broadcast)
- 3** *A Nocturne for Strings* (1938) (4:26)
Milton Katims, conductor
Studio 8H broadcast of October 8, 1948
- 4** *Hatikvah* (arranged by Alan Shulman) (1949) (1:32)
Leonard Bernstein, conductor
Waldorf-Astoria concert of April 23, 1949 (broadcast transcription)

- 5** *Waltzes for Orchestra* (1949) (7:58)
Milton Katims, conductor
Carnegie Hall broadcast concert of October 15, 1949 (première)
- 6** *A Laurentian Overture* (1951) (9:08)
Guido Cantelli, conductor
Carnegie Hall broadcast concert of March 1, 1952
- 7** *Minuet for Moderns* (1954) (3:37)
Don Gillis, conductor; NBC Concert Orchestra
Studio 6A broadcast concert of July 11, 1954
- 8** *The Bop Gavotte* (1954) (2:53)
Don Gillis, conductor; NBC Concert Orchestra
Studio 6A broadcast concert of July 11, 1954

The Music of Alan Shulman

Alan Shulman was born in Baltimore to a musical Russian émigré family June 4, 1915. His father died when he was a year and a half old. His sister Violet was a pianist. His brother Sylvan played the violin. At age 8 Alan was given a cello to complete the trio. The Shulmans received their early musical training at the Peabody Conservatory where Alan studied cello with Bart Wirtz and harmony with Louis Cheslock. In 1928, the family moved to Brooklyn. Alan played in the National Orchestra Association under Leon Barzin, and received a New York Philharmonic Scholarship (1929-32) to study cello with Joseph Emonts and harmony with Winthrop Sargent. From 1932-37 he was a fellowship student at the Juilliard School of Music, where he studied cello with Felix Salmond, composition with Bernard Wagenaar, and orchestra under Albert Stoessel. He composed music for Hans Christian Andersen's *The Chinese Nightingale* in 1934.

From 1935-38 Alan and Sylvan were members of the Kreiner String Quartet. The Shulman brothers then founded the Stuyvesant String Quartet (1938-54) which was noted for its performances and recordings of contemporary chamber music. They also had a swing septet, "The New Friends of Rhythm," which recorded Alan's humorous arrangements and original compositions for Victor (1939-40) and International Records (1947). In 1937 Alan and Sylvan Shulman became charter members of the NBC Symphony under Arturo Toscanini. Alan continued cello studies with Emanuel Feuermann

(1939) and composition with Paul Hindemith (1942). From 1942-45 he served in the U.S. Merchant Marine at Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn, where he played and arranged. He taught orchestration to Nelson Riddle who was also stationed there. Following the war, he composed music for motion pictures, for radio and children's records, arranged five albums of popular songs for mezzo-soprano Risë Stevens for Columbia Records, and completed a cello concerto for Leonard Rose who premiered it with the New York Philharmonic under Dimitri Mitropoulos.

In 1946 Shulman married pianist Sophie Pratt Bostelmann (1916-1982) whom he had met at Juilliard. They had four children. In 1948 Shulman rejoined the NBC Symphony, remaining with the orchestra until its demise in 1954. He was a founder of the Symphony of the Air (1954) and the New York Violoncello Society (1956). In 1957 Shulman had a breakdown and was hospitalized for six months. Upon his recovery, he wrote popular songs with entertainer Steve Allen. In 1959 he participated in a Soviet-American composers symposium broadcast over NBC, moderated by Nicholas Slonimsky, which included Howard Hanson, Roy Harris, Ulysses Kay, Dimitri Shostakovich and Dimitri Kabalevsky. During the 1960s and 1970s Shulman composed teaching material, and numerous original works and transcriptions for multiple celli. He was one of the busiest studio players in New York. From 1962-69 he was cellist of the Philharmonia Trio and from 1972-82 the Haydn Quartet. Shulman taught cello at Sarah Lawrence College, Juilliard, SUNY-Purchase, Johnson State College (VT) and the University of Maine.

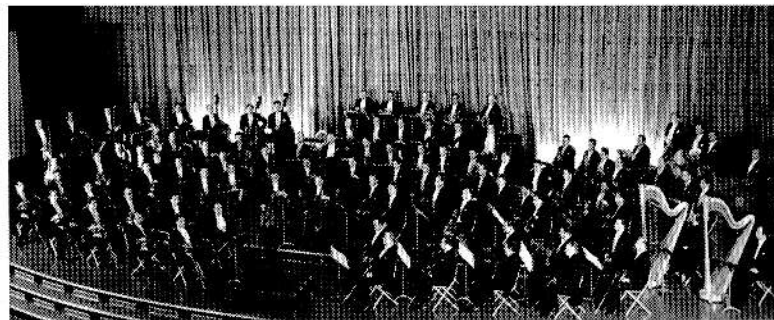
In 1987 Alan Shulman suffered another breakdown and ceased composing and playing altogether. He currently resides in a nursing home in Hudson, New York.

Like the music of his contemporaries Morton Gould and Leonard Bernstein, Alan Shulman's music reflects the "gritty, urban style" popular in New York in the 1940s and 1950s. All three had dual careers, but unlike Gould and Bernstein, Shulman was not a conductor and lacked the podium to promote his own works. None of Alan Shulman's orchestral works were recorded. They were however, performed by virtually every major American symphony orchestra, and conducted by Peter Herman Adler, Sir John Barbirolli, Antal Dorati, Arthur Fiedler, Tauno Hannikainen, Guy Fraser Harrison, Skitch Henderson, Walter Hendl, Hans Lange, Dimitri Mitropoulos, Reginald Stewart, Alfred Wallenstein, and later by Seiji Ozawa and James Levine. Sylvan Shulman, who conducted the ABC Symphony and the Great Neck (NY) Symphony, regularly programmed his brother's works. (Guido Cantelli, who had championed Shulman's *A Laurentian Overture*, was killed in a plane crash in 1956.) Nevertheless, by the 1960s, Shulman became convinced that it was too difficult to get performances of his works by orchestras. With the exception of *Theme and Variations* his works disappeared from concert programs. He concentrated instead on writing for smaller ensembles and continued to arrange. His album of Christmas carols for Felix Slatkin, *Seasons Greetings*, is a celebrated classic. It would be nearly 30 years before Shulman again wrote for orchestra in a handful of works composed in the 1980s.

Alan Shulman's music is witty and sophisticated, although works such as the *Cello Concerto* (1948), *Threnody* (1950), and *Kol Nidre* (1970) reflect his Jewish roots. In a prolific career as composer, performer and arranger which spanned the early days of radio from the jazz age 1920s until the digital 1980s, Alan Shulman was admired by his colleagues as having "the best ears in the business." He refused to "write down" to an audience, or to write serial or "intellectual music." Despite his enormous facility, his belief was that music is entertainment and that the listener deserves a tune. The works presented here exemplify that philosophy.

-Jay Shulman

Jay Shulman is a cellist and the son of Alan Shulman.



NBC Symphony, Studio 8H, 1937

Theme and Variations was sketched on the subway between Brooklyn and New York in 1940. Upon seeing the first few variations, violist Emanuel Vardi told Shulman that if he finished it, Vardi would play it on his debut recital. *Theme and Variations* was completed November 13. Vardi gave the première with pianist Vivian Rivkin February 17,



Emanuel Vardi and Alan Shulman, 1941

1941 at Town Hall. "It was the hit of the concert," Vardi wrote. "Toscanini was there and loved it." The Maestro, who was interested in NBC players' performing and composing activities, commented, "*Semplice ma bene.*" NBC's General Director of Music, Dr. Frank Black (1894-1968) encouraged Shulman to orchestrate it. Vardi gave the first (short-wave to South America) and second (network) broadcast performances March 11, 1941 on the inaugural "New American Music" program over WJZ with the NBC Symphony conducted by Black, to whom *Theme and Variations* was dedicated. Vardi played it twice more at NBC, April 1, 1941 and February 3, 1942. He played it with the Navy Orchestra in 1944, at ABC in 1946, and with the Los Angeles Philharmonic in 1947. Chicago Symphony principal violist Milton Preves heard Vardi's 1942 broadcast. The *Theme and Variations* impressed him and he played it with the CSO in 1943, 1944, 1947, 1966 and 1979. William Primrose toured North and South America with it 1944-1946. Violists embraced the work, and it was performed by Nathan Gordon, Louis Kievman,

Milton Thomas, Milton Katims, Carlton Cooley, and David Schwartz among many others. Vardi's performance remains definitive, and *Theme*

and *Variations'* success is due in large part to his championing of it. In 1954, at the request of Joseph DePasquale, Shulman made a version (which he prefers) for viola, harp and strings. The 1940 orchestration is for winds in pairs, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, glockenspiel, xylophone, chimes, harp and strings. *Theme and Variations* is published by Chappell. It has been recorded twice, by Yizhak Schotten in 1989 (Crystal), and Cathy Basrak in 2000 (Cedille). In 1981, Shulman composed a new "second set" entitled *Variations for Viola, Strings and Harp* (revised 1984) which is published by Piedmont/Presser.



Samuel Antek

In the summer of 1946, Alan Shulman left the heat of New York City for Oquossoc, Maine where he rented a cottage and began composing his *Cello Concerto*. While there he received a long distance telephone call from his brother Sylvan in New York. Benny Goodman had invited the Stuyvesant String Quartet to be "Homecoming Stars," a weekly feature of his summer radio program. Goodman wanted to perform a movement of the Mozart *Clarinet Quintet*. The Quartet had appeared on a program at Carnegie Hall on March 29, 1941 for Anglo-Soviet relief on which they played the American premiere of the Shostakovich

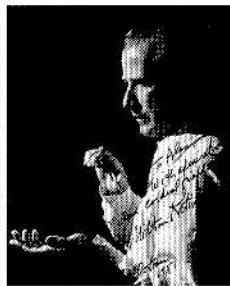
Piano Quintet, Op. 57 with pianist Vivian Rivkin. Also on the program were singer, actor and humanitarian Paul Robeson, and Benny Goodman. Alan did not want to make the long trip from Maine to play five minutes of Mozart on the air. He proposed instead that he write a short work for clarinet and string quartet for the broadcast. Goodman agreed, and on July 29, 1946 Alan completed a new work which he titled *Rendezvous with Benny* in honor of the occasion. The premiere was aired on Monday, August 19, 1946 with Benny introducing the Stuyvesant Quartet to his national audience. Ironically, Goodman never played the piece again. By the time Bregman, Vocco & Conn published it in 1947 its title had become *Rendezvous for Clarinet and Strings*. Artie Shaw recorded it May 31, 1949 with the New Music Quartet for Columbia Records. Alan added a string bass part and Alfred Gallodoro, who had been the NBC Symphony's bass clarinetist from 1942-44, played it at a "Symphony Concert for Youth" at Carnegie Hall on December 30, 1946 with violinist Samuel Antek (1909-1958) conducting 50 members of the NBC Symphony. The concert was not broadcast.



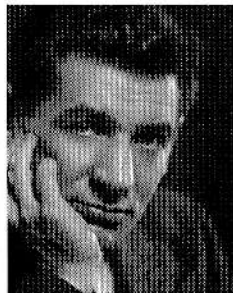
Alfred Gallodoro

A Nocturne for Strings has been described by its composer as "somber and serious piece." Although it resembles the Barber *Adagio for Strings* which Shulman played in the first performance under Toscanini on November 5, 1938 NBC Symphony broadcast, *A Nocturne for Strings* was completed on June 17, 1938, and first aired by Josef Honti with the NBC String

Orchestra before the Barber broadcast. The *Nocturne* was recorded by the Stuyvesant Sinfonietta on March 22, 1945 for Columbia Records and later was released on 10" LP ML 2121. It was published by Belwin in 1945, and transferred to Sam Fox in 1955. Milton Katims conducted the NBC String Orchestra on a NBC network broadcast October 8, 1948.



On April 23, 1949 the NBC Symphony performed at a dinner at the Waldorf -Astoria in *Milton Katims, 1951*



Leonard Bernstein, 1949

honor of the President of Israel, Chaim Weitzman. Jascha Heifetz played the Beethoven Violin Concerto and Leonard Bernstein conducted. At the morning rehearsal of the anthems, Bernstein ran the *Star-Spangled Banner*, and then Kurt Weill's arrangement of *Hatikvah*. Bernstein objected to the Weill, and Alan Shulman offered to make a new orchestration for that evening's performance. Bernstein released him from the balance of the rehearsal and Shulman set to work, incorporating several changes which Bernstein had requested. Bernstein's heartfelt singing is heard over the orchestra on the transcription recording which was broadcast to Israel on May 5 over the "Voice of America." In appreciation, Bernstein presented Shulman with a photograph inscribed "For Alan, tude and great respect." Bernstein

conducted it again at a rally at Ebbets Field June 16, 1949 and Fritz Reiner conducted it with the NBC Symphony at Madison Square Garden, May 10, 1951. *Hatikvah* was published by MCA.

The *Waltzes for Orchestra* is a big, cinematic, orchestral tour-de-force. It has been described as "a 1940s *La Valse*," although Shulman originally conceived of it as "seven waltzes in search of a choreographer." Its "Broadway-Meets-Hollywood" style prefigures Shulman's score for the RKO-Pathé film, *The Tattooed Stranger*. *Waltzes for Orchestra* was completed in New York City on May 13, 1949. Milton Katims conducted the première with the NBC Symphony on a network broadcast on October 15, 1949. On November 11, Henry Aaron conducted *Waltzes* with the Buffalo Philharmonic at Kleinhans Hall, and Tauno Hannikainen conducted it with



With Tallulah Bankhead
1952

the Chicago Symphony at Orchestra Hall on March 18, 1950. Seymour Raven, reviewing it for the Chicago Tribune described it as "witty, well-scored and thoroughly American." It is scored for flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons in pairs, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, 2 percussionists, piano (doubling on celesta), harp and strings. *Waltzes for Orchestra* was published by Chappell in 1950.

"The country of our neighbors to the North has always held a fascination for me -- therefore the title *A Laurentian Overture*," wrote Alan Shulman about the work whose working title was "9B to Rouses' Point." Upon complet-



Guido Cantelli

ing it in New York City June 6, 1951, he sent the score to Guido Cantelli who was summering in Italy. Cantelli wrote from Milan on August 10, "My opinion is favorable about it and I have already decided to put it in program in January at the N.Y. Philharmonic as first world performance and perhaps even at the NBC later on." Cantelli conducted the première with the Philharmonic January 17-20, 1952. The overture was dedicated to actress Tallulah Bankhead who was then starring on NBC radio's "The Big Show." She explained to The New York Times, "We met each other on the Big Show program. Alan is a brilliant cellist. I'm simply devoted to him. He's a darling. We talk music all the time." When asked about the association with the Laurentians, Miss Bankhead, an Alabaman answered, "The Laurentians? I don't even know what they are." Upon being told they were mountains in Canada she replied, "Of course, now I remember. Some of my best friends are Canadians." Alan Shulman commented, "Let's just say it's my way of bringing the North and the South together." Reviewing *A Laurentian Overture* in the Times, Olin Downes called it "contagiously high-spirited and boldly and mischievously made." The scoring is for 3 flutes (3rd flute and piccolo), three oboes (3rd oboe and english horn), 3 clarinets (3rd clarinet and bass clarinet), two bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets 3 trombones, tuba, tympani, percussion, harp and strings and was published by Chappell. Guido Cantelli conducted *A Laurentian Overture* with the NBC Symphony on

the broadcast of March 1, 1952.

In 1953, as a retort to Leroy Anderson's ubiquitous novelties, Alan Shulman wrote *Ricky Tic Serenade* for Canadian violinist Al Pratz who premiered it on the CBC "Music Box" program. Then, in the spring of 1954, Shulman composed in short succession a series of light string orchestra works for Skitch Henderson's weekly NBC radio program. The first of these, *An Elizabethan Legend*, was written March 9, and broadcast over WNBC radio on March 17. The following week, Skitch conducted it for a television broadcast over WNBT-TV. On March 23 Alan completed a second score, *Dream Sounds* (subsequently renamed *Portrait of Lisa*) which was broadcast March 31. (The last Toscanini NBC Symphony broadcast was Sunday, April 4, 1954. On April 11, NBC gave the orchestra 8 weeks' notice. Toscanini recorded two final sessions with the NBC Symphony at Carnegie Hall on June 3 and June 5.) *The Bop Gavotte* received its television and radio premieres on April 14, and *Viennese Lace*, begun April 7, was broadcast May 19, July 19 and July 21, 1954, all conducted by Skitch Henderson. *Minuet for Moderns* was sketched April 26 and scored April 27. Skitch conducted the premiere over WNBT, May 26 and again July 28. NBC Symphony producer, composer Don Gillis (1912-1978) conducted *Minuet for Moderns* and *The Bop Gavotte* with the NBC Concert Orchestra on a network broadcast Sunday, July 11, 1954, with Ben Grauer announcing them as "both novelties." All five string orchestra works were published by Sam Fox.

Note on the recordings: *Theme and Variations*, *A Nocturne for Strings*, *Waltzes for Orchestra* and *A Laurentian Overture* were made from preservation copies of the original acetate transcription discs in the NBC Collection at the Library of Congress. *Minuet for Moderns* and *The Bop Gavotte* were made from the original disks. *Rendezvous*, *Hatikvah* and the opening 1:20 of *A Laurentian Overture* (missing from the Library's copy) were made from transcription acetates from the collection of Alan Shulman and required additional noise reduction.

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Leonard Bernstein performance courtesy of Ambersson, Inc.

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