

# Rey de la Torre, guitar with The Stuyvesant String Quartet

Isaac Albéniz (1860-1909)

- 1** Leyenda (Asturias) (6:10)
- 2** Torre Bermeja (4:18)

Enrique Granados (1867-1916)

- 3** La Maja de Goya (3:52)
- 4** Danza Española No. 5 (4:13)

Joaquin Nin-Culmell (1908-2004)

- 5** Six Variations on a Theme by Milán (6:14)

Joaquin Rodrigo (1901-1999)

- 6** Zarabanda Lejana (4:29)

Manuel de Falla (1876-1946)

- 7** Homenaje a Debussy (2:47)

Julián Orbón (1925-1991)

- 8** Preludio y Danza (3:48)

Recorded July 1952, Village Lutheran Church, Bronxville, NY  
Norman Pickering, engineer

Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805)

## Quintet No. 1 in D Major for Guitar and Strings, G. 448

- 9** Allegro maestoso (6:20)
- 10** Pastorale (6:55)
- 11** Grave assai: Fandango (6:56)

Rey de la Torre, guitar with The Stuyvesant String Quartet  
Sylvan Shulman, Bernard Robbins, violins; Ralph Hersh, viola; Alan Shulman, cello

Recorded 6 December 1950, Village Lutheran Church, Bronxville, NY  
Norman Pickering, engineer

Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959)

- 12** Étude No. 11 (3:21)

Unreleased live encore, 19 March, 1961; Great Neck, NY  
Richard Shahinian, engineer



"El Niño" circa 1930

During a concert career spanning over forty years, the classical guitarist José Rey de la Torre (December 9, 1917 - July 21, 1994) made a dozen LPs. Recorded from the 1940s to the 1960s and sadly out of print, they have long been treasured by connoisseurs and are only now beginning to be released on CD. The present disc comprises two of his finest; it also includes a previously undiscovered performance.

Born in Gibara, Cuba, like many virtuosi Rey got off to a fast start as a child prodigy, "El Niño." When the family moved to Havana, he took up the guitar at age ten under the guidance of Severino Lopez, a "young and shy" former pupil of the Catalan Miguel Llobet, who was the foremost guitarist of the day. Rey made fast progress: his first

solo recital in Havana, at age twelve, included Sor's *Variations on a Theme of Mozart*, *Granada* by Albéniz, and Tárrega's *Capricho Arabe* and *Recuerdos de la Alhambra*.

In 1932, at fourteen, his family sent him to Barcelona to study with Llobet. Rey wrote a detailed portrait of the master and a tender account of those two and a half years in *Guitar Review* (Winter, 1985). What he left out was his own success there just before returning to Cuba, when Llobet presented him in concert—his program included a work still at the outer limits of guitar technique, Alfonso Broqua's *Ritmos Camperos*. Rey received raves from the tough Barcelona critics, who compared him not only to Llobet but to Casals; composer Jaime Pahissa

declared Rey the most complete guitarist he'd ever heard, with "a sweet but powerful tone and an extraordinary technical perfection that permits him to play the most difficult passages with ease."

The composer and pianist Joaquín Nin-Culmell recalled meeting Rey back in Havana just after his return. "As a young performer he was astounding. His playing was aristocratic and exact, quite different from the romantic, improvisational school of Segovia. He had a truly purist mind; this purism went into his concept of technique, which he got from Llobet but which he took much, much further. He was one of the very few guitarists with a respect for the musical text. And I've met very few musicians as well read as Rey, a man of extraordinary culture and interests. Even when he was twenty, he had a tremendous literary, cultural, philosophical, and political point of view."

When Rey began his career, the present worldwide popularity of the classical guitar, so easy to take for granted, was still many years away. The guitar was, as Rey wrote, "practically unknown to musical audiences and . . . largely ignored by the classical performers." Beginning with his Barcelona debut in 1934 at sixteen, for over four decades Rey concertized across North America, Europe, and parts of Central America, the Caribbean, and the Middle East, and did much to bring the instrument the worldwide respect it enjoys today. His New York recitals (mostly Town Hall, but also Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, and the Metropolitan Museum) became annual milestones. He made countless radio and TV appearances.

For the historical record, Rey gave world premières of Joaquín Nin-Culmell's *Six Variations on a Theme by Milán* (Town Hall, New York, November 10, 1947); José Ardevol's *Sonata* (Woodstock, NY, September 3, 1950); Julián Orbón's *Preludio y Danza* (originally *Preludio y Tocata*, in 1953);

and Carlos Chavez's *Three Pieces for Guitar* (Alice Tully Hall, New York, November 14, 1969). He also performed in the première of Villa-Lobos's *Introduction to the Chôros* (New York, August, 1962). And I believe, but cannot confirm, that he was the first to perform, in its totality, the seven-movement suite, *Evocaciones Criollas*, of Alfonso Broqua.

Rey made the first recordings of works by Sor, Giuliani, Tárrega, Cervantes, Falla, Grau, Torroba, Rodrigo, Ponce, Lee, as well as the Boccherini, Nin-Culmell, and Orbón pieces included here. He may also have been the first guitarist to record duets by performing both parts himself.

As Michael Lorimer says, "When the guitar world had few great performers, Rey gave a standard of excellence to which to aspire. As the outstanding student of Miguel Llobet, who was the most distinguished performer in the school of Tárrega, Rey directly linked us to that fountainhead of guitaristic tradition. At the same time, Rey's collaborations with composers provided the literature beautiful new vistas."

When the two recordings presented herein were made, Rey had built a busy concert career in the USA over the years since his 1938 New York début. He'd also made four prior LPs which, for various reasons, were unsatisfying to him. However, once he met the Shulman brothers, his recording luck changed. Though their Philharmonia proved a short-lived label, Rey accounted for two of Philharmonia's dozen releases, and under several titles the solo LP thrived for many years as an Elektra LP and then as Nonesuch LP and cassette. It remains one of the essential guitar recordings, with all the glories of Rey's poetic, precise playing evident a half-century on—his rich and nuanced tone, his exquisite phrasing and sense of line, his bravura technique and profound musicality. (Let those who insist that today's players have surpassed those of yesteryear consider the fact that

this recording was made without any edits.)

The Boccherini *Quintet in D*, G. 448, of which this is the first recording, was done just three days before Rey's 33<sup>rd</sup> birthday. He had recently received his first of two superb guitars from Hermann Hauser I, arguably the pre-eminent luthier of the era, and this instrument would prove his beloved "workhorse" for the rest of his career.

The Stuyvesant Quartet was one of the finest mid-century chamber groups in the U.S., with a repertoire of remarkable breadth. The quartet's founders, Sylvan and Alan Shulman, had started Philharmonia, and this disc was the label's second release. (Side 2 of Philharmonia 101 was Gian Francesco Malipiero's *Rispetti e Strambotti*, already reissued on BRIDGE 9137.) Apart from its historical importance, the Boccherini performance is notable for a warmth and dynamism that remain unsurpassed. One reviewer pointed out that "the guitarist . . . fits into the quintet group as though he had been a regular member of long standing." Here the famous 'castanets' passage in the closing *Fandango*, usually handled by the cellist tapping the instrument's body, was played by Rey with his fingernails on the side of his new Hauser, while cellist Alan Shulman took over the pedal figure from the guitar part. (According to Rey, this was Alan's idea; he was trying to protect the finish on his cello, made by Joseph Dalaglio in Mantua, circa 1800.)

The solo LP, which Rey remembered as "a work of love," was made over the course of a couple of days. As legendary engineer Norman Pickering recalled, 52 years later, "Rey and I had a short but intense relationship. He was a wonderful man, and a wonderfully sensitive musician. I liked him enormously; to this day I've never heard another guitarist like him. He was so smart, so easy to work with. He didn't have any problems, he was totally non-temperamental about recording. He would play things over and over with no objections so I could get the right sound.

Complete takes, with no splices; this was how I always worked. Both discs were recorded in the same church. It's large, of rough stone, with a long reverberation time. I used a single microphone recording him solo, and for the quintet too, placed carefully: a Neumann U-47."

Rey's abiding memory of the session was carpets hung in the church to help the sound, and a touch of whiskey being drunk by those listening, not working.

We have included Rey's original liner notes, which appeared in part on the Philharmonia LP and Elektra reissue and in full on the Nonesuch version. It would be difficult to praise this recording too highly. Though Rey's later five Epic LPs are superb, revered within the guitar world and awaiting CD reissues of their own, they were made under trying circumstances, far removed from the ease and camaraderie of working with Pickering and the Shulmans. The present two LPs were an Eden in Rey's recording life, and he looked back on them with pleasure and pride.

It's worth noting that the pieces in whose development he had a hand have some aspect which is entirely new on the instrument (like the "false harmonics" in the final crescendo of the Orbón). Because of his deep friendships with Nin-Culmell and Orbón, as well as Llobet's urging, Rey always thought of the guitar in orchestral terms. His attention to dynamics, muting, and registration, his devotion to finding ways to give a score maximum life on the guitar, came from constantly thinking orchestrally.

The Villa-Lobos *Étude No. 11* (1929) shows how electrifying a live performer Rey was. Having already recorded the piece for Epic, his interpretation reflects a longstanding friendship with the composer who praised Rey for playing his music "like a great guitarist and like a true Brazilian." This 1961 encore—following a performance of Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez*—was only recently unearthed. (Rey had given the concerto's U.S. première with the Cleveland

Orchestra on November 19, 1959, under conductor Robert Shaw, thus becoming the first guitarist to appear with that ensemble.)

As his career flourished, Rey began to have increasing trouble with his right (plucking) hand, a problem unrelated to the later rheumatoid arthritis which would end his concertizing. During the late 1950s and 1960s he found his middle finger weaker and less responsive, with a tendency to under-reach; having never had any problems with technique, he was forced to compensate via complex re-fingerings. The solution came through Marianne Eppens, a Swiss physical therapist whom he met socially. She realized the problem was due to Rey pampering his right hand to avoid injury or breaking a nail; the delicate mechanism of muscles had become imbalanced from unnatural under-use. She encouraged Rey to put his hand back to active everyday use, and in months he was cured. In 1969 he and Marianne married and left New York for California. Except for two years on Staten Island in the mid-'70s, Rey spent the rest of his life in the San Francisco Bay area.

In 1975 Rey was diagnosed with the rheumatoid arthritis which soon twisted his hands and left him crippled. His final concerts, in '75 and '76, were played while heavily dosed on anti-inflammatory drugs. The last twenty years of his life were spent in severe pain, and his courage in the face of major setbacks (both knees replaced, a quadruple bypass) was heroic. His marriage to Marianne was profoundly happy and her devotion was, as he put it, "saintly." He continued to teach until even that became too arduous. It was inexpressibly poignant to see him during this time, a giant who had once played the most difficult pieces with grace and ease, now unable, as he said, "to play even first-year positions." Still, even as illness ended his performing at its zenith, it made him a better teacher. Childless, he was loved by students as a surrogate father. Rather

than clinging to the faded splendor of what his playing had been, he tried to pass on all he knew, sharing his knowledge (as he wrote of Llobet) as one shares one's daily bread with a friend. He could explain anything.

It is unfortunate that we have had to wait so long for these discs to see the light of day again. Sometimes it is difficult to grasp how very quickly the vagaries of time can erase a performer's legacy; the familiar name becomes an unfamiliar ghost. Now the classical guitar audience will have one of the instrument's great poets, at his magnificent best, before them again, more than a half-century later. May he never be forgotten.

*Anthony Weller (2005)*



Joaquín Nin-Culmell and Rey de la Torre

## REY DE LA TORRE'S ORIGINAL NOTES FOR PHILHAMONIA 106

"The pieces included in this album, by six Spanish and Spanish-American composers, are linked both by cultural background and personal association. Manuel de Falla, besides being musical godfather to the younger group of composers, was in fact the teacher of Joaquín Nin-Culmell. The latter, in turn, is a close friend of Julián Orbón, his Cuban compatriot, as well as of the blind composer Joaquín Rodrigo. Finally, I myself am privileged to enjoy the friendship of Nin-Culmell and Orbón, whose respective works were written for and dedicated to me.

"There is, in the Rodrigo and Nin-Culmell works, a reverent homage to the distant voice of the past, to 'the *vihuela* of Luis Milán' (as Rodrigo has dedicated his *Zarabanda Lejana*). Over the modern musical language and craftsmanship of the *Zarabanda* and Nin-Culmell's variations on a pavane by Milán, there hovers the melancholy shadow of the distant world of 16<sup>th</sup>-century Spain and its greatest lutenist. The *Six Variations on a Theme by Milán (Pavane No. 3* in Emilio Pujol's edition of Milán's *El Maestro*) were written in 1945 in Havana, where Nin-Culmell and I met during concert engagements. The work is especially remarkable for the composer's exploitation of changes of color, culminating in the last variation, which is actually a re-statement of the theme in modern harmonic dress. Rodrigo's *Zarabanda Lejana*, one of the outstanding modern contributions to the guitar repertoire, evokes a sense of distance in time and space in which even the *fortes* sound *piano*. It illustrates, better than any composition I know, Stravinsky's characterization of the instrument: 'The guitar does not sound little: it sounds from afar.'

"Falla's *Homenaje a Debussy* was written in 1920 for an issue of the

*Revue Musicale* containing musical tributes to the French master by several prominent composers. At the suggestion of Miguel Llobet, to whom he dedicated the work, Falla composed his *hommage* for the guitar (his original title for the piece was *Elegia de la guitarra*), later transcribing it into orchestral and piano versions. This short work is a model of controlled intensity and precise notation for the instrument, consistent with the composer's noted meticulousness, his passion for clarity and almost painful self-imposed demands. In an original, striking conception, Falla has used the *habañera* rhythm to communicate his personal grief in a bitersweet elegy on the loss of a great composer and friend, quoting with grave irony, toward the end of the piece, a fragment from Debussy's *La Soirée dans Grenade*.

"Julián Orbón, born in 1925, has written an impressive number of works for piano, chorus, chamber groups, and orchestra. The *Preludio y Danza* [original title: *Preludio y Tocata - A.W.*] was composed in December, 1951 during a visit to New York. The two pieces, which form a unit, are notable for a certain legitimate hybridism derived from Spanish and Cuban elements. The key to their development consists of a Cuban 'son' bass. Especially in the *Danza*, the Cuban influence creates an unusual rhythmic style heretofore foreign to the guitar. With due respect to the Iberian masters, I am personally delighted that a way has been found to escape the inevitable Spanish guitar formulas.

"The Albéniz and Granados transcriptions are so familiar as piano compositions that they require little introduction here. The two Albéniz pieces, youthful works written for the piano, are nevertheless so idiomatic for the guitar that it may almost be said that they are piano transcriptions from an imaginary guitar original. *Leyenda (Asturias)*—for which the composer's original title was simply *Preludio*—is drawn from Isaac Albéniz's *Suite Española* for piano; it is the fifth of the suite's seven pieces, each one of which reflects a particular region of Spain.

The transcription for guitar is by Andrés Segovia. The evocative *Torre Bermeja* (the 'red tower' in the title refers to a famous building in Andalusia) is heard here in Francisco Tárrega's guitar transcription.

"Although Enrique Granados composed a quantity of orchestral, chamber, and vocal works, he is better known for his piano pieces and for the opera *Goyescas*. *La Maja de Goya* is one of his *tonadillas* (a set of 'little songs set in the old style,' modeled on the forms of Spanish music in vogue in the time of Goya) for voice and piano, which Llobet transcribed into the delicate guitar piece that I play here.

"The popular *Danza Española No. 5* (also transcribed for guitar by Miguel Llobet) is one of a set of twelve Spanish dances written for piano (Op. 37). The *Danza* is in the style of an Andalusian *playera*—a music of lament deeply characteristic of Spanish expression, supremely suited to the instrument celebrated by Federico Garcia Lorca in his poem *La guitarra: 'Empieza el llanto de la guitarra'*—'Now begins the lament of the guitar.'"

*Rey de la Torre (1952)*

The Stuyvesant String Quartet was founded in 1938 by violinist Sylvan Shulman (1912-1985) and cellist Alan Shulman (1915-2002). Born in Baltimore, the brothers received their early musical training at the Peabody Conservatory. By 1925, they were playing in a piano trio with their sister Violet and broadcasting over WFBR. In 1928, the Shulmans moved to New York. Sylvan supported the family playing in the Broadway pit orchestra of Jerome Kern's *The Cat and the Fiddle* (1931) while Alan received New York Philharmonic and Juilliard scholarships in cello and composition. By 1933 Alan was arranging for the brothers' Sweet Rhythm String Quartet, and in 1934 played in the pit of Cole Porter's *Anything Goes*.

In 1935, Polish born violist Edward Kreiner asked the Shulmans to join a string quartet he was reorganizing. Kreiner, who had been Fritz Reiner's principal violist in the Cincinnati Symphony during the 1923 season, had played with the Detroit Symphony and the Letz Quartet. Kreiner's social connections helped finance the quartet's Town Hall debut in October 1935. Ralph Hersh, the original second violinist, resigned and the chair was held in succession by Jacques Lerner, Joseph Relich, David Sterkin, David Mankovitz, Bernard Robbins, and Josef Gingold. The Kreiner Quartet gained exposure making weekly radio broadcasts



over CBS, and also appeared on NBC's Music Guild program. In 1937 they recorded the Malipiero *Rispetti e Strambotti*, Beryl Rubinstein's *Passpied*, Roy Harris' *Chorale* for String Sextet and Mozart K. 80 and 171 for Victor, and Mozart, Boccherini and Griffes for the Friends of Recorded Music. When the NBC Symphony was created for Arturo Toscanini in 1937, the Kreiner Quartet auditioned for Artur Rodzinski, Samuel Chotzinoff and H. Leopold Spitalny and were accepted. Gingold soon joined another NBC-based quartet formed by William Primrose with Oscar Shumsky and Harvey Shapiro. Edward Kreiner left NBC after one season. The Shulman brothers, unhappy with Kreiner's paying himself more than his younger colleagues, then formed their own quartet in 1938. Seeking a regional identity, they named their quartet after the Dutch director general of New Netherland, Peter Stuyvesant. According to violist Louis Kievman, the name came from the Stuyvesant telephone exchange in New York City.

As with the Kreiner Quartet, the pre-war Stuyvesant String Quartet also changed inner voices frequently. Violinists were Harold Kohon, Zelly Smirnoff, John Dembeck, Harry Glickman, Maurice Wilk, and Leo Kahn. In the summer of 1940, pianist Jerome Rappaport invited Sylvan, Alan and Louis Kievman to Green Mansions resort in the Adirondacks. With no second violinist available, they performed 3 concerts of piano quartets instead. When Kievman married and moved to California in the fall of 1941, Emanuel Vardi, who had played the premiere of Alan's *Theme and Variations* in February, became the Quartet's violist.

On January 30-1, 1940 the Quartet recorded Bach's *Musical Offering* for Victor under the supervision of Bach scholar Dr. Hans T. David, having performed it January 20 on a Bach Circle concert at Town Hall. They had recorded the *Wedding Cantata* with soprano Elisabeth Schumann for Victor in 1939. Despite these occasional forays into the baroque, the Stuyvesant Quartet's real

focus emerged when they began recording for Columbia Records in 1939 with the release of the first quartet of Ernest Bloch, recorded in October. In May 1940 they recorded Gabrieli and Scarlatti. They performed the Prokofiev Opus 50 Quartet at a "Concert of Modern Chamber Music" at the New York Public Library January 6, 1941 on a program with the Villa-Lobos Third and the Milhaud Fourth Quartets. On January 15, they recorded the Prokofiev. On February 9 they joined John Kirkpatrick in a program of Harvard composers at the Harvard Club in New York, playing the string quartet of John Knowles Paine. On March 29, 1941, four months after Shostakovich introduced his *Piano Quintet* with the Beethoven Quartet in Moscow, the Stuyvesant Quartet played the American premiere with Vivian Rivkin at Carnegie Hall on a program for Anglo-Soviet relief with Benny Goodman and Paul Robeson. On May 7-8, 1941 Columbia recorded it. The group's 1940 recording of the Ravel *Introduction and Allegro* with harpist Laura Newell was already a best seller. With Newell, they also made a popular series of 16 sides for Victor under the name The New Friends of Rhythm, a swing septet featuring arrangements of classics and originals by Alan Shulman in 1939-40. *Time* magazine noted on June 10, 1940 that the New Friends had sold 20,000 records, impressive for its day.

The Stuyvesant Quartet made a belated New York debut with Wilk and Vardi at Town Hall, March 29, 1942 playing a program of Haydn, Brahms, and the premieres of Leo Weiner's 1938 Quartet and Alan Shulman's *Four Moods*. The *World-Telegram* and the *Post* praised their tone and ensemble. On May 18 the Quartet performed the Shostakovich First Quartet, Opus 49 on a Buffalo Chamber Music Society program. They recorded it for Columbia on July 30, 1942 with Goddard Lieberson producing, just prior to the recording ban that American Federation of Musicians President James C. Petrillo instated on August 1. Emanuel

Vardi and Alan Shulman entered military service soon after. The Quartet played the first performance of Vincent Persichetti's 1st String Quartet, Opus 7 at a League of Composers concert in New York, March 14, 1943, and played another wartime concert in Washington, D.C., August 3, 1944 with Leo Kahn, second violin and Ralph Hersh, viola. The *Evening Star* wrote, "It is a group that maintains the highest standards of chamber music art, being individual musicians of distinction, yet willing to submerge their personalities for a more perfect united effect."

In 1943, the Government mandated that NBC split the Red and Blue networks into separate entities, creating ABC. Sylvan Shulman left NBC for the newly created network where he was concertmaster and conducted. Violist Ralph Hersh (1910-1985) became principal viola at ABC. He had played with the National Symphony under Hans Kindler and briefly with the WQXR String Quartet. Violinist Bernard Robbins (1913-1999) returned to New York in August 1943, first joining the Blue staff, then playing with the NBC Symphony and NBC String Quartet. He had been assistant concertmaster under Kindler in the National Symphony, and, from 1937-43, was second violinist of the Stradivarius Quartet. In the fall of 1945, when Alan Shulman was discharged from the Merchant Marine, the Shulman brothers reformed the Quartet with Robbins and Hersh, both of whom were Kreiner Quartet alumni. The Stuyvesant Quartet resumed concertizing December 9, 1945 in a typically challenging program at Princeton, playing Hindemith Third, Shostakovich First and Porter Third. In demand as a composer and arranger, and preferring to play with the Quartet, Alan did not rejoin the NBC Symphony until 1948.

The Stuyvesant Quartet repertoire emphasized twentieth century works including Bartók, Milhaud, Malipiero, Hindemith, Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Bloch, Turina, Kreisler, Weiner, Persichetti, Pavel Borkovec, Paul Creston, Roger



Goeb, Quincy Porter and Alan Shulman. Their programs also included standard fare: Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn, Schubert, Brahms, Schumann, Dvorák, Smetana, Dohnányi, Wolf, Debussy, Ravel, and lesser known Dittersdorf and Boccherini.

In July 1946, Benny Goodman, who had played on the Carnegie Hall concert when the Shostakovich Quintet premiered, asked the Quartet to join him playing a movement of the Mozart Clarinet Quintet on his weekly radio program. Alan suggested instead that Goodman commission him to write a short original work for clarinet and string quartet. Goodman agreed, and Alan composed *Rendezvous With Benny*, which premiered over WEAJ on August 19, 1946.

The Quartet returned to Washington December 30, 1946 to perform at the Library of Congress in a program of Dohnányi, Prokofiev and Dvorák. Their manager, Erminie Kahn, booked short concert tours of the east, Midwest and Canada when their busy radio (and soon television) schedules permitted. They enjoyed playing concerts with colleagues. Pianist Jerome Rappaport joined them for the Fauré C-minor quartet at Columbia University and Franck F-minor quintet in Buffalo, clarinetist Clark Brody for the Brahms quintet in Columbus, and bassist Phil Sklar played the "Trout" Quintet with pianist Nadia Reisenberg who then played the Brahms F-minor at Princeton.

Early in 1947, The New Friends of Rhythm reformed briefly to record two sessions for the independent label International Records. Then in May, 1947 the Quartet recorded the Villa-Lobos Sixth Quartet for International. The composer, on one of his annual trips to New York, gave them a photograph inscribed, "A Quatour admirable Stuyvesant Quartet avec beaucoup d'admiration Villa Lobos." Alan Shulman sent a copy of the album set to his friend Eleanor Aller Slatkin, cellist of the Hollywood String Quartet, and the Villa-Lobos Sixth then became the Hollywood's first LP. In November, 1947 the Stuyvesant recorded the Bloch Second

Quartet and in December, the Brahms Clarinet Quintet with Alfred Gallodoro who had performed it with them in Newark, New Jersey the previous April. These 78 rpm sets later appeared as LPs on the Concert Hall label.

In 1950, with horn player and inventor Norman Pickering, the Shulman brothers, Bernard Robbins and Ralph Hersh formed their own label: Philharmonia Records. Self-financed and self-promoted, Philharmonia issued an eclectic series of recordings during the label's short life. Releases included solo albums by Laura Newell, guitarists Ramon Montoya and Rey de la Torre, saxophonist Vincent Abato playing concertos by Ibert and Glazunov (conducted by Pickering and Sylvan Shulman) and the New York Woodwind Quintet.

The first Stuyvesant Philharmonia recording begun July 26, 1950 (completed August 9 & 16) at the Mannes School was the Malipiero *Rispetti e Strambotti*, which the Kreiner Quartet had recorded for Victor in 1937. In November 1950 at Mannes, they recorded the Hindemith F minor Quartet, which was released on a 10" Philharmonia LP in early 1951. Pickering and the Quartet bought their own recording equipment, a Magnecord PT-6 tape recorder and a Western Electric 635 microphone (later a Neumann U-47) and moved their recording activities to the acoustically vibrant Village Lutheran Church in Bronxville, New York.

Between 1950 and 1953 they recorded the Debussy and Ravel Quartets (in what was to become the standard pairing of these two works in the LP era), the Mozart D major Quartets, K. 499 and K. 575, and string quartets of Kreisler and Paganini. Before their 1950 recording of the Boccherini D major Guitar Quintet with Rey de la Torre, only two works of Boccherini were well known, the 'Celebrated Minuet,' and the so-called Cello Concerto (in Bb) which was a pastiche made by German cellist Friedrich Grützmacher. With harpist Laura Newell, they

recorded the Bax Quintet, the Ibert Trio and the Malipiero *Sonata a Cinque*. Reviews of Philharmonia releases were enthusiastic. The *Herald-Tribune* praised the Debussy/Ravel as "...beautifully executed, with lovely tone and deliciously in tune." David Hall wrote of the Mozart disc, "To my ear, this recording offers more of an aural thrill and human listening experience than many a symphonic or choral-orchestra effort." Jazz publications loved the Hindemith. *Metronome* called it "a superb performance," and *Downbeat* called the Stuyvesant Quartet "...one of the most intelligent and inventive groups now recording."

The Quartet "consciously avoided the well-traveled literature," according to recording engineer Norman Pickering. Projects considered, but not recorded, included the Brahms viola quintets with Leon Frengut, and the 1951 String Quartet of Julián Orbón. Pickering, who was also a violin maker, made the viola that Ralph Hersh played on the recordings of the Mozart Quartets and the violin Sylvan Shulman played on the Kreisler recording.

After recording the Kreisler String Quartet, Sylvan Shulman and Norman Pickering played the test pressing for Fritz Kreisler, who approved, praising in particular Sylvan's playing. On December 6, 1953, the Stuyvesant Quartet recorded the Paganini String Quartet as a companion piece at Carnegie Recital Hall with Bob Blake engineering instead of Pickering. It was to be their last recording session. In all, Philharmonia Records released 11 albums, 6 by the Stuyvesant Quartet. Despite critical acclaim, they barely made expenses and ceased operations in 1954.

When the Kreisler/Paganini disk was released in April 1954, Irving Kolodin wrote in the *Saturday Review*, "It is in every way a successful combination of affectionate performance, first-class engineering and excellent processing. Those who know other recordings by this group know what to expect in tonal faithfulness; others will find it hardly subject to improvement."

In the 1950s, fees for chamber music concerts were not substantial. The Quartet declined a residency offer at Princeton. They all had families to support and commercial work was more lucrative. Coordinating their schedules was difficult. The demise of the NBC Symphony in April 1954 marked the end of an era. In a letter dated June 18, 1954, Alan Shulman wrote his friend Milton Preves, principal violist of the Chicago Symphony, "Thanks for the Qt. leads. I don't think we'll be doing any playing since concerts are booked so far in advance none of us want to commit ourselves. After agents fees, hotels, meals, transportation, etc, one record date pays more without knocking ones brains out rehearsing."

Other opportunities beckoned. Bernard Robbins joined the New York Philharmonic in 1955, played with the CBC String Quartet (1961-1964) and then returned to New York to rejoin the Philharmonic, retiring in 1983. He was an avid chamber music player. Ralph Hersh remained at ABC until 1964 when he joined the Philadelphia Chamber Symphony. Summers he played at Blue Hill in Maine, at the Casals Festival (1951) and at the Aspen (1956-61) and Dartmouth (1962-64) Music Festivals. He played in the Atlanta Symphony (1968-9) and was principal violist of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra (1972-1977) before retiring to Tucson where he remained active until his death in 1985. Alan Shulman was a founder of the Symphony of the Air (1954) and the Violoncello Society (1956), was cellist of the Philharmonia Trio (1962-1969) and the Haydn Quartet (1972-1982); he also composed and arranged, played in the television and recording studios in New York, and taught. Sylvan Shulman conducted the Great Neck Symphony on Long Island between 1954 and 1972, taught at Juilliard and Meadowmount, and also was a busy studio player. Illness curtailed the Shulman brothers' activities, Sylvan in 1982, Alan in 1987.

In 1964 Nonesuch Records reissued the Hindemith/Malipiero, Debussy/Ravel and Mozart recordings remastered in electronic stereo to renewed critical acclaim. Sylvan Shulman then recorded a new LP for Nonesuch, "Quartet Music of the 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries," under the name Stuyvesant String Quartet with violinist Rena Robbins (no relation to Bernard), violist Leon Frengut and cellist Harvey Shapiro.

In 1980, CBS/Odyssey reissued the Kreisler/Paganini recording in mono. Richard Freed wrote in *Stereo Review*, "The Stuyvesant recordings always gave us an image of four musicians not only in total accord with each other, but crazy about the music they chose to play."

In a 1997 interview, Norman Pickering told of seeing Alan Shulman again at a Toscanini Association dinner at Lincoln Center in the 1980s. "Those years we worked together," Alan said to Norman, "were the happiest times of my life." For these extraordinary, versatile, driven musicians, the Stuyvesant Quartet was truly a labor of love.

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For a complete Stuyvesant Quartet discography, visit the Alan Shulman Website:  
<http://www.capital.net/com/ggjj/shulman>

**Thanks to** Bernard Braddon, Harry Friedland, Marion Hersh, Carl Hersh, Mura Kievman, Norman Pickering, Bob Perlstein, Brian C. Peters, Marianne Rey, Libby and Bernie Robbins, Doris R. Shulman, Alan Shulman, Walter and Dolly Spalding, Emanuel Vardi, and Anthony Weller.

Producer: Jay Shulman

Original engineer, Philharmonia Records: Norman Pickering

Transfers: Eldad Benary (Boccherini, Villa-Lobos); Brian C. Peters (de la Torre)

Audio Restoration: Brian C. Peters

Cover photo of Rey de la Torre: Bernard Robbins, Village Lutheran Church, Bronxville, NY, July, 1952.

Rey de la Torre's solo album by special arrangement with Nonesuch Records.

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Note on the Recordings:

The Boccherini Quintet was made from the original master tape recorded by Norman Pickering, in the Village Lutheran Church, Bronxville, NY, December 6, 1950. Rey de la Torre's Philharmonia solo album was also recorded by Norman Pickering in the church in July, 1952. As the master tape was unavailable, it was restored from a copy of the Elektra LP. The Villa-Lobos encore was made from Dick Shahinian's original master tape, recorded live March 19, 1961, Great Neck, NY.

Rey de la Torre's guitar was made by Hermann Hauser I in Munich in 1950.

Sylvan Shulman played a Vincenzo Panormo violin. Bernard Robbins played a Nicholas Gagliano violin. Ralph Hersh played a Mathias Albani viola. Alan Shulman played a Joseph Dalaglio cello.

Anthony Weller studied with Rey de la Torre for many years and prepared his posthumous edition of the Carcassi Studies (Orphée Publications). A well-known classical and jazz guitarist, Weller has many discs to his credit. [www.anthonyweller.com](http://www.anthonyweller.com)

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

Executive Producers: Becky Starobin & David Starobin

For Bridge Records: Ashley Arrington, Alexis Napoliello, Brad Napoliello, and Robert Starobin

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