

performing, she serves on the piano faculty of Vassar College, and in the summer at the Marlboro and Kneisel Hall chamber music festivals. With her husband Orion Weiss, she is a member of the Polonsky-Weiss Piano Duo.

Ms. Polonsky is a Steinway Artist.

A NOTE FROM THE ARCHIVE by Brad Snelling

Of the well-known violinists who have played for Matinee Musicale, it seems fitting to remark on Joseph Szigeti, who was the dedicatee of the last of Prokofiev's *Five Melodies*, which Erin Keefe plays on her program tonight. Szigeti, whose Matinee Musicale recital was on April 7, 1959, was also a frequent soloist with the Minneapolis Orchestra, the earlier incarnation of the Minnesota Orchestra for which Ms. Keefe serves as concertmaster. In *Music and Maestros: The Story of the Minneapolis Orchestra*, John Sherman remarks, in particular, on Szigeti and Dimitri Mitropoulos's 1942 performance in Minneapolis of the rarely played Busoni Violin Concerto in D Major in which "the bald heads and flying hands of soloist and conductor spelled a special kind of magic."

Szigeti is widely regarded as one of the great musicians of the 20th century. He recorded extensively, and was well-known for his advocacy of modern composers. *The New York Times* 1973 obituary for Szigeti notes his friendship with the composer, Bela Bartok, with whom the violinist concertized throughout Europe when he was in his early 20s. Bartok

would later dedicate his Rhapsody No. 1 to Szigeti. The violinist was also the dedicatee of Ernest Bloch's Violin Concerto, and gave the first New York performance of Alban Berg's violin concerto with Dmitri Mitropoulos conducting.



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Szigeti and Mitropoulos recorded the concerto twice, including a 1945 performance with the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra.

For his 1959 Matinee Musicale recital at Pilgrim Congregational Church, Szigeti played Stravinsky's *Duo Concertant*, a work which he had recorded with the composer in 1945. Other major works included the Sonata No. 2 in A Major by Brahms and the Sonatina in D Major by Schubert. The program concluded with the Ravel Sonata in G, another piece which Szigeti had first-hand experience performing with the composer—in this case, at Ravel's own New York debut in 1928.

Last month, I had the unexpected pleasure of corresponding with the pianist, Roy Bogas, who performed with Szigeti on his Matinee Musicale program over 58 years ago. Mr. Bogas very kindly offered "a glimpse of concert life with this great artist" which I will excerpt here. Rather astonishingly, Bogas begins his reminiscence with a vivid description of a meal which he shared with Szigeti here: "I particularly remember our visit to Duluth because of an invitation to dinner that was given to us by a friend of Joska's, who was a retired restaurateur and who aged her own meat in her basement. It was without a doubt the tastiest, most elegant *filet mignon* dinner that I can recall in all of my years traveling to concerts."

Bogas continues:

Joska (as he was known to his intimate friends and family, pronounced "yaushka") was a remarkable violinist and a musical intellect of the first rank, yet he was a difficult man to work with, extremely demanding and a tireless worker himself. It was not fun to be with him, but highly rewarding, and I owe him a lifelong debt of gratitude for all that he taught me. He was an authority on Stravinsky and taught me the proper style to interpret the *Duo Concertante*, a style that depended less on emotion than on a feeling for ancient Greek tradition. He had one peculiarity in his self-evaluation: he could not simply allow the previous evening's performance to stand on its own merits, but he insisted on rehearsing parts of it with which he had not been satisfied. This rather obsessive side to his character was also in evidence in his daily life, so you can imagine that it was necessary to give him a certain

amount of permissive leeway in dealing with him as we traveled between concerts...

As a hard taskmaster, he was completely different from Menuhin, for whom I acted as pianist for five full seasons in North America... Yehudi was a man of the world with a broad universal view which also translated to his dealings with other musicians, including me, in the most generous, kind and trustful manner. This in no way detracts from my gratitude in having had a hard working and rewarding experience with Szigeti.

It should be noted that Joseph Szigeti returned to Duluth in 1962, playing a solo Bach program here at The College of St. Scholastica. He died on February 19, 1973. Roy Bogas—now in his 80s—continues to perform, and is the director of the Master Guild music series in Oakland, California.



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