# *Cellist*

Autobiography of

## Gregor Piatigorsky

(1903-1976)

**Chapter One**

EKATERINOSLAV (now Dnepropetrovsk) had a mild climate, but the air in the steppe seldom stood still. The breeze bent and swayed the grass and rye, which grew high and wild and made the wide plains look like an ocean. I had never seen an ocean, but my father said that the steppe looked like one. It had great power over me. I liked to stand outside in front of the fence and listen to the wind and watch it change the face of the steppe. Inside our peasant-like house I was always in the mood to hear stories about it. Fascinated, I listened to the tales of roaming packs of wild dogs that devoured the cobbler's son Vanya, of tramps and deserters, of hidden springs and mysterious flowers whose scent put men to sleep, never to awaken again.

On the other side of the town flowed the Dnieper River. The stream, which rushed over all obstacles, hitting stones and tearing the banks away, did not frighten me. Nothing frightened me in the presence of Father. He was strong and it was good to do things with him. We plunged into thundering waters and struggled with rapids and we laughed at storms and lightning and we always returned home to the edge of the steppe smiling and happy.

Unlike my mother and my sisters, Nadja and Pauline, I dreaded the family walks into town on holidays. "These parks, boulevards, and monuments are here to remind us of the romantic founders of our city, the Empress Catherine and Potemkin," Father lectured, and spurred us to look at things. None of us acted natural. Even Mother appeared as if the whole world were watching her family parading, but she looked pretty as she walked, holding Father's hand. She was always pretty and calm and she enjoyed those walks.

Perhaps Father enjoyed them too, but I knew he preferred our excursions to the river.

One day my older brother, Leonid, Father, and I wandered into the depths of the steppe. The summer day was bright. There were burned patches and wild flowers that looked like weeds. “There must be springs somewhere near,” said Father. “We must listen to a bubbling sound deep under the earth.” We thought that Father spotted something, and ran toward him. “Be calm,” he said. “There are tramps—four of them.” We saw them swaggering toward us from afar. “It looks as if we will have to defend ourselves. Gather all the stones you can find. Fill your pockets; but pretend you are playing.” Father spoke fast and low. “Aim well. You are good at that. Jump at their faces with the heels of your shoes. Then get up quickly, run to the side, and throw the rocks. Make a lot of noise the moment I give a signal, and don’t be afraid.”

The four ruffians approached. “Hands up!” They ignored Leonid and me, and Father let them go through his pockets. Standing with his hands up obediently, it struck me how gentle Father looked next to those rogues. He was not a giant at all, I realized.

The vagabonds collected Father’s belongings as suddenly he shouted, “Kill, hit, fry them!” With this command everything went wild. Whether they were drunk or stunned by the fury of our surprise attack, the battle did not last very long. We followed Father’s instructions to the letter, and he demonstrated his prowess as a pugilist. Bewildered and bleeding, the tramps limped away.

“Nothing is more degrading than that kind of contact with human flesh,” Father said, collecting his scattered belongings. At home, Mother was horrified at our appearance, torn clothes, and Father’s swollen face, but I thought he looked beautiful.

I don’t know how poor we were, but we were not hungry. One of the few houses I knew besides ours was my grandfather’s , on Mother’s side. As in our house, there was no running water, and the toilet was in the yard. His name was Amchislavsky, and he was a carpenter. I loved to watch him work and to smell the wood in his workshop. But I disliked one relative, a barber, to whom we were all brought in a group for haircuts. We had to wait for hours until he was finished with his paying customers. Often he would show his resentment by pinching me with his clippers. He smelled of onions and demanded gratitude. I resented both, and while everyone else continued

visiting him at regular intervals, I refused to join them and made my mother cut my hair.

My grandparents on Father's side lived in the rich section of the town, far from the neighborhood where I was born. Their house was big and unfriendly. In spite of much bulky furniture and ugly paintings in huge frames on the walls, it seemed uninhabited, like a warehouse. There were old commodes, chests, and china closets, and many ancient objects of which one spoke with veneration. But the oldest thing in the house was Grandmother, who was preparing to celebrate her first century. Grandfather was her third or fourth husband. Stumpy and with a square beard, strict and stingy, he seldom came to see us. He had a bookshop, where my father had been employed. They did not approve of one another, and their quarrels weighed heavily on my mother.

I didn't see Grandmother often, but later, thinking of her, I realized how many bad dreams I had because of her, and how afraid I must have been of her. She moved like a ghost, and I imagined hearing her bones clatter. We called her the Queen of Spades. The news of her death never reached me, and I still sometimes see her in my dreams. To me she is one hundred and fifty now, and still alive.

My mother's mother has completely escaped my memory, as if she had never existed. Mother had two brothers, Matway and Gregory. Gregory was tall and good-looking. I always ran with outstretched arms to greet him, to be picked up, wrestle, or measure the big muscles in his arms. But Matway looked unhealthy and gloomy. Father said that he had contracted some terrible illness, but he would not tell more. I avoided going near him, and ran away when he wanted to give me a hug.

Father had a sister, diminutive Aunt Julia, who had a little limp and who did not resemble my father at all. Her husband, Leo, was flabby and fat and when in a jovial mood he pinched us and gave us wet kisses. I hated his baby talk and I never laughed at his jokes.

Our house bustled with activity. Father practiced his violin at all hours and he was always cheerful and full of the most exciting plans. "Everything will be new and daring," he liked to boast. He spoke to me of the Messiah and Buddha, of Byzantine architecture, of the salmon's mating habits, and, sensing my pride in being chosen to listen, he ignored my inability to understand half of what he said.

One evening, in the middle of a story from the Bible, he said that there would be a new addition—Number Five—to our family. "A new sister or brother will put you smack in the middle," he said, as though offering me a formidable new position.

That evening he took me to the symphony concert, where I saw and heard the cello for the first time. I had never heard or seen anything nearly so beautiful before.

From that night on, armed with two sticks, a long one for the cello and a short one for the bow, I pretended to play the cello. Even the birth of my new brother, Alexander, did not interrupt my make-believe. Those magic sticks lifted me into a world of sound where I could call every mood at will.

Suddenly something at home changed. More frequent visits of neighbors, their faces showing fear, their whispers, and Mother's tears. Even Nadja's occasional laughter did not change the atmosphere of anxiety. "They catch only the fat ones, who can't run," she giggled to Leonid.

"It's not a hide-and-seek game," he said seriously. "Not all are safe who can run. Don't you remember a chicken running in the yard after the butcher cut its head off?"

"Phooey—don't speak of that. Besides, no one cuts anybody's head off. Father said himself that the pogroms are under czar's personal supervision. How far away is the pogrom now?"

"I don't know. Not very far. Are you afraid?"

I was very young, yet I recall our cellar and the faces crowded against each other in the dark. It was there in the cellar that I learned to feel the fear of others. The silence was heavy and long. Someone pressed me against a wall. The wall was cold and moist. I hurt my head. "They are coming!" I heard tramping above my head. The ceiling was shaking and pieces of plaster fell.

The voices were now quite near. "Hey, you dirty kikes! Get out!" There were sounds of broken glass and threatening laughter. Inhuman, menacing voices hit my ears savagely.

"Where is Rosie, my Rosie? Let me out! Let me out of here!" cried a woman. Someone must have put a hand over her mouth; her voice sounded suffocated. I tried to ease myself from the wall. "Are you hurt?" a man whispered. "I think they are leaving," he said.

"No goddam rat left alive!" boomed a voice from above. The noise of the swearing mob became fainter and soon silence descended again. No one moved. As if by a miracle, I could now see the cellar and the people. Were my eyes closed before? At the end of the room I saw Father. Leonid stood close to Grandfather, the carpenter, who with his silvery beard looked like a picture of a prophet I had seen in a book. Nadja's eyes shone like a cat's. They did not blink, and made me afraid. There was unrest in the crowd. Father climbed the ladder to the trap door. "I will see if it's safe to get out."

"It's all right. Don't rush—one at a time," ordered Father. His voice sounded unnaturally loud. When we emerged, our house was a shambles. Only the piano stood in its place untouched. I ran into the yard. People stood in a wide circle. No one spoke. Uncle Gregory wiped tears from his face. "Go away! You should not see," he said.

"They slashed open her stomach. She was pregnant," sobbed someone quietly. "Rosie was raped. Sam is dead. They hanged the teacher—right there—see the fire?" A woman pointed at the street. The blood was everywhere. I reached down to touch it. It was still warm. Some people were stained with it, but none looked like a murderer.

That night we all slept close together on the floor. In the morning a policeman entered the house. "Just going to piss," he said, passing through the room. "It's a nice place for you people," he remarked, buttoning his trousers on the way out.

I recall the spring, the sun melting the crust of ice lying shiny on the snow; and later, the death of Uncle Gregory, and the War Department report that he had died bravely for Russia, his land.

**Chapter Two**

"You are seven today. It's your birthday. Come on, hurry! There is something waiting for you," my father said as he awoke me. I followed him into the living room, where the entire family was assembled. I saw a cello. "It's real, not a quarter of half size as for children." I stood awe-struck, not daring to touch it. It was my first cello, and even before I could pluck the strings it was next to me at all meals and at my bedside at night.

My first teacher was Father, who, although a violinist, thought he could teach me. "They all are one big family," he said. But once, when trying to demonstrate something on the cello and producing a series of squeaks and scratches, he conceded that sometimes relatives are incompatible and he had

better find a good cello teacher for me. I started lessons with Mr. Yampolsky, working with furious enthusiasm and making fast progress. I liked my teacher and his beautiful cello. It was golden red and shiny, while mine had a muddy varnish and ungraceful shape. Soon I began to criticize it openly, and asked for a better one. "By making you wait longer, you will feel more deserving of it later," said Father. I certainly waited a longtime for it, in the meantime developing a contempt for the bulky monster I had to live with. Finally one day Father brought me to a violin shop to see two instruments. Without hesitation, even before playing, I pointed toward the nicer-looking one, which was darker

"One does not judge by looks," said Father.

"The other has a fat belly like Uncle Leo," I protested.

"What! What is this, a joke?" screamed Father.

Needless to say, I brought home the cello my father chose. As though he had just bought a pair of shoes for me, he explained, "You will see that this cello will prove most wear-resistant."

Mr. Yampolsky had to leave town, and I became a student at the conservatory of music and, dressed proudly in its uniform, entered the class of Mr. Gubarioff. My new teacher, who was also director of the conservatory, had a well-groomed mustache. He had an enormous stomach that separated his cello from him and made it appear as if it stood by itself. I was impressed by everything: his melodious voice and the smell of mint emanating from his mouth. He had a large supply of mint drops that he offered me during lessons.

Father supervised my practicing. One day he walked into my room and saw a big pillow on my stomach, holding the cello. "What's that?"

"I am trying to play like my teacher," I said, my mouth full of mint. "Doesn't it smell divine?" I puffed into Father's face. I did not stay long with Gubarioff.

During the summer season there were open-air symphony concerts. Many members of the orchestra came from various parts of Russia. The visiting first cellist, Mr. Kinkulkin, a pupil of the famous Professor Klengel, consented to listen to me.

While I played, Mr. Kinkulkin tapped his tiny fingers on a table and cleaned his nails with a toothpick. He remained silent until I had put my cello away.

“Listen carefully, my boy. Tell your father that I strongly advise you to choose a profession that will suit you. Keep away from the cello. You have no talent whatsoever.”

I repeated to Father what Mr. Kinkulkin had said. He looked at me, surprised, but said nothing. At first I felt happy to be able to join my playmates in their soccer games, but after a week or so I began to look uneasily at the corner where the cello stood. It was increasingly difficult to ignore it.

“What bothers you?” asked Father. I pointed at the cello.

The sound of the cello filled the house again. I thought nothing of getting up at four in the morning while the family still slept and practicing with the soundless system I devised—my fingers on the fingerboard and the bow in the air.

Father was not an ordinary man, and though he never achieved anything substantial, he made important mistakes. Grandfather wanted him in his bookstore and opposed Father’s ever-shifting search for a career—as a theologian, philosopher, sportsman, and biologist. But above all, he opposed Father’s mightiest ambition—to be a concert violinist. Grandfather threatened to stop his financial support should Father disobey. When Father left to study with Professor Auer in St. Petersburg, he did not believe that the threat would be carried out, but it was. Soon after his departure, I was elected to ask Grandfather for help. My ambassadorship was a disaster.

“I won’t give a penny. I predicted that this would happen,” said Grandfather. His face was hard.

Early the next morning I left the house with my cello to look for work. But each day brought disillusionment, until my hopes vanished and I was ready to ask for any help. Returning home one day, I saw people carrying musical instruments, going in and out of a building. I too went in. There was a large hall and I saw groups of people. Some had long hair, some were crippled, many were old, and none looked prosperous. There were no chairs except one occupied by a man at a desk.

“What do you want?” he called to me, looking at my cello. “Come on, son. This is a hiring hall. Do you want a job?”

“Yes.”

“But you're just a kid. How old are you?”

"Eight."

"And your parents want you to work?"

"They sent me here."

"Have you played anywhere?"

"At home—quartets, with my father and brother."

"But that makes only three of you."

"I usually sing the part of the viola."

"Also a singer, eh? But we don't need quartets here. Do you know any gypsy music? He offered me his chair, settled himself on the desk, and I played *Marussja Poisoned Herself* and my own variations on *Dark Eyes.*

"There's a job in a night club," he said, puzzled, and as if speaking to himself.

"I would like it very much," I said.

I got the job, but we kept it a secret from Father. I brought home my wages regularly and gave them to Mother. All went well, but the make-up of the ensemble puzzled me. Why were there two women among us? Neither could play the guitar or the mandolin they held. When I asked the leader, he said, "Decoration—just furniture!"

I thought Vera was beautiful. She sat next to me, permitting me to inhale the perfume she wore. Everyone loved her and many customers demanded her company, making her leave the stage sometimes for hours. Occasionally she would come back very soon, but not for long. People wanted to see Nadja also, but less often. I did not blame them. Her cheeks were too red and she had angry eyes.

On one rainy night, Vera offered to bring me home in a buggy. "Why don't you come to my place?" I will give you hot chocolate. You will see how I live," she said, caressing my hand.

She lit kerosene lamp much faster than my sister Nadja could. I looked around the small room. A terrier doll sat in the middle of an enormous bed. I touched it; it was soft and perfumed. Vera said that the chocolate would be ready in a minute. "Why don't you say something, my big little boy? You haven't taken your coat off yet. I will make myself comfortable." Swiftly, she

pulled her dress over her head, throwing her rich golden hair into disorder. “Won’t you stay with me? It’s raining outside.” She played with my hair.

In the morning after breakfast, dressed in freshly pressed trousers, meticulously groomed, brilliantined, and with a touch of perfume, I returned home. I found the entire family in a state of exhaustion from a sleepless night spent in worrying and looking for me. When I said that I had spent the night with Vera, I was surprised at the effect it made.

At work again, I attended to my duties absently. Why did Vera ignore me? I wondered jealously. She even exchanged seats with Nadja. I hated the men who beckoned to her. Guests began to complain, “Is this a whorehouse or a kindergarten?”

“The kid is bad for business,” the manager said to the leader. It was my last night.

The Coliseum was the first movie theater in Ekaterinoslav. Moving pictures were a novelty and everyone was proud of the new building. But none was as thrilled as I, for I belonged to it. I sat with my cello in the orchestra pit and saw the pictures even before the grand opening. It was a stroke of luck that the only available cellist in town was afraid of the dark when sober, and therefore did not want the job. The owner himself was present when I tried for the position. He and all eight members of the orchestra complimented me. When I emerged from the pit, the owner, putting on his glasses, gave me a looking-over.

“I'll be darned! Say, what’s your age?”

“None one can see him down there, below,” the contractor said. The owner hesitated. But there was no one else to be had, and I was hired. I ran home, holding fast to my cello, impatient to tell Mother the great news.

“It’s a marvelous job,” I said. “They will let me choose the music for the picture! It will be such fun—really different, not only playing the cello.” I spoke fast. “You know, Mother, how it’s done? You must come with me—will you? I will have a watch, paper and pencil for timing every action. Every mood must be illustrated with music. For instance, when the train comes, we will play TARARAM-TARARAM-TAM-TAM—you know, Rossini. There is a scene, Mama, oh, you will like it—a beautiful girl is kissed by a man and he is all bent over. I never saw anything like that—there is a bit of music, just perfect, by Tchaikovsky.”

Mother smiled. “Don’t you think it’s time for you to go to bed?” She kissed me good night. Alone in my room, I thought of Father. I wished he were home. I missed him, his cheerfulness, and even his anger. Now I was never sure if I had done something wrong.

My first days at the Coliseum were exciting. The orchestra, the repertoire, the picture itself I felt were a part of my own creation. Before the week passed, my enthusiasm lessened. I sat deep in the pit. Drops of water fell on my head from the new cement on the low ceiling, and even after I covered my head with a cap there was no relief. I anticipated every drop before it reached me. There was no other place for me to sit, and no one volunteered to change places with me. I developed a strange tic-like grimace that alarmed Mother. On Sundays and holidays I had to play from three in the afternoon until midnight. I became irritable. Only my friend Stolpikoff in the orchestra knew how tired I was. He offered to play my part on the trumpet, but his own was more than he could handle. Besides, his lip was constantly sore. I think it was from eating too many peanuts. There was never such a peanut fiend. He liked them roasted. His pockets were full of them and wherever he went one could track him by bits of shells. A goodhearted man, he had not much to offer except sympathy and a handful of peanuts. To me, at the time, these were great riches.

It was one Sunday that I heard Stolpikoff urging the musicians to give me some rest. “The youngster will die.”

“Shut up, you peanut-head!”

I was in the middle of the solo in *William Tell*, but I could not continue. “Play!” hissed the concertmaster (who was also the conductor). “Play, you bastard!” He hit me with his bow. All went dark in my mind. I must have done something terrible; I do not recall. But later, on the street, Stolpikoff told me that I had broken a chair on the head of the conductor and that among other casualties were a violin and Stolpikoff’s trumpet. So ended my second job.

**Chapter Three**

GRANDFATHER’s death brought my father back home. He looked defeated and haggard. It had been a fiasco in St. Petersburg.

Aunt Julia and Uncle Leo left hurriedly for the United States with the supposedly greater part of the inheritance. Father decided to use his scanty share to move to Moscow, where his children would have better

opportunities for education. I was about nine when we arrived there. Father invested in an apartment house on the outskirts of Moscow and applied for my entrance to the Moscow Conservatory of Music. I was interviewed and I played for the director, Ippolitov-Ivanov, and the cello professor, Von Glehn, and was admitted as a scholarship student.

It was a long walk back to our house. The building was of solid logs and the entrance to the house was in a courtyard behind a huge rustic gate. A bolt barred it for the night. It was like a parody of something medieval, a pitiful fortress that had nothing to protect. Surrounding it were rows of desolate and unpainted frame houses. Nearby was a shack where vodka was sold by government monopoly. There one saw men drop to the ground strewn with empty bottles, as though in a fever of typhus. On paydays women waited for their fathers and husbands. Some tried to prevent the men from getting drunk, but more often they limped home, weary and beaten by their impatient and thirsty men.

In this neighborhood there were gang fist fights of one street against another which started with children and ended with adults, a sport sometimes resulting in murder. It was a tough district. A few streets from us was a chocolate factory. Most of our tenants worked there, their days beginning in the dark of the morning.

The house had six apartments—three on each floor. Ours, upstairs, was the largest. There were a piano and books and a large table in the dining room. That table, between meals, served for writing, reading, and playing games.

The former owner had sold the building simultaneously to Father and to someone else. The legal proceedings that followed drained Father's purse. But, undiscouraged by a lost cause, he bustled with energy and spoke of the magnificence of Moscow and the new, interesting acquaintances he made.

"Great," he announced one afternoon. "Come on, boys," he called to Leonid and me. "I have news for you. We are going on a trip when school ends—the first thing this spring. A friend of mine recommended all three of us to Mr. Susow, with whom I signed a contract for a two-month tour with his grand opera company. We will go to many towns on the Volga River. I will be the first viola, Leonid, the concert-master, and Grisha, the first cellist."

On the day of departure the entire company, with the orchestra and chorus, crowded themselves into one third-class railroad car. Our section, two wooden lower and two upper benches, we shared with a very fat lady from

the chorus. Soon after we left, she made herself comfortable, took off her clothes, and put on a greasy robe that she called a "*peignoir*." She had a remarkable assortment of cheeses, apples, and big loaf of bread. Her appetite was prodigious. The smell of one brand of her cheese, mixed with the perfume she was wearing, was suffocating. The situation worsened when she refused to let us open a window. Despite our pleas to the manager, he would not separate us.

The first meeting of the company was a rehearsal of *Eugen Onegin* in the theater in Samara. Walking from the railroad car, which was to be our living quarters, we saw billboards posted around town: "HISTORIC OPERA EVENT—FAMOUS STARS—100-MAN CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA—IN SENSATIONAL PRODUCTION OF 'EUGEN ONEGIN.'

The orchestra consisted of seventeen men. Its most unusual feature was the conductor, who occupied the podium with his French horn. Holding the horn in both hands, his mouth shut by the mouthpiece, he was mute and gestureless. I was surrounded by four music stands, with parts for the cello, clarinet, trombone, and oboe. It was my duty to play the important spots of each part.

Mr. Susow was the entrepreneur of the company and the leading tenor as well. Irritated and nervous, he complained about many things, but his greatest annoyance was that the lady who was to sing Tatiana, the virgin maiden, had not mentioned her advanced stage of pregnancy when she signed the contract.

At the opening, Mr. Trilo, the double-bass player, stood near me with a bottle of vodka protruding from his pocket. The eager audience paid little attention to the scantily spread orchestra in the pit, but showed surprise when Mr. Jubansky walked to the conductor's podium with his horn.

The house lights dimmed, and during the overture it was quiet in the hall, but soon after the curtain went up the restlessness of the public became noticeable. As the performers warily proceeded, the unrest of the audience mounted, reaching the crucial moment when, for some reason, Mr. Susow's aria suddenly stopped. The conductor, desperately looking for a tenor, pointed at Mr. Trilo, of all people, and screamed, "Sing!"

Trilo's rasping voice, "Olga, good-bye forever," came loudly from the pit as Trilo fell, crashing over his double bass in a drunken stupor. The house was in an uproar. "We want our money back!" the people shouted, moving

threateningly toward the pit. We ran out into the streets. Back in our car, we listened to Mr. Susow. He promised all sorts of improvements and our pay in the next city. Shortly we were off to Saratov. There the first performance was as shabby but was completed without serious protests from the audience. Mr. Susow assured us a long stay in the city. However, at the second performance the house was almost empty, and the third never took place.

Susow's eloquence and our lack of funds made us agree to go on to Astrakhan. Now there was more space in the car, as a considerable number of the company had dropped out in Saratov, among them the fat lady from our section. Upon our arrival in Astrakhan, Susow, unable to pay wages, disappeared, and the company disbanded.

We decided to have a little vacation and moved into a rooming house near the amusement park. Our first days in Astrakhan were spent at the river which flows through the city into the Volga. At a food market we bought melons, grapes, and milk in terra-cotta containers. In a rowboat we went down the river toward the Volga. We located a deserted island and, exploring it, ran into an ill-smelling pool. Putting his feet into it, Father said it was a discovery—the healing spring of youth. Holding my nose, I followed his example.

We repeated our trips to the island. Father noticed that the spring had already done him much good. He was about to register the discovery officially when he learned to his embarrassment that it was the outlet for the sewers.

We counted our money. The sum remaining, after paying for lodging, would buy only two passages home. There was a problem of choosing the one who was to remain. Walking through the amusement park, Father spoke to the conductor of the outdoor symphony orchestra and found that there was an opening for a cellist. I auditioned and was hired.

Shortly after Leonid and Father left, the former cellist of the orchestra reappeared and I was told that I could remain only if I played in the second violin section. The conductor had a spare instrument for me and was quite unimpressed with my assurances that I couldn't play the violin. I hated that little thing under my chin. For the difficult passages, I had to hold it, like the cello, between my knees. At first, the switching of the position did not draw attention, but the moment I was noticed by the public it began to attract a

large number of people who burst into applause each time I manipulated the violin.

"You make a circus of my concerts," said the conductor, and fired me.

At the amusement park there was a Cafe Chantant, opening late in the evening and closing early in the morning. I offered my services and was engaged.

The musicians and the conductor, protecting me from the sight of the nudes on the stage, placed me facing the wall of the orchestra pit. With the help of a rear-view mirror I was able to see the conductor.

At closing time I frequently met a girl who was the barefoot dancer. She complained that the customers always drank and talked while she danced. I felt sorry for her and looked for an idea for a new dance for her. I thought that *Souvenir,* by Drdla, would suit her perfectly and I spent many hours working on the choreography. I danced barefoot and sang until my creation was completed. I demonstrated the dance to her and she agreed it was just what she needed. A rehearsal was called and I got permission to watch the premiere from the hall. My heart beating, I saw her entering the stage, waving her hands, gliding, and executing all my ideas, which aroused more and more laughter as she proceeded. I rushed to her dressing room, where I found the manager firing her. Indignantly I announced my own resignation and got my week's pay.

With my suitcase and cello I was on my way to the railroad station. I bought passage as far as my money would take me. The remaining distance home, I stole rides on freight trains at night, sleeping in haystacks during the day. In one village I sold my suitcase and other belongings and stuffed my pockets with bread and salami. About twelve days later I arrived home in time for school. Inventing a little here and there, I told of my adventures.

**Chapter Four**

It was good to be home again, good to sit at the table with the family and drink tea from a humming and shining samovar. In the evenings we had chamber music, with Mother knitting and listening, and nodding approval at all her favorite spots.

Conservatory started, and autumn turned almost abruptly into winter. One morning, on a day off from conservatory, I looked through the frosted window. The branches were heavy with snow, and I hurried with breakfast to wax my skis for a run in Sokolniki Forest. Maybe Father would want me

to practice the cello first, but it would not really matter. For me practicing was not a chore.

I asked Leonid if he would go skiing with me. He called me aside and, making sure no one listened, in a fast whispering voice tried to tell me something about Nadja. The usually quiet brother spoke in broken sentences and so unclearly as to make me wonder what had come over him.

"You talk like a lunatic," I said loudly, just as Father came toward us. Father said he knew what Leonid was telling me. He looked gloomy, but spoke with no trace of it.

"You are the only one who doesn't know yet. Your sister is engaged to be married. Surprised?" He patted me on the shoulder. "Love is sacred, must be allowed to take its course. We're a lucky family. Some children fly away like birds when they grow up, but Nadja will move just a few steps downstairs into the apartment of Dmitri and his parents."

I knew Dmitri and his quarreling parents, and I could see his stupid smirk clearly as if he stood in front of me in his uniform with brass buttons.

"It's not a *few* steps down," I said.

"What are you saying?"

"It's not a few steps down. It's miles deep into a cesspool."

"How dare you!" he shouted.

I ignored Father's reaction and continued to speak calmly with an air of peculiar detachment. "Nadja is only sixteen, beautiful and naïve. And if you don't stop her from marrying, she will soon be watching Dmitri's consumption progress and she will nurse his bruised face each time he is caught cheating at cards. She will be maltreated by his drunken partners while Dmitri is working at the telegraph office, and by him when he is home. Her life will be crippled. She will not thank you, Father, she will hate you. I will."

Father's eyes went through me like fire. He struck me. "She will marry Dmitri. Get out, and don't ever come back!"

Someone was shaking me. I opened my eyes. There were people around me. "Heavenly Tzaritza! Mercy! The kid is frozen stiff! Let's bring him inside. What about your place, Shutkin?"

“Sure, I'll take him, but you'd better run for the doctor. We'll be waiting for him in my store.”

“Let me carry him,” I heard another voice, “and you, Shutkin, take his big guitar.” I was carried into a well-heated room. “Quick—blankets—pillow,” someone ordered. I was placed on a table, where I fell asleep.

I awoke with sharp pains all over my body. “Don’t cry.” An old man looked at me. “My name is Shutkin; it’s my store. We found you asleep in the snow. The doctor put those bandages on you.” He stroked my head. “All will be fine. I know the pain is just starting.”

It was a strange place, small and crowded with hardware, secondhand clocks and books, metal pipes, stoves, samovars, old garden utensils, and an accordion. The wood crackled in the fireplace. I recognized the man with the fur hat who had carried me. He was rolling tobacco into a cigarette paper, wetting it with his tongue. He spoke to Shutkin in a sonorous voice.

“The young fellow will thaw out in no time ... *da, da* ... well, I'd better get going before that boss of mine kicks me out. Why doesn’t the cholera or something drag his filthy nature to hell?” He lit a cigarette, spat in the fire, and after inhaling a few times said with a grimace, “You know, Shutkin, this cigarette tastes just like dry cow shit,” He lifted his hat politely and left.

A week passed. I still had bandages on my feet and hands, but I felt markedly better. The table on which I slept stood near the shop window and I was in full view of the passers-by until Shutkin improvised curtains. He wanted to exchange places with me, but the table was too high for him to climb and he slept on a couch.

There were very few customers in the store and the people coming in were mostly acquaintances seeking advice or just visiting the old man. They were quiet and did not stay long. Shutkin had a furrowed face, but his eyes glowed with friendliness and made him appear deceptively young. His voice was also warm and young, though asthma prevented his speech from flowing smoothly. He was very old, but how swiftly he moved—boiling the water, putting the covers on me, taking his shoes off; then again, adding a log to the fire, arranging a pillow under my head. I marveled. I trusted him and spoke freely of my home, my sister and father, and of my quick temper and stubbornness. “I will never return. Can I stay here with you?” I knew I could.

One evening he spoke of himself and of all he had missed in his lifetime, but there was no bitterness in him. “A boy like you could be my great-grandson,” he said. “It’s a long time since I have spoken of myself,” he apologized. “It’s hard to talk to people. The very young don’t understand, nor have they the patience to listen. The middle-aged prefer to do their own talking, or to listen when one speaks of them. And the old do not hear—or are too preoccupied with their ailments.” I asked him how old he was. “Not old enough to think of death. All people know their time will come, but they don’t know exactly when, and that makes the trick, a fine joke of nature, which makes everyone feel immortal.” He smiled. “I couldn’t watch my own birth, but I hope to witness the last scene of my life. It may be interesting ....”

He stopped abruptly and said, “Don’t be angry at your father. It is he who is hurt. You are not ready to go home yet, but you will be,” and with a wink of the eye, “Let’s write them so they know you are safe, eh? No? Well, never mind.”

**Chapter Five**

In the soothing company of Shutkin my recovery progressed rapidly, and although my fingers still had sores and were swollen, I practiced the cello and thought of looking for a job. Shutkin would not hear of it. “Study—that is what you should think of—not of being a burden to someone or of earning money.” He went toward the closet and returned with a folded paper in his hand. “Read this. I found it at the conservatory when I went there to explain you absence.”

It was a message from Leonid saying that everyone except Nadja and Dmitri was leaving for Ekaterinoslav, and they were all glad that I was all right.

“I sent word to your folks,” Shutkin said guiltily.

I recommenced music lessons and attended the high-school classes attached to the conservatory. There on a bench to my left sat a mustached singer of about thirty, and on my right a boy violinist of six. With me in the middle, our grades were equally poor.

Professor von Glehn was not very demanding, and he did not seem to mind hearing me play the same etude by Duport, lesson after lesson. I knew, of course, that I could do better, for when alone I played a great many pieces, composed cadenzas to concertos, and wrote a difficult caprice for unaccompanied cello. The goodhearted professor, unable to hurt anyone’s feelings, never scolded me or demanded explanations. He also could not

refuse when I asked permission to appear in one of the student recitals. He shook his head sadly and said, "If you want. I hope you find something to play."

At these concerts it was customary for the least interesting student to open the program. The more advanced ones followed, and the program always closed with the best. I was placed first. The piece I chose was the vulgar but flashy *Souvenir de Spa,* by Servais. The excitement created by my performance came as an enormous surprise, not only to me, but also to my perplexed professor. At my next lesson the classroom was crowded with students wanting to hear me. When I began to play the old Duport etude in my old indifferent fashion, the professor stopped me.

"Please go home," he said. "I can't understand you."

It is strange that a person who ennobles with his mere presence and who inspires respect should be addressed simply as "Shutkin" and not "Gospodin Shutkin" or, more customarily, by his and his father's first names. In Russian *shutka* means "joke." He liked it, as he liked the absurd store that he had had for a long time. He made fun of his wares, but no one dared to insinuate that he was selling junk. The store was the seat of a sage, and I was his chosen disciple. "The music you play here would not be different in a cathedral," he said.

Business was poor and for the last few months our meals had consisted of only bread, *kasha,* and milk. I had to find work. Shutkin finally consented. "You are a stubborn fellow. I'd better agree with you right here and now, before you run away." He thought for a minute. "There is a place I know. Let's go there"

"Here it is." We saw a signboard, "TRAKTIR—Third Class." We walked in. "I used to come here regularly," said Shutkin. "A filthy place. One shouldn't eat here, but the tea is good." We listened to an accordionist. The tea *was* good. Shutkin spoke to the owner, and after a short conference with the accordionist I had a job. "You are such a skinny giant, no one will believer you are only twelve. You had better have proof before you are drafted," said Shutkin.

The World War, which had been raging for over a year, left its mark everywhere. No one spoke of victories or defeats. No one with crutches looked like a hero. People in the streets were gloomy, and only a few watched the new recruits marching. It is odd that the world's turmoil and

misery left no mark on me, and that cartoons of the Kaiser and pictures of the battles did not seem terrifying or real.

Shutkin came nightly to the *traktir* and waited to walk home with me. With my job, our household improved considerably. Shutkin enjoyed his new bed, and his couch replaced my table. The job did not interfere too much with my studies, and Shutkin and I were content—that is to say, until the accordionist quarreled with the owner and was fired. The cello by itself was an insufficient attraction in those noisy surroundings, and I had to quit too. But I was not idle for long. The accordionist, who kept in touch with me, found a new job for us both. Shutkin hated the new establishment. "It's a den of dregs, nothing but bad women and drunkards."

One night as Shutkin kept me company while the accordionist had his dinner, a stranger asked if I would play Bach for him. I did not believe my ears. There had been no such requests before. I played the Prelude of the C Minor Suite, but before I reached the fugue someone yelled, "Hey there, stop it!" I kept playing. "Didn't you hear? Stop tickling your cat!" A drunkard swaggered toward me and kicked my cello with his boot. There was a commotion. I saw Shutkin being pushed; he fell and was hurt. "Your cello, your cello," he gasped.

The man who requested the Bach picked up the pieces of my cello from the floor and put what was left into the cello cover. Together we helped Shutkin over the ice-covered sidewalks as we took him home. I ran for the doctor. After examining Shutkin, he called me aside and told me that the old man was very sick and must be taken to a hospital at once.

Shutkin was put in an overcrowded ward. I stayed with him. I had the impression he looked at me as though to say something, but the physician said he was unconscious. He never saw "the last scene" of his life and without regaining consciousness died two days later.

Shutkin's neighbors found new lodgings for me and I bought a cheap cello in a most unlikely place, a vegetable market in the street. It was coal black and it had wormholes and many cracks that were cemented or roughly repaired with carpenter's glue. The varnish had a smell of tar. It is surprising that with that smell I was able to get a job in a salon orchestra in one of the better restaurants of Moscow.

The musicians spoke to me about an important patron who preferred the cello to all other instruments, that his favorite piece was a melody from the ballet *Fiameta*, by Minkus, and that I had better prepare the piece well.

One evening a middle-aged man walked toward a table close to the orchestra. "There he is," whispered the leader.

"What is that?" He pointed at me and, not waiting, turned to depart. The leader rushed after him and a few minutes later announced, "Afanassieff will stay. Such a fool! He is used to grown-up cellists. I told him a thing or two." Slapping my shoulder, he said, "Play for him until his heart bleeds. Come on, boys, bring your ammunition. We are going to play for Afanassieff in a private room." I hesitated. I had heard of all sorts of wild private parties, where musicians galloped around a table as they played or allowed their faces to smeared with mustard for a tip.

"Come on, we are waiting," urged the leader. "He doesn't believe you can satisfy him. He is alone there, and he never drinks."

Mr. Afanassieff sat in a corner of a large room. He commanded, "*Fiameta*."

"Play it again," he said nostalgically as soon as I had finished. I had to repeat it again and again. He came toward me. "Stand up," said the leader.

"Buy yourself a better cello." Mr. Afanassieff pulled a bundle of money from his pocket and counted out nine thousand rubles, which he handed to me. As I stood abashed, holding the money, he gave one thousand rubles to the orchestra and walked away.

The responsibility of safekeeping so much money and finding the right instrument made me uneasy. The musicians did not share my concern. "Just stick with us. We didn't do badly, did we?" They celebrated the event and walked me home, and the cheerful group appeared to greet me in the morning.

Of the instruments that were for sale, I was impressed with a Montagnana, but my friends liked a Guarneri. It had a light yellow color and its measurements seemed faulty. But, influenced by their enthusiasm, I was swayed to buy it for the exact sum of nine thousand rubles.

Where was Mr. Afanassieff? I wanted him to hear the Guarneri and to know my gratitude. But it was not my fate ever to see him again.

My mornings and afternoons were spent at the conservatory and I practiced at home between classes. I even practiced in the restaurant when there were

no guests. Our pianist liked to accompany me or just to sit and listen, while the rest of the orchestra played cards in the musicians' room. They played one game called *Frapp*. Yankov, the second violinist, taught it to me, and it was to him that I lost one month's salary. Everyone lost large amounts to him, but it did not console me at all. I resented his never-failing luck and became suspicious of it. Though I did not play anymore, I was always present, standing opposite Yankov and watching his every move. It disturbed him. Sometimes his hand trembled. He began to lose.

"Why don't you go away and practice your cello?" he would say. Not to cheat must have been hard on him. One night he watched me during a game. His eyes kept darting at me as if he was waiting for an opportunity to catch me off guard. Finally, like magic, a card came from his sleeve. I saw it, yet I stood mute. After work I followed him out to the street.

"I will pay you my debt," I said. He walked faster. "They are your friends. I will not tell them. You must not cheat." He slapped my face. Long after he disappeared into one of the side streets I still heard the slap. The sound of it seemed to come from all sides, from every wall of the buildings around me. The next day was payday. The cashier, following my instructions, gave half of my salary to Yankov. For the next few weeks, undisturbed by my presence, he continued to win, until one day he was caught and beaten up. Somehow he managed to keep his job.

It was I who lost mine. The first guests to arrive one evening were a group of conservatory professors. Catching me at my usual practicing, they asked me to continue. I played several pieces and acknowledged their applause. Honored by the praise of the distinguished musicians, I hoped they would want to speak to me. Instead, pointing at me, they spoke to the waiter, whom they sent to the stage with money on a tray. "Here's your tip. Buy yourself a cigar," the waiter said. Insulted, I ran toward the guests and threw the money on their table. Before I realized what had happened, I was bodily thrown out with my cello and all in the snow.

In this ungraceful exit I lost my mittens, and, being susceptible to frostbite, my hands became swollen and red within a few days. My room was not heated, and in a chronic state of hunger I did not even try to look for a new job. Avoiding my teachers, nonetheless I hung around the conservatory because it was the only place I could go that was warm.

One day I bumped into the director, Ippolitov-Ivanov. "Someone mentioned seeing you in strange places—night clubs or something. Very distressing."

He tried to appear strict. “We must maintain high standards. You will be punished. We can’t keep you here—not after you have insulted our professors. How could you, Gossinka?” he said softly, coming closer to me.

He looked at my frostbitten fingers. “You must put goose grease on them.” And, as though speaking to himself, “God knows why some talented fellows dig ditches under them instead of growing wings! Show me your hands again. Does it hurt?” He rubbed my hands gently. “The goose grease will help, I know, Krassic, it will. You don’t really believe that we don’t want you, do you?” His voice was tender. I wanted to say something but I could not.

Simple and kind, he reminded me more of a coachman or village parson than the composer of *Caucasian Sketches,* the only work of his I knew. His hair and his fleshy face, which seemed too large for his short body, made his eyes look very small. But I loved him almost as much as Shutkin, only I wished he wouldn’t use so many diminutive names on me.

“Go home, Lirotchka, and don’t worry, Prokossonchik, my boy,” he said, walking me to the door. Long after I left, his words “Pussik—Dushka—Goose Grease—Grishinka” tickled my ears.

My landlady did not believe in extending credit to her boarders. My punctuality in paying had made me her favorite. At the table, I had been served before the older boarders. She would bestow smiles upon me, show her pleasure at my having had a good night’s rest, and volunteer information on the weather. But the day I lost my job, her sentiments changed. She asked to be paid in advance. Rapidly running out of funds, I had to sell almost all of my belongings to a peddling Tartar. They did not bring much, but it gave me time to look for a new job. There were no jobs available. Wherever I went, I heard the same thing: that I was a troublemaker. Days passed. Waiting to be paid, the landlady ordered me not to take the cello out of the house, I asked her to accompany me to a place where I could sell my Guarneri.

A well-known violinmaker took a quick look at my cello and said, “I wonder who keeps putting new labels inside of this factory-made product. The last time I saw it, when a fellow named Yankov brought it here, it was a Stradivari. Before that, it was a Guadagnini. Now it is a Guarneri.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

"This Guarneri is the darnedest fake. It has been circulating in town for a long time. My boy, it is worthless. Don't buy it, no matter how cheap. That is my advice."

"It's he who is a fake!" shrieked the landlady, shaking her finger at me. "Put it back in the cover." She snatched it. "I will salvage whatever I can," she said, slamming the door behind her.

"Is she your mother?" asked the violinmaker sympathetically.

"Heavens, no!" I said.

The sky was clear, the air crisp, the ground under my feet solid. I was free. No house, no obligations, no cello. That is, until the next one.

**Chapter Six**

The janitor of the conservatory let me sleep in one of the classroom. When Professor von Glehn heard about it, he said that I should have come to see him. He gave me some money and loaned me a cello. It was rather small and girlish, and the sound matched its appearance. It did not respond to my masculine style. "This cello will help you develop a taste for lyrical and elegant music," said the professor.

"Do you know Gospodin Kachouk?" the janitor asked me one day.

"No."

"But you know Chaliapin?"

"Of course."

"Well, Kachouk is his manager, and right now he is in a jam because Chaliapin's regular stopgap got sick."

"Stopgap?"

"Yes, someone to fiddle while Chaliapin rests between numbers. You were recommended, and I said, 'Piatigorsky is your man.' We made the deal."

"What deal?" I asked.

"It's a proposition for three concerts. He left a deposit—here, see?" He showed me the money and quickly put it back into his pocket. "Congratulations! You sure can use a few rubles." He produced a slip of paper and handed it to me. I read: "For Piatigorsky—rehearsal with Professor Keneman Thursday at four in the conservatory. Wear a dark suit

and a clean shirt at the concert." The word "clean" was underlined and it was signed, "Kachouk."

"Thursday! That is tomorrow!" I thanked the janitor and hurried away.

The next day I met Professor Keneman. His age could have been anywhere from forty to seventy. He wore a high collar that covered the sides of his face but left an opening in the middle for his goatee. Our rehearsal was easy and short. There were no questions asked, and I heard his voice only when he said, "Uha," or "Aha," which meant that he took notice of everything essential.

The first concert was two days later. The news of my engagement spread fast at the conservatory. Students congratulated me and said they would attend. "Your genius will illuminate the world, and put Chaliapin in the shadow," one of them said, to the enjoyment of the others. I took their mockery stoically. I had no time for them. I went to practice.

At the big conservatory hall, the backstage was dark and empty. I listened to the rumble of the oncoming public and waited to be called on stage. A short, round man rolled into the room. He puffed and was out of breath. "What's the idea—puff, puff—of hiding yourself? It's time to start. My name is Kachouk."

"I am ready," I said.

"Don't you know that tonight is a gala? Chaliapin? Premiere?" I passed through the narrow stage door with Professor Keneman. Blinded by the bright lights and deafened by noise, I stared at the tremendous audience. There was no applause to greet us. No one seemed to have such a notion—they greeted each other instead. As soon as I sat down, Keneman proceeded with the *Polonaise* by Popper. It was surprising to hear such a restrained gentleman play suddenly with a devil-may-care gusto. I took over with no less bravura. But despite our effort no one seemed to pay any attention to us. Quite the contrary—the general noisiness increased. When we reached the middle of the piece, I was startled to feel someone's hand on my back. Behind me stood Kachouk. "Chaliapin is ready—let's go," he said. Keneman stopped playing only after he saw us leaving the stage. Chaliapin stood in the wings. I looked at him admiringly. There was a man who, like a formidable mountain, did not need to give proof of being gigantic. He did not need to sing or act—just be there, high above the world. I was so impressed that I forgot my disastrous appearance of a few minutes before.

"Hey, Kachouk, tell the electrician to put the lights off and on—blink them, Chaliapin boomed.

"Yes, yes, certainly," said the little man.

Chaliapin cleared his throat and sang a few notes. "Devil—my throat—it's good for spitting, not singing!" He crossed himself. The instant he entered the stage, the possessed and frantic mob roared.

At the intermission I asked Keneman what piece we would play next. "It does not matter. No one will notice a couple of fleas on an elephant's back."

After the concert I was met by my fellow students. "You certainly drew a terrific crowd tonight!"

My wounded ego asserted itself the very moment I faced the audience at the second concert. Angrily I shouted for silence, but got no reaction. When Keneman finally began the *Polonaise*, it sounded pitifully lost, and I entered my solo in a mad rage. I stamped my feet, screamed, tossed my bow in the air, caught it, and twirled my cello before playing again. I must have done even more incredible feats of clowning, for the public became attentive, and at the conclusion of the piece there was an ovation. I had to play one encore and then another.

Chaliapin was standing in the stage door, completely filling it with his massive body. His anger was terrible; his threatening looks and gestures frightened me. I dared not pass through that narrow door. The only safe place for me was where I was—on stage. He shook his fists at me and swore, as I obliged with more encores.

The second Chaliapin moved away from the stage door, I broke off and dashed out. I just made it.

A few minutes later Mr. Kachouk said to me, "Chaliapin won't forget you. And you will not forgive yourself for your cheap tricks. Now pack your cello and good-bye. I will get someone less eccentric for the next concert. You will hear from me."

Kachoul was right. Chaliapin did not forget me. Much later, when we had become friends, he recalled the incident, much to our mutual amusement. Kachouk was correct too in predicting that I would not forgive myself. I am still ashamed. And his last words, that I would hear from him later, also came true when he asked me to participate, with Serge Koussevitzky and

Vladimir Horowitz, in a Chaliapin memorial concert at Hunter College, New York, about thirty-four years later.

**Chapter Seven**

It was the Revolution. Everything was disrupted in a mighty gust of wind that changed direction chaotically and spread like wildfire. It was a hunt—a hunt for Whites and Reds, for the ghosts and for the living. The wounded with their insides out charged forward, and none believed himself dead. The cries for vengeance or freedom made calls for mercy too feeble to hear. The mice of yesterday were the tigers of today, and rabbits laughed like hyenas. Oh, what a hunting ground, what deafening noises! Cries, barking, shots filled the streets of Moscow, still wet with tears from the time of Rurik. Princes were smoked out of palaces. Grandmothers, sons, daughters, and grandchildren crawled from under Louis XIV beds like poisoned vermin. Pianos were dropped from windows and diamonds exchanged for a loaf of bread. The generals bombarded a factory of workers. All were on the run, foam dripping from their mouths. They were mad dogs—but there were no Pasteur, no laboratories, no hospitals in sight.

It was a frenzied convulsion. All was blood. A gigantic volcano had come to life, and Russia trembled. The serfdom, pogroms, and uprisings of the past were just a small show. The fury in France and its guillotines were fit only for nursery games. Now it was different. It was a great spectacle, a monster show within a show, and all were characters in it, free to unfold their genius in deadly improvisations. It was the time of awakened anger, and many had waited long for it.

I was fourteen, and I wanted to participate and be swept up in the torrent, but I held on and just listened—to the guns firing, and to the trumpeting voices proclaiming that the gods, demigods, and the centuries-old rule of the House of Romanoff had fallen.

The great uprising of the masses was terrifying, yet astonishingly many went about their daily lives. I had a room, but I could not think of study, and I had to work.

My landlady was a modiste who employed three workers. Very friendly, she often invited me for a meal and asked me not to worry about the rent. She was married and had a child whose father visited them regularly. She said that he knew many musicians.

"Do you know his friend Professor Lev Zeitlin?" she asked me one day. "He is a violinist."

I said, "Only by name."

When I met Professor Zeitlin, I immediately recognized him as the man who had helped pick up the bits of broken cello at the *traktir*. He remembered me, too. I was elated to see him again. He said he had thought of me often and wondered what had become of me, but that he did not even know my name. He told me that musical life in Moscow had suffered a loss at the recent death of the great young cellist Vassily Podgorny, who had been a member of his string quartet.

He said, "Perhaps it is fate that we meet again." A few days later he introduced me to his colleagues, Konstantin Mostras, the violinist, and Ferdinand Krish, the violist. I played for them, and after I joined them in Beethoven, Borodin, and Tchaikovsky quartets, I was asked to join the celebrated ensemble.

I became extremely fond of my three older colleagues. Our daily rehearsals, which would begin in the morning, usually lasted until the clean-shaven face of Mr. Krish had grown whiskers. We scheduled cycles of concerts, and on Mr. Zeitlin's advice I entered the contest for the first cello chair at the Bolshoi Theater. He spoke of the great importance of such an event and told me the position was considered the finest in Russia and perhaps in the world. "Everyone will compete for it," he said.

The Bolshoi Theater had great meaning to me, as to everyone else. It was a source of national pride and a place of honor to all participating artists. Even as I entered the imposing building, I could not believe its magic doors were opening for me. I was led into a long and narrow foyer. There I saw a small army of cellists sitting along the walls and practising. I found an empty chair and joined them. The merciless noise would stop for only a second, to hear a voice calling the name of the next to appear before the jury of judges. They left and reappeared again, but the anxiety on their faces remained the same. By the time I was called, my attitude of aspiring artist had turned to that of an unwilling recruit, waiting in line to be rejected or drafted.

I confronted the judges, presided over by the venerable Vyacheslav Suk. The famous musicians consulted in whispers as I tuned my cello and waited.

"What would you like to play?" I heard finally.

"I didn't bring any music, only my cello."

Turning to the pianist, Mr. Suk asked, "What do you have there?"

"The Dvorak Concerto," he said, and as if it was all he had been waiting for, he started immediately a few bars before the cello entrance.

"Stop, stop," I shouted. "Please start the concerto from the beginning."

There was an uncomfortable silence. "It is not customary here to waste time on long piano introductions," someone remarked angrily, and the piano began where it had left off.

It was lucky that the strong attack of the cello solo corresponded so well with my mood. Still more fortunate was the power of the music over me. After the conclusion of the first movement the jury, not trying any more to economize their time, asked me to play more for them. When I finished, everyone, including the contestants, congratulated me on my new position as first cellist of the Bolshoi Theater.

In the orchestra pit my seat was on a platform quite prominently placed. On my left stood the first-bass player, and both of us were separated from our respective sections. We shared the same music stand and played from the same old hand-copied scores, which had both parts written in and which were enormously thick and besmeared with many markings and strange signs in all colors and shapes. The first bass, Mr. Domoshevitch, was very helpful. "I will turn the pages. Follow me. Watch *me*, rather than the conductor. Don't pay attention to the others," he warned.

On my first night in the theater *Swan Lake* was given. As Mr. Arens, the conductor of the ballet, walked to the podium, Domoshevitch remarked, "He is an old snapping turtle—came here straight from Noah's ark," and, turning the pages, he quickly showed me which signs and signals in the part had to be ignored. "Those in black ink are nothing but traps; the blue and red were used years ago; only the red pencil and drawings of eyeglasses are valid." Throughout the evening Mr. Arens stared at me, and only once, after a big solo, did his face show approval.

I liked the ballet and I enjoyed playing the challenging solos, particularly for our prima ballerina, Ekaterina Gelzer, who, despite her enormous calves, danced with lightness and grace. Zhukov, Baloshova, Abramova, the frail Kengurova—all were a delight.

Although officially the soloist of the ballet, I played operas too, and if it was Wagner or Verdi under the direction of Suk, the performances were on a

high level. For Russian operas I liked Golovanov. Regretfully, there were no contemporary works presented.

Each leader traditionally carried all responsibility for his group, so if, for example, the cello section did not see me enter, they would not play, letting me take the blame. My failure to enter at the right time had caused near disaster on a few occasions. I finally discovered that the cause of my mistakes was wrong indications intentionally written by someone into the score.

I soon learned why there was resistance from older members of the orchestra: Every promotion took years, and no matter how small, it was cause for an important celebration. Obviously many were reluctant now to watch a youngster ahead of them from the start. To win their respect, I had to do something.

At one performance, having a long rest in my part, I put my bow on the music stand, leaned back in my chair, and rested. Suddenly I grabbed my bow, pretending to make an entrance. The entire section promptly came in at the wrong time, while I, not having touched a string, glared at them. After a few more no less malicious jokes on my part, wonderful relations with my colleagues were firmly established.

The Communist government was established, but the after effects of the great struggle remained, and people were weary and hungry. I was the only member of the orchestra to receive a child's ration card, and was called a "chocolate baby." For some it was funny, but I would rather have had raw fish and potato peels than my endless diet of sweets.

Despite cold and hunger, art flourished in Moscow. Artists shared each other's ideas, and musicians played for actors and in turn heard them discuss their plays. It was good to know and to play for Stanislavsky, Kochalov, Nemerovich-Danchenko, and Moskwin, all of the Art Theater. But when they spoke of music and we of the drama, our innocence of each other's field was obvious. I was attracted by the poets, particularly Majakowaky and Essenin, whom I saw at the Tabakerka, a place all revolutionary poets frequented. Secretly I wrote poetry myself, and still more secretly I thought myself a poet.

My life bustled with activity. There were recitals, new programs, quartets, and a newly founded trio with Dobrowen and Fischberg (later he changed his name to Mischakoff). I had concerts with Professors Igumnov,

Goldenweiser, with Nikolai Orloff, and Madame Beckmann-Scherbina—all so different and yet all outstanding pianists and musicians. Madame Beckmann-Scherbina and I introduced the *Improvisations* by Goedicke and, as I recall, the Debussy cello sonata and the *Ballada*, by Prokofieff; and with Zeitlin we gave the first Russian performance of the Ravel Trio. Sometimes in my programs I included somewhat obscure old music seldom or never before performed.

The concert audiences of Moscow were extraordinarily receptive. It was as though the listeners took an active part in music, not unlike the musicians themselves. The spiritual food here was not rationed like bread and meat, and many took advantage of it.

In addition to ballet and opera, the Bolshoi Theater also had symphony concerts with guest soloists and conductors. An unusual feature of these concerts was that the orchestra sat in the pit as in opera, while the soloist was behind the orchestra, alone on the stage. It was at one of these concerts that I met Serge Koussevitzky for the first time. The soloist for this concert was Romanovsky, who played the Grieg Piano Concerto during the first part of the program. I don't know what happened, but by the end of the first movement Koussevitzky and Romanovsky lost each other. Romanovsky ended the long struggle unexpectedly by dashing from the stage, leaving the orchestra and Koussevitzky to finish the movement alone. Koussevitzky, enraged and in full view of the perplexed audience, pointed at me as if I was the cause of the disaster. Following the hastily arrived-at intermission, I not only refused to participate in the rest of the concert but demanded an apology. It is strange that such an absurd beginning should have resulted in a lifelong friendship, but it did.

There was another incident at those concerts. The conductor Gregor Fitelberg gave the first performance in Russia of Richard Strauss's *Don Quixote*. He addressed the orchestra: "The important cello solo in this piece is very difficult," he said, looking at me. "I don't doubt that your first cellist, though very young, is a capable artist. Yet this work, in Europe, has always been performed with a guest soloist. The cello part needs long preparation, just like a concerto. Even more so. Therefore, I have invited Mr. Giskin."

A gentleman with a cello walked in. He was greeted by silence. I liked his appearance and was delighted with the prospect of listening to him. I offered him my place at once and moved over to the second chair. As Mr. Fitelberg was ready to begin, there were voices of protest.

"Our cellist can play as well as anyone! We don't care what they do in Europe. We are here in Bolshoi Theater of Moscow," someone shouted. I was embarrassed to see Mr. Giskin, with whom I had already had an agreeable exchange, walk out. Under such circumstances the rehearsal commenced.

I was too busy sight-reading to know how I played, but after the conclusion of *Don Quixote,* Fitelberg embraced me and the orchestra played a fanfare.

Such an unusual and triumphant start had an equally unusual ending. Immediately after the rehearsal, for no apparent reason I was sent by the Bolshoi Theater authorities to a convalescent home, and the performance took place with Victor Kubatzky as soloist.

**Chapter Eight**

THOUGHTS of my sister Nadja weighed heavily on me. I sent her messages but had no answers. Once I went to see her. There was the familiar log house. I walked through the gate. Everything looked vacant and run-down. I climbed the stairs and stood listening at the door of our old apartment, but something kept me from entering. I retreated noiselessly, as if afraid to be caught. No one saw me. I was glad to get away from that house and my memories of it.

I wrote her repeatedly, confessing my cowardice to face her in her surroundings and begging her to come to me. Many weeks passed before she finally came. Her deep-sunk eyes, her hollow, ashen cheeks reminded me so little of my giggling, beautiful sister. She spoke late into the night of her ill-fated marriage, her misery, and the cruelty of Dmitri and her in-laws, but mostly she spoke of her baby, which was deformed and did not live long. She showed me snapshots of her wedding and I said she looked beautiful as a bride. "Did you ever see Father cry?" she asked. "I did—I saw it. When you left, and then again at my wedding."

Early the next morning while Nadja slept I rushed to her house. Confronting Dmitri and his parents, I made them sign a confession of their mistreatment of my sister, and not until all three scribbled their names under the most crudely composed document did I leave. When later I showed it to a lawyer, he said it was a masterpiece and Nadja was as good as divorced.

Nadja recovered slowly, but what a joy it was to hear her play the same sugary pieces on the piano in the same sentimental way like at home in the old days. It was fun to find pretty dresses for her and to introduce her to my friends. She attended the theater and concerts, but though she like living

with me, she wanted to see our parents, and before long she joined them in the Ukraine.

The government assigned artists to play in factories, workers' clubs, and Red Army clubs. There were sometimes as many as four such appearances in a single night. Groups of musicians and actors were loaded on sleds and driven by horses from place to place. We were instructed not to play anything too heavy for the unaccustomed audiences. If our show took place in a chocolate factory, we would receive chocolate in exchange for our services; if in a cannery, herring. Only once did I hear a complaint—when Chaliapin received a pair of baby shoes for his singing.

I was drafted, but I did not quite know my exact army status, for somehow I belonged to two regiments. My duty was to play for each one a few times a month. I did not have to wear a uniform or live in barracks, but I regularly received food rations in amounts measured according to a soldier's daily requirements. Once, caught in a roundup of deserters, I showed the two military cards, each issued from a different detachment. The military police not only promptly arrested me, but, as a special case, separated me from the bunch of mere deserters. It was sheer luck that one of the policemen let me go free after recalling having heard me at a concert.

Living alone and unequipped for cooking, I distributed my food rations among friends and families with children, who in turn invited me for meals. At one period everyone wanted to have me for dinner. Strangely, all served rabbit ragout. There was nothing else, but it tasted good and I did not mind the monotony. It was not until I noticed the total disappearance of pets and of stray cats from the streets that I realized how many of them I must have consumed.

Time moved fast. Nothing old could remain under the revolutionary banner. Old names of cities and streets had to be changed. When it came to giving new names in the field of art, I was asked with other colleagues to the meeting presided over by Minister of Art Lunocharsky. After the renaming of the important institutions it was proposed to call the quartet of which I was a member the Lenin Quartet. "Why not the Beethoven?" my adolescent voice came through the room. Someone kicked me, under the table. We became the Lenin String Quartet. Our quartet underwent other changes. Ferdinand Krish was replaced by L. Pulver, an exceptionally fine violist, and K. Mostras's place was taken by an equally exemplary musician, A. Yampolsky.

Those who had the distinction of carrying Lenin's name were invited to the Kremlin. Lenin greeted our quartet warmly. He was alone. We had tea and played one movement of the Grieg Quartet. As we were departing, Lenin accompanied us to the anteroom and helped Zeitlin with his coat. Lenin reached out his hand, said, "Thank you, Comrades," and to me, "You must stay." Scared, I whispered into Zeitlin's ear, "If I am not out of here soon, call for me, please." They left.

I followed Lenin along a narrow corridor into a small study. "Sit down." I kept the cello at my side. He looked at it. "Is it a good one?"

"Not very."

"The finest instruments used to be in the hands of rich amateurs. Soon they will be in the hands of professional musicians rich only in talent." He spoke with a slight burr. There was nothing of the mighty revolutionist in his appearance. His manner of speaking was simple and mild. His jacket, his shoes were like those of a neighborhood tailor. He looked like a well-meaning provincial uncle, and as he sat in a straight chair and looked at me as if encouraging me to say something, my uneasiness vanished.

"You are very young, but you have a responsible position. It is strange that only in music and in mathematics can the very young reach prominence. Did you ever hear of a child architect or surgeon?" he said, smiling.

"No, but I have heard of child chess players."

"Quite right. Do you play chess?" but, not waiting and as if reminiscing, "Chess has been good for the Russians—checkers too. It gives them occasion in this country to fight—to win or lose or come out even, on equal terms and merits." He changed the subject abruptly. "Is it true that you protested at the meeting?"

"I am sorry." There was a slight stutter to my voice.

"At you age, one speaks first and thinks afterward," he said, with no trace of sarcasm. "I am not an expert on music, but I know that there is no more befitting name for a quartet than Beethoven."

"I am so glad. So you are not angry with me?"

"No," he said, smiling again. "But I wanted to speak with you. Only what is logical remains. Time filters impurities and corrects mistakes, particularly if made at such times as these. The Lenin String Quartet will not last; the

Beethoven will." He spoke in parables, not touching big topics. But whatever he said was profoundly human and was said with disarming simplicity.

Later our quartet participated in a celebration at which Lenin and Trotsky were the speakers and at which for the first time the name Lenin was not attached to the quartet. I went to see him. He was surrounded by many people, but the moment he noticed me he pointed at the line on the program which read, "The First State String Quartet." He said, "You see?" It was the last time I saw him.

I had an audience with Lunocharsky and asked him for permission to leave for France or Germany to study. It is true that I had taken several cello lessons from Anatol Brandukov, but I felt that to become a full-fledged pupil of his would have been disloyal to Professor von Glehn. It was necessary to study abroad. Lunocharsky flatly refused and said that I was needed in Moscow. I went to see him again, trying to impress upon him the need of my further development. His answer was no. "I will run away," I said frankly. He did not believe me.

In the summer of 1921 I joined the tenor Vesilovsky, the baritone Sadomov, and the violinist Mischakoff, all of the Bolshoi Theater, in a concert tour, together with manager, accompanist, and the wife of one of the singers. It was hastily arranged and we had only a vague idea as to where we were going. Sadomov, who spoke with a severe stutter, was the only one who thought this was an ordinary concert tour.

Our route took us from the larger cities like Kiev to the smaller and smaller ones, until it brought us to Volochisk, a village on the Polish border. There we met another group of artists, among whom was a well-known violinist, Naoum Blinder. We joined our forces in a gala performance during which I, for the first time, heard Sadomov speak almost fluently. Pacing backstage, he protested, "This empty barn, this tour, and everything else is c-c-c-razy. I will pack and go home." After the concert Sadomov disappeared.

In the morning negotiations began with individuals who specialized in smuggling people across the border. We were told to move, one by one and without arousing attention, from the village closer to the border. The smugglers' price was outrageous and their methods dangerous, but their terms were accepted. On the first dark night we were led stealthily toward the low bridge over the Sbruch River. Reaching it, we were commanded to run.

The instant we set foot on the bridge, there were shots from both sides of the border. I jumped into the river. Mischa followed. So did Madame Vesilovskaya, who clutched at me in panic. I struggled to keep my cello above my head. The river was shallow, but I heard Gurge-like sounds close behind me that came from Mischakoff. We reached the Polish border.

"We are safe—we crossed the border," said Mischa, shivering.

"No," I replied, "we did more than cross—we burned a bridge behind us forever."

**Chapter Nine**

THE border guards arrested us and we were put in jail. In the morning we stood before the chief of police in his office. "Your documents," he demanded. Astonished, I saw Vesilovsky produce his papers. He had not thrown them away as the smugglers had ordered. Furthermore, he spoke in polish to the chief. They shook hands and with "Good-bye, fellows," in our direction, he and his wife left.

The chief of police, in his broken Russian, ordered us to call him "Pan Vojevoda." He waited for our identification. "No papers, eh?"

"No."

"You say you are musicians? Not spies? Prove you are musicians! Play! Mischakoff and I unpacked our instruments and played Kreisler's *Schon Rosmarin*. I plucked the accompaniment. When we finished, the guards applauded and we heard, "*Dobje, dobje*." The chief stopped them short. "Still I want papers."

"We are musicians, Pan Vojevoda."

"There are plenty of fiddling spies. We know your tricks," he said. He gave a sign to the gendarmes. "They will deliver you where you belong—straight back over the border to your comrades."

Outside, we climbed into a cart hatched to a scrawny horse that pulled us unhurriedly along the dusty road. One guard holding the reins looked back at us from time to time and smiled. "He must like music," I said. We sighted a railroad station. I had an idea. "Can we stop and play over there?" I gestured. "Just a little bit. Perhaps we can also have a drink." I tried to make myself understood. They nodded and we stopped and walked with our instruments into a small waiting room filled with peasants. The guards followed.

As we began playing, I heard the puffs of a locomotive. Plucking the accompaniment in a standing position, I started to move a few steps at a time toward the platform. Mischakoff followed. The guards did not object and did not even move when we boarded the train just as it was pulling out. We caught a glimpse of them and the peasants watching the train speed away.

Without tickets, money, or passports and afraid of being caught, we hid from the conductor until the train stopped in a big city and we got off. The name of the city was Lwow, Mischa discovered. "This is real Europe," I observed admiringly as we moved in the direction of the center of town. Mischa was at my side. Thrifty and practical, he did not waste time in conversation. "It's getting late," he said. "Soon it will be dark. We must find lodgings. We must have something to eat. I will tell you what we will do," he proposed. "You go in this direction to find food and money, and I will go, with my fiddle and your cello, to look for lodgings. We will meet right here in about two hours. Mark the place in your dreamy head, will you? We parted. There were lights announcing the beginning of the evening. I looked at the passing people. Such elegance—real Europeans! I wished I could understand their language.

Exploring the city, I saw a man with a cello. A cellist to me could never be a stranger. I followed him down the street. He turned his head and I waved. He walked faster. He went around a corner; I was behind him. He ran; I ran after him. I called, "Stop! Stop!" but I had lost him. I saw my reflection in a shop window. No wonder the cellist was frightened. My clothes were wrinkled and damp, my jacket torn, and my toes protruded from muddy shoes. I walked toward a brightly lit marquee, Cafe de la Paix. The doorman standing in the entrance gave me a sign to move along and said something in Polish that did not sound encouraging. I glanced at the carpeted stairs through the glass door and heard the sound of music coming through the open window upstairs. It was a piece I knew from my restaurant era. I wanted to see the musicians, and when the doorman looked away I slipped through the door.

I climbed the stairs and entered a large room filled with people at small tables, drinking coffee and listening to music. I headed straight to the stage. The doorman was after me. He gestured at me and called, "Psst, psst." I begged the cellist, "Please let me play." Perplexed, he handed me his cello and, taking his place, I saw the doorman retreat.

There were three musicians, and all spoke Russian. The cellist had heard my name and we had a few friends in common in Moscow. I told them of my

escape, of Mischakoff, and of our problems. They showed great warmth, advised me to go to Warsaw, and loaned money for the trip.

I returned, lighthearted, to meet Mischa. He was waiting for me. He too looked pleased. "It's terrific," he said. "I found a room for us on credit. Let's go. You never saw anything like it."

I never had. The room he rented was crowded with people sleeping on the floor, some of them on mattresses. But we had a bed, which stood at the farthest end of the room, a spot we could not reach in the dark without stepping on someone. "How do you like it?" asked Mischa.

"I adore it," I said.

"Of course, it's not a palace. I hid our instruments under the bed." The bed was rough and I felt bread crumbs or something on the sheet.

"Where is the bathroom?" I whispered.

"It's no palace," vexed Mischa repeated.

Very tired, we fell asleep. But not for long. We awoke scratching and picking off bugs. They crawled all over us. I took the cello and made my way out of the house. Mischa, in his underwear, with his clothes and violin in his arms, followed me to the street. "And I thought it was a bargain!" He was indignant.

While he was dressing I said, "By the way, I have all the money in the world."

"What?" Mischa almost lost his balance, one pants leg not yet on. I showed him the money. We walked to the station and waited for the early train to Warsaw.

Arriving there, we found a modest but clean hotel and in a day, in newly bought clothes, we were ready to look for work. Mischa practiced every morning. Back at the hotel from my long strolls, I always found Mischa with the violin, still practicing. "You are a lazy bum," he would greet me.

Fitelberg, with whom I had had the memorable experience of sight-reading *Don Quixote* in Moscow, was now in Warsaw. I was glad to see him. A Polish subject, he had had no difficulty in leaving Russia. He advised us to speak to Emil Mlynarski, the director and conductor of the Warsaw Opera House and the Philharmonic. We were received by him with great courtesy. He was a man in his fifties, with pink cheeks, blue eyes, and a big pearl in his tie. He

helped us obtain identification papers and permits to live and work in Warsaw. Luckily for us, there were vacancies in the Warsaw Philharmonic and through his influence we were engaged, Mischa as concertmaster and I as assistant first cellist. We became acclimated quickly to our new surroundings, and in a short time were accepted as musicians and made friends.

The first Americans I met were Mr. and Mrs. Adolph Held. They were an elderly couple who were in Poland to head a large charitable agency. Although both led very active lives, they always seemed to have time for me. We had no language in common, but it did not hinder our understanding and my fondness for them. They often attended concerts and we had many silent meals together, and I was free to stay with them or come and practice whenever I wanted. I don't know whether it was their childlessness or parent transferal on my part, or just their goodness, but in a short time there was a devotion and reciprocal that came as naturally as if I were their son.

The most likable man in the orchestra was the first cellist, Elly Kochanski, who was many years my senior. We became the best of pals. Aside from being a fine cellist, he was witty and an accomplished ventriloquist. This particular talent he usually demonstrated during a concert, to confound the conductor and make the orchestra laugh.

As a youngster in Russia, I took part in a game in which each of the students chose for himself the name of his favorite artist. I impersonated D'Albert. I liked the sound of the name, I liked his cello concerto, and I imagined him a Hercules. Now he was coming to Warsaw to play the *Emperor Concerto.* When I saw a tiny, mustached old man walking toward the piano, I could not believe it was D'Albert. He was small indeed, but what a titan as an artist! We spent an evening together. Elly suggested that I play one of the Mendelssohn sonatas with him. D'Albert played extraordinarily loudly, yet he must have heard the cello—he said so, and wanted to play more.

"Please tell the master," I told Elly, "that I know his opera *Tiefland* and that I play his concerto." Elly translated his reply, "My music is still alive, but it will die young."

"Don't worry about that," Elly told me later. "D'Albert has been married and divorced uncounted times. Who knows—maybe he is just about to divorce or marry again. In intermediate periods like this he is always gloomy."

There were many visiting artists whom I heard for the first time. I was impressed with a violin concerto by Carlovicz, performed by Hubermann, and with Szigeti's playing of the Busoni concerto. There were chromatic passages for violin with flute which sounded like two flutes. Szigeti's palette was very rich. Both Hubermann and Szigeti represented a school little resembling the one I knew in Russia, leaning less heavily on sensuous beauty of sound and sheer brilliance, which the Russians strived to achieve.

Everyone in the orchestra had great regard for the conductor Birnbaum. As a man, too, he was referred to with respect and affection. I waited eagerly to play under him.

I wish that day had never come. It was a concert for students for which there was no rehearsal scheduled. The concert was to begin at eight o'clock with *Scheherazade*, by Rimsky-Korsakoff. About five minutes before eight, the orchestra not yet completely assembled, Birnbaum crossed the stage with a baton in his hand. Reaching his platform and tapping his music stand, he gave a downbeat. The musicians, thinly scattered all over the stage, began to play. As Mischakoff was absent, I played the violin solo for him. Hearing the sounds, the rest of the musicians rushed onto the stage.

"You are insolent, all of you," Birnbaum screamed in a fit of insanity. He threw himself on his knees and stood up again. In tears he dropped his baton, cried, "Good-bye, brothers, forever adieu," and disappeared from the stage and the town, never to be seen again. I learned later that his body was dragged out of a lake in Germany.

I appeared frequently as a soloist at our symphony concerts and had engagements with other orchestras and recitals throughout Poland. Elly said that I was *a la mode*. My work with the orchestra went pleasantly except for my pranks. One of them might have cost me my job.

Mr. Slevak, an old cellist, a peaceful sort of man, was the first to arrive at all concerts. He liked to go about his business slowly. He placed his cello and a cushion on his chair on the stage, then proceeded to clean his pipe, attend to his shirt front, and read his newspaper.

Knowing his habits, one evening I too arrived early. I brought with me a roll of very fine but strong cord and waited for Slevak to leave the stage. When he was through with his routine and his cello was in its usual place in the middle of the orchestra, I went swiftly to work. I fastened the cord securely around the scroll of his cello, threw the roll over a beam high above the

stage, picked up the roll and brought it to the wings, where Pan Tedeus, the stagehand and my personal friend, spent most of his time during the concerts.

The concert started. The hall was filled and the orchestra played well, and if it had not been for the guest conductor's unbearable exhibitionism I might not have gone through with my plan.

As the symphony proceeded, thoughts of the cord, the cello, and Slevak ripened. I saw Pan Tedeus standing in the wings. The music went softly along. It was the adagio. I gave Tedeus a sign. He knew what to do. He began to pull the cord. At first it was as if nothing had happened, but soon, with an incredible slowness, Slevak's hands tried to follow his cello upward until it was out of reach. He stared incredulously at his instrument, which was in mid-air. In solemn silence everyone watched the cello ascend to the ceiling. A sudden roar of laughter stopped the performance.

At the conductor's insistence the concert continued—without me. I was not fired. My only punishment was the loss of one week's salary and payment of a fine for Pan Tedeus. I considered it a bargain.

**Chapter Ten**

MISCHAKOFF had joined his brothers in the United States. I wanted to go with him, but Mr. Held thought I needed more study, urging that after the season ended I go to Berlin. He offered to pay all expenses and put no time limit on my studies.

I spent the day of departure from Warsaw with my colleagues from the Philharmonic. We drank and made speeches and drank again until time to go to the station. There we tried again to be gay, but the effort, spurred by alcohol, evaporated prematurely. The jokes sounded senseless and forced as we waited for the train that would take me to Berlin.

In Berlin I was met by Alexander Zakin, a fine pianist and a nephew of the conductor Fitelberg, and another man who was to act in the Helds' behalf. He had a furnished room for me and had made arrangements with a teacher of German. Mr. Held's orders, he said, were to give me all I needed. At nineteen it was my first opportunity to study without worrying about money.

The name of my teacher of German was Herr Bruchenweiser. He had enormous feet, a square neck, and black teeth. He smelled of sauerkraut and beer. He taught me to pronounce words in true Berlin fashion. He made me

look deep into his throat and repeat, "*Ooobaahhrr—Beeeaaahhrr*," words that meant "Waiter, beer." I practiced them on a waiter in a restaurant, but he did not know what I meant.

Without an introduction or making an appointment, I went to the Hochschule to see the eminent cello professor Hugo Becker. When I entered his large classroom, filled with students, Professor Becker stood up. Impeccably dressed, gray-haired, tall, and straight, he was a remarkable-looking man. He asked what I wanted. I said in Russian, "To have lessons." One of the students interpreted for me.

"It's too late in the term to enter the *Hochschule*."

"Private lessons."

"Then why did you come here?"

"I wanted to speak to you."

Everyone laughed. "The professor said it's a strange idea for someone who can't speak."

"I want lessons."

"The professor asked if you would play something now."

"I will play *Improvisations* by Goedicke."

"What animal is that? Can't you play something civilized?"

"Goedicke is a great musician," I said.

"The professor wants you to play the Boccherini Concerto."

One of the students lent me a cello and Becker went to the piano. After a few bars he interrupted me and spoke to the students with a serious face, but he must have said something funny, because there was laughter again.

"The professor wants you to the play the Schumann Concerto."

Again I was interrupted by more laughter. I continued to play bits of many other pieces until I could not stand the merriment, and stopped. "Please ask the professor, will he teach me or not?" I said, irritated.

The next week I had my first lessor. Becker was the first and only teacher I had to pay for lessons. He charged a great deal, but the student could choose the length of the lesson—an hour or a half hour. I wanted to go easy on Mr. Held's purse and chose the half-hour one.

A servant led me to the study of the professor's luxurious home. Becker and Ochi Albi, the student who had previously translated for us, were waiting for me.

"The professor wants you to forget you ever played cello before."

"Yes."

"You must start from the very beginning."

"Yes."

"Your right arm is your tongue; your left, your thoughts."

"Yes."

"You have no thoughts whatsoever. Even if you have, you must learn to speak first."

"Yes."

Professor Becker showed me how to hold the bow. He seemed pleased. He let me strike an open string. "Professor is encouraged," said Ochi Albi. "He thinks you are gifted." Becker glanced at his watch. He stood up. The lesson was over.

Ochi Albi accompanied me home. He spoke with great admiration of his teacher. "It took the professor more than twenty years to solve the problems of the right arm," he said. "His method is perfect. He is a great man—a scientist and a true artist. I have been with him only two years, but my right arm is improving already."

My German progressed very slowly and my practicing of holding the bow was boring. My second, third, and fourth lessons were quite uneventful except at the end, when I would make a bow and say, "*Gott sei Dank*." Each time it seemed to throw him into a rage. What did I do wrong? I wondered, wishing that Ochi Albi had been present.

At the fifth lesson the professor was unusually friendly and I was glad to see Ochi Albi again. He told me how highly the professor thought of me and how rapid my progress was. "You learned to hold the bow in four lessons. Some can't master it in years. Your bow arm is in almost perfect position on all four strings. The professor has decided to make a great exception and begin to work with you right now on the finest music for our instrument."

Becker spoke again and Ochi Albi translated. “The situation is now drastically changed. You are not a pupil any more. You are ready to work on great music and therefore you and I are equals.”

“We have to be frank, and I expect you to express your opinions freely.” He took his cello and said, “I will play the beginning of the Dvorak Concerto—only the beginning. After I have played, you will do the same. Then we will discuss the merit of each performance.”

He began. I saw a gust of resin fly, rise and fall in all directions. Ripping off the hair, his bow knocked on the sides of his cello. The stick hit the strings. After some noisy thumping on the fingerboard with his left hand, he stopped. I did not dare look at him. He asked something. His voice sounded happy. I looked at his face and saw that he was happy.

“Herr Professor asked how you liked it,” said Ochi Albi.

“It was terrible,” I said. Ochi Albi was silent.

“What? What?” Becker asked.

Ochi Albi pleaded, “The professor wants to know. What shall I tell him?”

I hesitated. “Tell him it was just fine.” I don’t know what Ochi Albi told him. Becker’s face was red. He looked at his watch and said the lesson was over. I bowed and said, “*Gott sei Dank*.”

“Heraus!” Becker screamed. “Out of here, you conceited, ignorant mujik!”

On the street a few minutes later, Ochi Albi reproached me. “You shouldn’t have said, '*Gott sei Dank.’* It means ‘t hank God.'“

I regretted our misunderstanding and, disillusioned with the lessons so grotesquely interrupted, I seriously considered returning to Moscow.

I went to Leipzig instead. Professor Klengel’s students carried his fame throughout the world. I was impressed to be in the city where Bach and Mendelssohn had lived and where the Gewandhaus stood.

Julius Klengel was short and old. His beard was stained around his mouth from smoking cigars. He smoked one when I met him. His eyes laughed. He did not ask what I would like to play; he just went to the piano and began the Haydn Concerto. We went through the entire work and he was pleased to hear me play his cadenzas. Klengel seemed to be able to guess all I was trying to say, and the remarkable thing was that suddenly I could understand German.

I moved into the Hartung boardinghouse, where many of Klengel's students stayed. It was inexpensive and the landlady, Frau Hartung, didn't mind our practicing at all hours of the day. Even those students who lived elsewhere came often to Hartung's . They did so on the advice of Klengel, who wants us to learn from each other. His system was simple. He would remark, "Schneider's vibrato is marvelous." Everyone would come to "spy" on Schneider's vibrato. To Schneider he would say, "Auber's trill is the best." It worked. The students, though jealous, learned from each other and made progress. I marveled at Klengel's art of teaching by really not teaching. At lessons one seldom heard suggestions or discourses on music from him. He let a student play a piece to the end and said, "Fine" or in a severe case, "Watch your left arm, young man."

On holidays the boardinghouse was filled with cellists, and for those not acquainted with the habits and jargon of our clan such gatherings must have been puzzling. Everyone had to respect our instrument. Were the visitor violinist, pianist, or composer, he had better watch his remarks concerning the cello.

The majority of the students were foreigners like myself, and seldom, if ever, were they invited to a family dinner—any family, any dinner. Their social life was nil. They said they tried to solve this problem one way or another. On days of prosperity they patronized the Blue Monkey, but more frequently a more modest bordello that had no name. There they did not need an invitation. Even at meals at Hartung's they freely discussed Halina, Trude, Berta, and Madame herself. Trude had said something funny and Berta looked tired, or Madame was nervous on Sundays and the piano in the salon needed tuning. Hearing often of these people, their names becoming familiar to me, I visualized them as though I knew them.

One Saturday afternoon I joined my friends. They introduced me to Madame as "Herr Doktor." We ordered beer. There were two strangers in the salon. One wore high shoes and had a thick chain hanging across his vest. The other had long hair and was thin and unshaven. Both were around sixty, and they sat waiting as if they were in a barbershop. There were no girls in the room.

"Crazy days," said Madame. "Last Saturday we sat here idle, playing cards, as if all the men in town were castrated. Today the girls hardly had time for a meal. Ah, someone is coming," she said.

It was Trude. Her smile sparkled with gold fillings. She looked at the two men as if asking whose turn it was. The unshaven man stood up and went upstairs with her.

"Let's go have something to eat," I said.

"But you haven't seen Halina and Berta yet. Wait until you see Halina. She is firm, like an apple. Good to bite into. How are your teeth?"

"There is the bouncer, the pimp," I was informed as a husky man appeared. He gave us an appraising look.

One of the students who had been known to practice the cello as much as eight hours a day said, "The bridge on my cello is too high." He was worried. "You want to see?" He swiftly took off the cover of his cello and showed us the bridge. "Grisha, please try it." I played. When I finished, I was introduced to Berta and Halina, who were among the listeners. They did not speak, and I saw the rouge run on Halina's checks.

"Stop it," said Madame. "Go upstairs and put your billboard in order." Halina obeyed and Madame said, "For a whore, she's too sensitive. Boys, how about drinks?" More beer was brought in. The pimp gulped down a glassful, belched, and left.

My visit became frequent. A certain morbid attraction drew me back. Alone or in company, Herr Doktor was welcomed, and the Madame asked me what I thought of converting her piano to a pianola.

Halina was mostly silent, but when no one was in the salon she spoke to me of her parents and their farm in Poland. I liked to listen to her, and I liked her childish laugh when she spoke of her comical and deaf Uncle Jan. Once, quite unexpectedly, she said, "I liked you the first time I saw you."

The bell rang and a man entered. This brought Madame and her brood into the room. The visitor walked around stiffly and pointed at Halina. She did not respond. He pointed again. Halina moved closer to me. Trude rushed into the man's arms and caressed his head. He pushed her away and shouted, "I want her." Madame looked at Halina. "It's the third time I have come to this goddam place for nothing," he yelled. "Must I send her flowers first, or something?"

Madame spoke to him and made a sign to me. "Will you come some other time, Herr Doktor?" And to Halina, "Attend to the gentleman!" I walked out.

The next day at Hartung's one of the students spoke of the row at the bordello. "Madame got mad at Halina for refusing a client and the bouncer threw her down the stairs with all her belongings. She has been taken to the hospital."

I went to see her. She was bruised and pale. She said that she had no money and when she left the hospital with her yellow prostitution card she would be picked up by the police. I spoke to Professor Klengel about the problem. It was not easy, but he understood. "Dear Don Quixote! Let's rescue your Dulcinea," he said. He consulted his friend, the chief of police, who was willing to help with papers for Halina, providing someone guaranteed that she would leave for Poland immediately. I went to see him and he accepted my assurances. After tedious hours at the police department and the Polish consulate, Halina was ready to depart. I brought her a farewell gift and a railroad ticket.

She asked me to write some music on a piece of paper. I wrote down a Russian folk song, "In a Field Stood a Birch Tree," and sang it to her.

"Your voice is funny," she said through her tears.

I heard from her later. She was glad to be home. She wrote of her friends and her parents, and she said the crop was good and that her Uncle Jan had died.

**Chapter Eleven**

THERE was to be a reunion of Klengel's former students. "The big boys are coming from all over. We will have Dortmunder beer and when their minds are clouded, I want you to show them how one plays the cello in modern times," said Klengel with a familiar tinge of irony.

They were "big boys" all right. Many had gray hair and some no hair at all. The last to be introduced to us was Mr. Kinkulkin. I did not recognize the stumpy man with insect-like eyes, but the word "Kinkulkin" had a staggering sound, reaching back through the long distance to my childhood. His old verdict in Ekaterinoslav, once erased or faded, came alive again: "Keep away from the cello. You have no talent whatsoever."

As the evening progressed, Klengel went to the piano and said that as a punishment for his old students' past sins they would hear a Klengel concerto. He gave me a sign.

They heard not one but two concerti of his, and we completed the Klengel festival with his Variations and Scherzo. Smoking a newly lit cigar, he smiled happily.

“It is a privilege to meet you,” Kinkulkin said to me.

“We have met before—in Ekaterinoslav. I played for you when I was very young.” There was a light of recognition in his eyes.

Surrounded by students, the visitors reminisced about their days in the “cello paradise,” and we did not part until Klengel ran out of Dortmunder beer.

A “cello paradise” indeed. Day in, day out, an orgy of scales and exercises. Cello everywhere, everyone a cellist. Schneider, Benar Heifetz, Auber, Jascha Bernstein, Honegger, Baldauf, and more—all a beehive on the verge of drowning in its own honey, the honey of music by Volkmann, Lindner, Romberg, Popper, Davidov, Duport, Klengel, and Grutzmacher. A relentless drill, a tedium of overhauling and overcoming one weakness, only to have others creep in, to multiply themselves like microbes and form new diseases. I fought them with determination and when in the process I tasted some progress or stumbled on a new idea I gained new courage.

Herbert Baldauf was the only one among us uprooted immigrants who was in touch with the place where he was born, and who looked forward to the approaching summer when he could return to his mountains, his family, and his deer hunting. When he asked me to spend the vacation with him in the Italian Tyrol, I was overjoyed.

The Baldaufs' summer house was in Drei Kirchen, a short train ride from Bolzano. Arriving at the tiny station, we loaded our luggage and cellos on the back of a horse, which walked ahead of us up the mountain. We gained altitude steadily. The road, in spots, became steep and narrow, but the horse, unperturbed, kept his pace with the two cellos insecurely balanced on his back.

I wanted to rest, but Herbert said that would only make it harder to climb. He suggested that I hold onto the tail of the horse. We passed three little churches, huts and farms on the slopes, and many crucifixes by the path. Herbert pointed out the houses of his relatives. He had thirteen or fifteen aunts, a grandmother and an uncle, each of whom had many children. His grandmother reigned over all.

After hours of climbing we reached the top. The mighty panorama unfolding below was of incredible beauty. Such impressions must be earned. My effort of climbing made me almost deserve it.

Herbert's family awaited us. Mrs. Baldauf greeted me warmly. "This is my baby brother Hans, and this is Assunta, my sister," said Herbert. "I never mentioned her to you. Thought she might have scared you out of coming here." She blushed.

I met Herbert's father. He scarcely said a word during the entire evening. An embittered man, like many Austrians in the Tyrol upon whom Italian citizenship had been forced after World War I, he resented everything Italian.

The days on the beautiful mountain passed with incredible speed. I loved everything there, even the hunting trips with Herbert, which would start at the break of day. But mostly I loved the long walks with Assunta.

There was an inn, the place that occupied Herbert's particular attention. He was the first to survey the new arrivals, and if among them was a young and unattached female, we saw very little of him. Herbert was a man of nature, of few words, strong and good-looking, his instinct unerring. A hunter of beasts by day and of women by night, he knew that both would fall easy prey.

He wanted me to accompany him to Oberbozen, on the other side of the mountain. "I know a beautiful lonesome lady there. I promised to visit her. Exceptional redhead. Fancy she should study archaeology."

A few days later we came to Oberbozen. "There is your friend Professor Becker's house," Herbert said, pointing. "He spends his summers here. And over there is a restaurant in case you want to eat. I will meet you there in a couple of hours."

I was surprised to learn that Becker lived here; he was the last man I expected to meet. But, curious to see his house, I peered over the tall hedges that surrounded it and caught a glimpse of a tennis court and gardens. As I tried to get a better view, my face and hands scratched by bushes and nettle, I came face to face with Becker himself.

"Hey, who are you?" he screamed. "Hm, of all people! Are you not Pi-Pi-Pi-asi-ma-fovsky?"

I said, "How do you do?"

"That is beside the point. What are you doing here?"

"My friend came to see an archaeologist. I accompanied him."

"What nonsense!"

"I am telling the truth."

"Oh, you speak German now."

"Yes, a little. I would like to apologize for saying, '*Gott sei Dank*.'"

"It is I who thank God that you left."

"I did not leave. I was invited to leave."

His face twitched. "Now that you can understand, I will ask you. Is it your bolshevik system to run from teacher to teacher?"

"I have a fine cello teacher."

"I know, I know. Good enough for you to come all the way here to me. What made you think I want you?" He turned to leave.

"It was nice to see you," I said as he disappeared.

I waited for Herbert. When he came, he looked at my scratches and said, "I see. You were visiting Becker." He did not utter another word until after he had finished his meal. He ate unhurriedly, like a lion after a kill.

My encounter with Becker saddened me, but Drei Kirchen was not a place where hurt could last for long. It was not even a village, so small was it, but for me it became a special world of far-reaching meanings. This first summer was followed by others. Each visit was an experience of joy and tenderness, but after the tragic deaths of Hans in an avalanche and shortly after of Assunta in an automobile accident, I had no heart to return.

**Chapter Twelve**

ARRIVING in Leipzig late at night from Drei Kirchen, I made my way to my old room at Hartung's and went to bed.

I awakened with a start. The lights were on and two men in derby hats showed their badges. "We are the police. You are under arrest." They shook me and ordered me to get up. I dressed hurriedly and called for Mrs. Hartung on the way to the street, but no one answered.

At the police station my papers were examined and I was told to remove all objects from my pockets. No one told me why I was arrested. I was shoved into a cell. I sat down on an iron cot and stared at the bulb on the ceiling. During the night some prisoners were let out and new ones brought in. Many were drunk and belligerent.

In the morning I was called out and taken to the chief of police. I recognized the official who had helped Halina with her passport.

"*Da sehen wir uns schon wieder,*" he greeted me amiably. "I am sorry about this unfortunate incident—very regrettable. Incidentally, what's happened to the ... hm ... how did Professor Klengel call her? Ah yes, Dulcinea. Has she left Germany?"

I said, "Yes, she has."

"Good, good. Julius—I mean, Klengel—is the finest friend one can have, *nicht wahr?* It was he who woke me this morning and told me of your arrest. May I see your papers?" He shook his head. "What a document! No nationality. It's no passport—not even a certificate. It's almost as bad as the yellow ticket of your Dulcinea. Here it is, just as I thought." He indicated a visa. "Technicality, just a technicality. Your student permit in Berlin has expired. Without a new one, for Leipzig, your stay here is illegal. Don't worry, we will fix you up."

I rushed to see Klengel. "I have no words to thank you," I said. "It was a nightmare. Who told you where I was?"

"Mrs. Hartung. You look tired. Go home and rest." He gently patted my shoulder.

I thanked Mrs. Hartung, too, but when she wanted to know more about the arrest I said, "Oh, just a technicality."

Mr. Held was in Berlin and had asked to see me. He embraced me, barely reaching my shoulders. "You have grown still taller," he said. He wanted to know every detail of my life and told me of his and Mrs. Held's welfare activities. "Your German is fluent. It's wonderful to be able, at last, to speak to each other. I wish you could sail with me to New York tomorrow. Someday you will, as an artist."

We had dinner together. "Isn't this inflation in Germany a disaster? As an American, I feel ashamed to live here in luxury for almost nothing. Why, there are people who take advantage of their dollars and have bought

buildings and works of art for a song. There is another curious aspect in the situation. On one side, a German mark is worthless, but then again, the student life must be costly....You don't drink alcohol, do you?" he asked.

"Sometimes a glass of beer."

"Well, I guess music books and lessons are disproportionately expensive."

"Not at all," I said. "I hardly spend anything. My boardinghouse is more than reasonable and Professor Klengel refuses to charge me for lessons. Of course, Hugo Becker was different. This inflation is so absurd. One day a bank note reads in millions, next day in billions. At first when I came, a dollar was worth—oh, I forget." I looked in my pockets. "Here it is." I handed a little notebook to Mr. Held. "I entered every mark, every pfennig I spent, every date on which I received German money from your agent, and its relation to the dollar on that day. I would not have been as meticulous with my own money," I said, watching him glance through the notebook.

"It's rather strange," he said. "The reports I received from my representative were quite different. I have sent him considerable sums of money for you. But I suppose discrepancies can always occur."

It angered me beyond reason, and, unable to control myself, I spoke of his agent's deception, of my distaste for charity, and of my honor as an artist and a man. I said that someone else was the thief, that I didn't need anyone's help, and that I would pay back the money I regretted ever having accepted. Harsh and with an inexcusable intemperance, I abruptly left the confused and embarrassed Mr. Held.

In my remorse I wrote a long letter of gratitude to him and begged his pardon. I said that my studies were completed and forthcoming concert engagements were assured, and that I would no longer need his help. I hoped to see him and Mrs. Held soon, and I knew that I would be able to tell of my feelings better than I could write. (I did, but many years later, in New York. They said that their affection for me had never changed.)

I confessed my tantrum to Klengel and told him of my new situation and lack of funds.

"I might try to get you into the Gewandhaus Orchestra," he said, "but there is no vacancy. Maybe it's just as well. You ought to go to Berlin. Leipzig can't offer much." He went to the desk and returned with a paper. "Take this; it might be of help." I read his minute handwriting, recommending me in a succession of superlatives.

I followed Klengel's advice. In the Charlottenburg section of Berlin I rented a room. My landlords, Herr and Frau Kulasch, said they loved music and I could practice all I wanted. I signed the lease without reading its many stipulation, paid two weeks in advance, and went to investigate my new surroundings. I crossed the street and walked to the beautiful lake nearby. Charlottenburg had the air of steady peacefulness. Even the dogs taken for walks by their masters were quiet and seemed not to mind their leashes. The buildings and people alike were of order, solidity, and dullness. It did me good. It made me walk unhurriedly, as though I also belonged, also had a dog and family, and was like the others.

All my money was spent. I had to find a job, but the mere thought of again playing in restaurants provoked a strong resistance. I met the next payment of rent by selling a watch my father had given me. I sold it well. Not only would it pay for the room but there would be enough left for food for a week. It did not last that long. I had to sell a suit and part with my books. Yet I postponed looking for work.

The autumn humidity made the strings break on my cello. I had to tie them with knots, some in the middle of the fingerboard. I did not consider putting on new ones, keeping an entire set for a special occasion that might arise. As long as I had my cello I could not feel poor—perhaps hungry, but not poor. It was like having a check in my pocket on a bank holiday, which in a day or so I could cash.

With the coming of cold weather and no money for rent, Herr and Frau Kulasch remained polite. "We know that you will pay, but in waiting we have cut off the lights and the fuel. We are sure you will not mind." The room was dark and cold and I slept with my clothes on.

There was a cat in the house. On an empty stomach it was sickening to hear Herr and Frau Kulasch's caressing voices as they fed their pussycat. They fed it well. In the kitchen I saw meat neatly cut into slices. One day I snatched a few pieces and locked my door. I tried to roast it, holding it over the flame of a match. I used up almost a whole box of matches, burning my fingers in the process. The meat remained raw, but warm it was easier to swallow.

Herr Kulasch came to show me the lease. He enumerated the rent and damages for which I had to pay. "As you see, it makes a tidy sum—more than your belongings and the cello are worth. You will permit us, just the same, to keep them until the debt is paid in full. Your room is already rented, and it would be kind of you to leave the premises today." I gathered one set

of underwear, two shirts, a tie, a pair of socks, and a piece of soap and made a bundle while Herr Kulasch looked on. Before leaving I said, “Best regards to Frau Kulasch.”

**Chapter Thirteen**

IT was my first night in the Tiergarten. It was cold and rainy, that kind of drizzle that would last for days, but it passed uneventfully and wasn’t nearly as bad as I had thought it would be. Daylight came abruptly. I got up from the bench and stretched, picked up my bundle and started toward the Zoo Station. A policeman called to me.

He had seen me sleeping on the bench, he said. Together we walked out of the park. “Last night here a man stabbed a woman. Some bastards can’t make up their minds whether to make love or to kill. Some do both in this park.” He asked me to have a cup of coffee with him and said I could tell him my hard-luck story. But I didn’t have that opportunity because the good-natured fellow did all the talking. He told me that there was a whore stand in the Tiergarten and that the bench I slept on was their place of business, and a prosperous one at that. “They even charge queers for watching from the bushes. Last night I chased them away.”

I saw the policeman a few times more. Once he brought me a blanket for the night, but warned that he would not tolerate my vagrancy any longer. He did not believe that I had no place to go and warned that I had better do something before I got in serious trouble. I promised he would not see me again in the park.

Leaving the Tiergarten, I visited a public washroom and a library, and, to kill time, I went to an automobile exhibition. At the lunch hour I set off for Zakin’s . He was not home, but I conversed with the landlady and smelled her food from the kitchen. It made me so hungry that I considered paying a visit to my former teacher of German, Herr Bruchenweiser, but I did not know his address.

It was late at night when I knocked at the door of Alexander Cores, a young Russian violinist with whom I had become friends in Warsaw. He stood at the door in his pajamas. “What happened to you? You look like someone from the wilderness,” he said.

“I guess too much outdoor life.”

“I haven’t seen you for ages. Where do you live?”

"In Charlottenburg. I forgot my key. Can I stay here overnight?"

"There is only one bed."

"I will be all right on this chair." He insisted upon sharing his bed. In the morning I saw Cores spread on the floor. He said that I kicked him out of bed, that I snored, and that all around he never had a worse night. I apologized but could not hide my pleasure at the prospect of a hot bath and breakfast. He told me that our mutual friend Boris Koutzen, the violinist from the Bolshoi Theater, had been asking about me. He gave me his address.

Boris was at home. After affectionate greetings he said that he wanted to discuss with me a matter of urgency. "I have been here only a short while, but Berlin is not Moscow, that much I know," he said. "Here we are not the big shots we were there. We must start from the bottom. Listen—Mr. Skript, an old man who owns the Cafe Ruscho on the Ansbacherstrasse, wants a trio ensemble. I knew you were somewhere around and I spoke of you. Madame Davidowska will be the pianist. Skript will pay well and the work will not be too hard—from four to six, and from seven-thirty to twelve-thirty. Let's go and see him."

At the Ruscho we came to an agreement quickly, but I had to tell Mr. Skript that my cello was being held by the Kulasches, and I asked him for an advance.

With money in my pockets I went straight to see Herr and Frau Kulasch. "*Was ist das?"* Herr Kulasch exclaimed, counting the money. "Is it a joke?" Don't you know what you owe us? The lease says you must upholster the furniture and dry-clean the rug, in addition to your rent. And what about the table you burned with your cigarettes? There was something else—wait." While he studied the list of damages, Mrs. Kulasch said that they were missing my music.

I returned to the Ruscho without the cello and without a receipt for the money. Mr. Skript said that it was a known practice of some landlords to take advantage of foreigners. Legal action would be of no help, but he knew a Russian immigrant who was an expert in situations like this, a truly remarkable man whom he could produce in practically no time. Soon the expert appeared. He was sportily dressed and had a cheerful voice. His name was Tols.

"From the little I heard from Mr. Skript, you don't need to tell me a thing about your landlords. Bastards! But they soon will meet their match, the great crusader for nonpaying but honest lodgers. They will smell me," he gesticulated boastfully as we set out for Charlottenburg. "I am not bashful. I might as well tell you about myself—in brief, of course. Here is the picture. My parents were rich in Russia. They died impoverished and I, with no profession, fine appetite and a lot of pluck, came here. One of my first brilliant acts was to marry a woman whose only sport was to run after me with a knife—I guess to show her devotion. The lovely thing only once reached her mark, and slashed a tendon in my right hand. That solved at least one problem—my playing the piano, which anyway was lousy. Is it still far to go?"

"We will be there soon."

"Speaking of my wife," he continued, "you should see her when she is herself. She is tops. But I must tell you, if on occasion a woman is not ready to kill you, she does not really care for you. That wife of mine is a scream. In our luggage she carries a rope—not to hang herself with, mind you, but when our bill for lodgings arrives she fastens our suitcases to it and lowers them through the window. It's our best investment."

We stopped in front of the Kulasch house. "What will you tell them?" I asked.

"Leave that to me. You will have your cello, but I must take my time—perhaps half an hour. Wait for me here."

Nearby was a bakery where I used to buy bread. To pass the time, I asked the saleswoman if she knew of a furnished room for rent in the neighborhood. She said there was one around the corner—Number 12, Apartment 2 on the first floor. I found the house, but on the first floor were two apartments with no numbers. I rang the one on my left. The door opened and I was asked to enter. "Nice to see you," said a man in black jacket and striped trousers whom I followed into the library. There was a lady of about fifty, and a young man who was introduced as a cousin from Hamburg. "*Bitte setzen Sie sich.*" The room was large and the walls were filled to the ceiling with books. The three people looked at me and I knew that something was wrong. "What was your name again?"

"Piatigorsky."

"Oh, from my geology class at the university?"

"No, I came to inquire about a furnished room."

"Furnished room? We never had rooms to let. Who sent you here?"

"The bakery," I said.

"*Unglaublich!* Who are you?" When I said I was a musician and was in the city alone, they consulted in whispers and suggested that I see their guest room. "It will be nice to have a young musician with us." The gentleman said he was Professor Michaelis and the lady was Frau Professor. The room they showed me had a writing table, comfortable chairs, and a large bed.

"It's unbelievably marvelous," I said. They said I could move in whenever I liked, and pay what I could afford. Scarcely believing my stroke of luck, I thanked them and left to meet Tols. He was waiting for me with my cello and suitcases.

"Where shall we take your household?"

"I just found a room."

Tols was impressed by the house and my room. "It's high-class," he said approvingly. "Probably not *sturmfrei*."

"What is 's *turmfrei*'?"

"It means you can bring women to your place."

"Did Herr Kulasch make things difficult?"

"Not at all. I identified myself as a special investigator of the protection squad and said it's a criminal offense to withhold a tool of one's livelihood. They said the whole thing was a misunderstanding."

Mr. Skript and his patrons, mostly foreigners and black-market speculators, were pleased with the Ruscho Trio. No one, not even the loudest *nouveau riche*, disturbed me as much as the presence of musicians, actors, and writers. And when such virtuosi as Emanuel Feuermann and Max Rostal sat at the nearest table, sipping their coffee and listening to us as we played trash, my discomfort was acute. Still, it was good to feel the strings under my fingers again, and it was fun to watch the good, innocent Boris trying to match old hands in the trade like Madame Davidowska and myself.

The galloping inflation made money almost worthless, and we could barely manage to have one good meal a day. Mr. Skript augmented our salaries

frequently, and cakes and sweets were offered free, a diet for which I developed distaste.

After less than four months in the noisy, smoke-filled cafe, Madame Davidowska had to leave and Koutzen received his visa for the United States. Skript engaged Liopold Mittman, an extraordinary pianist, but, having no violinist, we faced a problem with the repertoire. Just the same, it did not prevent us from playing operas, symphonies, overtures, and of course sonatas, solo pieces, popular songs, and something resembling jazz.

Among the musicians who came to the cafe was Geza de Kresz, the violinist of the Pozniak Trio. Subsequently he and Bronislaw von Pozniak invited me to join the ensemble. We rehearsed for the forthcoming concert tour and made arrangements to leave for Breslau, where our headquarters would be.

I went across the street to the Russian restaurant Medwejd to say good-bye to my friend Joseph Schuster, who played the cello there. On account of the good food I had envied his job for a long time. I admitted this to him frankly and once had suggested swapping jobs for a while, but, not being too fond of pastries, he had categorically refused, preferring to remain with his borsch, cutlets, and *pirogki.* I did not blame him.

**Chapter Fourteen**

FOR years the Pozniak Trio periodically changed violinists and cellists, but it always remained the Pozniak Trio. Bronislaw von Pozniak built its reputation slowly and solidly in and around Breslau, the territory he guarded jealously. Clever and skillful, he was a king in his tiny kingdom.

Our first concerts in Upper Silesia took place in some towns and villages so small that they were not marked on the map. But we also gave a concert in Breslau in which we introduced a new work by Kornauth, a composer whose name I have never heard since. Breslau, like many other German cities, had its opera and symphony orchestra. It also had its local manager. His name was Hoppe. He offered to arrange a recital for me, providing I changed my name, which he claimed no normal tongue could pronounce. I agreed to his suggestion to print my name "Gregoire Piati-Gorsky."

Hoppe advertised this concert in a grand style. Though small, the audience was enthusiastic and the reviews, my very first in Germany, Von Pozniak called "sensational." But Hoppe fumed. "Look here"—he waved the clippings—"Potyporok-Sorsky, Gregoroff-Posky. Those nincompoops make

it tough to know who was the artist they praised." From then on my name remained unaltered.

The understanding with Geza de Kresz and Von Pozniak was perfect and my earnings were satisfactory. I was able to buy my own dress suit. At the beginning Von Pozniak, who was shorter than I and considerably broader, loaned me his. How glad I was now to return it to him! Although the cello is a convenient instrument for hiding soiled dress shirts, badly fitted jackets, and unpressed trousers, when it came to Pozniak's tail coat I regretted not playing the double bass.

I appeared with the symphony and Mr. Hoppe engaged me for a second recital in a larger hall. On the night of the concert I saw a big crowd rushing to the building. There were mounted police in the street and a sign, "Sold Out." Excited at this unexpected turnout, I went to a nearby *Kneipe* and had a drink. It was the first and only drink I ever had before a concert. Instantly drunk, I had difficulty in finding the artists' room. Alarmed, I doused my head in cold water. As I did so, someone insisted on interviewing me and seeing my cello. A gentleman peering disbelievingly at my wet head posed questions and, not receiving answers, tried to take the cello out of the case. It made me furious. I asked him to get out, and, to be sure that he was going out, I followed him all the way to the street. When I came back and toughed the cello to tune I was miraculously composed and sober. Despite that and an exceptionally satisfactory concert, my behavior preceding the concert lay heavily upon me for a long time. The gentleman I so unceremoniously escorted turned out to be an important music critic in town. In spite of my rudeness he wrote with intelligence and insight, giving not the slightest hint of what had happened before the concert.

Emma, Pozniak's housekeeper, said that he was tired and that they planned a vacation after the concert season. Holding his shoes in her hand, she said, "Bronislaw needs rest." The word "Bronislaw" was said with such a secure intimacy as to make me suddenly understand why Pozniak, who enjoyed great popularity among his friends, often preferred to stay home.

The trio had a busy schedule, but the concerts in bad halls and the repetitiousness of the programs were monotonous. One of our last performances was the Triple Concerto by Beethoven with an orchestra of amateurs. That such a tiny town had an orchestra was surprising in itself. Still more puzzling was the clean performance after a disastrous rehearsal. It

made me believe in miracles, for what would be impossible for a soloist is sometimes possible en masse.

The summer was approaching and I accepted an invitation to spend my vacation with people I barely knew. My prospective host, titled, erect, and wearing a monocle, spoke with a clipped voice, as if giving a command to his battalion. His wife, much younger, very blond, shy, and of Spanish descent, said she played the piano and that she hoped I would like their simple country life. I learned that I would be spending the summer in a Bavarian castle.

In a few days, with a suitcase packed by Emma, I was off for the summer. The third-class car was tightly packed with peasants. Two brightly feathered roosters in a cage tried to peck at my cello case. It amused their owner, who laughed and talked to his fine birds. I liked my fellow passengers. At my station everyone said good-bye and the man with the roosters said I must come to his village any Sunday and bring my bass fiddle with me.

I was met by a coachman. It was getting dark. I held onto my cello as the coach jogged along. It was a castle indeed. The big lights went on. One servant carried my luggage and another in livery waited at the door. I followed a man up the marble stairs to my room. Albert, the valet, asked if he might unpack my suitcase and press my dinner jacket. I said, "I have no dinner jacket." I watched him spread my torn pajamas on the bed and examine the holes in my underwear and socks before putting them in the drawer. He reached for my full dress and said, "The count and guests are dressed formally for dinner at eight. I will come to show you the way."

My room was large, expensively but sparsely furnished, and hospital-clean. I opened the window and inhaled the evening air. As I was contemplating how stupid I looked in professional garb with no concert, there was a knock at the door. "All the guests and Her Highness have arrived," Albert said. Not clean-shaven but in full dress, I entered the drawing room. The hostess greeted me and I kissed her hand. "*Ein Russe-Musiker*," someone remarked. There were four women in lavish gowns, three men in dinner jackets, and the host, in military uniform. I moved toward a lady. She smiled encouragingly. I said, "It's a lovely country." She said, "*Ja*." At that moment I noticed that the trousers I had on were not mine. Emma must have packed Pozniak's old ones by mistake. They were too short and were covered with stains. I stood in full view of all. The "Dinner is served" came as a relief.

On my right sat a man of about sixty whose nervous hands had already come to my attention in the drawing room. In quick motions he touched his nose, his handkerchief, and two medals on his jacket, as though to be reassured they were still there. Unlike his agile hands, his face was immobile and stone hard. I had the impression that out of sheer principle he would not speak or answer questions. During the dinner the host addressed him reverently. "I hope this wine will please Your Excellency," but there was no reaction of approval or disapproval.

On my left sat a lady of undetermined age. Her black hair stood high. Her eyes protruded, as did her cheekbones and chin. Her nose too leaned forward, dominating everything else. Never had I been so preoccupied with a nose. Only during dessert did I part with it and make my eyes travel downward. She had gigantic breasts. I was sure they obscured the view of all things immediately beyond and below them—certainly her plate and the food on it. Everything on her seemed big and protruding and as if all parts of her wanted to escape from her body but were too solidly anchored.

The hostess acted insecure. Her husband did not once address or look at her, while she watched his every move. She also glanced at the lady on my left, as if seeking reassurance. Before the tedious dinner was over the gentleman on my right completely lost control of his hands, which now ranged over everything within reach. Once he touched my ribs. Remembering Albert's mention of the princess, I tried to guess which of the women she was. The lady on my left coughed, which I guessed was signal for the hostess. She looked at her husband and the woman, and after receiving their nods the dinner was brought to a conclusion.

In the morning, after breakfast, I went for a walk in the flat country through fields and pastureland. Farther away the forest came to a river, and, taking a different route, I returned to the garden and the house. Later in the day Albert came to say that the countess wanted me with my cello in the music room. While escorting me he said that his uncle played violin in the opera at Braunschweig.

I found the countess at the piano, playing the *Jungfrau Maria*, a piece I had not heard since it was played by my sister Nadja. "Oh, I am so glad." The countess's face flushed. "I adore the cello, and those encores you played at the concert. Oh, you must love to play them. I look forward so much to playing with you," she said. She looked pretty.

"Here is my favorite—I simply adore it." She showed me the music. "It is for the piano. Do you think we could play it together?"

"Yes, of course. I will play the upper line." It was the *Autumn Song*, by Tchaikovsky. We played the piece until it was time to change for dinner. I will not describe our musical sessions of that afternoon and all the other afternoons, except that we never played or tried to play anything but the *Autumn Song*. She was madly, frantically in love with it, and in her passion she was blind to my sufferings.

My exchanges with the count never went beyond "*Guten Abend*." Fraulein Schruber, which was the name of the lady on my left at the first dinner, functioned as a supervisor, housekeeper, and lady in waiting, all in one. I felt that I was one more of the household objects she had to supervise. But soon I noticed little attentions that indicated a change in her attitude. On the night table in my room I would find a glass of milk, and as time advanced there would be added biscuits, fruits, and wine, and even a little note, "Sleep well." But otherwise she remained official and impersonal.

Not so my relations with the countess. We developed an understanding through barely perceptible and secretive glances, and at times I could detect her almost inaudible sigh.

One evening after dinner the count took the train to Berlin. It was the first evening without him. Alone with the countess in the drawing room, she curled up on the sofa. "I was thinking," she said languidly, "maybe one day we will play *Chanson triste*, by Tchaikovsky. Do you know it?"

"Yes."

"Is it very sad?"

"No, not very."

"Our garden is so beautiful in the evening," she said. She turned her head nervously toward the door and said softly, "Perhaps after she goes."

"*Ach, Sie mussen ja mude sein*," Fraulein Schruber said as she crossed the room straight and fast, as though she were charging. When she reached me she said intimately, "*Ach*, you must be looked after. So young. You need sleep and, *ach*, so many other things. Please go to bed early." To the countess she said, "I ordered some mint tea for you. It's good for your nerves. It will help you to sleep." I expected her to repeat, "Sleep, sleep, sleep," like a hypnotist, but she just puffed a little, arranged her hair and noisily sat down.

The tea was brought in. The countess drank a little of it. When I stood up and said good night, I felt her dreamy and promising eyes on me. In my room I found champagne, fruit, and a note attached to flowers. “I don’t say good night to a sleepy boy yet.” I left the room. Avoiding the sitting room, I quietly walked out into the garden. The warm evening air saturated with sweet flower scents was intoxicating.

When I returned the house was quiet, and, not switching on the light, I let myself into my room.

“Darling,” I heard whispered, but before I realized it was the countess the door opened softly.

“Where is the naughty, sleepy boy?” Fraulein Schruber’s coy voice was in the room. Groping in the dark, she repeated, “Where is the sleepy boy?” The countess clung to me. We did not move. The light was switched on. All at once it was an operetta farce—the two women facing each other, the sound of the count’s Mercedes driving up to the house, rushing servants, and the ladies' hasty retreat.

I locked my door and started packing. I nervously paced the room, listening to the commotion in the house. Finally all was quiet and in exhaustion I dozed off in an armchair. A knock on the door awoke me in the morning. It was Albert. “The count wants to see you.”

The count greeted me with feigned amiability. He closed the door and said, “Well, young man, the country air and food did you good. Also, of course, other distractions. I will come straight to the point,” he said. “Here is a paper for you to sign. It’s a necessary formality.”

I read it. “I will not sign.”

“You will if you know what’s good for you.”

“I can’t , because it’s not true.”

“I have a witness.”

I don’t know what would have happened at this point if not for the appearance of Albert. “His Highness has arrived.” The count, pale and angry, ordered me to wait there and hurried to meet his important caller. I too left the room. Albert pointed at the side door. Quickly I went out. I saw a carriage, my cello and suitcase. Albert said, “Everything ready. *Bitte, schnell*.” The reins were in his hands, and the horses took off.

Outside the gate Albert said, “If we're lucky you will catch the train.” I did.

My unheroic escape completed, I arrived in Breslau. The house was empty. Pozniak and Emma were still on vacation. In a day or so I had a visitor, the countess’s family lawyer, who said that the incident in the castle could develop into an ugly scandal. The divorce was imminent and I should go abroad, or, if I preferred, to the countess’s relatives in Berlin, to avoid testifying should it come to a trial. “We are willing to pay your fare and expenses,” he said.

“I have no reason to hide or run away from anyone.”

“Well, from what I know, you did not mind running from the castle,” said the lawyer. “But this is no time for a quarrel, and I assume you would want to help the countess.” He gave me the address of her family and begged me to leave at once.” To keep your whereabouts secret is imperative,” he warned.

Shortly after he left, Pozniak telephoned. He knew about the incident and was upset about it. He was also sad that there didn’t seem to be any trio engagements for the forth coming season. But there was also good news: Emma and he were engaged. I congratulated him.

With nothing to keep me in Breslau, I went to the countess’s family in Berlin. The taxi took me to a big, old fashioned mansion. I had been expected. I was led into a room with an enormous four-poster bed and was told that His Excellency was waiting for me in the library. The library appeared empty until I heard the voice of a man hidden in a high-backed chair. I walked around and as I saw his face I was struck by surprise. It was the gentleman who sat on my right at dinner. His nervous hands beckoned me to sit down. He arranged his handkerchief, touched his nose and tie, and after short successive coughs said, “How do you do?” After a little silence he said that if I needed anything just to tell the footman. “You will have it very quiet here.” He coughed some more and wished me good night.

The valet instructed me in the household schedule. “His Excellency suggests you take little walks in the fresh air on the large open balcony. Lunch will be brought at one into your room. At five, tea in the library, and at eight, dinner with His Excellency, all alone. We have visitors only at Christmas,” he said. My eerie days in the big house had a routine of confinement, and my link with the outside world was mostly through newspapers that were brought with the breakfast.

I could not have utilized my time better than I did in His Excellency's house. There were days when I practiced seven and eight hours. I read voraciously, did gymnastics, and even tried yoga exercises from a book I found in the library. Every day was like the other. I lost track of time and did not know how long I had been in the house.

One morning I had mail for the first time. It had been forwarded from Breslau. "Dear Casanova," wrote Bronislaw, "Well informed of your predicament, I know you will rejoice to learn that your summer host is with his wife on a second honeymoon in Paris, that they are very happy, and that you are innocent and free."

Jubilant over the good news, I hurried to say good-bye to His Excellency. He said that my presence had been pleasant and that my cello playing had hardly disturbed him, and he hoped that I would visit him sometime, perhaps at Christmas.

Almost as soon as I found my freedom again I was less jubilant and I wished that my quiet living with His Excellency might have continued. Professor Michaelis could not accommodate me with my old room, and Mr. Skript was not at the Ruschjo anymore. No one I knew seemed to be in town except Mr. Tols. He was glad to see me. He said he had heard I was successful in Breslau, but that as he looked at me something told him that I was not on top of the world. In his customary bravado he said he was all itch and desire to get someone out of the dumps. He wanted to know what he could do. I told him I needed a room. He recommended his boardinghouse in the Motzstrasse.

The street was noisy and the room I rented faced the back yard and was small and dark. But Tols was enthusiastic. He said the place was "cheap and furious" and it was not the room but the company that counted. It was the finest den of immigrants, he said, and I would agree with him when I met the inmates.

The first man to whom Tols introduced me was short and bald. His name was Hariton and he spoke Russian. Reaching out his hand, he said, "I am a pianist, and for your information a darned good one." He informed me that he was part of the "best darned two-piano team in this crummy country as well as in the entire darned Europe," that his partner was Dmitri Tiomkin, who was "the greatest darned genius in our entire miserable trade," and who was the only man to whom he would bow his bald head.

Suddenly, and for no apparent reason, he showed me a bottle. He poured a soapy liquid from it on his head and said that it smelled awful, but that it was the best darned thing to make his hair grow. His hair was essential for his career and in his predicament one did not mind the smell, he said. “I play the piano better now than when the whole tundra grew on my scalp. But where is the success?” he demanded.

Apart from Hariton, who finally succeeded in arousing my interest in the progress of the growth of his hair, there was Prince Pavel Urussoff. Though he was young, there was little that was young about him. He looked nostalgic and tired. Weak and helpless, he had no profession and no work, and he was too proud to ask for money. He spoke to me freely, and just as we were becoming good friends he suddenly disappeared. I tried in vain for many years to locate him. Though I never saw him again, I often think of the gentle and shy man and his words, “I am not an uprooted, but a badly planted, man.”

Soon my purse began to grow thin, and I accepted Hariton’s generous invitation to share his room. Every evening, with a flower in the lapel of his dinner jacket, Hariton sprinkled himself with an assortment of perfumes. “It’s to kill the hair-lotion odor,” he said before going out. His hat smartly on a slant, he gaily bounced to demonstrate his youthful agility. He seldom returned without bringing guests, who often stayed until the early hours of morning. This and many other habits of his put a great strain on me, to say the least.

The proprietors' belligerence reached a high pitch and they threatened to call the police and tried to break into our room. Hariton barricaded the door with his piano, rubbed the elixir into his scalp, and played Chopin. “Great music is great, even in this rathole,” he said.

The final blow, however, was delivered by Mr. and Mrs. Tols, who, after lowering their belongings with their old trusty rope, departed, presumably for a stroll. The proprietors held me accountable, and only after I paid all that I could of Tols’s bill was I permitted to leave the premises. The cello rubbed against my side as once more I headed for the Tiergarten.

**Chapter Fifteen**

IT was misty and cold on that November day in 1923, and my coat was no match for the piercing dampness in the streets. It penetrated my bones. As I turned with surprising briskness toward the Zoo Station and reached the

famous clock, I had a feeling of satisfaction, as if I had accomplished something of importance.

"I beg your pardon," a man said to me. He was tall, clean-shaven, and smiling. "Are you Mr. Piatigorsky, by any chance?"

"Yes."

"*Wunderbar!* What luck! Boris Kroyt certainly described you well. *Gott sei Dank*, I found you," he said, beaming. "Paul Bose is my name. I am the flutist of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra."

"Very glad to meet you," I responded.

"I hope you are glad; not even the police could locate you. Where do you live?"

"Out of town ... I mean during my vacation," I said, wondering what he wanted from me.

He stopped smiling. "Well, it does not matter now." He looked at his watch. "The main thing is that I have found you." He smiled again. "It is good you brought your cello to town with you. You may need it."

I waited.

"Do you know Arnold Schonberg's music?"

"*Verklarte Nacht*," I said.

"Do you know *Pierrot Lunaire?"*

"No, but why do you ask?"

"I will get right to the point," he said. "In about three weeks from now, there will be the first performance of *Pierrot Lunaire*. We have started rehearsing with the cellist Evel Stegmann, but he is not sure if he wants to have twenty more rehearsals without pay. Anyway, he got sick and we—I mean Artur Schnabel, Fritz Stiedry, Kroyt, and the others—want you to replace him. The question is, would you like to do it?"

"But you don't know me?" I said.

"Never mind. I know about you. Musicians live on gossip, so to speak, and an exceptional performer can't remain unknown for long, even if he wants to. Besides, a virtuoso's passion for obscurity is as nonexistent as

nightingale's milk. Artur Schnabel has heard of you too. Can you be at his place tomorrow afternoon?"

I said yes. He wrote down Schnabel's address, and warned me to be there at two o'clock *puncto*. "We scheduled a rehearsal without the cello tomorrow. *Gott im Himmel*, will they be surprised!" waving both hands to his right as though he were playing the flute, he left.

It began to rain. In Moscow it probably is snowing now, I thought absently, making for the shelter of the Zoo Station. Though it was only a short distance away, I was soaked when I reached it. I went into the men's room and took the cover off my cello to see if the rain had damaged it.

"I always thought this place needed music," said someone, and there was laughter.

The cello was dry. I put it back in its cover and headed dully for the waiting room. It was crowded with people waiting for the rain to stop. I joined them with that familiar feeling of loneliness one has when one is hungry, cold, and wet.

It was almost dark outside. Soon the rain stopped and I was in the street again. I imagined the moon rising behind the tall trees of the Tiergarten and thought of *Pierrot Lunaire*. Was it program music, like the "*Serenade"* of the Debussy Cello Sonata? There, too, was a Pierrot. He played a mandolin to an angry moon. After all these years, I still wonder why Debussy wanted him to play the mandolin and not the cello. Has anyone ever seen a Pierrot with the cello?! It is an instrument fit for a knight, like Don Quixote—or a king, like Solomon—not for clowns.

Suddenly I was overcome by great fatigue. The cello seemed to weigh tons. I had to lean on it. If only I could listen to music! The mere thought was a breath of life. There must be a concert tonight—maybe they will let me in. I headed toward the Philharmonic.

It was easy to sneak in through the backstage door. My cello was as good as a ticket. I saw a group of late-comers rushing into the hall, but I could not join them with the cello in my hands. I walked upstairs into the musicians' quarters, where I thought I could deposit it among other instruments. Near the entrance to the orchestra dressing room stood a man in his underwear, holding a trombone in one hand and his pants in the other. He did not see me as I placed my cello in the corner and disappeared quietly.

I did not succeed in entering the hall before the conclusion of the first piece, but I did find a seat just before Busoni began the Eighth Symphony of Beethoven. What an extraordinary-looking man he was! I listened in a rapture, refusing to let his insanely fast tempi spoil my joy.

After the concert I took my cello without being questioned by anyone. As I was about to step out of the building, the icy wind stopped me and I turned back. My shirt and socks were damp and I was miserably cold. Passing the drafty corridor, I walked toward the lobby. The last people were leaving. A little later the doors were locked and there was complete darkness.

The silence and emptiness of the huge building were ghastly. For a long time I stood still, my heart pounding. I felt trapped and wanted to cry for help. I knew that no one could hear me, and yet I dared not take a breath as I groped deeper into the dark. After every few steps I stopped to feel my way and to let my eyes accustom themselves. I had to move slowly until I detected a streak of light, mysterious and faint, that seemed to accentuate the enormous space of the hall.

I saw a door leading to a loge, which I later came to know as the Landecker Loge. I went in. It was large and deep; against the wall stood a couch. I felt its softness with my hand. It was wide and twice my length. My previous anxiety disappeared and soon I was undressed and settled for the night.

How warm and comfortable it is here, and what an improvement over the bench in the Tiergarten, I marveled. I was ready to fall asleep, but perhaps I enjoyed my new comfort too much to let slumber take it away from me.

A sudden irresistible urge to play seized me. I got up, grabbed my cello, and, naked as I was, moved toward the stage. I could not find the door or the stairs leading to it, so I climbed onto it from the hall. Impatient, I reached for a chair and began to play. The sound of the cello, eerie yet humanly full-throated, came back to me from the dark immensity of the hall. Held fast by this unique experience, I played to the limits of my endurance. Exhausted but elated, I finally returned to the loge.

In the morning I was awakened by the orchestra playing a Schumann symphony. I thought it was rather nice to rest on the couch there, unseen, and enjoy fine music in the morning. During the intermission it was quite easy to get dressed unnoticed behind the drapery and to slip out of the loge.

In the men's room I found soap and a clean towel, and in the pocket of my cello case a toothbrush, toothpaste, and razor. With petronian solemnity I

completed the morning with a thorough attendance to my external self. The orchestra was still rehearsing when I walked out of the building.

"Bravo!" Herr Bose greeted me in front of Artur Schnabel's house. "I like that—always *puncto*, on time!"

"Those orchestra rehearsals," complained Bose, climbing the stairs. "No one in there ever asks a fellow for his opinion of anything. I am tired of spitting into my flute, as if greasing a screw in a machine. Here I will say a word or two. That's the beauty of chamber music," he said, and rang the doorbell.

"I am Therese Schnabel," said a very tall lady. "Artur is in the music room," I liked her at once. I liked her saying "Artur," her simplicity, and her warm handshake.

Schnabel too greeted me with great friendliness. "The others will be here soon," he said with the score in his hand. "You remember this sixteenth note we spoke about?" he asked as he approached Bose.

Bose took a look at the score. "You mean this little one?"

"Yes," said Schnabel." After a long debate with Stiedry, we came to the conclusion that this sixteenth note is utterly impersonal, an example of an objective thought thrown rather carelessly into a heap of strongly emotionalized—I would dare even say—nerve centers, in which the seeming asymmetry represents its basic order."

I listened to Schnabel's deep voice with fascination. Glancing at Bose, I thought he grasped as little as I did of what Schnabel said. Though Bose's dumfounded expression must have been apparent, Schnabel went on to unfold his further thoughts. He mentioned something about "monkey bridges" and the relationship between "Schopenhauer and Wagner," but he was interrupted by the entrance of Stiedry and Kroyt.

I was glad to see Boris Kroyt, whom I had first met at the Cafe Ruscho. He was really responsible for my being here now. He was a very friendly and engaging young man, and he impressed me as a remarkable violinist as well as violist.

We took our places, and since the cello part was missing I played from a score. With it I could get acquainted with the composition more fully than if I had the cello part alone. The half-spoken, half-sung voice indicated in the score was partly filled by Stiedry. I wondered what his function would be at the concert. Would he conduct or recite? He was a conductor, but did this

piece need one? It was very intricate music for a small group, to be sure, but so are many sonatas, trios, and other chamber music works.

How would it be to prevent a virtuoso from playing unaccompanied music too freely by giving him a conductor, I thought. Imagine two people on the stage, one playing a Bach suite or Chopin polonaise and the other conducting! I laughed.

"Is it that funny?" Schnabel stopped me short.

All looked at me. "I thought of something," I said. "I am sorry."

"Let's continue," said Schnabel.

I was soon completely absorbed in the music. Its originality delighted me, and despite the hunger that gnawed at me mercilessly I think I played well. Everyone seemed pleased, most of all Schnabel.

"Shall we rest a while? Tea is served in the other room."

No one except me was in a hurry to have tea. I waited, listening with the others to Schnabel discoursing on *Pierrot Lunaire*, communism, and other interesting topics. However, sensing a rather prolonged dissertation, I slowly moved into the other room. There I saw sandwiches and a variety of cakes displayed on a table. I was alone.

It was like leaving baby lambs with a wolf. I devoured the sandwiches one by one. I worked fast. When there were no sandwiches left I began the devastation of the sweeter and less satisfying material. These also disappeared with fabulous speed, and only when nothing edible whatever remained on the table did I rejoin the group, who still listened to Schnabel. My absence had not been noticed.

"Well, gentlemen, tea is waiting for us." All followed Schnabel.

The moment he entered the room he called the maid. "Where are the sandwiches?" he demanded indignantly. I saw her eyes widen with fear.

We had twenty more rehearsals without pay, and I had twenty afternoon teas as my only daily meals. I enjoyed enormously both rehearsals and the sandwiches. But above all I valued Schnabel's sensitivity and understanding, which made our relationship ripen into a lasting friendship.

The forthcoming first performance of Schonberg's work stimulated great interest in the music circles of Berlin, but no one was more expectant than we ourselves were on the night of the concert. We knew *Pierrot Lunaire* perhaps

more thoroughly than any piece of the standard repertoire. Yet, because we were not certain how the composition would be received, we were anxious about the premiere.

We were greeted by a large audience, and after taking our places we waited for quiet to settle over the auditorium. But instead of silence we heard a sudden loud shriek, followed by a series of boos, and a commotion on one side of the hall punctuated by speeches and outcries.

Schnabel was equal to the occasion. With great gusto he launched into a circus polka, and Kroyt and I followed him. "Come on," he encouraged, "this is a fish market." The audience's laughter overcame the confusion, and the atmosphere of vaudeville stopped as abruptly as it had begun. In a short time we were ready to start. Our singer-speaker, Marie Gutheil-Schoder, apparently did not recover from the incident immediately, for at the beginning she appeared almost mute. But before long we caught the true spirit of the music, and despite the danger of an over-rehearsed performance, which often turns pedestrian, we did not lose spontaneity.

*Pierrot Lunaire* had an enthusiastic reception, but the cause of the disturbance remained a mystery. Later, referring to the event in an article, Cesar Saerchinger called it "The Battle of the Singing Academy" but failed to make the matter clear for me.

With the concert past, gone were the delightful hours of rehearsals, Schnabel's speeches, the sandwiches and the tea. These days had created a feeling of almost family belonging. Alone again, I missed it.

A few weeks after the concert I received a message from Bose asking me to bring my cello to the Philharmonic. When I arrived, he explained excitedly that, although the orchestra season had started, he had spoken so much of me to his colleagues and to Furtwangler that they wanted to hear me.

Facing Furtwangler and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, I only vaguely realized the importance of the moment. Instead of giving thought to what I should play, I stared at the Landecker Loge, in which I had spent the night and from which I had listened to the same orchestra and the same conductor the next morning. My dreamy absent-mindedness must have been noticed, for I heard Furtwangler's voice: "What's the matter with him?" This brought me back and I played the Schumann Concerto, a movement of Dvorak, parts of *Don Quixote*, Bach, and passages from orchestral works. Furtwangler put

his arms around me, and as we walked off the stage together, he asked me to become the first cellist of the Philharmonic.

The procedure of signing my contract was short and happy. Too impatient to begin work, I did not want to spoil such an occasion by reading it or by asking many questions. No longer beset with financial worries, properly dressed, and established comfortably—all paid from the salary that was advanced me—I could devote myself completely to my new responsibility.

Otto Muller, one of the oldest members of the orchestra and its harpist and orchestra personnel manager, gave me my first week's schedule. "You asked for it," I said to myself, reading it. There were two rehearsals and a concert daily, some of them at the Philharmonic, some at the Singing Academy, some at other places I had never heard of. I was scheduled to play in two "pops" concerts—the Volkmann Concerto in one and the *Zigeunerweisen*, by Sarasate, in the other. These were to be conducted by Herr Hagel. The other conductors of the week were to be Professor Schumann, Dr. Unger, and the Professor Doktor Felix Maria Gatz. I did not know them, and I had never played *Zigeunerweisen* before.

"Herr Muller," I asked, "can I play something else instead?"

"No," he said, "we don't reprint our programs."

"When are the rehearsals for Volkmann and Sarasate?"

"There are no rehearsals for the 'pops,'" he said calmly, and turned away. I ran after him.

"But Herr Muller—I have to have a rehearsal—I don't even have the music."

"It's not our fault that you don't know the pieces," said Muller.

"All right," I said, "but the Sarasate! It's a piece for violin!"

"Arnold Foldesy, our former first cellist, played it and the public liked it. Besides," he said, touching his hair, which looked like a wig but was not, "you'll be playing everything we have in the library anyway. You will get used to our way of life and love it. I am sure."

His prediction did not quite come true: I never did get used to playing obscure literature on two days' notice.

With already heavy duty I assumed new obligations. My colleagues and Furtwangler encouraged me to ever-greater efforts. Concert managers

offered engagements and students wanted lessons. I taught between rehearsals and I often practiced after concerts at night.

The organization of the orchestra was basically a cooperative one, consisting of active members with life tenure, while some younger musicians and soloists, like myself, were engaged on a yearly basis. The active members had all the decisions to make and often held meetings that we "guests" were never invited to attend. There were ten Sunday and ten Monday subscription Philharmonic concerts. These were the foundation of the great reputation the orchestra had built up since the days of Von Bulow and Nikisch. Now the old tradition was being carried on by Furtwangler. Though he was the head of the orchestra, the co-operative ruled. I had no opportunity to know their financial status, their rules and aims, and despite my colleagues' friendship, to the "Secret Society" I remained an outsider.

For two thousand marks anyone could hire the orchestra for a concert with two rehearsals, no questions asked. Conductors, soloists, composers, and choruses booked the orchestra solidly for the entire season. The orchestra did what they were asked to do, always obeying the conductor regardless of what he might demand.

This was an important rule of discipline at the rehearsals, but did not necessarily apply to the performances themselves, for some of the conductors' demands were of such musical absurdity that the word would be passed to play the concert "as usual." At such concerts the conductor's presence was ignored, and as a matter of honor the orchestra at times actually gave fair performances.

We had conductors who could not deny themselves the luxury of giving several concerts in a season. Financially they could afford it. Two of them provided the orchestra with excellent entertainment. Both, though on the "as usual" list, had no doubts about their craft, and both had a flair for the dramatic.

"Gentlemen," one of them would greet us in the morning, "before we begin with the Beethoven Fifth, let us contemplate and muse on Beethoven's innermost impulses, of which he became—luckily for us—a captive, a giant chained to the still more giantesque and more powerful cloud we are accustomed to know as his inspiration." At this point musicians one by one would unfold their morning newspapers, reach for a sandwich, converse, or just take cat naps. After a long discourse the conductor would finally reach

Beethoven's maturity, his illness, and his death. Then Herr Muller would announce, "It's time for intermission."

In the second part of the rehearsal, pressed for time, we would run through a few bars from each composition on the program. At the concert we would play "as usual."

The other "paying customer" would not waste his eloquent prose on a silent orchestra. He spoke as he conducted, walking to each section without interruption of music or speech. On his longer promenades to the timpanies or trombones I would also take a walk with my cello, but, preoccupied with his task, he never noticed my strolls.

Aside from the conductors, the parade of people renting the orchestra at times included instrumentalists who couldn't pay and singers who couldn't sing. But it didn't bother my colleagues, because they developed an amazing insensitivity through the years which helped them to survive. For me, however, it was not easy. The rehearsals tended to last an eternity, and embarrassment at certain performances did not lessen.

I had to find a remedy, and when I did it was so incredibly simple that I wondered why the others hadn't done the same. I began to study scores, and during rehearsals and concerts I imagined myself assuming responsibility for the performance. I got to know the parts of other instruments as well as my own, and in the choral works I sang with the chorus.

At one performance of the St. Matthew Passion, so engrossed was I in the singing that at the most dramatic moment my horrible voice, all alone, pierced the air one bar too early: "Barrabas!" The horrified conductor recovered from the shock, but I was never permitted to play under his direction again.

The great interest I took in my work was not always beneficial to others. Once, lost in enthusiasm after a performance of the First Brahms Symphony, I responded to the applause as though it were meant for me personally—I stood up and took a bow.

My great joy was the Furtwangler concerts. He, true leader that he was, made his orchestra give more than it had. I was young, and perhaps I idealized him somewhat, but his influence had been perhaps the most significant in my musical life. The scope of his artistry was immense, but it had some shortcomings, one of which was a rather scant knowledge of string instruments. He admitted it frankly and there was no end of his questioning

about fingerings, portamentos, vibratos, and the thousand intricacies of the string-playing art.

"The greater part of the orchestra consists of strings," he said. "A conductor really must play a string instrument. It's my weakness that I don't. Don't you think it's also the weakness of Bruno Walter and Klemperer? Oh God, how glad I would be even to play a double bass! Koussevitzky, without his double bass, would never draw such a sound from his string section. Don't you think that Toscanini would never have become what he is if he hadn't been a cellist at the start?"

I said, "I only know what Chaliapin told me of him."

"What was that?"

"He said that Toscanini is the damnedest lump of macaroni to swallow and that he was the only conductor who scared him and made him feel like a pupil."

Furtwangler said, "Fundamentally, Toscanini is an opera conductor, as Chaliapin is an opera singer. We here are engaged in a different profession."

Furtwangler had a contradictory nature. He was ambitious and jealous, noble and vain, coward and hero, strong and weak, a child and a man of wisdom, both very German and yet a man of the world. He was one only in music, undivided and unique.

Furtwangler's peculiar mannerisms in conducting have been a constant source of discussion. It is difficult to explain his ability to make his orchestra achieve remarkable ensemble without precise indications on his part. He could not explain it himself. Perhaps it was exactly this that made the orchestra grasp his intentions more keenly.

His downbeat in forte was usually preceded by a vigorous stamping of his feet and shaking of his head, and only a series of short spits (never reaching beyond the first cello) would finally force down his trembling baton. Just a fraction of a second after the baton had reached its destination, the orchestra would enter, yet always with perfect precision. His downbeat in piano had almost the same characteristics, except that there were no stamping and hardly any spitting at all.

Under him there were many memorable performances. Yet not every Furtwangler concert was all glory. I remember particularly one first performance of a contemporary work. Extremely difficult, the piece needed

more time for rehearsal than was available. Furtwangler, after running through the piece, began to work note by note for the rest of the rehearsal.

"Is it F sharp?" inquired a musician.

Furtwangler consulted the score and said, "Yes. Why?"

"Doesn't sound right."

Every second someone would interrupt Furtwangler with a question. "There are seven eighths in my bar. Is it correct?" "Is it a sixteenth note?" "How do you play pizzicato and *arco* at the same time?" Et cetera, et cetera. Furtwangler, trying to clarify things, sank only deeper into confusion.

He spent that afternoon and evening studying the score. I was permitted to glance at it, also. Next morning we rehearsed again, but the composition appeared only the more complex.

"Let's at least play together," Furtwangler would cry as he repeated the piece again and again. "You realize that there will be only one more rehearsal this afternoon, and that the composer will be present?"

After a short lunch we assembled at the Philharmonic.

"Gentlemen," announced Furtwangler, "I have just received the most wonderful news from Vienna. The composer is not coming. He sends his best wishes."

"Bravo! *Wunderbar!*" cried a host of jubilant voices.

"That's not all," Furtwangler continued. "We will of course try to do our best, but at the same time, I want you to know that there is only one score of the composition in the country. The composer has the other one."

We went through the rest of the program, which consisted of standard repertoire, and without so much as touching the new composition we cheerfully completed the rehearsal.

The next day the musicians arrived for the concert much earlier than usual, to practice their parts. The pieces preceding the premiere were played as if we had something else on our minds. Then came the world premiere. Up loomed Furtwangler's worried face and the orchestra plunged into deep, unknown waters.

From the very start I had the strange sensation of riding on the back of a galloping giraffe. The weird sounds of the orchestra welled up as though

from the stomachs of hundreds of ventriloquists. The double basses sounded like violas, and the bassoons like flutes. Seconds became hours as the performance rolled crazily on. Each player strove desperately to keep in touch with the others, not turning any more to Furtwangler for help. He himself was hopelessly lost.

The termination of the performance began very gradually, the players dropping out one by one until only Furtwangler and a few isolated instruments were left. At that point, for no explainable reason, the brass section entered. The magnitude of the sound was truly fabulous, and, coming so unexpectedly, it took us all completely off guard. We grabbed our instruments and vigorously joined the brasses with renewed hope. The incredible noise did not last very long, and soon—after a few last convulsions—everything stopped dead.

The silence that followed this abrupt ending was terrible to bear, and the hissing, hand clapping, and catcalls came almost as a relief. Among those applauding in the audience I noticed two famous musicians. After the concert I heard them say, "The public is too stupid to understand." So are you, I thought.

**Chapter Sixteen**

"THIS here is the best honest-to-goodness springboard for you fellows in the first chairs," was the frequent remark of my colleagues in the Berlin Philharmonic. Those "first-chair fellows" almost always were non-German, like the cellists Malkin, Foldesy, myself, Graudan, and Schuster; or concertmasters Holst, Maurice van den Berg, and Tossy Spivakovsky. "Almost all of them become 'somebody,' the old-timers said." *Ganz fabelhaft!* Think of our former concertmaster, Eugene Ysaye!"

I had not known that Ysaye once belonged to this orchestra, and was surprised. But then, scarcely a day passed without some surprise. One morning there was a rehearsal, conducted by Wagner, of music by Wagner. Of course, it was not Richard, but his son Siegfried. Even so, it was as much a surprise as when I had met Tchaikovsky's brother in Russia. I felt I was confronting something almost prehistoric. A polite man of about fifty-five, he politely and apologetically conducted his father's and his own music. I thought his overture, entitled *Little Hat* or something, had charm, but I pitied him when he spoke of Richard Wagner. "My father would like a little more power here, or less *diminuendo* there." I expected him at any moment to refer to his "daddy."

The rigid discipline of the orchestra had something of the Nietzschean "*befehlen und gehorchen*," I learned to obey and keep my musical and other disagreements to myself.

Once, at the music festival in Heidelberg, during a performance of the Double Concerto by Brahms, the cello soloist had a memory slip. Furtwangler gave me a sign to play his part. I did until the soloist could resume. The same procedure repeated itself in all three movements of the concerto. I wished that the soloist had followed the custom of playing this concerto from music. Later, at a reception, the cellist greeted me, "You are an arrogant fellow."

By no means was it always easy to obey orders, as in the instance of a rehearsal with Klemperer.

"Don't you see it is marked *mezzo forte?* Try it again," he demanded. I repeated the little solo in exactly the same manner as the first time. "*Mezzo forte!*" he screamed. "Once more." I played. He was in a rage. "Don't you know what *mezzo forte* is?"

I said, "No. Do you want me to play softer of louder?" After short pause he said, "A little softer." Later, paying under his direction as a soloist, I liked to tease him by asking for a lot of *mezzo fortes*, but he did not catch the joke.

The arrival in Berlin of my old teacher, Professor Alfred von Glehn, brought me much joy and worry at the same time. His wife, sparing her husband, told me when we were alone of the necessity of his finding work. Soon I was lucky enough to secure a teaching position for him at the Klindworth-Scharwenka Conservatory. For over a year everything went well. Von Glehn spoke with affection of his students, planning for their future exactly as he did for his students in my youth in Moscow. Suddenly he fell ill and was unable to teach. The director stopped his salary, resuming the payments only after I volunteered to substitute for the professor.

Meeting his students was an unbelievable experience. The first to play for me was Mr. Brenner. He had only four fingers on his right hand—the small finger missing. The next student, whose name I have forgotten, was minus the right index finger; and the third, Mr. Lumme, had only three fingers on the right hand, with the two middle ones absent. Perplexed, I waited for what would be next. What a relief it was to see all five fingers on each hand of Mr. Davidoff, but my joy turned to horror when he moved to an upper position, exposing two thumbs on his left hand.

I had no courage to go on listening to the remainder of the class, and, taking a rest, I wondered if it were not an orthopedist they really needed instead of a cello teacher. As became evident during my two years at the conservatory, they needed both—perhaps also a psychologist who at times could be of service to the teacher as well.

There were challenging problems to be solved in my work. Students with strong temperament, by learning how to capitalize on their emotions, I knew could serve art well; while unimaginative and frigid ones were as unfit for their profession as, let us say, too emotional dentists are for theirs.

There was a difficult situation with a student of whom I was particularly fond. His talent captivated me. Sensitive, with good taste, and equipped with perfect build for his instrument, here, I thought, was a born virtuoso. Never did I wish more ardently to pass on to another all I knew. Believing in making my thoughts clear by examples, I played for him at the lessons, repeating passages and pieces he played. I criticized, praised, and analyzed, and I played for him—trying, and at times succeeding, to surpass myself.

The harder I tried, the less happy he seemed. At first slowly, and then increasingly from lesson to lesson, his playing worsened until all his previous qualities almost vanished. It was heartbreaking to watch such disintegration, and, unable to explain its cause, I developed a frustrating feeling of bewilderment and guilt. Why had other students, less gifted, made splendid progress, while he, given the benefit of perhaps better lessons, was being choked and retarded? I had to find the reason. One sleepless night, thinking of my failure, an idea struck me that perhaps it was precisely my over-anxiety that was causing the disaster. Did my playing, by any chance, make him lose hope of matching it?

At the next lesson, my playing for him was slightly more faulty than his, and, seeing his young face light up, I knew that I was on the right track. Now the lessons were long and frequent. Deliberately I continued to play worse and worse while he gained more and more assurance. His progress was astonishing and my satisfaction as a teacher couldn't have been greater when, after his brilliant performance at graduation, he said to the other students, "Mr. Piatigorsky is certainly a fine teacher—but what a lousy cellist!"

I had not belonged to a string quartet since Moscow. I missed it. I joined in a trio with Leonid Kreutzer, pianist, and Josef Wolfsthal, violinist, both professors at the *Hochschule* in Berlin and splendid musicians; but despite

our achievements as an ensemble, it could not replace the ideal blend of four string instruments.

One of my first solo tours outside Germany was to the Baltic countries. The invitation came from the *Osteuropaisches Konzert Bureau,* upon the recommendation of Fritz Kreisler.

“Business is fabulous,” said Mr. Zacharin, the head of the bureau. “A real inundation. It certainly keeps our accountant busy.” The accountant was still busy even after my last concert at the opera house in Riga. But I had been promised payment and an exact statement at seven o'clock the following morning, about an hour before my departure.

Breakfast for four—Mr. Zacharin, his partner, the accountant, and myself—waited for us at seven. I had it alone. Unable to reach them, I headed toward the station. In the waiting room a porter approached me. “Are you the cellist? Here. They asked me to give you this.” He handed me a third class ticket to Berlin.

Through the window, as the train moved and gained speed, I saw the members of the *Osteuropaisches Konzert Bureau* coming out of the round men’s room installed at the center of the platform, with their handkerchiefs waving and their faces smiling.

Mrs. Louise Wolf, the head of the venerable Wolf and Sachs, became my concert manager. Her knowledge of music was not above the level of other managers, but her judgment had great weight and her influence reached every corner of the globe where tickets were sold for concerts. Many feared her sharp tongue; many sought her favor; everyone admired her wit. Her remarks were quoted and jokes about her widely circulated. Her nickname, Queen Louise, stuck to her solidly, and a queen in her field she was indeed. She was in her sixties at the time I first saw her in her office. She sat majestically at her disordered desk, her massive torso wrapped in what appeared to be numerous blouses, scarves, and shawls.

There was another visitor in the room. “Don’t mind Piatigorsky,” she said pointing at me. “What is on your mind?” The young man hesitated. “Go ahead, I have little time,” she urged.

“You did not hear me play the piano,” he said, “But those who did! Well, I brought these reviews for you.” He handed her a thick envelope. There were dozens of newspaper clippings. She chose the longest one and began to read. I was impressed with the thorough attention she gave to each and every

review. She read it all, sighed, put it back into the envelope, returned it to him, and said, "And now, show me the bad ones."

"But madame," he exclaimed, "they are all good."

"Hm, it's too bad. I am afraid you must look for another manager. You see, young man, in my long experience I have never met a poor artist who wasn't in possession of glowing reviews, as I have yet to meet a great one who has escaped unfavorable ones."

"I will call you Piaty—all right?" she asked when the young man had gone. "Tell me, now, all about your past, present, and your future aspirations. No—no—don't tell me about your escapades. I know you are a rascal. I don't really want to hear of your past—after all, I can see how well you have grown. Future—that interests us, *nicht wahr?* What is your ambition?"

"To play the cello well," I said.

"That's my boy!"

A few months later I regretted not having told her about some recordings I had made in Berlin. Under financial stress I had agreed to play some salon pieces and tangos with the popular band leader and violinist Dajos Bella. I was well paid and the recordings were released under the Dajos Bella label.

Great was my shock when I came to Hamburg to appear with Karl Muck and saw an advertisement in the symphony program:

PIATIGORSKY ON RECORDS—HEAR HIM IN

"I HUG YOU, DARLING," "ECSTASY,"

"PLEASURES OF LOVE," AND OTHERS!

After a fight with the phonograph company, they agreed to change all the labels on the records. Apparently my "repertoire" on the records did not alienate anyone, certainly not the Hamburg Philharmonic and Muck, for year after year I was invited to play with them.

My friendship with Muck had not had a very promising beginning. I looked forward eagerly to meeting a man so long important in the world of music. At the rehearsal I sat in the empty hall and watched the extraordinary sparse movements of his baton. He was old, thin, and dry, and so sounded the C-Major Symphony by Schubert on that morning. And yet there was something fascinating in his personality and his music, something definite that only very mature artists achieve.

I thought there would be an intermission before the concerto, but when the symphony ended I heard Muck: "Where is the cello scratcher?" He repeated it louder. I rushed to the green room and soon, with cello, entered the stage. He did not greet me.

"How do you know that I scratch?" I asked.

"We will find out soon enough. Sit down," he ordered, and began without further delay. Unhappy and angry, I did not look at him once. Not a word passed between us until after the adagio, but just as I was ready to continue, I felt Muck's hand on my head. "I must thank the old witch," said Muck, "for sending you here. You are the damnedest scratchless cello player, if there ever was one." The musicians laughed.

Knowing him, I came to think that anyone who could survive his crude humor would find him a lovable man. Not all could. A violinist in his orchestra approached Dr. Muck with the complaint of an unbearable pain in his arm. "What shall I do?" he asked.

"Cut it off," advised Dr. Muck, and walked away. The violinist quit his job.

Muck's scope as a conductor seldom reached beyond sober knowledge, economy, and mastery over strictly fundamental matters. His austere art had something of a "before breakfast" quality. And yet, despite or because of his lack of warmth, a musical contact with him, like a cool bath on a hot day, was refreshing.

When the great cellist Jean Gerardy, stopped concertizing, Hugo Becker replaced him in the Schnabel-Flesch-Gerardy Trio. After many successful years they had become inactive as an ensemble—until I, in turn, became Becker's successor.

I was considerably younger than my two colleagues, and they had a tendency to indoctrinate their slightly too Russian partner with *Deutsche Kultur*. My respect and affection for the two men made it easy for me to make a good adjustment. Nevertheless, our congenial rehearsals, at times, would break into heated discussions, which were stimulating.

Carl Flesch carried his weighty name with great dignity. His every word, every gesture, as that of Artur Schnabel, had a special significance. But unlike Schnabel, I soon discovered, he was a prankster at heart, and youthful enough to become the best of pals.

Eager to include contemporary works in our programs, we commissioned a trio from Krenek and planned to ask Hindemith and others. I wish all young musicians could have witnessed the enthusiasm with which Schnabel and Flesch reacted to the Ravel Trio, which was new to them.

"Artur, stop, let us play this phrase once more. I think I found something that will even 'over-French' Jacques Thibaud."

"Friends, listen. How do you like this pedal here?" Schnabel asked. "So clouded, yet clear." I listened to his caressing and velvety sound.

Our concert tours were organized with precision, taking care of every detail. Praised for my punctuality, I was scolded for constantly forgetting to bring my music to the concerts. "It's lucky we have your parts," they grumbled backstage. I continued to forget, and my friends became increasingly irritated.

One evening, somewhere in Holland, instead of taking time for warming up as he usually did before the concert, Flesch tuned his violin quickly, and, hurried by Schnabel, we walked on-stage. There again, without further warning, and before I was settled in my chair, they began the B-Flat Trio by Schubert. I followed suit.

On my music stand, instead of Schubert I saw the cello part to the *Meistersinger* overture, by Wagner, Gazing stupidly at this, I played from memory. Even after I had gained the assurance that I didn't need the music at all, the triumphant faces of my partners were still evident. "It is a plot—they want to teach me a lesson," I knew. This gave me an idea. With my eyes fastened on the music, I quickly and noisily turned the page and solemnly continued playing. The effect so produced exceeded all my expectations. The two gentlemen shook with laughter and Flesch's violin slipped from under his chin. I t evolved into the gayest performance of Schubert ever presented. Still chuckling backstage, they offered to carry not only my music but, if needed, my cello as well.

Schnabel enjoyed having listeners and occasionally would invite a guest to our rehearsals. Flesch didn't like it. "But he is not a musician," Schnabel would explain, as though only musicians were unwanted. We had jewelers, critics, artists, publishers, also Aldous Huxley, Bruno Frank, James Joyce, former and future students of Schnabel, and others. They came singly and seldom twice.

I wondered how they took the procedure of our work, or the dialogues, as follows: "Artur," Flesch would say, "please be good enough at those bars before letter C when I have the *theme* ..."

"Theme?" Schnabel would interrupt. "Dear Carl, we are engaged here in music only."

"Fine, fine," Carl agreed. "I mean to say, when I play that—ah, ah, *melody* ..."

"Ha, *melody!*" Schnabel was horrified. "Like *Melody in F*, by Rubinstein, perchance?"

Impatient, Flesch would say, "Who cares? Let's call it a *motif.*"

After giving them time to search for the correct definition of whatever Carl had to play, I would finally intervene: "I think you are perfectly right," addressing both of them. "Letter B, please," and the rehearsal would proceed.

Our joyful traveling and playing together had been stimulating at all times. Both Artur and Carl were receptive to new ideas and alert to controversial issues, were they in music, philosophy, or politics. Schnabel's love of talking and his sarcasm were amusing, and at times somewhat cruel.

"That poor fellow you cornered at the party," I said to Schnabel, "I couldn't stand seeing his sufferings, listening to you. Didn't you know you spoke above his head? He was almost in convulsion from concentration."

Schnabel said, "Oh, I just wanted to flatter him."

Flesch and I, after one incident in London, became careful in letting Schnabel make social arrangements, which proved costly to us. "Let's not accept those pompous invitations after our concert in London," said Schnabel. "I propose that we each invite our friends for supper in a restaurant and divide the bill among us. Don't you think it would be practical?"

At the supper Flesch's and my appetites vanished as we counted Schnabel's twenty-two guests and only three of ours.

My return to the orchestra from solo and trio concerts was not always a letdown. Not when Ossip Gabrilowitsch came from Detroit. His sister, Pauline, introduced me to him and we became friends at once. During his short visit in Berlin, we spent much time together. I enjoyed playing sonatas with him and listening to his musical experiences and the stories he had to tell of Mark Twain, his father-in-law.

"Don't make the same mistake I did. Change your name. My father-in-law, after I married his daughter, suddenly disappeared. We were worried, but after he showed up and was questioned about what had happened to him, he said, 'Why, I was trying to cram in the name of my son-in-law.'"

When he became a conductor, Gabrilowitsch did not abandon his original instrument, as so many conductors did. Luckily for all, despite the heavy duty with his orchestra in Detroit he continued to give superb performances on the piano until the end of his fruitful life.

It was at his concert that a drastic change took place in my life. The conductor Efrem Kurtz introduced me to a lady. I was very young, and she was beautiful. I was shy, she was eloquent, worldly, and with the experience of a previous marriage. Her maiden name was Lyda Antik. She became my wife. Very musical and alert, she was ambitious and had great charm. My bachelorhood turned into a stormy life that, after nine childless years, ended in a peaceful divorce. Faithful to the cello, she later married the eminent French cellist Pierre Fournier.

**Chapter Seventeen**

IN the years between 1927 and 1929, whirling from one concert hall to another, allured by the demand and fast-increasing fees, I kept accepting solo engagements until there was very little time for the orchestra and none at all for teaching. The orchestra co-operated by limiting my obligations to ten pairs of Furtwangler concerts in Berlin and spring tours to foreign countries.

Those tours, although taxing, were exciting. The arrival of the orchestra in Paris or London had something of the spirit of conquest, with Furtwangler, the poet of conductors, leading his army to victory. We spent most of our time on the train. In each new city there would be very short rehearsals, mostly for trying acoustics and seating arrangements. We called them *Sitzproben*. Evenings without concerts were very rare. Whenever I had time I took walks, and the less familiar the language and city, the more interested I was. Strange was my fascination for paintings. Without any background or ability to draw, I could not explain it. I roamed in France, Germany, and the Scandinavian countries in search of paintings. I spent more time and more money than I could afford in acquiring them. And when I met an artist whose work I admired, there was no limit to my delight.

Passing a small frame shop in Paris, I saw a painting in the window depicting a chicken hooked on a chain. Slain, and yet alive. I was struck by

its colors and its torment, and it was as if in agony painter and chicken alike were bleeding, both unable to escape. Breathless, I walked in and for a small sum bought the picture. Were it portrait of landscape, I always knew this master at sight, and even later, when introduced to him, I knew at once that this frightened man could only be Soutine.

In Germany, Kirchner, Jawlensky, Nolde, and Marc all differently but equally appealed to my taste. Among the painters I met, Spiro, Kandinsky, Gluckmann, and Klee loved music. But none of them could have appreciated it as much as I admired their art.

On one of our visits to Paris, Furtwangler, glad to take leave of conducting, and I of playing in the orchestra, settled ourselves to perform sonatas and variations by Beethoven at a reception in the German Embassy. Furtwangler's qualities as a pianist were of particular value in chamber music. Like Gabrilowitsch, while giving the fullness of music, at no time did he overpower his string-playing partner, who had no advantages of a pedal or open lid.

After the performance, many guests expressed their appreciation and some their views on music. Not particularly fond of such discourses, I felt almost glad at not knowing French. Some of the more sensitive people left me quickly, but one individual, wiry and slightly built, was very persistent. I did not know what he was speaking about, but, looking at his expressive face, I was curious to know what he was saying. Monsieur Painleve, member of the French Cabinet, whom I knew and who spoke German, joined us. The thin man continued talking, and after his last sentence, which sounded like a question, shook my hand and abruptly disappeared.

"Who was it? What did he say?"

"From what I heard," said Painleve, "Maurice Ravel liked your playing."

"Ravel!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, our great composer."

"What was his question? Didn't he ask something before he left?" I was eager to know.

"Yes, it was a question," said Painleve, smiling. "Ravel asked why you waste your talent on such abominable music as you played tonight."

"Abominable? It was Beethoven!"

Disturbed, I pondered how Ravel could say this. Yet, had he worshiped Beethoven, could he compose like Ravel? Didn't the same question apply to other composers? Didn't they have special ears, as artists have special eyes not necessarily resembling ours? In protest to Tolstoy's declaration that Beethoven was without talent, Tchaikovsky wrote indignantly, "To reduce to one's own incomprehension a genius acknowledged by all is a characteristic of limited people." Almost in the same breath Tchaikovsky said, "I play Bach gladly, but I do not recognize in him, as some do, a great genius." And he writes in his diary: "Handel has, for me, an entirely fourth-rate significance." Or, as Soutine once cried to a group of friends, "I must paint roses! I want roses." He got them. Days later there were still roses, but wilted in a vase. On canvas were gladioli. Strange world of art! When asked, "Why do your cow fly?" Chagall said, "I don't know." Or when a group of young violinists approached Frita Kreisler, asking, "Should one play that passage in the fourth position?" he answered, "I don't know where the fourth position is." So the creative and the performing artist had this in common. Furtwangler, after pleading with the orchestra, "Gentlemen, this phrase must be—it must—it must—you know what I mean—please try it again—please," said to me at the intermission, "You see how important it is for a conductor to convey his wishes clearly?" Strangely, the orchestra knew what he wanted.

Scientists' perception of matter and time can be equally puzzling. Albert Einstein, whose ardent love of music often brought him into contact with musicians, once asked me to dinner. As I arrived at his apartment at Haberlandstrasse in Berlin he asked me, "Did you ever see a Japanese violin?"

I said, "No."

"A Japanese student at the university made one. Would you like to see it?"

I said, "Yes."

"That's fine. Just wait a minute." Einstein disappeared. Alone in the apartment and hungry, I waited almost two hours for his return. At last he rushed in, out of breath. Not taking his coat off, he handed me the violin. The coarsely constructed violin was unattractive. While I thought of what to tell him, I felt that his interest in the violin and my opinion of it suddenly disappeared. Relieved, I suggested having dinner at a good restaurant nearby. He ate heartily, spoke of music, and asked me questions, and I, of course, did not attempt to touch his field.

Before saying *auf wiedersehen* he asked how I had liked his playing the violin the week before at the home of friends. I remembered too well, but hesitated to answer. "How did I play?" he repeated.

I said, "Eh, relatively well!"

My great wish was to hear Pablo Casals. One day my desire was almost fulfilled and I met him. But ironically, it was I who had to play. It was in the home of the Von Mendelssohns, a house filled with El Grecos, Rembrandts, and Stradivaris. Francesco von Mendelssohn, the son of the banker, who was a talented cellist, telephoned and asked if he could call for me; they had a guest in the house who would like to hear me play.

"Mr. Casals," I was introduced to a little bald man with a pipe. He said that he was pleased to meet young musicians such as Serkin and me. Rudolf Serkin, who stood stiffly next to me, seemed, like myself, to be fighting his diffidence. Rudi had played before my arrival, and Casals now wanted to hear us together. Beethoven's D-Major Sonata was on the piano. "Why don't you play it?" asked Casals. Both nervous and barely knowing each other, we gave a poor performance that terminated somewhere in the middle.

"Bravo! Bravo! Wonderful!" Casals applauded. Francesco brought the Schumann Cello Concerto, which Casals wanted to hear. I never played worse. Casals asked for Bach. Exasperated, I obliged with a performance matching the Beethoven and Schumann.

"Splendid! *Magnifique!*" said Casals embracing me.

Bewildered, I left the house. I knew how badly I had played, but why did he, the master, have to praise and embrace me? This apparent insincerity pained me more than anything else.

The greater was my shame and delight when, a few years later, I met Casals in Paris. We had dinner together and played duets for two cellos, and I played for him until late at night. Spurred by his great warmth, and happy, I confessed what I had thought of his praising me in Berlin. He reacted with sudden anger. He rushed to the cello. "Listen!" He played a phrase from the Beethoven sonata. "Didn't you play this fingering? Ah, you did! It was novel to me ... it was good ... and here, didn't you attack that passage with up-bow, like this?" He demonstrated. He went through Schumann and Bach, always emphasizing all he liked that I had done. "And for the rest," he said passionately, "leave it to the ignorant and stupid who judge by counting only the faults. I can be grateful, and so must you be, for even one note, one

wonderful phrase." I left with the feeling of having been with a great artist and a friend.

I was the possessor of a so-called Nansen passport, established by the League of Nations for people who lost their own country of birth and were wanted nowhere else. The strange document attached to me gave no indication as to my nationality, and the place and date of my birth were so illegible that each time I entered a new country the officials argued if I had been born at all. Landing in New York, Oscar Wilde, when asked what race he was, wrote, "Human." A man with a Nansen could not be that witty when crossing borders. I just tried to impress upon the border police that I was harmless and that I would quit the country immediately after my concerts, and only after signing papers to that effect would I be reluctantly admitted. The main objective of a Nansen passport was to provide the right to stay in a country, but it gave no right to work. Once a Nansen individual had been let in, there was no place where he could be deported, and so that country was stuck with him. To obtain visas for my engagements was the nightmare of all the concert organizations and managers. But I respected my mile-long document, filled with innumerable visas, stamps, stipulations, and warnings. In fact, I was quite fond of my Nansen, an emblem of honesty and truth. Honesty, because no crook, no spy would choose such a credential for his operation; and truth, because I really had no country and existed on a strictly temporary basis only where my services as a musician were needed, at the time they were needed. To travel with a Nansen, one had to be endowed with patience and tolerance and no little sense of humor. With years of training I think I qualified.

Being met by the police upon arriving in a city, marching through the streets with them to headquarters, and seeing one's name on posters plastered on the walls became a habit.

To be a fugitive in the morning and the government's guest of honor that night after the concert made the procedure amusing.

It was a dream of several Nansen colleagues of mine to graduate to some more convenient passports for travel. One of them had such a stroke of luck. Fishing one beautiful day in a lake on the outskirts of Berlin, my friend Karpilowsky, a member of the Guarneri String Quartet, lamented his illegitimacy to a kind old Chinese who was also fishing. He happened to belong to the Chinese Embassy. The fish were biting, and a good meal by the campfire sealed the friendship between them. Some more fishing trips

together, some more mutual understanding, and upon my friend was bestowed a Chinese passport. Caressingly he showed the beautiful document. “My troubles are over,” he said. He learned to slant his eyes when needed and to pronounce Kar-pi-low-sky in nasal syllables, a sound he believed was Chinese.

Vladimir Horowitz and Nathan Milstein had an equally marvelous opportunity, on the strength of their contributions to the charities of Haiti, to become recipients of passports as honorary citizens of that country. They needed no visas, and their comfort was almost complete. “Almost” because of the puzzlement of the officials over the slight discrepancy of color and name with the natives of their land.

I don’t know how and when Karpilowsky parted with his Chinese passport, but Milstein, upon his arrival in New York, needed to answer only two questions—”Where were you born?” “In Odessa.” “Have you ever been in Haiti?” “No”—to land on Ellis Island. His alarmed managers went to his rescue. Horowitz was expected with the same credentials on the next boat, but the immigration authorities, well prepared, treated him kindly.

My accompanists in Europe had to be regular citizens, no matter of what country, in order to travel with me. Mr. Benzinoff, who had just arrived from Leningrad, was highly recommended for my concerts in Spain. With a Soviet passport he had no difficulties getting visas. He was a fine fellow, and very hungry. After rehearsals we went off on the tour. We changed trains in Paris, and in the taxi to the other station I said to Benzinoff, “I am sorry not to have time to see my manager here, who is a prince, and his assistant, a colonel, both Russian emigrants.” Benzinoff, in his pure Russian, responded, “A prince and a colonel—but no general?”

“I am a general,” said the taxi driver, in equally good Russian. “My milkman is an admiral, I buy tobacco from a banker, and my laundryman is a duke.”

“In Russia,” whispered Benzinoff, “we thought they all were dead.”

Benzinoff did not speak any language but Russian. In the dining car he had no need to speak, for we were automatically served a fixed menu. Benzinoff finished his soup with prodigious speed and, extending his plate to the waiter, said, “Soup.” The waiter obliged and after each course he brought second helpings at once. Benzinoff, completing his two meals, waited contentedly while I paid the bill for three dinners. Back in our compartment, he took a nap that lasted until we reached the Spanish border.

Our first concerts were in Algeciras and Malaga, followed by Gibraltar, a place not particularly known as a musical Mecca. The hall where the concert took place was sort of a club, half filled with smoking, coughing people who, I assumed, belonged to the garrison of the fortress. They were all men. The most remarkable thing about this concert was the piano. A man whom I took for a stagehand walked with us on the stage without our invitation and, taking the place next to Benzinoff, proved himself the most valuable performer of all. He lifted up the stuck-down key. He had a prodigious technique. Never, even in the fastest passages, did he miss lifting up a single key. The dedicated key lifter responded to the applause of his clamoring public and took bows with us. After the concert he showed us with pride the signatures inside the piano, which included the names of Paderewski, Cortot, and others. "I had some fine performances with them all," he said.

The concerts in Spain began at odd hours. In Malaga it was at six-ten in the afternoon. On a wall in the artists' room hung photographs of the musicians who had appeared there. Among the familiar faces was Schnabel's, dated just a few months before. I asked the president of the music society how he had enjoyed his concert.

"Enjoyed? After five Beethoven sonatas he gave the *Diabelli Variations* as an encore.

Just think, almost a fifty-minute encore. I thought they would kill him." It made me think of a talk Schnabel and with a reporter who asked, "What makes your programs so different form the other pianists?"

Schnabel replied, "My programs are also boring after the intermission."

Our next concert was in the Hotel Victoria. The clerk at the desk put questionnaires before us. I filled them in quickly. Feverish and with a sore throat, I wanted to be in my room. The clerk, who spoke only Spanish, put his finger on one unanswered question and, looking at me, asked, "*Casado?*"

"What's that?" wondered Benzinoff.

I said, "It's the name of a Spanish cellist, Gaspar Cassado."

The clerk repeated the question, louder: "*Casado?*"

"No," I said, "Piatigorsky."

"*Casado?*" He banged the paper with his fist.

"No," I yelled back, "Cassado is short, I am tall, must everyone with a cello be Cassado? I am Piatigorsky."

Later I discovered that in Spanish *casado* means "married."

I did not know Madrid and had looked forward to seeing the fabulous city. It was not my fate. I had the flu. After a miserable night I called the floor waiter for breakfast. It was not really breakfast that I wanted, just something hot to drink. Benzinoff was up early and already downstairs in the dining room.

The waiter entered. He was short and blond. He wore a soiled full dress with black tie and folded on his arm was a large red napkin.

I said, "Lemonade, very hot, please."

"*Bitte*?" he asked.

"Oh, you are German?" I rejoiced. Finally I would be understood.

"No, Swiss," he said. I noticed his eyes sparkled. He jumped forward, unfolded his napkin, turned sideways, stamped with his foot, and, yelling "*Ole! Ole!*" stormed toward the corner where my cello stood. So unexpected was it that I could not utter a word. "Here is the bull—here is the great Belmonte. *Ole! Ole!*" He waved the napkin. He kneeled, letting the imaginary bull sweep past, got up again, and, performing a *veronica*, ripped open his trousers.

Benzinoff came back. "He is crazy," I said. "Do something!"

My voice was week and hoarse. At this moment the waiter, as if he understood Russian, said quite calmly, "Lemonade? *Sofort*," and left the room.

"They serve a fabulous breakfast here," Benzinoff said dreamily, and soon fell asleep on the couch.

The two days before the concert were nightmarish. Benzinoff gained weight and I was practically dying. I grew so weak that Benzinoff had to shave me and help me dress for the concert. It was nice of him, and I was grateful for his carrying my cello and holding me by the arm on our way to the Teatro Zarzuela.

How I got through even the first part of the program I will never know. It was a supreme effort and I played in agony. The intermission, as was the custom there, was expected to last almost as long as the concert itself. We were summoned to the royal box. Someone gave me a pill, which tasted like

burning kerosene in my mouth. I was helped through the long passageways and upstairs to the loge.

The royal family was gracious. I tried to smile, thanking them for the honor, and pretended to listen to what they were saying. My temperature must have jumped as my eyes focused on Benzinoff, just as he patted the shoulder of a lady in waiting, or was it the queen? He seemed as though in his own family circle—happy and free and quite undisturbed by the signs and whispers of the president of the concert society.

We concluded the recital and I was put to bed again. With hot lemonade on a tray the waiter said, "I liked your concert, your bull fiddle and all, but my cousin, Don Fritz, wanted more action—a stupid fellow."

I asked him to call a physician. The doctor arrived, listened to my heart, took a look at my throat, and said something in Spanish. The waiter translated, "He said you will die."

"I know, but when?" I thought he was joking. After a conference with the doctor the waiter said, "Soon." His visit was short. "No prescription," said the waiter. "It wouldn't be valid without a stamp of the Department of Health—it's closed now, also on Saturdays, and the day after tomorrow is Sunday ...."

I handed Benzinoff all the money I had. "Run to the station, please. Buy tickets to Berlin, the best accommodations you can possibly get."

He certainly did. Each of us had a bedroom de luxe with a salon in the middle.

I canceled the rest of the tour. Benzinoff packed my bag and helped me to the station. Though sick, I was grateful for being on my way home.

"There is no dining car," said Benzinoff sadly. "In the hurry of departure, I ate very little. Aren't you hungry also?" I moaned, "No." He left the compartment but after a while came back again. "Our car is cut off from the diner." He was agitated. "I should have bought a couple of those dinner baskets they sell at the station. They are terrific—fried chicken, cheese, fruits and wine." His tongue clicked.

Later at night, in his pajamas and bare feet, he came in to ask if I needed anything. "If I could only sleep," I said. He listened to the rhythm of the train. "You hear? It is going to stop!" He grabbed some money from the table and rushed out. I heard brakes screech and the train was brought to a stop.

But almost as soon as it stopped, the train was in motion again, gaining speed rapidly.

"There goes Benzinoff's chicken," I thought. I looked at the door, expecting him to enter. I waited. "Perhaps he is in the corridor," I wondered. Almost fifteen minutes passed without a sign of him.

"Benzinoff!" I called as loud as I could. "Are you in the bathroom?" There was no answer. I tried to get up. My legs were weak. I rang the bell for the porter, but no one came. What could have happened to him? Finally I wobbled into his room and took a look at the passage. Suddenly there was a big jerk, followed by a still rougher one. It threw me on the floor. The train stopped. I made my way back to bed.

At last Benzinoff returned. His face was black, his pajamas torn, his hands clenched to a basket, and he grinned at me. "Oh boy, I made it!" he said. "There was a fellow selling dinners, but just as I snatched the basket, I heard the train move. I ran like mad and jumped on the steps of the last car. The door was locked. I had to hang onto those steps. Was I scared!" He sat on my bed and ate as he spoke.

I don't know why—whether from watching him tearing and biting into the chicken, from laughing, maybe from seeing him safely back, or was it a few good gulps of wine from the bottle?—but I did not feel sick any more.

**Chapter Eighteen**

NERVOUSNESS experienced on facing an audience has many names. In German it is *Lampenfieber,* in Russian *volnenie*, *trac* in French, and in English stage fright. I hear people speak of butterflies in the stomach, of ants crawling on the skin, and of having the heart in the mouth. Every language and every individual has a different definition of this state, but where I am concerned the word "torture" explains the feeling I would have before a concert. I knew there was an empty chair standing and waiting for me on the stage that would be transformed into an electric chair, and that despite all agonizing fear I would stride toward it and appear composed and ready for public execution. I know it sounds dramatic, anyway too dramatic for someone who has been executed thousands of times and is still here to speak about it.

None of my colleagues' reactions resembled mine, and since they were seldom willing to discuss it at all, I had to rely on my own observations as to the degree of their afflictions, if any, and their methods of helping

themselves. So many denied the existence of stage fright that at times I suspected I was its only victim. It's true that there were colleagues whose last action before stepping on-stage had been to vomit, and that Chaliapin had imagined having lost his voice. Yet most of my friends, while admitting their nervousness, thought that it was to their artistic advantage. Kreisler laughed when I spoke of my anxieties, and assured me that he was ignorant of such things. There are colleagues who devour steaks before concerts, and there are some who act as if they were going to a picnic in full dress. When I asked Iturbi, he looked at me thoughtfully and laid his hand on his heart. "It goes '*killee, killee, killee*,'" he emitted shrilly, and walked away. His description was as good as any.

Nervousness can be contagious. Maestro Toscanini, one night before we appeared together, paced the dressing room in which I practiced, warming up for the concert. His quick steps, his grunting and swearing to himself did little for my morale. I tried not to pay attention to him and to concentrate on my fingers and cello, but who could ignore Maestro? For a moment I stopped playing. Toscanini stopped too. He looked at me and said, "You are no good; I am no good," took a deep breath, and began pacing again. I practiced, repeating passages frantically, and wished that I had died as a baby. After a while there was his terrible verdict again.

"Please, Maestro," I begged. "I will be a complete wreck." He was called to begin the concert and after the short overture he said to me in the wings just before we walked on-stage, "We *are* no good, but the others are worse. Come on, *caro*, let's go."

Although I could not put my finger on exact reasons for my stage fright, there was an awareness of multiple hazards connected with public performance. Fear of a memory slip; introduction of a new work or a first performance of an old one; concern about bad acoustics or an unpredictable audience; fear of appearing in "important" cities in which one had not appeared before or in which the last concert had been especially successful or not successful at all; anxiety that the instrument was not in order or the weather was too humid or too dry, or, worse, that one was not adequately prepared, and the fear of self-punishment for it. The dread of insulting reviews, varieties of superstition. Or even worry about one single passage or note could cause distress. I felt the impact of nervousness at rehearsals, and even when playing alone at home, and the duty of practicing and being well prepared was not a cure for ever-present concern before the performance.

No one can foresee the imponderables that lurk at the concert to catch a musician off guard. Even a simple thing like putting a new pair of cuff links in a full dress shirt cannot be done without caution. In Prague a Japanese gentleman, returning his compliments after I had signed a record of mine for him, presented me with silver cuff links. They were connected by a chain, and on each side were engraved Japanese characters.

"What do they mean?" I asked.

"Something very good-very. Please take them." I wore them at my next concert. They looked good on my cuffs. The concert went well, too, until I came to the softest *dolcissino* passage, which was spoiled by the tinny clinking of the cuff links. It was the vibrato that caused it. I stopped it, and the sound became unexpressive and dead. I vibrated again, and again there was that clinking to ruin the music. "Never again," I said after the concert.

But a year later, in London, having left my regular ones at home and having no choice, equipped with the Japanese cuff links, I entered Queen's Hall to play the Elgar concerto. During a passage when in a swift movement of the left hand I was about to reach a high note, the cuff links got stuck on the shoulder of the cello, preventing me from getting there.

With the sharp edge of the very same links I cut my finger in Stockholm. I threw them in the wastepaper basket, but found them back home in the mail. I still have them. They are unlosable, and there is no one I dislike enough to give them to as a present.

Even healthy pleasures before a concert can have disastrous consequences. On a cold day in Amsterdam, when all canals were frozen and the entire population of Holland was ice skating, I mournfully went to rehearsal. Not even Pierre Monteux and the magnificent Concertgebouw Orchestra could completely take the ice skating off my mind.

I had lunch with friends who had a beautiful daughter who loved to skate. It was not difficult for her to persuade me to go with her after lunch. With rented skates on my feet I dashed off smartly, but after a few figure executions I bumped into someone or something and crashed down. With a sharp pain in my hand and thinking of the concert that evening, I reproached myself bitterly, but too late.

By the time of the concert the thumb of my right hand, swollen and red, was barely capable of holding the bow. Yet I played. Desperately I tried not to let

the bow fall out of my hand. I held it in my fist and so brought the first movement of the Dvorak Concerto to a conclusion.

We began the adagio. The pain was intolerable, and before the beautiful movement ended I couldn't hold back the tears running down my face. It took an unusually long time to proceed to the finale. No wonder! After such a touching performance many were crying with me. It was a "triumph," and echoes of it reached my ears long after the doctor took off the cast from my thumb.

Public reaction is a mysterious phenomenon. Did my performance deserve such a favorable reception? I would be the last to be able to judge, because it was not the music but the pain and the exasperation that had been my only preoccupation. I cannot, however, doubt that with an undamaged finger the performance would have been superior to that which I gave. Equally, I am certain that the response would have been less impressive.

Unlike in Amsterdam, where I was guilty of negligence by skating before a concert, in Vienna I was reasonable innocence itself. Well rested and well prepared, I looked forward to playing the Haydn Concerto under the direction of Bruno Walter. We had played often together, and the rehearsal with the Philharmonic could not have gone more smoothly. I was informed that the concert had to start exactly at seven. There would be no overture, because a Mahler symphony was to be broadcast at seven-thirty. At that, there would barely be time enough after Haydn for the chorus and vocal soloists to come on-stage. Though I thought it strange to open the program with a concerto, I complied.

In the evening we entered the stage chronometrically at seven. Walter was impatient to begin, but due to the noise of the still-arriving audience and the weak but continuing applause, he could not proceed.

"Take a bow," he said to me.

I said, "No, it's for you." The applause increased.

"Let's take the bow together," Walter urged as the applause increased. In waiting I recalled that there had been a heated debate in Vienna about who should be named director of the *Staatsoper*. Many favored Bruno Walter, and tonight, undoubtedly, was an expression of protest that the position had been given to Clemens Krauss.

When Walter finally faced the audience, there was an enormous ovation. After repeated bows the applause slackened enough to permit us to begin.

I cannot recall ever giving a better performance of Haydn. Even the brisker tempi (we had to!) appeared delightfully right. The very second we brought the concerto to a close, the chorus, soloists, and members of the larger orchestra for Mahler stampeded onto the stage, and before I realized what had happened the Mahler was under way and I found myself in the green room. Not a soul came to see me, and after a while I slowly walked alone back to my hotel.

I wondered which I preferred—the unanimous success after a handicapped performance in Amsterdam or a fine concert in Vienna of which I was the only enthusiast.

Accidents, the dread of performers, are often the crowd's delight. A broken string or a bow slipped from the hand and its flight into the hall will not fail to provoke enthusiasm. During a concert in Detroit my starched collar snapped open. Not having time to secure it back into its place, with both sides of the collar flapping like wings I sailed through the concerto. So enormous was the effect that I contemplated repeating the trick later by fastening my collar insecurely, but it never worked again.

Another far more serious accident happened in Hamburg. An atmosphere of earnestness preceded my performance of the D-minor solo suite by Bach. Inexplicably, my memory limited itself to only the first open D, and not one note further. I kept tuning my cello, all the while hoping the continuation would come back to me. But the more I tuned, the less I knew what followed the D. I had to start. My fingers would automatically follow, I was sure. Determinedly I struck the D, but stopped, and to an embarrassing silence pretended that my cello needed some more tuning. Realizing that I couldn't sit there forever and having no alternative, I finally began. I improvised and, my heart pounding, I tried to foresee how it would develop and end. It was a very long preludium, but I finally reached the concluding chord. Glancing at the hall, I saw Professor Jacob Sakom and his cello students staring bewilderedly at their scores. "It is amazing," said Sakom after the concert, "I don't know that edition of the preludium. Most interesting. I would love to see it."

In the morning he came for breakfast. "The critics and everyone loved your Bach," he said. I laughed and confessed that it was "my" Bach indeed.

A strange profession. One might be physically and mentally in perfect form, only to give a poor account of one's self; or be sick and under unfavorable circumstances give one's best. The climate of the traveling musician is

neither mild nor steady. He is praised and insulted at the same time, often after the same concert. He might be a gold mine in Buenos Aires and financial fiasco in Chicago. It is precisely this that can make him keenly aware of money. Yet while he is capable of being shrewd in business, this gift cannot function while he is composing, practicing or performing.

At times the musician's ability in practical matters reaches extraordinary refinement. Here are two rather creative examples:

I worked with Igor Stravinsky in Paris on the cello arrangement of his *Pulcinella Suite*. I enjoyed our meetings so much that I felt sorry to see the work, which Stravinsky christened *Italian Suite,* completed. Before the manuscript was sent to print, Stravinsky came to see me in New York. He produced a paper and said, "Here is the contract for you to sign. But before you do so, I want to explain the conditions."

"Conditions? But dear Igor Feodorovitch, I did not count on anything. I was happy to collaborate, and I am glad that the *Italian Suite* will be published."

"No, my friend, you are entitled to royalties. I insist. The question is, if you would agree to the proposition, which is fifty-fifty. To be sure, half for you, half for me."

"But really!" I protested, not wanting to hear of such a thing.

"I am not convinced you understand. May I repeat again: fifty-fifty, half for you, half for me. You see, it's like this: I am the composer of the music, of which we both are the transcribers. As a composer I get ninety per cent, and as the arrangers we divide the remaining ten per cent into equal parts. *In toto*, ninety-five per cent for me, five per cent for you, which makes fifty-fifty." Chuckling, I signed the contract. Since then I have shied away from fifty-fifty deals, but I continue to love Stravinsky's music and to admire his arithmetic.

No less admirable a device was unfolded when Schnabel, Hubermann, Hindemith, and I planned to commemorate Brahms's centennial with a cycle of his chamber music for piano and strings, to be given in Hamburg and Berlin. We agreed smoothly upon the programs and dates, and even the question as to how to divide the fees seemed simple, at first. There was no doubt in my mind that it would be in equal parts, but Hubermann and Schnabel were silent. Finally Hubermann suggested that the matter of money should be left to the managers. (Undoubtedly he was certain that if this

procedure were adopted he would come out best.) Irritated, Schnabel came with a winning trump.

"Gentlemen, we waste our time. The fee should be divided into thirty-five equal parts."

"Why thirty-five!" exclaimed Hubermann.

"It's simple," said Schnabel. "We will pay thirteen works for the piano and strings: three trios, three quartets, three violin sonatas, two viola sonatas, and two cello sonatas—thirty-five parts in all. As all thirteen works are with piano, I should receive thirteen thirty-fifths of the fee. The violin will be minus two cello and two viola sonatas, and will thus get nine thirty-fifths. The cello will get eight thirty-fifths, and the viola five thirty-fifths." With mouths agape we all extend to counting the notes, in which case I would have come out much worse.

It is the practice of concert managers to list on the artist's schedule the hour and date of rehearsals and concerts, the fee, and composition to be played by the soloist. But other details, such as the name of the conductor and the rest of the orchestral program, are seldom mentioned at all. When I entered the stage for rehearsal in Frankfurt-am-Main and saw Richard Strauss, it was a shock. He was the last person I expected to be the conductor. I thought that it was a mistake and that I was in the wrong town, but as I was about to retreat he called for me.

"The Haydn Concerto," he said to the orchestra. After a few bars he stopped and said, "The tutti is too long. It's a concerto, not a symphony. We will make a cut." He counted the number of bars to be left out. "Let's try it." I listened to this impossible cut, but did not dare to protest. At the end of the first movement he asked me to play the entire cadenza. I did. "Who wrote it?" he asked.

I said, "It's mine." He murmured something that sounded like a compliment. After the cadenza of the second movement he asked with disgust, "Who wrote *that*?" This cadenza was also mine, but in my embarrassment I invented "Emil Schmorg."

"Schmorg? It's awful. I will write one for you right now. Gentlemen—intermission."

It was a long one. Strauss wrote with a pencil in my orchestra score (I still have it). When we were on the stage again he put the music in front of me, and after a few bars of the orchestra leading to the cadenza, I began to play

it. There was a recitative after which, not believing my eyes, I saw the famous theme of *Till Eulenspiegel.* I played it. There was a roar of laughter. When it subsided, Strauss said, "I prefer the Schmorg."

Following the Haydn, everyone except me was in a fine mood for *Don Quixote*. I was very nervous. I had played it before, but was it the way the composer wanted it to be?

After the big solo variation in D minor there was a heavy silence. I didn't dare to look up at Strauss. "Why doesn't he go on into the next variation?" I thought anxiously. Finally he said, "I have heard my Don Quixote as I thought him to be." It was a supreme moment, which lasted even when at our concerts he looked at his watch during my long cadenzas of the Haydn Concerto.

Strauss spoke of his *Don Quixote* with affection. He conducted it magnificently. The reserved attitude generally associated with his conducting was replaced by pathos, humor, and passion, and his Sancho Panza was as characteristic as Cervantes had made him. Strauss's demands for the viola solo were hard to take, for instead of playing the part "beautifully" he wanted the violist to stutter and scratch.

"I have never been asked to play ugly and funny," protested the violist.

"Humor is a great art." Strauss answered.

Strauss promised me a cello concerto. His messages said that he had not forgotten, he would start soon, but years went by. The last time I saw him, in Vienna, he assured me again. Then came Hitler and the war, and the great loss to cello literature seemed of no importance any longer.

**Chapter Nineteen**

ENTERTAINMENT-seeking Russian emigrants in Berlin knew Mary Bran. An energetic free-lance manager, she was often more colorful than the artists she represented. We did not work together, but we knew each other and were good friends.

"Grisha, beloved darling," was her customary approach. "I have an urgent matter to discuss with you." I listened. "Are there other managers who would have risked their lives to save your cello—you remember?" She enjoyed reminiscing about my pre-Philharmonic days, when we both stayed at the Pension Pragerplatz.

"It's a fire—open up, quick!" she said as she banged on my door one night. The instant I opened the door, she stormed into my room. I watched her snatch my cello and rush out with it. "Follow me!" she screamed. "The fire escape is on your right." I caught up with her and as we stood in front of the building, facing each other in the deserted street, she said disappointedly, "A false alarm, I guess, thought I swear there was smoke."

"It was a nice run, anyway," I laughed.

Now, a few years later, we laughed again. "Listen, beloved darling," she said seriously. "It is the turning point of your career. Discher and Discher are here." Obviously she expected me to be impressed, and I did the best I could.

"Really?" I said, not knowing who Discher and Discher were.

"Yes, they are here—both of them. It was a stroke of luck that I met them right upon their arrival from the United States. They are leading American impresarios. Everyone knows that. In short, we can't waste time. You are going to play a concert with Furtwangler. I have to have two tickets for them. Please try to get three, with a seat for me between them." I promised her three tickets.

Backstage in the Philharmonic after the concert she introduced me to two dignified, gray-haired gentlemen in their fifties. They wore thick-rimmed glasses and didn't say a word.

"I will call you later." Mary gave me a significant look and followed Discher and Discher out.

For several days Mary rushed to the Dischers and back to me to report progress in the contract negotiations. "It's already too marvelous for words, but I am still working." She was fire and flame.

The great day finally arrived and the contract was before me. It called for thirty appearances in the United States at a considerable fee and with all expenses paid. "The Dischers have invited us for a celebration," Mary said.

We all met for dinner in the lobby of the Esplanade and were led to a festively bedecked table. The two gentlemen looked official and equally festive. They wore dinner jackets, and their solemn bearing added still more to the importance of the occasion. No one spoke of the contract and the technicalities connected with the forthcoming tour. It was only after a few glasses of champagne that I asked what my programs would be and with what orchestras I was to appear.

“This should not be your worry,” said the older Mr. Discher.

“Aren’t the programs important?”

“A personality—that is important,” he said, “and you have plenty of it.”

“A toast to your triumph,” offered the younger Mr. Discher.

“Shouldn’t you have my repertoire?” I persisted. “Is there an interest in contemporary music?”

The Dischers exchanged smiles. “Whatever you play is okay. You will be a sensation, not a bit less than the great Magno was.”

“Magno? Who is he?”

“You are a European, I see,” answered Mr. Discher, smiling, “but never mind. Magno was stupendous, and something different.”

“Yes, different,” the other Discher agreed. Both gentlemen were in animated enthusiasm. “With your personality to work with, it’s a cinch. You will be the greatest damned box-office attraction in United States show business.”

“Show business?” my voice cracked.

“We will promote Piatigorsky, build him to a still-mightier Magno.”

“What did you do?” I asked, refusing the dessert. “Tell me.”

“Just as you, Magno was new to America, but as with you, we believed in him at sight. Signing him up, we promoted and sold him in Dischers' proverbial campaign. His first night in New York is now history—unbelievable and unforgettable.”

“Have a cigar? No? Well, the packed house waited in suspense. Slowly the curtains parted, but the brightly lit stage revealed—nothing! It was bare. Mind you, completely bare. A large transparent aquarium magically rose from under the stage, flanked on either side by two mermaids and a Neptune. The lights went out, illuminating a magnificent display of sea life, fish of all colors and shapes, sea stars and all. The suspense in the audience reached an incredible pitch, as a spot-light followed Magno, a giant of your size and magnitude, approaching the aquarium. He stood in front of it and said—nothing! His magnificent face expressed—nothing! He just stood there, like a statue of a demon or like a god of the sea, as he was described in the vaudeville paper. The four assistants slowly lifted the aquarium, and the audience gasped as the fish and water began to flow into Magno’s throat.

They heard the stones rattle and saw the vegetation swallowed by the gigantic man. By the time the tank was empty, the house was in an uproar. Many fainted. The crowd—"

I choked. "I feel sick," I said, and hurried out.

An hour later, Mary Bran came to see me. She almost cried. "It's a disaster. You will never know how I feel. They are vaudeville agents—no, probably they are barkers for a freak side show. I shudder! What did they plan to do with you?!" I tried to calm her. She sighed and said, "They want damages to be paid for breaking the contract." I paid, and so ended my first prospect of an American tour.

Pleased at not having traded my position in Berlin for Discher and Discher, I looked forward to my next concert at the Philharmonic. Rachmaninoff was scheduled to appear. Before his arrival Furtwangler worked with the orchestra on Rachmaninoff's Third Concerto, mostly trying to clarify the many little cuts in the score, apparently made by the composer.

On the day of the performance Rachmaninoff sat in the first row of the hall and listened to the rehearsal. His furrowed face looked tired and troubled. His long fingers rubbed his short-cropped hair and his face, as if to refresh himself or to wipe out something tormenting him. Not once did he look at the orchestra, but often at his watch.

He rose. Lean and very tall, he walked to the stage. Not paying attention to Furtwangler, who was rehearsing a symphony, Rachmaninoff sat at the piano, looked at his watch, and thunderously struck a few chords. Perplexed, Furtwangler stopped. He looked at Rachmaninoff, who showed his watch and said, "My rehearsal time was ten-thirty."

With no further exchange the rehearsal of the concerto commenced. After five minutes or so Rachmaninoff walked to the conductor's stand and began to conduct. The orchestra had two conductors—Furtwangler, bewildered, and Rachmaninoff, swearing in Russian. Even after he returned to the piano the tension held on until the end of the long and unpleasant rehearsal. Still at odds at the concert, the two extraordinary artists nevertheless brought forth an exciting performance of a peculiar unity.

Mrs. Louise Wolf, preparing a reception to honor the visit of Rachmaninoff, asked me to play his sonata. My friend, the pianist Karol Szreter, practiced fervently. No wonder: Rachmaninoff was his idol. Well prepared and eager, we watched the musical elite of Berlin assembling in Mrs. Wolf's house.

Rachmaninoff took a seat a few paces from Szreter and me. He looked as though trapped or forced to go through an ordeal.

The sonata went well. It had a spontaneous reception. Rachmaninoff shook my hand and said a few complimentary words in his aristocratic brand of Russian (strangely, with the same guttural *r* as Lenin's ). Szreter, completely ignored, stood at my side.

"I will be three days more in Berlin. Please come and see me," and, pointing at Szreter, "but not with him."

I did not see Rachmaninoff, but I spent many hours with Szreter to help him recover from the incident. Several years later, meeting Rachmaninoff in New York, I said with a shade of reproach that Szreter had died. Sergei Vassilievitch, as though receiving good news, said, "Good, I wish him a kingdom in heaven."

Inexplicably the word "good" did not sound cynical, and the "kingdom of heaven" had a religious note and sincerity. As I became better acquainted with his complex nature, I came to understand his forbidding austerity, suspiciousness, prejudices, and dryness on the surface as scars from hard-fought struggles deep within him. His attitude may have been caused by an unwillingness to expose his innermost self, which was reserved for music alone. I heard from others that he rarely laughed, but once after I told him a joke he burst into such violent laughter that I was frightened.

He frightened me once more in his speedboat in Lucerne, when at the steering wheel, in rain hood and phantom-like, he raced, zigzagged and transformed the peaceful lake into a churning whirlpool. As if challenging the trust of his guest, he headed straight for the shore, avoiding it by a sharp turn at the very last moment. He had a smile on his wet face. "You are not easily scared," he said. "You should have seen some other musicians. I like you." I more than liked him. I deeply admired him and he never ceased to fascinate me. But I never took another ride in his boat.

Leaving the Philharmonic one day, I ran into Tols. He smiled broadly and was looking very prosperous in a well-tailored suit.

"It's a fine suit you are wearing," I said. "I have one exactly like it."

"You had," he said. "You also had a gray one and a brown one—for all of which you have my compliments and gratitude. I hope you don't mind ... I always approved of your taste."

I did mind, but there was nothing I could do. Tols rarely gave me an opportunity to react. This time he was pressed for money and he needed a physician to attend to the rather delicate situation of a female acquaintance. But whatever his requests, nothing surprised me. Judging from the past, the best I could do was to comply. This time the result was more than I expected—I did not see Tols for a very long time, which made me hope that he had found in someone else my successor.

Tols had many gifts allotted to him by nature, each one in microscopic quantity. Along with the bargain went numerous tiny defects. Together, they made a colorful figure. At first, in my appreciation for his help I magnified his good qualities, and on later occasions when he stood by me I minimized his faults; and by the time I was aware that only shortcomings were left and, at that, far from microscopic, it was too late. I was imprisoned already by my own gratitude. He was a source of never-ending trouble. He had to be helped out of jail and sent to faraway countries, wired money to come back, only to be sent or deported somewhere else again. The good-looking and healthy man easily picked up diseases, but were they tropical, venereal, or gastric, their stay with him was never long. He was versatile and changed occupations in rapid succession—manager of a Chinese laundry, veterinarian, masseur, reporter, impresario, and, at one more prosperous time, a co-owner of a night club. A free guest in prisons, when out he managed to get most things for free. During the years I knew him he had passports of seven different countries, the last of which was Honduras. He had been suspected of being a spy but I couldn't imagine for what country and, in France, of trafficking in narcotics. The last time I saw him he was as cheerful as ever. He introduced a woman who he said was his fiancée. He did not say what happened to his wife. I invited him and his fiancée for lunch, but they never appeared. I never saw him again.

Much later I heard that he died, but I do not know of what cause. Probably there are not many who miss this hungry-for-life, corrupt, goodhearted, and irresponsible man. He had helped me when help was needed and often made me laugh when I could have cried. Without Tols the world is not the same. Perhaps safer, but not the same, and I miss him.

Upon my return to Berlin from a concert tour I had an attack of appendicitis and was rushed to the hospital for an operation. The first meal I was served after surgery was frankfurters with potato salad. The fact that I enjoyed eating it promised a miraculous recovery, but a few hours later I thought I would die. Next day the surgeon slapped my stomach. "That's a good

soldier!" he said in praise. I did not know exactly what happened, save that I became very ill. The ensuing complications kept me in the hospital for weeks.

Following someone's advice, I left for an Anthroposophic Clinic to complete my recuperation. Not clear what anthroposophy was, but fed with anthroposophically grown vegetables and provided with anthroposophic soap, I settled myself in agreeable surroundings. There was a building that stood like a temple. It was called Gotheanum. Its symbol was Goethe, its teacher, nature, which in turn I gathered had something to learn form man. I watched patients in the Goetheanum dance. Each gesture and each movement was supposed to signify a letter or a word. One said that their legs and arms had a rich enough vocabulary to be capable of performing Goethe's *Faust* without uttering a word. All this was rather intriguing.

I followed my physician's orders. I read articles on anthroposophy and I dreamed of Russian food. One day I went shopping and returned with salami, herring, borsch, sauerkraut, and an assortment of smoked fish. It was dinnertime and, putting aside the anthroposophic grasses, I had my private feast. The patients cast hungry eyes toward my table. Some joined me and helped themselves to my shockingly profane food.

While at the clinic I received many letters and I myself developed into a good correspondent. I even wrote to Stefan Zweig, whom I did not know personally but whom I wanted to tell of my esteem for his writing. He answered promptly. He said that my assumption that I did not know him was incorrect, that he had attended my concert in Vienna and that we had been introduced. A correspondence ensued and we saw each other at intervals in Salzburg, London, Vienna, and elsewhere.

Completely recuperated and in Berlin again, I plunged into concert activity. I played many contemporary works, some of which sounded like Grieg. But I also played the music of Anton Webern, which only a few understood but which I had fun playing. There were standard Bach-Beethoven-Brahms programs and some ranging from rightfully forgotten music to the neglected works of masters; and there was the *Schelomo* by Bloch, which I introduced with the Philharmonic.

There were unusual programs with unusual combinations of instruments, one of which was with my dear friend Joska Szigeti. It was his idea and, as usual with him, was an invigorating and challenging one. I was fond of him and I admired the great integrity of his art, and I looked forward to the

concerts with him in Berlin and Frankfurt. The program was: Duo for Violin and Cello by Kodaly, Partita for Violin Solo by Bach, the Suite for Cello alone by Max Reger, and the Sonata for Violin and Cello by Ravel. Our rehearsals were pleasant but somewhat tense because Szigeti, unaccustomed to playing from music, was troubled by fast page turning in the Ravel. I must admit that those turnings were in the most inconvenient spots, which did pose a problem. At the concert, however, he solved this difficulty in an astonishingly practical manner. The large edition of Ravel he augmented by several more copies. He placed them all on a row of music stands, and, instead of turning the pages, he simply "walked his way" through the work.

When not playing myself, I attended the concerts of others. I went even to choral concerts and lieder recitals, performances at which it would be a rarity to see another virtuoso. If Moussorgsky had heard such German singers as Karl Erb or Maria Ivogun, to name just two, he would not have said that all German singers sing like roosters.

I eagerly awaited the recital of Heifetz. I had never heard him, but although only two years his junior, since my early childhood the name Heifetz, in Russia, was a legend. Not to miss his concert, I had to postpone mine in Hamburg. It was not easy, but well worth the effort. What supreme mastery over his instrument! It seemed that he had reached his Olympian heights—or rather, had been placed there—by forces other than human. He stood as if cut in marble, but I had to stop watching his perfect co-ordination and listen with my eyes closed to the unearthly beautiful sound of his violin.

Heifetz attended one of my concerts, and when we parted I hoped our paths would not only cross again soon but lead to a more permanent destination where we would have time to become friends and make music together.

(We not only met again, but our relationship as friends and our activity together as musicians spread over the past thirty-five years has a significance deserving of a voluminous account. Yet in favor of continuity and repressing the temptation, I will only offer something less than a skeletal sketch: We have recorded over thirty works together, we have taught, and we have made motion pictures. We have spent uncounted hours playing chamber music, Ping-pong and gin rummy [the latter without "kisses" and "around the corners," if you know what I mean.] We founded the Heifetz-Piatigorsky Concerts, which we continue to present. And at one time, with Artur Rubinstein, we held the dubious title "The Million Dollar Trio," bestowed upon us by *Life* magazine after our series of concerts in Ravinia.)

Jacques Thibaud came to town and as always brought his delightful stories for his friends. His talent for improvisation made his old and often-repeated tales new again. His visits meant late nights and chamber music at home. The music-loving world knew his exquisite art, but I wish that someone would put down for posterity his anecdotes and escapades. Witty and elegant, he would not hesitate to take a short leave form these virtues for a promising, even if slightly wicked, practical joke.

On this visit it was Thibaud who was provided with entertainment, and unwittingly at that. There was a chamber music concert that included the pianist Edwin Fischer and the corpulent double-bass player Godike, as well as myself. Thibaud came to hear it. Godike was late and we all waited with the "Trout" Quintet until finally he appeared. Even at his normal best, his Gargantuan dimensions had been a landmark of Berlin, but now, as he stood drenched and with his teeth chattering in full dress before us, he was a sight to behold. Speechless, he stared at the small pool of water collecting at his feet. "It's those two hoodlums who tried to hold me up as I crossed the bridge," he finally said. "I banged their heads against each other and threw them into the river. Then I had to drag them out to save the devils' lives." Shivering, he demanded a shot of brandy. He took three or four.

With no time to change or dry his suit he tuned his bass on the stage, and after we settled, his generous grin indicated that he was feeling fine. He appeared to feel better and better as we proceeded with the quintet until, unable to keep his happiness for himself alone, he began to talk to us and to the audience. We stopped. So did the laughter and Godike's clowning. The instantaneous silence sobered him, and as the quintet recommenced it turned into a good performance. Afterward, with tears in his eyes, Godike said, "I should have let the two bums drown rather than insult Schubert."

After a few pleasant days with Jacques he made me promise to hear Wanda Landowska. Thibaud said it was a crime that I never had. I went to hear her play the Haydn Concerto. She crossed the stage draped in something priestly, approaching her harpsichord as though it were an altar. There was the solemnity of a virgin offering and a mystic ceremony about to begin. But her performance was wonderfully simple and as exemplary as one would expect of a truly great artist.

After four seasons with the Berlin Philharmonic, my concert commitments had become so demanding that I was no longer able to remain with the orchestra, and we had to part. I think that my colleagues felt our separation

as keenly as I, but Furtwängler and I had many appearances scheduled together and we expected to see each other almost as much as before.

Herr Blanke, and old violinist, said with emotion how sorry he was to see me go without ever hearing me play.

"But I have seen you for years in the orchestra," I said.

"I was not listening. Since my nervous breakdown ten years ago, I stopped listening to music. The doctors forbid me to. They warned me it was my only chance to survive. At first it was hard, but I managed gradually to build a habit of not hearing what I or the others were playing, and since I made myself quite deaf to the voice of the conductor, I have had no troubles and feel *Wunderbar*."

**Chapter Twenty**

IT was a busy morning. I made telephone calls and wrote letters of apology, but it was like trying to mend the unmendable. Reciprocating the hospitality of many, I had arranged a dinner for forty many weeks in advance. Food and wine chosen, invitations sent out, caterers and help hired, I had marked the date on my calendar "At Home." Satisfied with my efficiency and feeling that I had been a good host already, I had left for a concert tour.

Shortly after returning I saw "At Home" on the calendar and, delighted to be free, went in the early evening to see a murder movie featuring my friend Peter Lorre. I had a long walk after the show and a sandwich in a *Bierstube*. Content with the time so pleasantly spent, I unhurriedly approached the street in which I lived. It was a little after ten. The air was calm and there were lights in the windows, and what a joy it was to run so unexpectedly into a group of friends.

"What are you doing in my neighborhood at this hour? How wonderful!" My jovial greeting had a somewhat subdued reception. A little later there were more acquaintances, and when I stopped to greet them I saw more coming toward me. "*Ah, Herr Doktor, wie geht's ? Ah, Frau Professor! Hans! Frieda!*" I was delighted to see so many friends, and the dubiousness of such a series of coincidences did not enter my head until I reached my house and

saw the Mayor of Berlin, whom I knew only "officially," stepping out of my apartment.

"Who are you?" demanded a bewildered caterer as I entered the apartment. I explained that I was the host and that I had forgotten all about the dinner. "It's a crazy house—never had such a job. Some dinner party! It's a mess," he grumbled. "There are still four people left who want salad and biscuits." I rushed toward the dining room. There at the table I saw Furtwangler, his secretary Fraulein Geissmar, and a couple of elderly people whose identity I could not recall. With no sign of reproach they greeted me, and I joined them. Furtwangler consulted me about the programs for the next season, Fraulein Geissmar made notes in a book, and the elderly couple ate cheese and crackers. These were the only people to whom I had not to apologize in the morning.

Done with all the excuses but still with an unpleasant after-taste, I waited for a visitor. It was Alexander Merovitch, who had arrived a short time ago from Soviet Russia, together with Vladimir Horowitz, the pianist, and Nathan Milstein, the violinist—all three strangers to me then. Merovitch was a man in his thirties, meticulously dressed and with the overall appearance of a Russian old-guard squire. By way of introduction he unhurriedly went about his autobiographical sketch. He had been a student of music, political scientist, economist, and cultural organizer, and he revealed at length his philosophy of the function of art.

"I took upon myself the responsibility of guiding the careers of two great exponents of their instruments, and I wish you to be the third. I can offer you, as I offered them, my energy, experience, and my very life."

Surprised at such an offer, I said, "It is very nice of you, really, but ..."

"I know," he said, smiling. "I must explain. Horowitz and Milstein entrusted their careers to me unconditionally as their personal representative already in Russia. Believing in each other, we arrived abroad with their genius and my managerial capabilities as our only contract and promise. My obligation is to protect their unique gifts from the pitfalls of their profession and to help reveal their art to the world." He took a breath, stood up, and slowly paced the room. "The whole world will share my fanatical belief in them. It won't be long. I hate comparisons, but even if I wanted to—well, what can I say? They are great artists. They are wonderful people, and, as yourself, they are in their twenties. I know our lives will be bound together."

Next day I met Horowitz. Frail and poetic, he resembled the young Chopin, a gravure of whom hung in my room. “I never have been to Germany,” he said. “At home, they frightened us with the German profundity. They called them deep-sea divers,” he said with a touch of sarcasm. Biting his nails, he listened to Merovitch.

“I wish Nathan were here. He is on his first tour in Spain. His success is enormous. I bet that son-of-a-gun already speaks Spanish.” He spoke of Nathan’s wit and self-reliance and mentioned Horowitz’s sister, Regina, who had been Milstein’s accompanist in Russia.

Horowitz looked at the piano. He moved toward it and apologetically asked, “Can I?” It’s a curious phenomenon with some performers that even before they touch their instrument one instantly expects a miracle to be revealed. Horowitz was such an artist. He tried the piano hesitatingly at first, but hours later I still listened to his playing of unequaled force and poetry.

The next day and the next we saw each other. I listened to him and we played together and we spoke of music, of its many facets, and of its problems, which we agreed could not be solved in words or in theories, but only experienced.

Horowitz, or Bolodja, as we called him, left for Hamburg, and Milstein arrived. In two seconds he was calling me Grisha and I was calling him Nathanchik. His quick movements, lively eyes and shiny black hair, and his strong, medium-sized frame suggested youth that would stay with him forever. It didn’t take long to realize that he stood squarely on the ground and was equal to any situation he might encounter.

Unlike Volodja, who when not practicing would play a piece from the beginning to the end, Nathan ran through the violin repertoire, playing bits from every piece and demonstrating his clever solution to every difficulty. In between, he spoke of the economics of Spain, enforcing his opinion with a sentence or two in Spanish. Tomorrow, I was sure, he would start speaking German, but meanwhile, he disapproved of German pedantry and approved of all things Latin. So spontaneous and harmless was he that one hated to be critical of anything he said. His extraordinary violinistic capacity, of course, could not be doubted. His violin belonged to his body no less than his eyes and legs. There are violinists who could have been flutists and cellists, and pianists who could as easily function as musicologists or conductors, and so on, but Nathan could only be what he was, a marvelous violinist.

Presided over by Merovitch, who was called Sascha, we all became fast friends, and I joined Horowitz and Milstein in what was to be known as "The Three Musketeers." The long meetings with Sascha revealed the drastic change I was to expect in my professional life. There would not be a head-quarters, no salary, no guarantee, no concentration of activity in one given city or land. I had to be available for concert engagements everywhere. I had to acquire my almost-forgotten uprootedness all over again and to make the wide world my home.

And yet Sascha's gift for outlining the strategy for my future turned the vagueness and insecurity into an exciting daring and a sense of rightness. He spoke of the urgency of humanizing managers, of changing the unhealthy pattern of the concert "business," and of finding the methods of achieving more creativity in the performer's life. Before leaving Berlin he said that there were pending engagements in Europe, and he mentioned the possibility of concerts in South America, Africa, and the United States.

Merovitch concentrated Milstein's activity in Spanish-speaking countries, which would bring him as far as Havana without touching the United States. Sascha explained that it would ripen Nathan for other countries and keep him in good financial shape and spirit meanwhile. Merovitch traveled with Volodja in Europe and accompanied him on his first tour to America.

In his letters he gave glowing accounts of America and of Volodja's conquests. Sir Thomas Beecham, he wrote, had embarked on conducting the Tchaikovsky Concerto from memory. Despite the fact that Beecham lost his soloist, Volodja's debut in New York was a spectacular success.

I spent much time with my friends, fellow cellists. We met privately, played together, discussed music, and attended each other's concerts. Cassado, Eisenberg, Feuermann, Foldesy, Garbousova, Mainardi, Marechal—all had qualities to generate my enthusiasm. Cassado and Mainardi composed prolifically for their instrument and dedicated some of their pieces to me.

At one time I saw a great deal of Arnold Foldesy, the Hungarian cellist. Unreliable and exuberant, and not very scholarly, he had a peasant-like directness, and his mastery of his instrument attracted me. His very appearance, with his one glass eye and worn face, his princely largesse, and his cello, which rested on a pin about only half an inch from the floor, was as unusual as his artistry.

"Come in, don't be bashful," he shouted when I found him with his cello, practicing naked while his wife massaged his head. She brought in a basin of hot water for his foot bath, and he handed his cello to me. I loved his instrument. He said it was an early Stradivari, but then again, he said, it might be an Amati. He indicated a bad soundpost crack on the back and said it was the worst of cancers, but I still liked the sound and looks of the cello, and the "cancer" only made me feel the more tender toward it.

One night, after his appearance with the Philharmonic Orchestra, of which he had preceded me as first cellist, I attended a reception in his honor. He was the last to arrive. The moment he entered the exquisite parlor, the hostess and her guests watched him look around and walk directly toward me.

"What a conglomeration!" he boomed. "Let's leave these bores and go have beer and something to eat." He grabbed me by the hand and led me out.

"You shouldn't have done that."

"Oh hell, I didn't fit there anyway, and besides, my wife was not even invited. She would rather stay home and prepare paprika goulash. You never tasted anything like it."

He was right. It was a dream of a goulash. We ate and talked for many hours.

"Arnold thinks he is Kaiser Franz Josef, or something," Mrs. Foldesy said the instant he left the room. "He bestowed a piano upon one stranger, gave my earrings to someone's bride, and his tail suit to a Hungarian headwaiter. He would give away—" She stopped as Arnold returned.

He often complained about his cello and couldn't understand why I liked it so much. One day he announced that he had finally found a satisfactory instrument and had decided to get rid of his. It was for sale at the violin dealer Emil Hermann, he said. I acquired it and concertized with it for years. Even after Foldesy retired and went back to Budapest, the thought that he had maligned his instrument to make it easier for me to acquire haunted me for a long time.

With his cello I went to Vienna to commence my long affair with the Double Concerto by Brahms. There I played it with Erica Morini, then with Bronislaw Hubermann in Budapest, Kulenkamph in Mannheim, Henry Holst in Berlin, in between rehearsed it with Thibaud and Szigeti, and performed it in Gorlitz with Carl Flesch. This was at a music festival conducted by

Furtwangler, where Flesch gave a remarkable example of his humility. At the public rehearsal, after I had concluded the cadenza at the beginning of the first movement and Flesch had begun his, Furtwangler stopped him. "Please start softer." Flesch began again.

"It's too slow," said Furtwangler, loud enough for a great part of the audience to hear. Flesch remained unperturbed, always beginning anew, only to be interrupted. He tried to comply, until finally, with a shrug, Furtwangler went on with the concerto.

After the exceptionally successful performance Furtwangler apologized and Flesch said, "It doesn't matter. One can always learn, be it from a genius or an impudent man."

I continued the tour with a series of recitals in London and played with the orchestra in the huge Royal Albert Hall, where I discovered that the massive sound of the orchestra could not "fill" the hall, while the pianissimos, light and transparent, soared effortlessly through the vast space.

From London I went to Paris, where I was to have my first concert with Horowitz. A hero in Paris, he attracted enormous audiences. We spent much time rehearsing, saw Prokofieff, Igor Markevitch, Nicholas Nabokov, and other musicians, and met an array of interesting people in the almost Proustian salons of Princess de Polignac and Countess de Noailles.

One afternoon we had an unexpected visitor. As if from nowhere, Francis Poulenc appeared with "*Allo, allo, allo*," trotted straight to the piano, played a witty, short piece, and then, waving his hands and throwing kisses at us, ran out, leaving us chuckling over such a brief appearance, performance, and disappearance.

Our concert program consisted of Brahms and Beethoven piano and cello sonatas, a cello suite by Bach, and a piano sonata by Mozart. Though of the highest artistic level, in chamber music he was a different Horowitz from what his clamoring audience expected.

After the delicate Mozart piano sonata there were demands for an encore. "What shall I do? What shall I do? It's a chamber music concert," he said between taking bows.

"Hell, give them what they want," I said, clapping his shoulder.

He certainly did. Chopin mazurkas and polonaises, some Liszt and Dohnanyi made Brahms, Beethoven, Bach, and Mozart forgotten preliminaries.

Apropos of encores, at his Paris recital a few years later he responded to the public demand with an exhibition of his extraordinary *Carmen* Fantasy. As he moved forward to acknowledge the applause, there was a voice from the gallery: "*Monsieu Horowitz, un peu de Tosca, sil vous plait!*"

**Chapter Twenty-One**

CARANS FUR SIERRE, a little Swiss resort that had been chosen by Sascha for our summer vacation, had no huge mountains with snow and forbidding peaks. The hotels and little houses spread over a lovely valley that was surrounded by gentle mountains on all sides as far as I could see. It was a joy to my eyes, and I knew it would be a wonderful summer.

But after only a few days Sascha started reminding us of the next season's tours. His asking for programs and speaking of travel schedules gave me a feeling of urgency, unpreparedness, and lack of time.

I counted eight-three concerts on my itinerary. I looked forward to those with symphony orchestras and one of chamber music with Bela Bartok, but I dreaded the thought of the recital programs, which comprised the bulk of my tour. I had to get used to my fairly new role as a virtuoso, and I had to learn to live up to what was expected of me. "Ungrateful" works had to be avoided. And while my daily work on legitimate music persisted as always, I was compelled to enter a territory, little known to me, of "effective" short pieces, fast ones that had to sound still faster, and all kinds of transcriptions for encores. To enter into the spirit, I acquired a fine collection of bugs: *Bee* by Schubert, *Mosquitos* by Fairchild, *Bumblebee* by Rimsky-Korsakoff, *Butterfly* by Faure, and a lot of tarantellas.

As much as in my student days all acrobatics on the cello had meant fun, today they were an embarrassment. Not one, of course, forced me to include unwanted pieces in my repertoire. It was I who did not want to retreat in protest, but rather to compromise and meet the challenge. The battle, without conviction, would not be won. But how to find incentive for my tarantellas?

To my rescue came recollections of the remarkable juggler Rasstelli, whom I saw in Berlin. Young and elegant, he threw balls in the air, making them, as if alive, perform miracles. With enchantment and disbelief I watched them in

all combinations and rhythm fly and freeze after they fell on the tip of his nose, or travel as if driven by some unseen force around his unmoving, graceful body. When he did move, he was like the finest of classical dancers. Exhibiting his incredible skill, he did not tell profound stories. Perhaps he would not have wanted to if he could. Yet he was heard to remark, "Those balls are my Stradivari, my painter's brush, and the pen of the writer." Thinking of him, I taught my "bugs" to fly and zoom, and I demonstrated one of the "tarantulas" for my friends.

Nathan said, "It's a handy little thing, but what would your friend Schnabel say?"

"Yes, what would he say?" laughed Volodja.

"He once told me, 'I like bingo and I like cathedrals, but I hate bingo in cathedrals."

"That's good," Volodja said, giggling. "I too said something clever to Schnabel at Grisha's concert with him. I asked if he played Chopin and Liszt. 'No, I don't ,' he replied, 'but after I have played all of Mozart, Schubert, Beethoven, Schumann, and Brahms, perhaps I will.' You know what I said? I said, 'I am doing exactly vice versa.'"

Although with a tremendous concert schedule ahead of him, Nathan, unlike Volodja and me, had no trace of restlessness. He was self-sufficient, unperturbed, and always neat; his friends, his surroundings, his violin, his exquisite cashmere sweaters, all existed to augment his pleasure. He was s sympathetic listener, and if at times I got out of hand with my outbursts and fiery speeches, he playfully encouraged, "Come on, Grisha, some more passion!"

Merovitch's cumbersome dissertations on the downfall of human morality and the labyrinth of the Russian soul met an equally merry end, after Nathan congratulated him on his light touch and brevity.

Nathan and I lived in a hotel, but Volodja had a house in which we spent much time. We played together and had many discussions about the programs, which we all found extremely difficult to compose. Those consultations did not end until the very deadline. Sascha assumed an authoritative role in all matters. We listened to his advice, and when alone we secretly scrutinized and criticized his suggestions, only to accept them in the end.

A keen interest in Volodja's and Nathan's work often distracted me from my own. Nathan's door was always open to me, and I only rarely found him without the violin in his hands. As long as he had his violin, no one could disturb him. Quite the contrary: such visitors were a stimulus for new ideas which would pop up spontaneously, to his delight. I never caught him practicing scales or any other exercises. In fact, he did not give an impression of practicing at all. He just played on the fiddle and with the fiddle. Occasionally he imitated other violinists, but when I asked him to impersonate one he particularly admired, he said, "It's dangerous, for if I succeed in playing like him, I would not want to play like myself ever again."

Nathan would drop in too when I practiced, but, impatient of listening inactively, he would appropriate my cello to illustrate his ideas. After I began to do the same to his violin on my visits, we agreed not to appear without our instruments at each other's place.

Although separated in age by only a few months from my friends—I being the eldest, Volodja next, and Nathan the youngest—I felt that I had lived very much longer. Professionally I had lived many lives, while since childhood their field and destination had been solely that of the virtuoso. Without the experience of playing in orchestras, operas, operettas, chamber music, teaching, playing in restaurants, movies, and weddings, they could not be expected to understand my concern about embarking upon a strictly soloistic career. In this I was the youngest.

Nathan and Volodja arrived at the same time in my life, but they could not have been more different if they had come centuries apart. Nathan was always in full view; Volodja had to be found. I liked to watch one and to search for the other. Volodja was complex and elusive, and this searching had to depend on the light in which he wanted to be seen or to see himself. He did not make it easy.

But as an artist Volodja was a master in presenting music in its unmistakable, true dimensions. He worked tenaciously, with meticulous care to every note, every phrase, until all was fitted into one integral form. His instinct was unerring, and his performance had a quality of spontaneity, as if it couldn't be otherwise and had just happened without intention or previous labor.

Volodja showed me manuscripts of his compositions from his youth—music for the piano, a sonata for violin, an unfinished piece for the cello, and fragments of other works. All had the mark of a true gift for composing.

The summer was ending and soon we would disperse in all directions. I was the first to leave. A long walk on my last day took me through the valley and into the rolling hills. I saw a farmer who, with a stick, spurred a calf along the path. The animal balked and tried to turn back, struggling unsteadily on its newborn legs. Only a few days old, the animal sensed it was being driven to slaughter.

Plagued by this pitiful sight, I returned to the hotel, packed, and left for the farewell lunch with my friends.

“I recommend the veal cutlet,” said the waiter, “real tender.”

(Strangely, the incident with the calf made me want to avoid vacationing again in Switzerland. Only once more did I do so, in Sils-Maria, and again I was with Horowitz and Milstein. That summer Horowitz became engaged to Wanda Toscanini, and it was then also that I met the Menuhin family for the first time. At that very first meeting I went for a walk with Yehudi’s two little sisters. I didn’t know how to strike up a conversation, and when I was just ready to make a cute remark in the best baby-talk manner, Yalta, the younger one, asked me what I thought of Schopenhauer. And before I could take a breath Hephziban demonstrated her linguistic prowess by reciting excerpts from Dostoevsky in Russian, Goethe in German, Pascal in French, and, by way of an encore, something in Hebrew. I learned that at home Yehudi and his two sisters spoke each day a different language. I loved my three young friends, who taught me, along with many other admirable things, never to make an attempt to treat even a baby like a baby.)

Harold Holt met me in London. A concert manager, he had chosen this profession more as an exciting pastime than anything else. He knew as little of music as I of the diamond mines that were the source of his parents' fortune. Corpulent and jovial, he believed that most artists were crazy in an interesting sort of way. He had a considerable collection of tales about them. Reluctantly I felt that somehow my personality strengthened his attitude.

I was fond of him and his two unmarried sisters, Hilda and Mattie. The patriarchal dinners with his parents, the gentle father, and the lavishly bejeweled mother were always a pleasure. Harold’s family for some reason was not happy about his occupation. I wondered why, because Harold’s position as the head of the leading concert management in England certainly spoke favorably for his chosen field.

Most of my concerts in England I played with Ivor Newton, an excellent pianist and the dearest of friends. Except for his presence, there was nothing sunny about our tour of the provinces. Abominable food at inflexible hours, humidity and cold in the hotels, having to get up every few hours during the night to put coins in a heater, the press receptions and the complications of having to weigh the cello and buy a special ticket for it before boarding a train—all this and more did not succeed in spoiling the pleasure of being in Ivor's and Harold's company.

There were concerts in many cities, but I believe it was in Bristol that while playing a suite by Bach I heard frightening noises that completely disrupted my concentration to such a degree that I was forced to walk off-stage. "I have hallucinations—I am cracking up," I thought in near panic.

"What has happened?" I saw the worried faces of Harold and Ivor.

What I had heard on the stage was so improbable and fantastic that I was afraid to be thought insane, but after a hesitation I said, "I heard, quite near me—I don't know where it came from—well, what would you say if I told you that I heard tigers, elephants, and lions?"

Harold burst into laughter. "I forgot to tell you. There will be an animal show here tomorrow. They put the animals under the stage tonight." Happy that there was nothing wrong with me, I continued the concert and was hardly disturbed any more by the roaring beasts.

This occurrence became one of Harold Holt's collection of amusing stories, and he used it many times. It came back to me from others, and even Harold himself, who, leaving the incident more or less intact, replaced me with some other of his artists.

Before leaving for Germany, I spent a few hours in London with Nicholas Medtner. I had admired him since my youth in Moscow, where the shy and unobtrusive man and his noble art had made him one of the most loved musicians. His brother, the violist, said to me once, "He is an eternity who thinks himself a day." In his modest apartment in London he spike hesitantly, as if he wanted to say something but couldn't . He went to the piano and played a few pages from a manuscript.

He stopped. He looked lonely and lost. "No one really wants my music," he said. He shouldn't have left Russia, I thought with heaviness, bidding good-bye to the wonderful man.

Back in Germany after concerts in Dusseldorf, Koln, Essen, Dresden, and Leipzig, all with orchestra, I had a few days' rest in Berlin. I spent the time visiting old friends and going to the concerts.

One of the concerts was the guitar recital of Andres Segovia, whom I had not heard before. The exquisite artist transformed his intimate guitar into a miniature orchestra with many shades of color and timbre. Even the slides, which because of the frets made unwanted notes audible, did not mar my enjoyment. Astonished with his mastery, I stayed as long as he played for the enthusiastic audience. Just before he finished the last piece, which ended in a pianissimo, there was a loud cracking noise. Startled, Segovia looked at his guitar and hurried off.

I went to see him backstage. He looked heavier than from the stage, and his meaty hands felt too massive to have produced such delicate sounds. “My guitar, guitar,” he repeated, as if it was the only word he knew.

Later Segovia told me that his friend, the maker of the guitar, had died in Madrid the very minute his guitar had split at the concert in Berlin.

It was a nice surprise to see Sascha, even if only for a few hours. He had good news for me—a contract for the United States for the 1929-30 season. He was jubilant. “The demand for you there is fantastic. Some dumbbells say we are lucky, as if you had no talent and your concerts were not planned and worked on with blood and sweat. But I must admit that there is such a thing as luck,” he laughed. “Just listen to what happened to Nathan in Vienna. His introductory concert in the small hall of the *Musikverein* conflicted with an Adolf Busch violin recital in the big hall of the same building, the same night. But it was not conflicting, really, because Nathan was completely unknown in Vienna, while Busch’s concert had been sold out.”

Unhurrying, as though prolonging his pleasure, Merovitch continued. “The hall was empty, but you know Nathan. Before starting the concert, his only reaction was 'My violin sounds best in an empty hall.' At this very moment there was the sound of an oncoming crowd that noisily filled the hall. Nathan waited in astonishment for the overflow audience to settle. Every seat had been sold to the people who came to hear Busch’s concert, which was canceled at the last moment. Nathan did not leave Vienna before playing several concerts for big audiences in the big hall. Tomorrow, when you are in Vienna, you will hear about all this.”

The first thing upon arrival in Vienna, I called Otto Schulhof, with whom I was to play the concert that night. He was a remarkable fellow who knew as only a few know how to blend his piano with the cello. Strictly a professional, he would play with anyone, anywhere, and anything, for his fee. But this did not reflect on his great sensitivity as an artist, which made playing with him a joy. I played with him many times in different countries and had never needed more than one rehearsal.

I was shocked to hear that Schulhof was not in town and that through some fatal misunderstanding on the part of the local manager I had no accompanist.

“I will be ruined. The concert must not be canceled,” pleaded the manager.

In a few hours he called. “Here is an American, Richard Hageman. Do you know him?”

“I know his songs,” I said. “He is a composer. Why?”

“He is willing to accompany you.”

A short while later a tall man with glasses entered my room.

“My name is Hageman.”

The tall man took his coat off, revealing a full dress. “What are we playing tonight?” he asked with an engaging smile. I handed him a brief case full of music. He looked through it. “I played the Beethoven Variations once—also the Strauss Sonata, though a very long time ago,” he said, “Is there anything special you do in those works?”

“No, just as they are written,” I said, trying to appear calm. Even under normal circumstances my nervousness before a concert was enormous. Now it was barely controllable. No wonder. To play a recital in Vienna with a man I had never seen before!

While I dressed, Hageman kept going through the music—the Boccherini and Debussy sonatas and other pieces. There were no questions, and by the time I was dressed the heavy silence was broken by the waiter bringing us tea and sandwiches.

The big concert hall was near the hotel, and we decided to walk.

“This is just what I need,” said Hageman, going straight to the piano in the artists' room. “I can practice while you play the Bach. How long is the suite?”

"I don't know, but I won't omit a single repeat."

Soon I walked on the stage with a pianist with whom I had never had the slightest musical contact.

The miracle happened. From the first note it was as though we had played together for years. Such anticipation and understanding could rarely be achieved by many rehearsals and words. The great experience was unique also in another sense, for, though in years to come I had the pleasure of Richard's friendship, we never played together again.

I looked forward to going to Holland. I liked the canals there, the museums, the marvelous breakfasts, and of course the people, who were brought up to hear good music and wanted serious programs. I was also delighted to play again with Van der Pas, a fine musician and a friendly man. He accompanied many of the visiting artists and played often with Emanuel Feuermann.

"You know," he said, "Feuermann fooled me. He spoke Dutch—a strange Dutch, but Dutch. It took me a while to find it was Yiddish."

Three different programs played alternately in twelve concerts were well received. Completing the tour, I was ready to take off for France, to play in Paris, Lyons, and Marseilles. After paying my bill, I saw Anna Pavlova in the lobby of the Amstel Hotel. She had also finished her tour, and she looked tired. We spoke of the combined spiritual and physical efforts of artists, and she said, "Sometimes I wish that only the spiritual would remain." She made me promise to play *The Swan* for her in London. She died before I could keep my word.

In Marseilles the concert was with orchestra. I arrived punctually for the rehearsal, but found only a handful of musicians.

"It doesn't matter," said Georges Sebastian, the conductor, calmly. "They will be here sometime." I followed him on-stage. He introduced me to the few men present and said, "Concerto, please." Turning to me, he whispered, "We must pretend we are ready. They will hurry. It always works." True enough, I saw musicians rush with their instruments from all sides to their places. They greeted each other and tuned their instruments. In fifteen minutes or so a good half of the orchestra assembled.

"Concerto, please." Sebastian tapped the stand and I heard something that was supposed to be the concerto. It was so funny that I couldn't help laughing. Finally the orchestra was complete, with the concertmaster arriving last. He explained, "My barbershop was full. I couldn't refuse to

attend to my steady customers." It was pitiful that those fine musicians could not earn a living exercising their profession.

That night the orchestra, as if wanting to make up for the rehearsal, played splendidly. After the performance we celebrated with bouillabaisse and good wine and we spoke of music and made ourselves believe that as long as there was music the musician's life was still the best.

After excessive consumption of bouillabaisse it was only logical for me to hurry to Vichy, but I did not go there to drink its mineral water but to play the Schumann Concerto with Sir Thomas Beecham. I had played with him on other occasions, and, appreciating his musicianship, I regretted that my shaky English hindered me in the appreciation of his famous wit.

The rehearsal went fine, and in the evening, had it not been for the hotel bellboy, I would have arrived at the concert in the best of spirits. As I was about to leave, the bellboy, catching me off guard, snatched my cello and before I could utter a word bicycled full speed with it toward the concert hall. I ran screaming after him and watched the cello swaying from side to side as the bicycle disappeared. Out of breath when I caught up with him at the stage-door entrance, he looked pleased with a job well done.

Fifteen minutes later I met Sir Thomas on-stage. He conducted with great gusto and the Schumann proceeded inspiringly. It continued so even after I noticed Sir Thomas swaying form side to side. It distracted me and brought my thoughts to the bellboy again for a moment. But I was glad that the performance did not suffer from it.

After the concert we paid each other compliments.

Sir Thomas said, "Great playing."

I said, "Fine bicycling." He looked at me, surprised, but said nothing.

**Chapter Twenty-Two**

AFTER a long and uneventful crossing the passengers, suddenly aroused from their lethargy, showed the same unrest on arrival in New York as at their embarkation in Hamburg.

"The Statue of Liberty—hurry!" I saw a group of Americans rushing to the deck.

"Those Americans"—the German steward shook his head—"as if they had not seen the statue a hundred times before."

The pilot boat brought mail, newspapers, and immigration officers. The activity increased. I received welcoming messages from the Columbia Concerts Corporation and a few friends.

"Are you the Russian cellist?" asked a man with camera, approaching me. Instantly I was encircled by others with cameras and notebooks. They asked questions and their cameras clicked. The most repeated question was, "How do you like America?"

"It's my first visit and I have no impressions yet."

The next day at Columbia Concerts, Arthur Judson showed me newspaper clippings. "RUSSIAN CELLIST NOT SURE IF HE LIKES AMERICA." A fine beginning," he said.

The office was quite different from those of my European managers, who had only one or two rooms. Here were departments of transportation, sales, field representatives, recital, program, auditing, publicity, Community Concerts. There were secretaries and receptionists everywhere, offices of vice-presidents, and of course, the office of Mr. Judson, the president. Walking from room to room, I met many men and women with whom I was to be associated for twenty years to come. Everyone was friendly, yet there was something impersonal about the place, just as Merovitch told me it would be. This was one of his reasons for wanting to serve as a personal representative to his three artists.

Ruth O'Neill and Ada Cooper, close associates of Mr. Judson, were extremely amiable, but they spoke slowly, using simple words as if they were speaking to a child. They never quite changed this attitude. I am not sure what prompted their almost motherly protectiveness, but I rather enjoyed it, and I valued enormously their friendship, which was to last for many years.

I stayed at the Ritz Tower as the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Boris Said, my friend from Berlin and Carlsbad. Sonja loved music, and Boris, a financier and oilman, loved to speak of his big business deals. Their luxurious apartment on the thirtieth floor had a fabulous night view of New York. There were many windows, which my hosts liked to keep open in all weather and which would be shut only on the condition that I stop smoking. I chose to freeze.

"Boris loves everything healthy," explained Sonja. "He is so self-reliant and strong." I too had the impression that he held his fate firmly in his hands and that his counsel to others was infallible. An image of security, his life and

marriage seemed destined to flow on forever, in accordance with his well-designed plans.

Some years later, Sonja, at the wheel of their car, wondered why Boris was so silent. He was dead.

One of the most immediate matters to attend to was to find a pianist for my tour. My two lady friends of Columbia Concerts lined up several accompanists. With only a few days left I had to go through the painful chore of trying out pianists, instead of seeing more of New York. To find a sensitive musician and an agreeable companion with whom to travel was not easy. There was a pianist who knew violin repertoire; another, opera. Only two of them had played with a cello at all, but one of them had black teeth and a sour smell, and the other breathed with a wheeze that was audible when I played softly. I was impressed with one superb musician, but he wore two ties and on the Sunday we met insisted that it was Tuesday.

Finally came Valentin Pavlovsky, a talented Russian pianist who, although not long in America, said that he could speak English and knew the country well. We rehearsed, shaping ourselves into a satisfactory ensemble. Tall, blond, and young, he resembled a playboy about to take another vacation rather than a musician going on a tour.

The first concert was to be in Oberlin, Ohio, on November 5, 1929. One day earlier, as we boarded the train at New York's Grand Central Terminal, I started to wonder if he knew the country as well as he said he did. He looked more puzzled than I, did not know where to find the train, and could not read the tickets. I realized that I had as yet not heard him speak English. The porters, train conductors, and waiters took our sign language and Russian-English jargon in stride, and so did most of the people throughout the tour.

The first contact with an American college audience was heartening. Pavlovsky played admirably, and with the exception of one mishap the program went very well. At the beginning of a lengthy scherzo of a composer named Feltzer, Pavlovsky accidentally turned several pages at once. I made the same jump, caught him, and before we knew it the piece was over. Because of its humorous brevity, the delighted audience demanded a repeat.

"Let's play it again, but right, this time," I said to Pavlovsky. We did. The same piece, stretching endlessly on, had a lukewarm reception. We never played Feltzer again.

One city followed the other, each with a main street and drugstore and each with its overheated hotel, with a Gideon Bible on the night table and Palmolive soap in the bathroom. On free days we went to the movies. On the mornings after the concerts we read our reviews. It was Pavlovsky who did most of the reading, always stopping as soon as he saw the word "but." His experience, he said, had taught him that the reviews with "buts" were not worth translating or keeping.

He entertained me with stories of his father, who had been a gambler and once lost the piano, his house, and even bet on his wife, and he spoke of his own romances of the present and the past, a conversational wealth that seemed inexhaustible. He said his real name was Karetnikoff, and why he had changed it to Pavlovsky he would never know. He spoke of the bottomless lake Baikal, of his native Siberia, and of his white piglet, which as a child he took in his bed and which one day had been served for dinner. He said he had always wanted to know what was inside of things. "I ripped open cushions and mattresses, broke watches and toys. And there was a little kitten. I had a pocket knife ..."

My first orchestral concert was in Philadelphia, under the direction of Leopold Stokowski. What an orchestra! What a luscious sound! The high caliber of the musicians, their enthusiasm, made the rehearsal a joy. It was good to meet Boris Koutzen again, whom I had not seen since the time of the Cafe Ruscho in Berlin and who now was a member of the Philadelphia Orchestra and had a wife and two children. There was also Fabien Sevitzky, whom I had last seen at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow. He was the nephew of Serge Koussevitzky and, like his uncle, played double bass and later became a conductor.

Leopold Stokowski was a demigod in America, and his fame had spread to Europe through his superb phonograph records. An innovator, a champion of contemporary music, he has had wide influence and his achievements as a conductor have been extraordinary. His compulsion to be "original" often incited controversy, on which he seemed to thrive. He is a showman par excellence, and his taste and talent have successfully converted his mannerisms to his own special style. His orchestra had different seating arrangements from those of other orchestras, and at one time each of his violinists became concertmaster by turn. There was a rumor that he had devised an efficiency system, giving every musician a number, but this had to be dropped. Stokowski's melodious voice had a peculiar accent, the origin of which it was impossible to detect, and his signature on paper suggested a

fantastic design equally unknown to man. His hair too was of such unusual texture that one could not imagine that it would grow and prosper on an ordinary head. He conducted without a baton, and his string sections, contrary to all rules and customs, upon his orders avoided uniformity of bowing. When one played down, his neighbor's bow moved up. New to me was his manner of entering the stage. The orchestra waited and watched for him in complete readiness. A fraction of a second before he reached the podium, the performance would begin. But whatever his idiosyncrasies, his orchestra played marvelously for him.

After the cello concerto I went to the hall to listen to the Tchaikovsky *Pathetique*. I had just missed his eccentric entrance, but after the conclusion of the third movement I was rewarded with his unexpected speech.

There was applause. Stokowski turned and silenced the audience. He spoke of bad manners in applauding between movements and of the musicians who, after trying to produce beautiful sound, are rewarded with the horrible noise of clapping. Pleading that the audience abstain from applauding altogether, he proceeded with the symphony.

"I love applause," I said later at supper. "Don't you?"

"Oh yes, of course," Stokowski replied.

"But why did you say it's horrible?"

"Hm ... yes ... tomorrow's papers will explain," he said.

They did. In the reviews there were no "buts", barely the music or concerto—only Stokowski's speech.

I met Pavlovsky in St. Louis, where we had two recitals with a repeated program. The severe cold, to which my cello had been sensitive, lowered the bridge and the strings, a condition that hardly permitted the sound to be heard. Not to overpower my painfully whispering cello, poor Pavlovsky barely touched the keys. The public, hearing me for the first time, probably accepted my miniature sound and did not act as if it missed anything.

Early next morning I was at the violinmaker. Even to change a string on the day of the concert could upset me, and to become accustomed to a new bridge required days. The new, very high bridge completely changed the sound of the cello. "Must I again play as if walking on a soft cheese?" asked Pavlovsky before the concert.

"Heavens, no. My cello refuses to play anything less than fortissimo."

In the same hall, playing the same program, we thundered throughout the recital.

A critic came backstage. He looked at me carefully and said that he was wondering if I was the same man who played yesterday. “Formidable,” he marveled. “The same artist, but what a different conception! I don’t know which one I like better. Which do you prefer?”

“Neither,” I said.

The smaller the town, the more trains, buses, and taxis were required to reach it. When we finally arrived at some ungodly hour at the destination, it was difficult to believe that in this deserted prairie anyone would be waiting for a cello recital. Yet there were enormous numbers of listeners at the concert hall each time. These were audiences organized throughout the entire country by Community Concerts, which supplied the artists and arranged a series of concerts for a reasonable subscription price. No single seats were sold. Like other commercial enterprises, these concerts were on a mass-production scale. Many artists criticized the organization as a whole. The more established ones objected to the uniform fees, which were considerably smaller than those of so-called “straight” engagements. The lesser-known ones, despite the opportunity to play before the public and a source of income, complained that this did not further their careers. The audiences would be there independent of who was performing, and re-engagements only seldom took place. I questioned management’s condescending belief that programs had to consist of familiar music and be light. But then again, I thought that without management multitudes of rural communities would not have had music at all. As for my instrument, I was grateful for the opportunity to introduce it to many who had never before heard a cello.

In no other country had I found more attentive audiences, and, contrary to management’s conviction, there was no evidence of their preference for the inferior pieces on the program. Yet it was true that many liked to hear the music they knew. In all other things the majority has the urge for the new. They would not read the same book or see the same movie twice, or even eat the same dish twice in a row, but in music they seem to want to hear the same pieces all over again, all their lives. Managers and musicians oblige. However, this was not a cellist’s problem, for whatever I played in smaller towns—Brahms or Beethoven or Prokofieff—it was likely that the people heard it for the first time. I was told to avoid the title “Sonata,” which is

supposed to be associated with something long and boring. The problem was solved by mentioning only movements of the sonata as a group.

Back in a Pullman car and pleased to find ourselves in our home, sweet home again, Pavlovsky showed me a clause in a contract for the next city which specified that we must arrive a day before the concert. To catch this train, we had had no time to change after the concert, and we were both hungry. I pleaded with the porter to get us some food, but the dining car was closed and he could not offer us anything. Not able to sleep on an empty stomach, we sat gloomily in the men's washroom and smoked. Pavlovsky's face suddenly lightened. "I think I have something." He opened his suitcase and after shuffling its contents produced from his soiled laundry a half bar of melted chocolate. He placed it on the edge of the washbasin, unfolded the sticky paper, and with the nail of his thumb divided it fairly into halves. I ate it. The powerful souvenir of this meal has been too lasting to make me want to taste chocolate ever again.

As soon as we reached the town and were in the hotel, the telephone rang. A harsh voice with a German accent asked if I was I and if I would like beer after the concert tomorrow. I said, "Yes." It was the president of the music society.

"What a dreary place," said Pavlovsky. "The fellow downstairs says there is nothing but a brewery, a new post-office building, and a movie theater." We walked down the street and saw on the marquee "For Adults Only." We entered the theater. The picture was educational, dealing with the misery of syphilitics who, too timid to speak of their disease, did not seek medical help. A man next to me belched and smelled of liquor and Vicks. We walked out.

Next day Pavlovsky and I, both heavy smokers, puffed in the artists' room before the concert. Someone who said he was a member of the board of directors opened the window and said, "If you want to be re-engaged by this society, the president must never know that you are smokers." He looked at the door as if afraid someone would overhear and whispered, "He hates smokers, but he has a brewery, and my friendly advice to you is to like his beer." I thanked him and asked if he knew why it was necessary for us to arrive a whole day early.

"The president cannot sleep the night before a concert if he is not sure that the artists are in town." As I practiced, a big man walked in. He sniffed the air.

"Hm—good air. Not smoking? That's good," he said. "Smokers are worse than dope addicts, who kill only themselves but no others. The smokers do both."

After the last encore Pavlovsky, the lucky devil, barricaded himself in the men's room and smoked while I autographed programs.

During supper with the president and his wife I praised the beer. With another one ready, the president said, "You are one of the greatest nonsmoking and beer-drinking artists I have met."

For ten successive seasons I was re-engaged. I never was caught smoking and I praised the beer. The president's death ended my career in that city.

**Chapter Twenty-Three**

IN NEW YORK again, one morning I faced the great orchestra and Mengelberg. Carnegie Hall, the conductor, and the New York Philharmonic, with the exception of my friends and colleagues Alfred Wallenstein and Mischel Piastro, were new to me. The rehearsal commenced without the customary introduction to the orchestra. Mengelberg, a heavy-set man with an enormous head, boomed his instructions to the orchestra, which played too loudly to hear his voice. Taking the tempo much slower than was indicated in the score, he stopped, recommenced, stopped again, and the orchestra played louder and slower as it proceeded. I waited for an opportunity to communicate with the conductor. Finally, taking advantage of a short respite, I discreetly asked him to take a faster tempo.

He responded loudly, "I studied this concerto with the composer himself, and the tempo I am taking is the right one."

His nagging voice, mingled with the orchestra, went endlessly on. I stood up at least to be seen by him and perhaps to induce him to listen, but he gave me a sign to sit down and asked the orchestra to play once more from the beginning. He tapped with his stick, sang, and spoke, and the tempo became still slower. In such a predicament, when my entrance came at last after a long tutti, in protest I played faster than I generally would. He stopped. "You play too fast."

"No, you are too slow."

"It must be played as I conduct."

I walked out. The men in the orchestra applauded. I felt terrible. As if from nowhere, Judson appeared. "It doesn't look as if we could come to an

understanding," I said. Judson, quite unimpressed, explained that it was Mengelberg's last season with the Philharmonica and that his life had not been easy. He also said smilingly that Mengelberg's musical information came semi-direct, from a grand-grandnephew of Beethoven, or grand-aunt of a grand-grandson of Bach. "You see, he has made it clear that while all others seek guidance from printed scores alone, he, having known Schumann, Brahms, Wagner, Dvorak, and others in person, has weightier shoulders of authority to lean on."

I don't know what Judson said to Mengelberg, but we agreed to try once more. This time I met on the stage a new man, considerate and willing, and a fine conductor at the same time. The concert in the evening and the next day's performance went very well. But a few minutes before the third concert Judson announced that Mengelberg was sick, and Hans Lange, the orchestra's second concertmaster, would substitute.

"Without a rehearsal?"

"Don't worry," said Judson with confidence. This concert was the best of the three.

(I met Mengelberg again, on his own ground and with his Concertgebouw Orchestra in Holland. We played in Amsterdam, The Hague, and Haarlem in perfect accord, and made jokes about our bad tempers in New York.)

From coast to coast, in every major orchestra were Russians. Usually they were from the string section, the woodwinds being predominantly French and the brass German. Russian voluptuousness, French elegance, and German power, combined here and there with other nationalities different in schooling and culture, made the American orchestra a unit of unique quality. Playing with them, I played for them, and the degree of my satisfaction with the performance depended on their reaction to it. At the rehearsals I occasionally turned my back to the empty hall and faced the orchestra. I wanted to see whom I was "speaking" to, and I thought that seeing each other would accelerate our personal and musical acquaintance. This procedure was not always without hazard. At times my eyes would catch an expression of such boredom on someone's face that I wished that I was facing the hall. I knew that most orchestras had at least one member allergic to music. It was locating him that was unpleasant.

The Los Angeles Philharmonic seemed not to have such people. The conductor was Artur Rodzinski, and although our rehearsal proceeded

smoothly and almost businesslike, I was baffled at what could have provoked such an extraordinary reaction. Stamping, shouting, and applauding, the orchestra would not leave the stage. Surrounded by musicians, I played for them during the intermission and, after the rehearsal was over, until late in the afternoon. Before I reached my hotel, to my astonishment I found a front-page account of this rehearsal.

The concert, only a few hours later, culminated the unusual day. Its most interesting aspect was that, after the *Don Quixote* and the Dvorak Concerto, Mr. Clark, a wealthy patron who apparently singlehandedly supported the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, brought my cello on-stage, insisting that I respond to the demands for encores. Movement after movement from various Bach suites followed, and the last orchestral piece on the program was not played at all.

"Have you had such success everywhere?" asked Rodzinski.

"Once is puzzling enough."

I knew Rodzinski from the time I had come to Warsaw. I was pleased to see him again and to know that he had grown to an important conductor.

I visited movie studios in Hollywood and met several screen stars. Watching Clark Gable act in a violent scene, I asked him what it was about. He did not know. He told me that in a previous take he had kissed a woman and tomorrow he would burn a ship, but only when the picture was put together would he find out why. So impressed was I with Joan Crawford that I left the studio late, almost missing the train for San Francisco. Enchanted with California and regretting the brevity of my visit, I started back toward the East to fulfill more engagements.

Concerts followed one after the other. Often I arrived and left a town without glancing at it by daylight. I wish that it had been so in a college town (I think, Madison, Wisconsin) where I stayed overnight and, lured by the magnificent sight of a lake, postponed my departure until late in the afternoon. The lake was solidly frozen, and one of the students invited me for a ride in a "sail sled." Pavlovsky gave a suspicious look at it and said that it was too cold and too windy, and that he would rather have a second breakfast with a coed than deal with this crazy contraption. I had not even heard of the existence of such a thing before, but, curious, I could not wait to know how it worked.

The moment I climbed on it a big jolt threw me flat on my stomach. I clung with both hands onto something as the sled whirled, jerked, and lunged

forward and sideways all at once with dizzying rapidity. The wind pierced my ears and knifed my face and my body. The incredible speed with which we took off developed into a mad ride of gigantic jumps. With my eyes closed I had the sensation that I was in the air flying to my doom on the back of a witch.

Happily, there is an end to every nightmare, as there was an end to this ride. Exhausted, I could not utter a word or judge the duration of the ordeal, or recall what my pilot-student looked like or what he said. Taking an inventory of damages, I left the town with a slight limp, several bruises, a stiff neck, and a discolored nose.

I played recitals in a few towns, and by the time I reached Chicago all visible marks of Madison had disappeared. I looked forward to meeting Dr. Frederick Stock and to playing under his direction with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. We became friends at once. Such a rapport between two musicians is not as much instantaneous as it is an old bond that has been nurtured for years by a similar approach to music. This relationship as musicians and friends remained constant throughout the years to come, during which we never missed a season without making music together in Chicago. In addition to the majority of the known works, we played his own concerto and Hindemith Concerto, which was new to Chicago.

Chicago, with all its infamous reputation for gangsterism at the time, for me became a place of gentle friendships and cordiality. The house of Dr. Maurice Cottle, eminent nose-and-throat specialist and amateur violinist, and his wife, the remarkable pianist Gita Gradova, was the home of all "wandering" musicians passing through the city or traveling long distances just to spend an evening with them. One could never know for sure whom one would meet there—Toscanini, Elman, Rubinstein, Prokofieff, Heifetz, Horowitz—but one could be certain of having enough colleagues for a feast of chamber music. And if a cold needed to be cured, or an operation had to be performed, Dr. Cottle would see to it splendidly and, above all, gratis.

"Piatigorsky, who crossed the Dnieper River on his cello, will appear in our city," I saw often in the press. The absurd "saga." created by publicity, needed some explanation. "What did you use as oars? Your bow? Doesn't the cello have holes?" some reporters wanted to know. As I laughed off the absurd story, new ones were created.

In one town I found photographers waiting in my room. "It's late, I barely have time to change for the concert."

"We just want a picture with your cello. It will take a second." I quickly took my cello out of the case. "Is that the one you crossed the river on?"

"Hm—well—" Not wasting time in taking a normal pose, I put the cello under my chin.

This picture greeted me in many places and I had to make explanations to some worried mothers who complained of their children's strain in trying to hold the cello in the position they saw me illustrate in the paper.

Miss Dorle Jarmel, head of the publicity department at Columbia Concerts and an exceptionally intelligent person with whom I became fast friends, knew my feelings about the reprinting of "superlative" excerpts from reviews, particularly those bestowing royal rank, as "The King of the Cello" or "The Prince," but she said that this great democracy would not part with its temporary monarchs, its elected Tomato Queens, Sugar Tzars, and others.

Ready to leave a hall after one concert, I saw a group of young people conferring. Tired, I wished I could sign the programs quickly. Their leader advanced. "Is it true that you are the greatest cellist in the world?"

"No," I said.

"He's not. He said it himself," announced the leader, and they hurried out.

The ease with which people made friends I found unusual. "Call me Bill," proposed a man of whose existence I was unaware a few minutes before; his wife called me "darling"; and another citizen whom I never met at all insisted that I was a peach of a fellow. I rather enjoyed the friendly familiarity and the directness of people. The Old World often mistook this simplicity for a lack of refinement and traditional culture, on which Europe assumed that it held the patent. Europe's reproach of America was one toward an infant who had grown to a giant. Busy outgrowing his garments, he tended to appear awkward to those for whom he had never lost his reverence, but whose long-worn garb he had to patch.

My diet of people's company was quite unbalanced. On days of a concert I saw too many. On free days and on the train I was mostly alone. I practiced only spasmodically, as do all musicians on tour, and I read, explored new territory, or, fighting boredom, wrote limericks that never seemed to rhyme. And of course, whenever I could, I made new friends and saw old ones, like Mischakoff, who had not changed, except that he addressed me now in English.

In Buffalo I met a man who said that he had heard me in Warsaw. “You played the Boccherini Concerto in B Flat,” he said.

It was never pleasant to hear of that work, arranged, orchestrated, and harmonized by others than Boccherini. Many cellists, including myself, decorated it with their own cadenzas, some of which were longer than the movements themselves. The great demand for this concerto was the more incredible, considering the prodigious output of this composer which remains unknown, while the most performed and recorded one was of doubtful authenticity. Aware of this and unable to locate the original score, I gradually stopped playing it and never agreed to put it on record.

“Do you remember that concert?” the man asked. I said that I did, but mainly because of the happy faces of Artur Rubinstein and Nela, his future wife, who were in the audience that night. The man laughed. “I knew him well,” he said. “On his tours, Pan Artur Rubinstein traveled with his own little audience, of which I was the only male.”

My next engagement was in Detroit. It was good to see Ossip Gabrilowitsch again and to meet his wife and his daughter, Nina. A surprise to me was the presence of Alexander Glazounov, who was to conduct his symphony at the same concert in which I was the soloist, accompanied by Gabrilowitsch. Old and flabby, Glazounov had a touching affection for people that seemed even more apparent here than in Russia. Although he was an unimposing conductor, phlegmatic and vague, the orchestras in Russia, loving and respecting him, did not spare themselves. There, as now in Detroit, the musicians gave him their best, which was more than he was capable of demanding.

All three pleased with the concert, we were together until late at night. Glazounov spoke with a tired voice, switching subjects in short sentences. “Your orchestra, fine. Woodwinds and strings, good musicians. Yes, I like Paris. Nice Russian church. Russian restaurants. Yes, French people friendly, cultured. Nice little Russian conservatory. Would like to go to Finland sometime.”

I listened, transferring my thoughts to long ago when at the age of ten or eleven I played in the Metropole Restaurant in Moscow. There I had seen Glazounov for the first time. He dined alone and I played his Chant du menestrel and the Serenade espagnole. He had asked me to join him, and he spoke like a father to me. Looking at him now, I wished that I could do

something for him, something encouraging or tender, as one does for a helpless child.

I saw him for the last time several years later in Paris. He had married a young wife, but looked still older and as helpless as in Detroit.

Finally, after crossing the country, I was back in New York for my recital. Together again with Milstein and Horowitz, we exchanged our impressions and listened to Merovitch's plans for our future.

"You will be here next year and the next, for many years to come," he said. "We will also hold our own subscription series in all centers of the world. The life of a virtuoso should be as permanent and as fruitful as that of philharmonic societies, which outlive wars and depressions and build traditions in their perpetual service to music. We will present the best of music in all forms, and we will invite other virtuosos of our own choice, who later, in turn, will be our successors," he predicted.

"Let's have lunch, meanwhile," suggested Nathan.

In the evening we went with Horowitz and Milstein to Rachmaninoff's . Nathan had his violin and I my cello. Volodja (Rachmaninoff called him Gorovetz) had the music of Rachmaninoff's trio with him. We had rehearsed this work for a concert in New York and we wanted to play it for the composer. Horowitz, shyly advancing many excuses, begged the composer to play it with us instead. Nathan declared that there were no critics present and no risk whatsoever involved, which made Rachmaninoff laugh, but he categorically declined. We proceeded with the performance. I think it was a good one, and the only listeners, consisting of Rachmaninoff, his wife and two daughters, reacted more than approvingly. "What pretty music!" the ladies exclaimed. "Who wrote it?"

"I," said Rachmaninoff guiltily.

"Sergei Vassilievitch," Milstein began, "why don't you write anything for the violin?"

"Why should I, when there is the cello?" he said.

Two days later I was at Leopold Godowsky's . The lovable old man, no longer active as a pianist, lived up to his reputation as a wit, entertaining his friends and playing some of his clever and over-expanded transcriptions. His nimble fingers' appetite, as if not satisfied with the offered intricacies, hungrily snapped with lightning speed at more keys than seemed possible.

Almost inaudible, it was fascinating to watch. His son-in-law, David Saperton, played something of Godowsky too—to my surprise, still faster and softer. With Godowsky, I played his Larghetto lamentoso, a singing piece I always liked. Its slow tempo came as a relief.

The clerk of my hotel developed a habit of personally delivering my mail and taking care of my comfort beyond and above his duties. He offered theater tickets, ordered my meals, and introduced me to people he thought would be interesting or useful to me. He was a nuisance, and I even played with the idea of escaping his services by moving to another hotel.

One of the characters he introduced was a basketball coach. I was surprised how much his advice to athletes could be applied to me. Fitted to the self-prescribed discipline of a cellist—early to bed, practicing, walking, eating at regular hours, and practicing again—I did all his team did; and except when I could not sleep, could not practice, could not take a walk, and was not hungry at meal hours I stuck to the routine.

I played the recital at Carnegie Hall. The journey from hell to heaven and back to earth again had been completed and after supper with friends I returned to the hotel, still in high spirits.

"Congratulations. Gee, quite a reception," I was greeted by the clerk. "I put a salami sandwich and beer on ice in your room. Incidentally, you must see our Harlem. I will arrange sight-seeing for you. Do you know it? No? It is a must. Negro section. Very exciting."

I left my cello in the room, sneaked past the clerk to the street, and took a taxi for Harlem, alone. Soon I found myself in a different world, exotic and strange. I heard jazz from a bar in a cellar and walked into a dark street toward it. The place was jammed. The only white, I watched the dancing crowd. There were two woodwind instruments I had never seen before, a piano, a drum, a bass, and a fat trumpeter standing in front. The band calmly played a tune. As it progressed, the sound increased and the tune shortened, until one heard the trumpet blowing only one note. The throbbing beat of the plucking double bass encouraged the trumpet, and the short exciting cries from the dance floor made the note more intense and insistent. Like an irresistible call to a weird ritual, the fanatical band drew more heated cries form the possessed crowd. The waiters dropped their trays and joined the piercing trumpet in a wild, frenzied dance.

Unable to resist the passionate climate, I saw myself suddenly moving to the floor, and as if mesmerized I became part of the bewitched ritual. I kicked my feet and shook my body in the strangest gyrations, as if from a savage tribe. An incredible stranger to self, I was lost in my own jungles. Encircled by convulsively moving bodies and deafened by the trumpet, I danced until I found myself panting on the street. Ashamed and puzzled by my behavior, I returned exhausted to my hotel.

"Furtwangler should have seen me dance," I said to myself. Not knowing how to dance, Furtwangler and I had decided to take lessons. With assumed names, we entered the class. After the third lesson the teacher said that we were exceptional cases and, being unmusical, had better have the special course. We gave it up altogether.

The clerk kept offering to show me Harlem, and when I finally consented he said that he would start arrangements at once.

"All is set," he said one day. "I have made reservations in the finest joint—floor show and everything—well, you will see," he rubbed his fingers. "Don't bring cash. You will pay by check."

He and his wife, Volodja, Nathan, Sascha, and a few others met at the night club. The dark place, with electric candles on the tables, had a predominantly white clientele. Nothing there resembled my first visit to Harlem. The mediocre dinner and bad wine made waiting for the show that much longer. When it started it was as conventional as any colored show anywhere. I was not bored, but Volodja chewed on his nails and Nathan discussed with Sascha his coming tour in Europe. The wife of the clerk compared her dull life to that of the wife of an artist. She made coquettish eyes and from time to time I felt the touch of her foot against mine under the table. Catching Volodja yawning, I said to the clerk that it was late, and would he ask for the bill.

"I have paid, tipped, and all," said the clerk.

"How much was it?" I asked, taking out a blank check.

"Give it to me, I will fill it out for you. Your spelling, if you don't mind my saying so, is known to be hilarious." I signed the check, and the party dispersed.

One of the few remaining concerts was at the Schola Cantorum, a series held in large private homes in New York. Everything went wrong at this concert—the acoustics, a too long program, my own playing, the dainty

applause in gloves and our rushing on-stage to give an encore. Too late: the room was empty! "It is formidable," Pavolosky said admiringly, "how fast elderly ladies can run."

Back at the hotel I met Milstein. He looked at my tails and touched the still-damp dress shirt. "Where did you play?"

"Schola Cantorum."

"What kind of concert is it?"

"A sort of musicale—you know—society affair."

"How was it?"

"Exhausting. Imagine, after a long program in a home, playing eight encores."

Nathan was impressed. A week later, on the day of our departure, I saw Nathan in his working garb. "You had a concert? Where?" I asked.

"Never mind." He was in a bad humor, which was as rare as my ignorance of where he had played. He looked at me searchingly. "How many encores did you say you played?"

"Where? What are you talking about?"

"You know—Schola Cantorum. I just played there."

"None." I said, bursting into laughter.

"I carried my entire library of encores," said Nathan, his own self again. "Knowing from you what to expect, I did not hurry, and when I walked on-stage, there was no public, no lights, and even the chairs were already removed." He looked at his watch. "I have to pack, before you invent something again."

I had not packed either. I went to my room. Merovitch was there. He looked upset. "How could you do it!? It's terrible. You have written checks that were returned because of insufficient funds."

"Ridiculous! I had lots of money in the bank."

"No, you didn't. Show me your cancelled checks. What is that?" Merovitch spotted a large, four-figure check. I saw my signature. It was the one that the clerk helped fill out for me in Harlem.

The clerk admitted his theft. Sascha threatened to put him in jail, but the clerk promised to return the money sometime. I took a chance on his repaying me eventually and in the commotion of departure I tipped him and caught myself shaking his head.

So, with no money, with debts, but marvelous impressions, my first American tour ended.

**Chapter Twenty-four**

I suppose all bon voyage wishes who come to see people off share the same problem, of what to do and how to say something worthwhile. Of course, much depends upon how long one has to wait for the final good-bye. No doubt short waits are the best. For prolonged ones there is no solution. To act gay is downright tactless, and tears are reserved for mothers and lovers. The traditional course, of begging one to "drop a line" and to "take care of yourself," is tedious and not elastic enough for a longer stretch. There is seldom any choice, though, and at my departure we promised to write each other and swore to take marvelous care of our bodies and souls. I hugged a person who least expected it from me: it prompted him to start a joke that he never finished.

Finally all my friends left the boat and the last waving passengers on the deck dispersed. For a long time I watched New York waning and the North River broadening until it lost its identity and was no river any more. Often depressed at departures, I felt no trace now as I stood and looked back to the land to which I would return and to which I wanted to belong.

In the cabin I found my bulging brief case, into which I had dumped all my papers. On my bed I spread out the long-accumulated correspondence, programs, and bills. I went through the bills: 20 per cent commission to Columbia Concerts, 10 per cent to Wolf and Sachs, and, after deduction of these, 15 per cent to my personal representative. Bills for mimeographing leaflets, for photos, posters, three-sheets, press book (a true literary jewel), clipping service, window cards, and heralds. The bill for New York recital expenses was two pages long. Ironically, attached to it were glowing reviews. I had read them earlier, when they were nice and fresh. Now they were stale, so I went back to the bills. Pullman, railroad, musical magazines, ocean crossings, accompanists' fees ... I took a quick glance at another pile of unpaid and paid bills and with the cheerful thought that poor Europe would soon replenish my purse I threw all these back into the brief case and went on deck to take a walk with Nathan.

I had no camera, no assortment of hats and suits, no maps, folders, guidebooks, or other equipment that marks the tourist fraternity. I kept to bare necessities and traveled with one suitcase, a brief case, and, of course, the cello; and in conspicuous contrast with the tourists I wore the same suit for the entire crossing. The busy people packed and unpacked, made reservations and arrangements, had conferences with stewards and headwaiters and looked for a fourth for bridge. They sent cables and flowers, wrote cards and letters, and above all they dressed and undressed, trimmed and manicured before and after every event; and for physical fitness they played shuffleboard. I did my own fussing, but of a different nature. Because of the humid sea air I wrapped and unwrapped my cello in silk bags and flannels, manicured the fuzzy strings, cleaned the fingerboard with saliva, and polished the cello with a special cleansing formula. And, to protect the cello from catching cold, I would not leave it naked for long. After brief practicing I would put it back in its case, swathe it in blankets on my bed, and only after covering it with cushions and posting a note for the steward not to touch it would I leave the cabin.

Nathan Milstein, on this trip, as on many other crossings to come, was on deck at all hours of day and night. He supervised the passage and stood on watch, ready to save his life should the opportunity arise. He believed that all modes of transportation were precarious, yet curiously the same precautious Nathan was completely relaxed when I chauffeured him as my first passenger on my first solo drive.

The weather was beautiful, but on this trip I had to sacrifice playing bridge with Nathan and even promenading with an attractive Italian lady for the morbid company of music by Schonberg and Schnabel, the scores of which were in my cabin. Schonberg had given me his concerto based on music by Monn, asking if I would play it. There was nothing I wanted more. I had worked on it already, but unlike his other, more challenging works, this one puzzled me and forced me to come back to it again and again. I hoped that perhaps after this trip I would understand better what made a master of Schonberg's magnitude turn to Monn.

Things did not work smoothly either with the sonata for solo cello by Schnabel, which also had been given to me by the composer. Schnabel had consulted me when he wrote it, but its bizarre music fascinated me only when accompanied by Schnabel's verbal obbligato. He spoke of his musical ideas magnificently, but here, in the middle of the ocean, without his formidable rhetoric, gestures, and demonstrations at the piano, it was much

less convincing. I did not spare any effort, but I am afraid that Schonberg and Schnabel, both deeply admired musicians and friends, were disappointed by my noncommittal attitude, or rather by my admission of what I hoped was only a temporary lack of progressiveness.

I was glad that my tour brought me to Italy, and, judging from the sound of my cello, it was happy to be in its native country again. I loved Italy, its people, and its art. I did not want to miss anything, and the modest fees did not stop me from asking my manager, Clara Camus, to let me play even in the smallest of places. Vincento Vitali, the fiery young accompanist from Naples, cared still less for money. Although quite poor, he wanted to pay for all our meals and only by force accepted his hard-earned fees for concerts. He beamed with joy when I praised his playing and was ready to cry at the slightest critical remark.

After many concerts the tour ended. Still warm from the Italian sun, I found myself trudging through rain and fog to the Gramophone Company studios in London. The recording room was crowded with gentlemen of London Philharmonic. They turned noisily, talked, and gesticulated. In Italy such agitation, an accustomed everyday occurrence, might be provoked by almost anything. Here the masters of self-restraint could be sent into a commotion only by matters of the greatest inconsequence. In fact, judging by their very excitement, there was no disaster in store. For in meeting that, an Englishman is composed. Emergency and danger do not make him move a music. It is when losing his gloves or umbrella that he is apt to have tantrums.

The conductor, John Barbirolli, let me know that we had only forty minutes in which to rehearse and record the Schumann Concerto. The engineers from "His Master's Voice" said that there would be no breaks and that the entire concerto would have to be recorded from beginning to end without a stop. Barbirolli, who was a cellist himself and knew the concerto well, doubted that it could be done. "Indeed, it would be a miracle," said the engineer. "It will be the first experiment in recording a concerto as a whole, instead of making a break after each four-minute side."

"How will you avoid them?" I asked.

"By the time one side is completed, the next will already have been started by another machine."

There was barely any time to discuss tempi or anything else, and no time for a rehearsal at all. Barbirolli explained the unusual situation to the orchestra, and almost immediately the red stand-by signal appeared. There was a tense, apprehensive silence. The recording began. What was it? Mutual compassion, the loveliness of the music, or luck? I do not know. Perhaps no one knew as, with intense concentration, movement by movement, faultlessly the concerto reached the last chord. At this precise moment the voice of the first oboist, Leon Goossens, pierced the air: "Bravo!" Then the red signal went off. The "Bravo!" was on the record.

"I am sorry," said Goossens.

"Don't be," I said. "It's the sincerest bravo I will ever hear."

"We can't erase that voice," said the engineer. "Please try the last page again." As we did, there was the crash of a fallen bassoon, and each following repetition was interrupted by a sneeze, cough, or the scratch of my cello, until there was no time left for another try. The Gramophone Company succeeded only partly in erasing Mr. Goossens' voice on the record, leaving his "Bravo!" for me to enjoy to this very day.

I liked many things in London—its taxicabs, in which I could stretch my legs and stand my cello, its hotel valets and the illusion that they would serve out of sheer respect rather than for a tip. I liked its breakfasts and afternoon teas, its composers and conductors, who were titled or titled-to-be (there were no others), and I was fond of my friends, whose friendship was as enduring as Great Britain itself. I liked Queen's Hall and London audiences, and I read the Sunday *Times*. I liked to sit in the lobby of the hotel watching the debutantes, the pretty and even less pretty ones who, as if ripened all at the same time, pranced into the ball to be plucked off by their preselected harvesters. Though I seldom succeeded in deciphering "English" English, I was grateful that it was not expected of me.

A "Continental" artist had marvelous privileges in England. The less he resembled a Britisher, the more interesting he was; the more eccentric, the more enchanting. He could even pass port in the wrong direction at the dinner table and be invited again.

Once, conversing with a lady and not knowing who she was, I confessed that I couldn't recall where and when we had met before but that her face was so familiar and I had her name on the tip of my tongue. She simply said that she was the Queen of Spain. There were other uncomfortable situations, one of

which occurred when I listened to a group of men discussing the fantastic technological inventions to come which would make this world unrecognizable. Suddenly I joined in. “In comparison to Jules Verne, your conjectured future strikes me as a rather anemic fantasy.”

“You are so right,” they laughed. A little later I learned that among those I addressed were Aldous Huxley and H. G. Wells. It did not prevent us from becoming friends.

A more involved incident occurred when I happened to meet royalty en masse at one grand musicale during the so-called “season” in London. It was not a command performance, for which the artist as a rule does not get paid. I was asked to perform, along with Grace Moore and Fritz Kreisler. The fee was enormous, the duties small, and it was good to see Kreisler again, whose inimitable artistry I loved. Even his slight facial tic had a special charm for me. He was in bad humor that night, but Grace Moore hummed contentedly as she looked into the mirror and examined her dress, which consisted mainly of décolletage. She had a huge powder puff, but, unable to reach some area of her back, asked for help. I obliged.

Kreisler tuned his violin. “My wife is waiting for me at the hotel,” he said. “Would you mind if I start the program? It will make it nice: Grace will be in the middle, and then Grisha.” Each of us had his own accompanist. Kreisler walked with his accompanist onto a specially built stage in the drawing room. Grace stopped humming, but, still at the mirror, made some touch-ups with the powder puff.

There was no printed program. The familiar Kreisler sound caressed my ears until suddenly he had a memory lapse. I was sure that, if the pianist stopped insisting on playing the music in front of him, Kreisler’s improvisations would make it into a better piece, but as it was they were muddling along in search of one another. I did not see the audience, but, judging from the applause following the piece, it was an extremely small one. The second piece he played incredibly beautifully, and there was no third. “Harriet is waiting,” he murmured, packing his violin.

“Won’t you play some more?” I asked.

“No, no, I must go.”

I did not listen to Grace, and I was hardly ready to make my own appearance as she walked angrily into the room. “It’s all over. On-stage there, a polar bear can freeze to death.”

"It's a bloody short program; now it's all up to us," said my pianist through his bandages. Some other artist had taken my dear Ivor Newton away on tour and it was the first time that I had to play in England without him. The substituting gentleman had talked about nothing since his arrival at the concert but the unattractive infection he had caught at the barber's

With a feeling of considerable responsibility for the success of a concert by so many artists, with so little music, and for so much money, I was determined to give all I had. I bowed and placed my chair calculated to screen the bandaged face of my pianist. Then something incredible happened, something I still can't explain. The very first note of the muted, delicate piece I played came with a shrill whistle no cello can normally produce. The rest of the piece, despite my supreme efforts, could not erase the beginning. I hoped to make it up with the next bravura display. It went well, and, though the reaction of the audience justified Grace's remark, I announced the next piece to be played. Finished with this and simply not in the mood to continue, I walked off the stage.

My gauzed pianist said something about the itch on his face, apologized, and sauntered out. I too wanted leave, but the hostess asked me to stay. She did it with a politeness that chilled me to the bone. I followed her and joined the sovereign guests. Having failed in the concert department, I had nothing to lose.

In the drawing room I was introduced to royalty, current or in exile, and to a Russian prince whom I had met before. There was another man whom I recalled seeing in Brussels. He produced champagne, which I thirstily gulped down. Immediately he offered me another glass. After the third I found everyone exceedingly friendly, and I even imagined hearing praise for the concert. I began telling stores and soon, surrounded by all, I played the cello. I saw the hostess's face beaming.

While l conversing with the Princess Alice. I met her husband, the Earl of Athlone, for the first time. He stood by and listened to our talk of mutual acquaintances. Suddenly he broke in, "How is your dear, dear father? Haven't seen him for a long time, old chap. Is he still yachting and playing polo?"

On my way to the hotel I thought of my father and his sudden elevation to the imperial circle, his yacht, which was never larger than a rowboat, and polo, with which he was as familiar as the Earl of Athlone was with the barbershop of my uncle in Ekaterinoslav.

I would not miss the evening at Stefan Zweig's apartment, which was a meeting place of writers and musicians from all over the globe. On this trip I met Alexis Tolstoy, the author from Russia. I found him striking and as imposing as his novel Peter the Great. I was not sure how he was related to Leo Tolstoy, but his writing was worthy of that name. The more incomprehensible it is that I have met but few who are acquainted with his work. The topics of conversation at Zweig's were of enormous variety, and our poking fun at one another often made the room vibrate with laughter.

To the pleasant things in London also belonged my visits with Professor Whalen at his cello school. He had many students, of whom only a few were men. The female predominance I found as puzzling as their extraordinary vigor in playing compared to their male confreres. After spending one afternoon with Professor Whalen and his delightful brood we all walked with our heavy armament into the street. But our unusual group did not attract the slightest attention of anyone. What hilarity such a cello procession would have created in Ekaterinoslav! There, as later in the outskirts of Moscow, I rarely escaped being ridiculed when carrying a cello. "Boom-boom-boom-boom," the unpleasant voices and vulgar remarks of young and old accompanied me through the streets. Their gestures and words since childhood had become to me a synonym of ignorance.

With this recollection I arrived at Albert Hall for a concert with Sir Malcolm Sargent. After the Haydn and Dvorak concerti, Malcolm and I were asked to come to the royal box. The moment we entered, Queen Mary, her hands simulating the playing of the cello, walked toward me. Her greeting made me gasp. I heard, "Boom-boom-boom-boom!"

**Chapter Twenty-five**

It has been said that many a profession leaves its imprint on a man's character—even his appearance. Of course the time element is of importance. A cavalryman does not become bowlegged overnight, although I once knew a professional violinist who became a farmer, and in no time at all began to look like one. To be sure, there are exceptions. A composer might look like a barber, and a barber like an interior decorator. And I saw a photo in a newspaper of a kindergarten teacher who was arrested as a prostitute. But as a rule a butcher does look like a butcher, and it needs some doing to mistake him for a poet.

A cellist too is quite unmistakable. There is a touch of nostalgia that can be recognized like a scar, left from a long battle—often a losing one—against the

odds of his instrument. His melancholic disposition is particularly apparent when he has to perform something spirited and gay, often found in passages written in such awkward positions as to make them sound sad enough for tears.

Although the musical life of a cellist is not a solitary one, having company is not entirely of his own choosing. Unlike a pianist or guitarist, he is not self-sufficient, and one rarely sees a cellist on the stage alone. Walking behind him will be a man carrying music and wearing an expression, "It's not my recital, don't blame me," and who reflects the determination to go through joy and misery with a virtuoso to the bitter end. That man is the accompanist. His position in the world of music is peculiar, and although the life of a soloist is unthinkable without him, his immense importance rarely receives due recognition. Good recital programs for the bow instruments consist of ensemble music with a piano part of equal importance—equality that the accompanist is not permitted to enjoy. His piano lid is closed. He must be discreet. He uses music, and for a scant fee plays by far more notes than the soloist. His name on the program is not prominent and in the reviews he is scarcely mentioned. It is to be expected that sooner or later, on or off the stage or most likely both, he will resent his celebrated employer. However, old professional accompanists in time develop an extraordinary defense mechanism and in discharging their duties are as unperturbed as a fakir on a bed of nails.

Once on the subject of my piano collaborators, it is difficult to be swayed away from it. Were I to speak of Ralph Berkowitz, it would encompass more than fifteen years of activity. Thoughts of Ivor Newton and Pavlovsky bring many heart-warming episodes to mind; and images of Van der Pas, whom I saw without a cigar in his mouth only on the stage, of Otto Herz of Budapest, who practiced black magic in addition to his accompanying, Arpad Sandor, Emanuel Bey and others—all pass vividly through my mind.

One day in Paris a young man came to audition for a position as my accompanist. He was frail-looking and very eager. He played for hours, but, enchanted, I asked for more. Finally he asked, "Will you engage me?" His voice was anxious. My answer was "No." His color changed.

"You don't understand. You are so young. You are a master. You must not spoil the wonderful career that is awaiting you." I embraced him. It was Dinu Lipatti, a name that speaks so fully of beautiful achievements and recalls the tragedy of his premature death.

One of the reasons that influenced me in advising Lipatti is the stigma the word "accompanist" carries, a prejudice that can hinder a solo career. This feeling is even exemplified by the refusal of a world-famous pianist to record sonatas with an equally prominent string player for fear of being thought an accompanist, and so falling down into the gutter.

There are fewer fine accompanists (how I loathe that word!) than there are virtuosos, and of those I think with affection. Luckily, with the poor ones I have come into contact very rarely, and only in an emergency or by accident—like the one in a Midwestern city, with a thousand miles between my last and next engagements. My accompanist had fallen ill, and my managers engaged a local pianist. As soon as I arrived in town I rushed to him for rehearsal.

What a magnificent studio! What a magnificent host! A jovial man in his forties, clad in a dressing gown adorned with interesting designs set in gold and brocade, had scotch and soda and a comfortable armchair ready for me. "All yours," he said, spreading his arms as if for embrace. "You must be exhausted," he chatted lightly, "Those rattling trains—oh, the artist's life, what a price for glory! I gave all that up." He looked moved. "Yes, I did. For real depth, a real glory of spirit I have found right here." He pointed at his heart and his head. By the time I had finished my drink, he looked to me calm enough to attend to business. I handed him the music for our concert next night. "Splendid. It's like meeting dear old friends again," he said, lovingly leafing the music. "Ha, Brahms F Major. I bet you don't take the tempo of the first movement too slowly, as most cellists do. Allegro vivace—are they blind or deaf?" he demanded accusingly. His mood changed rapidly with every new piece.

"The little Debussy sonata—adorable." He caressed the title page. "Well, well, here is the Capriccio of Hindemith. I played it when it was still a manuscript. Quite German, don't you think?" But so was Bach." He burst into laughter. "I must not forget to tell it to my master class." He refilled my glass and became very serious. "My friend," he said, "Should I have been asked, instead of you, to make the program, it would be an identical one. Extraordinary! All music I know and love best. I suggest that we rest a day and that tomorrow, any time at your convenience, we run through the program—major works, bric-a-brac, and all. The other day I mentioned bric-a-brac at the academy. I said that it's nothing but encores and inferior short pieces." Delighted at the prospect of a free afternoon and evening, I agreed with everything he said.

A lucky stroke, I thought next morning after a good night's sleep, to find such an experienced pianist in this city. I enjoyed my breakfast, went for a long stroll, returned to my room, and wrote several cheerful letters. After practicing and having a light lunch I unhurriedly walked to the rehearsal. My new friend greeted me warmly and asked me to try his Turkish coffee, specially brewed for me. "No thanks, let's work."

"All right, I'm ready." I had the impression his voice trembled a little.

"Debussy," I said. It took him an unduly long time to look for the music, to find it, and to settle in his chair. "Are you sure you are comfortable?" he asked, blew his nose, and finally began. I listened, but, believing that he was joking, asked him to repeat the few bars again. This time, to my horror, I had no doubt that the man could barely play the piano. Shocked, I stared at his pale face. He got up from his chair and said, "What's the use? I confess I can't play. Yes, as simple as that. Please," he pleaded, "don't ruin my position in this community which I have so carefully built."

Unwilling to cancel the concert, I arrived at the hall. To my surprise, my collaborator, cheerful in his elegant tails, waited for me in the green room. "I have a marvelous idea," he said, as jovially as at our first meeting. "I will make an announcement that you have lost all your music on the train and that you will play works for cello alone. Oh, we will enjoy it so much to hear your Bach; and as a surprise, at the end of the concert we will play this encore together. I have practiced it for two days." He showed me a childishly easy minuet by Valensin which he must have picked from my music. His entry on the stage and the announcement were received by the full-house audience with cheers.

After an evening of two suites by Bach, one by Reger, and my own fantasy for cello alone, the "maestro" joined me with the minuetto. I followed his clumsy accompaniment as carefully as I could and he took many bows to the grateful audience with me.

There was another incident, but of a quite different order, this time with a true artist, Pierre Luboshutz. I enjoyed working at Pierre's apartment in New York, particularly after his marriage to the lovely and talented Genia. (Later they excelled as the Luboshutz-Nemenoff piano duo team.) She helped us with constructive criticism and cooked marvelous meals.

I called Pierre from Boston. “As you know,” I said, “the only new piece we play in Cleveland is the toccata by Castelnuovo-Tedesco. You have the manuscript. There will be very little time for rehearsals. Please work on it.”

“What do you mean?” cried Pierre. “I know the piece—do you know it?”

In New York I went to Luboshutz’s without delay. We had not seen each other for a long time, and there was much to tell to bring us up to date. Eventually we began to rehearse. We worried about not having enough time to work on the new piece. But after we played the toccata through and, encouraged, were in the mood to work, Genia announced that dinner was ready.

The view on the table was breath-taking. One had to be a poet of considerable talent to describe what I saw. The seductive power of the herrings was almost unbearable. The sturgeon from Russia, the ham, born in Prague, spoke their own languages, of no less promise than vodka prepared by Pierre and so justly called by him the foundation of all worthwhile things. The cutlets were not visible yet, but only a hopeless amateur would not know, just from the aroma, that they would melt in one’s mouth and would be the color of a fine Stradivari. All thoughts of the toccata vanished. “Our train leaves at ten—we have sleeping accommodations—arriving tomorrow early in the morning. We have nothing to do there until the concert in the evening—right?” We drank a toast to a long rehearsal in Cleveland and a successful tour.

We had lower berths at opposite ends of the car. Like an acrobat, I bent and twisted on the bed to take my clothes off and to put on pajamas. I buttoned up the curtains and fell asleep. Before long I was awakened by a baby screaming. I put my head under the pillow, but the baby was persistent and very near. I opened the curtains and saw a mother in the opposite berth trying to soothe her child. She saw me watching and asked if she might entrust her baby to me for a moment. “Of course,” I said, flattered. She placed her little treasure on my lap and quickly disappeared in the direction of the ladies' room. The tiny, furious thing screamed. Its face was wet and red and its body was wet, as in no time were my pajamas. Everyone in the car was awake and people swore. I drew the curtains and lay with the baby in my bed. The change of position or the intimacy with a stranger aggravated the infant still further. I began to sing to it, but it was a wrong lullaby—for a wrong baby! My sheets were wet, and the baby was still crying. I felt like crying myself. I was desperate—I thought that its mother would never come

back. Finally the curtain opened, the woman said, “Thanks,” and took her baby away. My night’s sleep was gone for good. The baby was quiet, but I listened to the rattle of the train and to the snoring of my neighbors until we reached Cleveland.

Pierre was in good shape and said that he had slept like a baby. “What baby?” I asked sleepily. After breakfast at the hotel I put the “Do Not Disturb” sign on my door and went to bed. I slept the entire day. In the late afternoon we had tea in my room and went through the program. I hummed the toccata and Pierre made some notes in his part.

The first half of the program went very well, and an atmosphere of great warmth awaited us for the first performance of the toccata in the United States. We began with vigor, and the first fifty bars promised a good performance, when my memory suddenly went astray. I invented as I went along, trying to stay in the style of the music. Pierre turned his pages back and forth, but, realizing that what I was playing was not in the score, he finally discarded the music and, like myself, played by heart. Meanwhile, absorbed with many interesting ideas and harmonies, I saw an opportunity for a fugato. Pierre’s talent, or fear, made him match my inventions. The fugato led us gradually to the first theme, but this time, instead of energico, it was in a lyrical mood. We elaborated on it, using some new material. We must have liked it very much, for we clung to it for a long while. It was a charming dialogue between the two instruments, and it was hard for us to part from it, but we had to. We gradually built up to a great climax that led straight back to the beginning of the piece. Oh, what a joy—after the fiftieth bar I knew exactly the continuation. But now it was Pierre who did not! There was no choice. We had to improvise. The perspiration ran down my face and dropped on the fingerboard and on my cello.

Pierre shook his head. His hair fell over his forehead and his eyes. He swayed and groaned and encouraged me to still-greater efforts. It was something of a coda now, a great lead to the triumphal conclusion. Faster, stronger, still faster we stormed, until breath-takingly the composition was brought to a finish.

Exhausted, we responded to the applause. Artur Rodzinski came to see us after the concert. He and Mr. Eyle, the concertmaster of the Cleveland Symphony, took us to the station. The toccata, they said, was very impressive.

In fairness to my dear friend Castelnuovo-Tedesco, I wanted to tell them the truth. Now, I have!

**Chapter Twenty-six**

Poor, good Castelnuovo! But at least he was not present to witness the mutilation of his toccata in Cleveland. I was worse off, punishing myself. Even then, the episode taught me a lesson. Working on his concerto, I learned not to trust myself until I had the music in my very blood stream.

The strenuous schedule of the 1934-35 season did not make an ideal climate for the study of a new work, even with an enforced discipline. On a busy tour there were enough distractions and irregular hours to play villainous tricks on a traveling musician. I started with concerts in Bordeaux, Lyons, Luxembourg, Lisbon, Oporto, Monte Carlo, Marseilles, and Paris. All, with a few exceptions, went fine.

In Bordeaux, the magnificent wine country, I indulged in tasting the wines in excess, and in Lyons an unexpected meeting with Jacques Thibaud and his accompanist, Tasso Janopulo, meant much laughter and little sleep after the concert. In Luxembourg the conductor began the Schumann Concerto in three-four time and when I insisted on doing it in four, as it is written, he said I was a "prima donna." In Lisbon, Pavlovsky lost every penny in a casino and in Oporto he lost half of my music. In Monte Carlo the audience was unusually small. When I came to take a bow at the end of the concert, there was only one person left in the hall, who kept applauding vigorously and made me return to the stage again and again. I even played a piece for him.

(Many years later in New York, between recording sessions for Columbia, I had lunch at the Plaza with its executive, my friend Goddard Lieberson. There he introduced me to Somerset Maugham, who said that he had heard me for the first time in Monte Carlo. It made me recall and tell them the incident of the single applauding man. "I have always wondered," I said, "who the man could be." "It was I," Maugham said.)

In Paris I happened to start the Dvorak Concerto up-bow instead of the habitual down-bow, a diversion that did not affect the performance or the audience's reaction but that sent the dozen or so fellow cellists present into an uproar. But it did not mar my pleasure, for I loved to play in Paris, and doubly so if it was with the remarkable Pierre Monteux. He said that we played music well together, but I knew that, short and round, he hated to

take bows with me. He looked like an old walrus. Thirty years later he was even more remarkable a conductor, and if he still resembled a walrus, it was not an old one.

Then came Vienna, Prague, Bucharest, and Belgrade; Athens with Mitropoulos; Antwerp, two concerts in Brussels with Erich Kleiber; Bilbao, Valencia, Madrid, Barcelona with Casals; Geneva, Vevey, and Basel with Felix Weingartner, who was ancient, like a rare remnant of the history of music. I found him astonishingly rejuvenated. He had just married a charming young lady and, as if having energy to spare, he ran instead of walked whenever space and opportunity permitted. I was not sure whether to attribute his fabulous dexterity entirely to the marriage or to his profession as a conductor, which seems to resist the natural aging of a man.

I completed an International Celebrity tour in England, gave three recitals in London with Ivor Newton and a concert with orchestra with Sir Landon Ronald, and then went to Budapest for a concert with Bela Bartok. Having little time for rehearsal, he asked me to come straight from the station to his home.

I was received by a lady at the door. She spoke Hungarian, a language of which I knew only two words: gordonka, for the cello, and kapusta, for cabbage.

“How do you do?” I said.

She said something long, smiled, and made a gesture to enter.

“Do you speak German?”

She made a series of Hungarian words, but there was no kapusta.

“Oh, French?”

She offered me a cigarette and spoke of things about which she appeared to be deeply concerned, or so it seemed, particularly so when after more heavy sentences she wiped her forehead with a handkerchief. I listened until she said everything she had to say, and we just stared at each other. To break the silence, I asked if it was the house of Bela Bartok. Her face brightened at the sound of familiar words.

At last Bartok appeared. What a relief and pleasure it was to see him. He asked about my journey and my tour and wanted to know if I would like to rehearse first and rest later. He spoke of Hungarian folk music and of a composition he was working on, and played a few excerpts on the piano

from the manuscript. His soft hands made music as strong as his face, as penetrating as his eyes, and yet as delicate as his frail body. We rehearsed, and during lunch we agreed that we had really not rehearsed at all but just played, and when we repeated anything it was merely to give us the pleasure of playing once more. In the afternoon we went through the program, which consisted of the E-Minor Brahms Sonata, Beethoven's Sonata in C Major, the D-Major Cello Suite by Bach, the Sonata by Debussy, and the Rhapsody by Bartok. It was wonderful to play and to be with him, and I hated to have to dash to Scandinavia and Italy to fulfill other engagements, which would last until I boarded the ship for the United States.

I looked forward to the crossing, not only because I needed rest, but because it would give me an opportunity to practice. But, as luck would have it, a crippling cold and fever, crowned by seasickness, put me into bed and kept me there with the manuscript of the Castelnuove-Tedesco Concerto throughout the long voyage.

Still shaky, the instant I entered my hotel room in New York I received a telephone call from Maestro Toscanini. "What have you been doing all this time?" he said impatiently. "Your boat landed hours ago. Hurry, I am waiting for you." Soon I faced Maestro at the Astor Hotel, where he lived. Rosy-cheeked, he hurried me to take the cello out of the case and to start rehearsing. He spoke with agitation of the stupidity of conductors and soloists and their habit of playing everything in a wrong tempo. This was his favorite topic and I did not expect him to stop so abruptly. He moved toward me, closer and closer, until his face almost touched mine. He stared at me scrutinizingly with his near-blind eyes, as if I were a terrible misprint in a score. He twisted his mustache, shook his head, and said, "Bad, very bad. Hemorrhoids again? Didn't you try the medicine I gave you in Milano? It helped Puccini. Your face is green," he concluded gravely.

Maestro at the piano, we began the concerto. Glancing at his score, I noticed that the cello part was virtually covered with penciled fingerings and bowings. No cellist except me had seen the concerto. Surprised, I asked who had made the markings.

"I did," said Maestro.

"Why?"

"Did you forget I was a cellist?" he said, smiling. "One does hear fingerings and bowings, and I wanted to know if yours would be the same as mine."

Maestro banged on the piano in a true Kapellmeister manner. He spoke and he sang, and his spontaneity and vigor carried me away. By the end of our long and exhilarating session I had miraculously regained my strength, and I returned to the hotel in an exuberant frame of mind.

There I found a telegram from Koussevitzky. "It's a question of life and death that you give with me in Boston the world premiere of the concerto Lyrico by Berezowsky. All arrangements for the performance, which is in two weeks, have been confirmed by your managers."

I knew Nicolai Berezowsky from Moscow, as I knew Koussevitzky from my youth, but I did not know the concerto. Before I could call Boston to decline the engagement, the telephone rang and there was the voice of Koussevitzky.

"Say yes—promise—I love you—say yes." I listened for a long time. His irresistible pleading weakened me, and my arguing that I couldn't learn the concerto in such a short time was of no avail. "You will like the concerto. It's not a bit difficult for you. Please promise."

"Do you recall what you said about promises?" I asked.

"What was it?"

"You said that you are weak enough to make promises, but strong enough not to keep them."

"Grisha, it's no time for jokes," After a heavy silence I heard myself: "I will."

I trusted Koussevitzky's judgment, and I knew that Berezowsky was a fine musician. Yet there was no end to my annoyance with myself for agreeing to play a work I had never seen. I thought that such improvised extra engagements could happen in Tokyo or South America and elsewhere, but not in the United States. But rules were never dictated by a country where Sergei Alexandrovich Koussevitzky resided. The obstacles to his ideas were swept away and rendered helpless by his overwhelming will to build monuments to music, which already in his lifetime were proof and testimony of his efforts. His enthusiasm and unfailing intuition paved the road for the young, gave encouragement to old masters who were in need of it, and inflamed the masses to spur him to go on building. He not only discovered composers; he performed them and published their works. He created orchestras and publishing houses, foundations, schools, and festivals, and he fought for Americans in America, for Frenchmen in France, and for Russians in Russia. One saw him in a rage and in tenderness, in outbursts of enthusiasm, in happiness, and in tears, but no one saw him in indifference.

Everything about him seemed elevated and important, and his every day was a festival. His life was a perpetually burning need to communicate. Every performance was a unique experience of supreme importance to him, and even the thought of music itself generated an excitement and eagerness that were attached to him to his very last day. His friends were the elect or his adopted sons and daughters, and everyone entering his house entered the Promised Land. He was drawn by everything "exceptional" from his childhood on, and grew exceptional himself. He demanded only the extraordinary, and no one could give him less. His praise was Immensity and in turn he received two-fold. Words like "A fine performance" after the concert would be an insult if they were not said with a choked voice of emotion or a trace of tears. There was no shortage of those voices, tears, and embraces. It's true that there were people who declined his requests, who refused their support, but this they communicated through a messenger, cable, or letter, for no one could resist when confronting him in the flesh. It was not so much the nature of his requests as the manner in which he presented them that caused such insurmountable difficulties in not giving in. I never could, and I never really wanted to. I loved him as he was, and that was not little. He had a magical gift for transforming even trifles into an event of urgency, because to him there were no trifles in matters of art. He was often attacked and criticized of ignorance and excessive vanity, but one saw those very critics flatter him to his face. Highly susceptible to any form of praise, he received flattery joyfully and unmarred by suspicion of a false note.

My thoughts were interrupted by the unexpected arrival of Berezowsky. Blond and youthful, he had a smile on his face and a score in his hand. He had also a suitcase.

"Are you going somewhere, Nicky?" I asked, embracing him.

"No, I came here to stay. The time is short; my concerto is long. We can't waste a minute. I was so happy to hear from Sergei Alexandrovich, while you were still on the boat, that you wanted to play the concerto. I had to make some finishing touches in a hurry."

He established himself in my room and I looked over the score and played it through. Later at night I was still playing, and he was jotting down my suggestions.

Lying in the dark, I couldn't sleep. The two concerti were running and bouncing in my head. "Oh, those giant twins—I am in labor," I groaned to

the snoring Nicky. The somber colors of the beginning of the Berezowsky Concerto threateningly gathered over me like a mass of slow-moving clouds. The orchestration of bassoons, bass clarinets, and low strings thickened the atmosphere as I laboriously tried to visualize the pages. But the further I advanced, the clearer and freer the music seemed to flow.

What a queer monster is a memory for music: A machine of precision with no mechanical devices. The science of music swarms with methods, but for memorizing music no one can depend upon a textbook for help.

The next four or five days were spent with maestro and three rehearsals of the Castelnuovo-Tedesco with the New York Philharmonic in Carnegie Hall. The concerts themselves struck me as almost easy, like putting on a many-times-fitted, well-tailored coat. Maestro was magnificent. We both were happy with the performances, and the only shadow was that the composer could not be present. (He heard the concerto one year later, when I played it in Florence.)

With Heifetz and Rubenstein

The next evening was spent with Vladimir Horowitz and Jascha Heifetz in Jascha's penthouse on Park Avenue. It was a veritable orgy of chamber music, with no one else present. We played until an early hour of the morning and paused but once—to fortify ourselves with delicious little Russian chicken cutlets, of which the thin and poetic Horowitz consumed fifty-six.

At noon I was on my way to Grand Central Terminal. I confess that to leave New York and enter the old Pullman car was a relief. It felt good to unload myself from Castelnuovo-Tedesco and to leave the Berezowsky Concerto for a while at the bottom of my suitcase. There were several engagements to fulfill, and by the time I came to Boston I had learned the Concerto Lyrico and looked forward to hearing it with the orchestra. I was happy to be with the Koussevitzkys and to stay in the room they always kept ready for me in their house.

On our way to Symphony Hall, Koussevitzky said, "We will begin the rehearsal with the concerto."

I wondered if Nicky had arrived from New York, as he promised. I could not find him. Instead, there was his wife, Alice. I spotted her in the hall the moment I entered the stage.

What a morning! Mistakes in the parts and in the score seemed unsolvable. So were the tempi and the dynamics. The musical Alice, with her own score, was not too helpful a deputy. The long rehearsal was like swimming in muddy waters. I finally lost my tact and control of myself. It is painful to recall my behavior and my rage and my walking off the stage, swearing and insulting everyone. But above all, I am ashamed of having hurt Sergei Alexandrovich. This was a black morning of my career, and only Koussevitzky's forgiveness and understanding made it possible to go on with the rehearsals and concerts.

Nicky, like many other composers, would not miss being present at the concerts to take a bow. He said that he was happy with the performance and with the reception, and, as for myself, after a successful concert I am incapable of bearing any grudges. But following the repetition of the program in New York, I never played the concerto again.

Usually, to convince other cities to present a new work after its premiere is as involved as regaining virginity once it has been lost, one hears from managers: "It's bad for the box office," or, "Our subscription audience can't stomach contemporary music." The conductors say that they are interested, but there is no time for extra rehearsals, or, if in a flattering mood, "You must play concerto we did once so magnificently together."

I am attracted by worthy contemporary music and like to introduce it, and I have little anxiety about the slow advancement of contemporary art. It is an old story, an old struggle, but a struggle that luckily does not prevent a composer from composing. Beethoven would have written the Missa Solemnis even if he had known that it would take over a century to have it performed in Philadelphia. Neither would Haydn have shied away from composing a symphony with violin and cello obbligato, the first performance of which took place in Krekfeld with Carl Flesch and me, more than a hundred years after his death. Of course it would be wonderful to find ways and means of accelerating the recognition of today's great art, and one should think that in this time of technological advances this could be achieved. On the other hand, if advertising tycoons suddenly discovered that advanced art would help sell deodorants and beer through mass media, wouldn't it be frightening to hear people in the streets whistling excerpts from Schonberg, Hindemith, or the late Beethoven quartets?

In the first stages of television in London I volunteered to perform on it without fee. I had to wear a bright jacket, as did everyone in the orchestra,

and we played under such a bright and hot light that we all almost melted away. I tried to locate someone in London who had watched the performance, but no one had. No wonder—there were no television sets!

Equally unencouraging was my debut on the movie screen, this time in Paris. Jacques Thibaud and Vuillermoz, the eminent critic, spoke to me of a new enterprise. The artists to participate in these short movies were Cortot, Thibaud, Elisabeth Schumann, Brailowsky, and myself, with Benvenuti at the piano. At the tender hour of six in the morning Benvenuti and I were waiting for the cameras. After a few days of hard work I left town. For many years wherever I went this film had just been played or its showing was scheduled for after my departure. I never saw the movie, and to this day I never received a penny for my efforts. I recalled signing a contract, but I was not quite sure with whom or where the document was. I did speak to managers and colleagues, but no one seemed to know who were the responsible parties or what was the name of the enterprise. Only Brailowsky said grinningly that he had smelled something and demanded to be paid in advance.

I did not lose my distaste for reading contracts, however, and I again showed negligence in connection with taking part in a film in New York.

The producer, Boris Morros, who for years insisted on having been my first cello teacher, engaged me for the picture Carnegie Hall. I did not see the script, but I was told that it would be an authentic history of the famous hall. The list of performers in the picture was formidable: Lily Pons, Bruno Walter, Jascha Heifetz, Artur Rubinstein, Jan Peerce, Stokowski, Rodzinski, Fritz Reiner, someone impersonating Tchaikovsky inaugurating Carnegie Hall, and heaven knows who else. My query as to what I should perform was answered, "Anything you wish." The contract signed, I asked again, but the identical answer had a slight modification: "Anything you wish, providing it's not over two minutes long."

I played The Swan. Well, it's not something unusual for a cellist to live in the company of this bird. There is nothing wrong with it: the music is fine, the bird is noble, as is the legend of its death; but there is hardly anything worthwhile that cannot with some effort be transformed into a travesty. In Carnegie Hall I recorded the piece with a harp. Finding the sound satisfactory, the next day I came for the shooting of the picture. To my bewilderment, instead of being photographed with the one harpist with whom I made the recording, I found myself surrounded by half a dozen or

so ladies with harps. They all were alike, wearing identical flowers, gowns, and expressions.

“Can they play the harp?” I asked Mr. Morros.

He said, “No.”

“What are they doing here?”

“I need them for the background.” The busy producer had no time for further conversation. He was arranging the position of the group, giving orders to cameramen, and hurrying me to the make-up room. Unaccustomed to theatrical beautification, I disbelievingly watched my face undergo drastic changes. With “voluptuous” lines around my eyes and with my face coated with something like a pink stucco, I returned to Mr. Morros. “You look gorgeous,” he said.

“Just gorgeous,” he repeated after my sequence of Carnegie Hall had been completed.

I attended the “premiere” of the picture and stormed out of the theater after The Swan. The sight of the cellist wrapped in a bouquet of harpists was devastating, but my post-mortem cries did not last, and this experience became a souvenir not unlike one of the comical or sad snapshots one finds in an old family album.

People love to travel, and they envy musicians for seeing so much of the world. I generally join in praising our planet, but I avoid talking about what traveling with the cello entails.

To carry a piccolo, oboe, clarinet, or violin is no problem whatsoever. The transport of the piano, harp, timpani, double bass, or harpsichord is the business of movers and truckers. Everyone knows that. It’s only with the cello that things are different. Because of its awkward size and shape it is never welcome on anything that moves. Cellists, who are a proud clan, don’t find their instruments too heavy or too bulky to carry wherever they go, and they can’t understand why transportation authorities should be so unreasonable. Take my Stradivari: It is considered absolutely perfect in its dimensions and shape by all except train conductors (mostly in England and Italy) and airline officials, who insist that it exceeds by some inches the size of an article permitted to be kept at its owner’s side. I have had letters from the presidents of major airlines which instruct their personnel to treat both Stradivari and me with utmost consideration. But it is understandable that the good presidents, unaccustomed to writing a piece on the Cremonese

master, failed to impress their employees. Once a pretty stewardess with whom I had been pleading to let me have the cello in the cabin said, "You cannot put a whale in a mackerel basket."

For me it is a gamble of considerable intricacy to sneak the cello into an airplane. At the terminal I hide it in a telephone booth and, to kill time, surprise people with telephone calls. As soon as the departure is announced, I pass through the gate and enter the plane, nonchalantly carrying the cello, its neck under my arm, as if it were a newspaper. Usually it works. If not, sometimes it is effective to speak Esperanto or just to grin, or anything to confuse matters until the door is shut and I am squeezed in my seat with the cello safely and uncomfortably between my knees.

But there are bleak days when no one responds to reason, when my pleading falls on deaf ears and when people have only measuring eyes for a big man and his cello. The cello is taken away by the porter and I watch it atop a heap of suitcases rolling off to the luggage compartment. To describe my emotions at such a sight would be to tear people's hearts apart. I can't do that. Besides, I can't bear tears. In fact, I regret having mentioned it at all.

Once, in Chicago, about to depart for Dallas, I was promised by Braniff Airways that I could take my cello in the cabin. It would be perfectly legal, they said, and they would be delighted to accommodate me.

Lighthearted, I approached the ticket counter at the Chicago Airport. This time I had nothing to hide. There was no need to be persuasive or put on an act or ask for favors. With my cello in full view I was a gentleman, a man who knew his rights. "You have a reservation for me," I said.

"Of course, Mr. Piatigorsky," replied the man, pronouncing my name as though he also came from Ekaterinoslav. While he was writing the ticket and weighing my suitcase I looked around me with the air of a traveler enjoying his life. "Here they are," he said, giving me two tickets. "This is for Gregor Piatigorsky, this for Miss Cello Piatigorsky—forty-seven fifty each." Stunned, I handed over the money.

The plane was quite empty. My cello occupied the seat next to me. The stewardess fastened the seat belt on it and asked me to fasten mine. She was charming, and I was furious. I insisted on having two lunches and the stewardess had to answer my questions twice and give as much attention to my cello as she would to any passenger. I overheard the word "sourpuss" in her conversation with the other stewardess. Perhaps she meant someone

else—anyway, we parted friends and I had the pleasure of seeing her at my Dallas concert. "You are a doll," she said.

In Central America I flew on "economico" airplanes, which transported fresh vegetables in the back of the cabin. I was allowed to sit there with the cello, and after several such trips I was becoming fond of being among carrots, cabbages, and other products of nature until one day I found myself in a plane overcrowded with men and tomatoes. My dear colleagues, please listen to this warning: Never subject your cello to traveling on a heap of overripe tomatoes!

My cello has been transported on mules, camels, trucks, rowboats, droshkies, bicycles, gondolas, jeeps, a submarine off Italy, subways, trams, sleds, junks—and on a stretcher in Amalfi. But by far the most nerve-racking experience of all is when, in full dress, I must transport the cello in my own hands across the stage each time I have to play.

With maddening schedules on tour, I have often lost track of actuality. So, working in Salzburg on a concerto by Elgar, I forgot that I was in the town of Mozart, or, practicing Beethoven in Kalamazoo, I did not know where I was at all. Straining one's head for exact dates and places of my meetings with Prokofieff, Stravinsky, Milhaud, Martinu, or Hindemith would be useless if at that time I had been studying the music of others. And since the repeating tours in America and elsewhere, my mind, where chronological events were concerned, became steadily cloudier.

At times I imagined having first met the awkward and outspoken Prokofieff in the house of Koussevitzky in Boston, or in Paris after a sonata recital with Horowitz, but most likely it was in Berlin, when I played his early Ballada with him and urged that he write a cello concerto.

"I don't know your crazy instrument," he said.

I played for him and, demonstrating all possibilities of the cello, saw him from time to time jump from his chair.

"It is slashing! Playing it again!" He made notes in the little notebook he always carried with him.

He asked me to show him some of the typical music for cello, but when I did, he glanced through it and said, "You should not keep it in the house. It smells."

Playing bridge, he was even more blunt. Through some unfortunate circumstances a few times I happened to be his partner. Although a weak player, I was not entirely insensitive to his remarks, uttered under his breath. "Why is the idiot bidding spades?" he would say, or, "Should I let the cripple play his three no trumps?" One day it led to a clash that ended, however, with an affectionate embrace.

We corresponded about the concerto. Prokofieff's letters were astonishing. They would read, "dr gr'" (dear grisha) and so on, his signature being "sr pr" (sergei prokofieff). Proud of his consonant abbreviation system, he ignored the difficulties it presented to his correspondent. (In crass contrast Stravinsky's letters were written with painstaking exactitude, in an orthodox Russian style.)

Finally he completed the first movement. I received the music and soon we began to discuss the other movements to come. The beginning of the second, which followed shortly, appeared as excitingly promising as the first.

"Even so," said Prokofieff, "it will lead to nothing. I cannot compose away from Russia. I will go home." I thought that the decision had come to him not lightly. Soon, with his wife and two little children, he was set for departure.

When the manuscript of the concerto arrived, Prokofieff was back in Russia and communication with him concerning the concerto became extremely difficult. The first performance of it took place in Boston under the direction of Serge Koussevitzky. The many problems we faced with the composition were hardly solved by a word from Prokofieff: "Do whatever you find necessary. You have carte blanche."

The performance in Boston went well and the response of the audience was gratifying. A few days later in New York, where we repeated the work, the affair turned for me into a mild nightmare. At one point in the second movement, through some inexplicable mishap, the orchestra took a tempo four times faster than indicated. There was no time to reflect as I, as if by a jolt of lightning, attacked passages that even at the right tempo were extremely rapid. I don't know if anyone of the press or the audience noticed what happened, but how I came through it alive remains a mystery to me to this day.

In my letters, sent through the courtesy of the Soviet Embassy, I asked Prokofieff to make changes, pointing out certain weaknesses of the work. He

thanked me for the suggestions and said that he would take them into consideration.

Nestyev, Prokofieff's Soviet biographer, says that this concerto was the last work of the composer's "foreign" period, "the least productive of his career, when the bourgeois Paris influences were still strong in him." After one performance "it has been shelved in the Soviet Union." But most likely it was his own dissatisfaction with the work that made him almost entirely rewrite the concerto.

Although he kept most of the old material, it has evolved into a new composition, Sinfonia Concertante, Opus 125. I heard it masterfully performed by the Soviet cellist Rostropovich, and I am grateful that there are now two major works for the cello by this great composer and unforgettable man.

**Chapter Twenty-seven**

SOMEONE once asked me how many violinists or pianists I have appeared with on the concert stage. The answer was easy, for there have not been many and I could mention every one of them. How difficult it would be to answer the same question about conductors! I tried to count once, but after reaching three hundred I gave up.

I have played with all kinds of conductors—with young and old, famous, unknown, with groaning, stamping ones, with masters and mediocrities. But, healthy or sick, there was not one who suffered from an inferiority complex.

It is a conductor's era. In his grand dimension he is a comparatively recent invention—not as recent as the jet plane or television, but recent enough if one thinks of the centuries—old fiddles that are still in use today.

The symphony orchestras of today have grown into fabulous bodies that exceed one another in size and brilliance, and all the Generalmusikdirektoren, maestri, sirs, or, as in America, doctors have also allowed their own role to assume enormous proportions. The popular interest for symphonic music could not alone sustain the great expense of keeping orchestras alive. Concerts had to be enhanced, illuminated with some new glamour, with something divine—a superman leader. Like no other musician, the conductor has answered the call. The focus of attention has shifted from prima donna, prima ballerina, and the virtuoso to a conductor, who, as a performer, has become all three in one. If he is to be

blamed at all, it is not so much for assuming his role, but for demanding and wearing his crown so naturally.

Conductors believe that they play the greatest of all instruments, the orchestra, and the problem of converting a hundred individual players into one thing like a tuba or a flute is an attractive challenge to them. It is true that this group of artists can play as one and in certain situations act and feel alike. But their feelings do not always coincide with those of their master. For instance, a rehearsal is invariably too long and too boring for them. For a conductor, it's never long enough, and a tired or bored conductor is as good as unknown.

A conductor differs from his men in practically everything. He dwells at the top of the heap, and one would never hear of a conductor working his way up to become a bassoon player. It's the men in the orchestra who strive, and at times succeed, to become conductors. Once Koussvitzky complained, "They don't want to follow me. You know why? I have two dozen potential conductors in my orchestra."

In most cases, after an unhappy cellist or trumpeter leaves the sufferings of his instrument to become a conductor, the transition will be immediate and truly remarkable. The miracle of the change is always complete. Once he has disposed of his instrument, his gifts as a conductor reach undreamed-of heights. His feeble memory for music in the past will develop phenomenally; and instead of peering prosaically at his second-violin part, he will with ease conduct the entire score from memory. Even his health will improve beyond recognition, and there will be no visible end of his life and his career. There are but few octogenarian virtuosos; when they exist, they are freaks of nature, and you will not see such a monument sitting in an orchestra.

The conductor, in a trance, seldom notices the work-like indifference of his orchestra. He vibrates all over and perspires profusely, and he changes his shirt at intermission and after the concert, while his men play and walk home in the same underwear. He is supersensitive, and at times just one wrong note of a musician will plunge him into convulsions. At such moments he could murder, but he never does, and soon, after tearing his jacket or breaking his baton, he is himself again. At the concert, however, he never tears or breaks anything whatever. There he just gives a look known to musicians as a "dirty" look. On occasions such a look is a rather prolonged affair. It takes time because of his difficulty in making the musicians grant him as much as a glance. "Watch me, look at me," is his constant pleading.

Off-stage he likes to complain that conductors are the only people in all music who never have a chance to practice on their instrument. Even at the rehearsal he must be so superior musically that when he steps before a group of players he is already in a position to make his mastery of benefit to them.

But of course the laments of a conductor seldom move his men to tears. A seasoned conductor knows it and saves his grievances for a more sympathetic audience. Once a disturbed conductor told his manager that he had overheard his musicians call him a "son-of-a-bitch." The manager congratulated him: "Wonderful, they finally begin to respect you!"

There are three reasons why a guest conductor has the advantage over a permanent one: He really knows his one program, the orchestra does not really know him, and everyone knows he will go away.

Many a conductor seems to be desperately in love with music, despite the fact that a short time ago, when he himself was in the orchestra, he was not overly fond of it. Conductors also have a keen sense of ownership. "Isn't my orchestra wonderful? Do you know my Ravel, my Tchaikovsky, my Brahms?" They also possess their own brand of technique. Evidently there is such a thing as technique, but if there is, then how is it that a man who never conducted or studied conducting is capable of giving an acceptable performance without warning and on the spur of the moment? No one can expect a comparable feat on any instrument.

It is fashionable for a conductor to say, "I am just a servant who tries to obey what is printed in the score." Black is black, white is white. Only when one ventures to ask, "How black?" or, "How white?" is he in trouble. It is believed that maestro Toscanini was responsible for the tradition of strict adherence to the score, yet he would not trade a musical thought for the dot over a note. I once asked him if he ever misunderstood a composer. "Yesterday, today, every day," he shouted. "Every time I conduct the same piece I think how stupid I was the last time I did it."

(Incidentally, my ambition was to hear Maestro play the cello. On one of our crossings from Europe I finally succeeded in luring him to my cabin. My cello, with the pin out, waited for him. He sat on a chair but when I handed him the cello he said, "No—no pin—it's a modern invention." He pushed the pin back inside. I gave him the bow and he began tuning. "The A is too high; The G is too low," he grumbled. Fifteen minutes passed and he was still tuning. I hoped he would start playing. "O bestia, stupido, now the D is too

high!" He continued tuning until it was time to go to lunch. I never heard him play the cello. I wonder who has.)

It's obvious that there are good and poor conductors, but it is not always easy for the public to tell one from the other. The conductor depends a great deal upon the good graces of society, the public, and the press. One expects from him functions far removed from the domain of music itself. He must be a charmer, a speaker, an organizer, and a bridge player. His own family life must be irreproachably pure, and at times a single mistake like poor concealment of pornographic material in his luggage, or introducing as his wife a lady who wasn't , has cost a prominent conductor his job.

Some people don't catch the "bug" of conducting. My own experience as a conductor, in spite of or because of its success, made me all the more faithful to my old, difficult cello. Playing recitals in Denver, I was asked to conduct the local orchestra. I was told that it would be of help to the orchestra's fund drive. Explaining that there is no shortage of conductors, I declined the invitation. There were repeated telephone calls asking me to reconsider, and my manager, Arthur Judson, strongly advised me to conduct. One day, still firm but embarrassed by their insistence, I asked my doctor, who was an amateur musician, for advice. Hesitant to voice his opinion, he finally said, "By all means, you should accept. You never do any exercise. It's good for your health." I accepted.

Eugene Ormandy helped me select the program and volunteered to show me some of his technique.

Four rehearsals and several speeches on behalf of the fund drive were scheduled for me. At the rehearsal I tried to follow the example of Arthur Nikisch, who knew human frailty and who, as a guest conductor, would not face an orchestra without knowing at least some of the musicians' names. Simple words like "Mr. Oberstreicher" or "Mr. Schmidt" accomplished wonders.

Finally the night of the concert arrived. Half dead from rehearsals and speechmaking, I went to the hall in my full dress. Usually very nervous before a concert, I was surprisingly tranquil. I was on good terms with the orchestra, and I knew that they would do their best. Carefully attending to my cuffs, which I thought should be visible, I walked on the stage. Ready to start with the Euryanthe Overture, by Weber, the concertmaster whispered, "The Star-Spangled Banner." I had not rehearsed it, and, somewhat bewildered, I gave a sign to the drummer and let him go on for an

unreasonably long time. Majestically I raised my hand for a crescendo, and only when it reached its peak did I recall the national anthem. The capacity audience sang and the sound of the orchestra was impressive. The performance of the Euryanthe Overture which followed drew enthusiastic applause.

Next on the program was the Haydn Cello Concerto. I faced my instrument in the backstage room almost in confusion, as if it were a piece of furniture I had never seen before. I frantically ran over the passages I had played all my life. Although the concerto went very well, its impact seemed pale in comparison to the reception of my conducting during the entire program.

The little baton had had such an easy victory over my Stradivari. But it felt more bitter than sweet, and when offers for guest conducting began to come in from all over the country, I swore never to touch the baton again. I never did, and so my concert in Denver has the distinction of being my first and last as a conductor.

**Chapter Twenty-eight**

THE official ceremonies—shaking hands in receiving lines, audiences with royalty or heads of government—are not the everyday life of an artist. In 1930 I was invited to play at the White House for President Hoover. The pianist Emanuel Bey and I arrived in Washington. On the day of the concert I had a visitor from the White House, who came to brief me on the exact procedure of the concert and the supper afterward. Since my English was weak, I referred him to Mr. Bey, and soon, curious about what the gentleman wanted, I went to Bey's room. I found him shaving. "Did you see the man?"

"Yes," said Bey phlegmatically.

"What did he want?"

Stretching his lip full of lather, he said, "Nothing much."

"There must be something. I understood it was urgent."

"Ridiculous. He wanted to be sure we knew how to behave."

"What did you say?"

"I said that we come from good families and that we know how to behave. You know something? I would not be surprised if they put us musicians somewhere near the kitchen, like in the good old days."

In due time a limousine brought us to the White House. We were led through many passages and halls and entered a corridor. Bey stopped, sniffed, and said, "Do you smell what I smell?" We settled in a small room assigned to us and listened melancholically to the clatter of dishes in the kitchen pantry nearby. The time passed slowly and we decided that, instead of waiting for someone to lead us to the stage, we would explore under our own power. After losing our way in a labyrinth of corridors and antechambers we finally emerged in a large foyer in which we saw a small orchestra in uniformed jackets playing the Minuet by Boccherini. It sounded so nice, so inviting, that I could not resist following the music, with my arms around the cello, in a slow and graceful minuetto step. Bey joined me with equal elegance. It was not until I heard Bey's voice that I felt alarmed. "For heaven's sake," he said, "stop dancing. Look behind you." I saw the President, Mrs. Hoover, all the dignitaries and guests following us in a procession. We could not turn back. There were no exits and we had to enter the hall. Standing close to the stage, which was too high for us to climb onto, and not able to follow or understand the frantic signals of a man whom I recognized as my visitor in the hotel, we had to wait until everyone entered the hall before we could be led backstage.

After the concert there was an informal supper with the President and guests. It began rather stiffly, but some English errors on my side dispelled the strained atmosphere. Perhaps thinking of Germany, where every wife carries the title of her husband, as "Frau Doktor" or "Frau Konzertmeister," I started my little address in answer to the President's welcome: "Mrs. President and Mr. Hoover." I did not need to say more, and even the gentleman whose instructions I had not followed laughed as merrily as everyone else. A few days later I received a large photograph of the President, and, putting it in my suitcase, went off to Canada.

Knowing only vaguely about Prohibition, I had promised to bring whiskey for some friends. On my way back I was asked to open my suitcase at the American border. On top, covered with Mr. Hoover, lay three bottles of scotch. The customs inspectors looked disbelievingly at the bottles and at me, read the inscription on the picture and my name on the passport, and ordered me to close my suitcase. I kept the President's picture, but I have not used it for smuggling purposes again.

My next visit to the White House, again with Mr. Bey, came a few years later, when I played for President Roosevelt. This time with much-improved English I could fully enjoy the conversation with the President and Mrs.

Roosevelt. The hostess was extremely gracious and the concert was warmly received.

During the intermission I told Mr. Bey how much I was looking forward to supper with the President after the performance. Bey's reaction came as a surprise.

"I am going to eat at the drugstore. Mrs. Roosevelt serves macaroni and tepid coffee. I have it from reliable sources," he said. "Please tell the President I am an expectant father, or I have to have my tonsils removed, or something."

I spent a delightful hour with Mr. and Mrs. Roosevelt and their few guests, and, eating the macaroni and drinking the coffee, I could not help thinking of Mr. Bey, the drugstore, and how accurate his information had been.

The next time I had to make excuses for my pianist was in Surabaya. But instead of for Mr. Bey, it was for Mr. Pavlovsky; and instead of President Roosevelt, it was the governor of the Dutch East Indies. We were on our way to Japan, and after the last concert before our departure the governor had a reception for us.

Pavlovsky, who was always on the lookout for attractive page turners, had refused to start the concert before finding one. She was young and beautiful and the manner in which Pavlovsky taught her the art of turning pages I thought quite unusual. They sat in the darkest corner of backstage, holding the music close to their faces while he whispered instructions and kissed her hands.

The beginning of the concert he took as a rude intrusion. At the intermission, seemingly delighted with the progress she was making, Pavlovsky gave her some more advanced instruction. And by the end of the concert he declared that he didn't feel well and asked me to convey his apologies for not being able to come to the reception.

When I came back from the party, he was not in his hotel bungalow. The next morning half an hour before departure he was still not in his room. A car waited to take us to the railroad station. In desperation I packed his suitcase. Suddenly I caught sight of him in the distance, pedaling furiously on a bicycle, and I drove toward him. He was out of breath and looked disheveled and wild. He threw the bicycle aside on the road and jumped into the car. We just made the train.

In the compartment he sat in complete exhaustion. He asked if I was very angry. I said yes. It saddened him visibly. “What can I do to be forgiven?” he said.

I said, “Just tell me honestly what happened to you, but without missing a single detail.” He happily agreed, and with every word my anger lessened. The unfolding of his exploits kept me fascinated all the way to Japan, and I am only sorry that I had to add this epic to his other adventures that I promised I would not retell.

It’s a pity, but still more regrettable is that I find myself unable to describe the fascinating Dutch East Indies, the incredible beauty of that part of the world, its art, and the grace of its people. Even the finest books on Java with the best of photography do not really pay justice to the marvels of that land. I could have stayed there for years instead of a few weeks, if only to study the native instruments and their music, the rhythm of which I found more refined than in our contemporary music.

I wondered what impression my programs would have made on the native musicians, but as it was, the audiences were primarily made up of Europeans. The Kunstkring, the Dutch music society, was very particular in its choice of artists and their programs. Conservative, they took music very seriously. The critics, following suit, wrote exceptionally conscientious and scholarly reviews of the concerts. Once I was surprised to read that I had utilized the lute version of Bach’s C-Minor Suite. I had, just as I had made a cut in the Rachmaninoff Sonata, which equally had been detected. Astonishing indeed that this should occur so near the deepest of jungles!

When our miserable freighter, battered by a typhoon on its long journey to Japan, at last docked in Kobe, Pavlovsky and I were joyous at the prospect of being released from the ship. We were first to present our papers to the officials, but long after the other passengers had disembarked we were still being questioned. I knew from past experience what impression my mystic passport could make, but I can’t recall a confusion equal to this one. I had the same honest to goodness Nansen, I had all the necessary visas, and, as usual, I was on an official concert mission. What could have caused the grueling cross-examination? I was at a loss to explain it. They continued to scrutinize my papers, and one of the customs men, who spoke Russian, wanted to know all about my past, my forefathers, and my future plans. Was he really that much interested in me, or did he merely want to exercise his rusty Russian? I do not know.

In the meantime, Pavlovsky's personality and his credentials were accepted, to the extent of his joining the group as their trusted consultant. "We friends," he said in English. "He fine. I guarantee."

It was at this moment that, losing my patience, I declared that I would remain on the ship, that it was not my idea to come to Japan, that I was asked to come. With this I took my cello, went back into the cabin, and went to bed.

This unexpected action proved effective enough to get me a permit to enter the country. Almost immediately the officials said that there was some embarrassing misinformation and they apologized. We all walked down the gangplank together like bosom pals. As we shook hands and parted, I found myself encircled by a big crowd of people waving flags. They were representatives of various musical and educational organizations who had come to welcome us.

My concerts were put so closely together that there was barely time left to get acquainted with the country itself. I met many old friends from Russia and Germany, America and France, a few of whom made their homes in Japan and had Japanese wives. The delicate and modest femininity of Japanese women I thought captivating.

I have been told that no man can enter a Japanese house without taking his shoes off. But of all the families I visited, only once did I have to do so, and with a hole in my stocking at that—when I visited the home of a German emigrant.

The audiences were remarkably attentive and among the most receptive I have played for anywhere. I had no opportunity to come in contact with Japanese musicians, but one blind composer whose name I am ashamed to have forgotten impressed me with his mastery in playing the koto. I performed a short composition of his with the orchestra under the direction of Joseph Rosenstock.

Shortly before leaving Japan I was approached by a record club with an offer to make a recording. It made me recall a note I received from Feodor Chaliapin upon my arrival in Tokyo, which read: "Just ended my tour. Sorry to have missed you. Should you be asked to make a record, do it, with no questions asked." In the same note he gave me the name and address of a Japanese tailor, recommending that I have a suit made.

I agreed to make the recording, and, taking advantage of the first free time I had, I went to the tailor. When the tiny man saw me enter his shop, he

exclaimed, “Oh no! A giant again!” He said he didn’t have enough material to make suits for people like that Russian mountain and me. I calmed him down, and we agreed upon the price and the time the suit should be ready. With the help of a ladder he was able to reach me to take measurements. I still have that suit. It’s not a very good one, but it is utterly indestructible. It does not seem to be inflammable or respond to any sharp instrument.

The record club wanted me to record two pieces that I had not recorded previously, each a few minutes long. They left the choice up to me. I chose Nocturne, by Lili Boulanger, and Vivace, by Tessarini, both pieces I barely knew. The studio had good acoustics, the piano was good, and after a ridiculously short session the engineer said that the recordings were good. I received an envelope, and a few hours later I was in Yokohama boarding the S.S. Asama Maru for the trip to Honolulu and San Francisco. I left my suitcase in the cabin, asking the steward to unpack, and went for a stroll on the deck. There I opened the envelope and, not trusting my eyes, I showed it to Pavlovsky. It took us some time to believe that the figure on the check was real. (Later in Paris, Chaliapin explained that the enormous fee represented the royalties for the records presold to the fantastically numerous membership of the club. I thanked Chaliapin for his good advice, and we drank vodka to the wonderful music lovers of Japan.)

The irony of this incident is that twenty-five years later, when a cellist named Gregory Bemko called me to ask where he could get the music of the Tessarini Vivace, I said that I didn’t know of such a piece. He said it was impossible, and he would prove it. He brought me the Japanese record and I heard it for the very first time.

**Chapter Twenty-nine**

“WHAT is it? A menage a trois? Bigamy? A harem?” laughed a friend, looking at a snapshot of me tenderly embracing two cellos. He knew that the cello in Russian is a “she.” But where the cello is concerned linguistic definitions mean little. For instance, although in English the cello is an “it,” when Beatrice Harrison, the English cellist, spoke to me about her instrument, she cried out, “I love him.”

For many people the cello signifies many different things. “Not often does the world mistake a cello for a cathedral. But I have,” wrote J.B. Priestley, describing the playing of one cellist. The cello can also be a perfect breath of death, as in the concluding notes of Richard Strauss’s Don Quixote. Of Hindemith’s Variations on “A Frog He Went A-courting,” a critic said that

the cello had no trouble whatever in turning into a bullfrog. Napoleon, listening to the famous cellist Duport, is supposed to have said, "You have made an ox sound like a nightingale." The cello's gift of metaphor and personification ranges from Jesus Christ (in an incompleted work of Roy Harris) to swan, clown, king, horse, or courtesan. As for me, the violoncello is a part of all things, and a central substance of this universe.

Though the purpose of any musical instrument is to produce sound, it is conceivable for even the deaf to admire the cello as they would a piece of sculpture. The great luthiers considered ornaments—such as the scroll, purfling, and f-holes—of enough aesthetic value as to give much of their creative efforts to them, despite their having little or no effect on the sound itself. In fact, if only the sound mattered, I could not have fallen so desperately in love with just the scroll of a cello as to purchase it before even hearing its sound. It belonged to the "Aylesford" Stradivari, mad in 1696. Though a very impressive instrument, the beauty, power, and grace of its crowning scroll were what I could not resist. Only after the "Aylesford" had been repaired did I finally play on it. But although I found its sound admirable, its very large size (a characteristic of all Stradivari cellos made before 1700) put a strain on my fingers and I was forced, reluctantly, to part with it after a year or so. I don't know who its owner is now, but I still think of my brief romance with it and occasionally dream of the gorgeous scroll.

Once, a good many years before my affair with the "Aylesford," while in London to play, I met my friend Ernest B. Dane, a banker whom I knew from Boston.

"You look worried. Are you feeling well?" he asked.

"I'm all right," I said. "It's my cello. It has a cancer." I spoke of the sound-post crack on the back and of hours spent at Hill's the eminent violin experts in London. "But even they can't do a thing about the crack. No one can."

Mr. Dane said he had always wanted to visit the famous Hill shop. The next morning we met there, and I introduced him to Alfred Hill.

"Here is something for you to try—a superb Montagnana which has not been played for close to a century." I was handed a cello as Mr. Hill went to show the shop to Mr. Dane. Voluptuous and richly covered with a gold-orange varnish, it was in a striking state of preservation. It was hard to believe that it had been made in 1739. Beautiful as it was, it had barely a sound at all. No wonder! Silent for so long, it had lost its capacity for speech. Puzzled and eager, I struggled to bring life into it. I don't know how long I tried or how long Mr. Dane and Mr. Hill stood listening.

"How do you like it?" I was suddenly interrupted.

"Fascinating," I said, not stopping playing, and continuing as they left the room. I looked at it again and again and played as if possessed, until Alfred Hill returned once more, this time alone.

"Mr. Dane," he said, "did not want to interrupt you. He had to catch his boat back to the United States. This Montagnana is his gift to you."

Stunned by the news, I carried the cello to my hotel. There, still in a haze, I locked myself in the room and spent the rest of the day and, with a mute on, the better part of the night playing and studying my new companion. The next day and for months to come, I desperately tried to awaken my "sleeping beauty," and when I began to succeed, I felt a joy akin to that of the price in the fairy tale.

We were inseparable for many years, traveling and playing uncounted concerts together—perhaps too many for both of us to endure. But the brave Montagnana, though badly in need of a rest, abused and exposed to all climates and acoustics, stood by me, giving its best. It was I who, though physically fit, tried to lessen my demands upon the cello by accepting fewer engagements and even leaving out of my programs some of the

contemporary works which I thought were too brutal and percussive for my Montagnana to bear.

Though I knew I had to have two cellos, it was inconceivable for me even to look at another one, much less hope to find a replacement as relief. I spoke of my problem to Alfred Hill, a man for whose views concerning fine instruments I had great respect. It was a shock. "Sooner or later," he said, "you will part with the Montagnana, no matter how fine an example of a great master it is. Only a Stradivari is the nu plus ultra." He had a particular one in mind for me and furthermore an exact copy of it, made by Vuillaume.

About two years later my friend Rembert Wurlitzer, the renowned violin dealer of New York, called me in Philadelphia. He was brief. "It is here. Just arrived from London. Hurry." Sensing what to expect, I dashed to New York. There, facing the "Baudiot" Stradivari, and after striking only a few notes on it, once more I gave free reign to my enthusiastic impulses and bought the cello on the spot. As at first encounter one feels an immediate rapport with some people, so it was the "Baudiot." There was no need to get better acquainted—no work, no study required—and I played on it from the first day with joy and complete confidence.

In 1725 Stradivari made only two cellos, but how different they are! One, in the possession of my old friend Gerald Warburg, known as "La Belle Blonde," is light and elegant; while the "Baudiot," in contrast, is red, dark, and ruggedly masculine. Its head (scroll) is classical and proud. Its f-holes are sharp and its purfling uneven, as if impatiently but determinedly cut by the then eighty-one-year-old master. Judging from its appearance and its extraordinary quality and richness of sound, one would expect a dramatic history and heroic stories of its past. But I have not run across anything of particular interest except a curious account of an incident I read about in France.

The bizarre story about Charles Baudiot, a concert cellist and professor at the Paris Conservatoire in the first part of the nineteenth century, tells of his appearance as a soloist at a concert that began with a symphony by Haydn. Baudiot, next on the program, ignorant of what the orchestra was playing, was warming up on his Stradivari. Called on stage, he proceeded, of all things, with his own arrangement for cello and piano of a Haydn symphony. To his bewilderment, after the first few bars he heard the audience laughing. Completely at a loss to explain what prompted the merriment, he struggled to give his all, without succeeding in stopping the laughter. The piece over,

with tears of humiliation he demanded, "Why? Why?" The answer was simple: The symphony that the public had just heard from the orchestra happened to be the very same one Baudiot echoed in an absurd miniature on his cello.

The owners of great works of art, be they artists or collectors, carry the responsibility of a trusteeship. Though it is a burden at times, the pleasure and the honor of being associated with them more than compensates for the effort of preserving them for future generations.

Horace Havemeyer was one of the most admirable art collectors I have had the privilege of knowing. With a keen sense for quality, he and his lovely wife surrounded themselves in their Park Avenue apartment in New York with only the choicest examples—were it Vermeer, Stradivari, or Manet. An amateur cellist himself, he owned the two foremost cellos of Stradivari, the "Batta" and the "Duport."

At my first visit, they stood side by side, like two kings resting in their royal caskets. (My "Baudiot," too, when I am at home, is kept in a similar wooden case specially made by Hill & Sons.)

"Do you want to see them?" asked Mr. Havemeyer. So much had I heard about these legendary instruments and dreamed to see them one day in the flesh that I felt now like being invited to enter paradise. I waited, watching Mr. Havemeyer take the instruments out and carefully placing them for me to see. Dazzled and as if blinded by some mysterious light emanating from them, I had to close my eyes for a moment. When I opened them again, there was a sight to behold! A glow of colors of all shades from soft to bright transported me into a land of enchantment.

(As I was dictating these words to my secretary, she interrupted me. "Do you really mean it?" she asked. "You seem out of breath even reminiscing. Can musical instruments make such an impact, cause such a rapture? At the time her question disturbed me, but later I thought it was for the best. After all, no description can do justice to those masterpieces. And in trying, I may only succeed in making myself appear somewhat over-emotional.)

After my first visit, whenever I was in New York I would not miss an opportunity to see the "Batta" and the "Duport." But no matter how often I was questioned on which of the two cellos I preferred, it was impossible to decide. Only after Mr. Havemeyer lent me the "Duport," with which I spent almost a year, did I know that I favored the "Batta." I think that Mr.

Havemeyer knew it all along, for he always handed me the "Batta" first to play, and it was the "Batta," he said, that I played last each time before departing. He also confessed one day that the reason he could not lend me the "Batta" was that it belonged to his son-in-law, Dr. Daniel Catlin. Later, it must have been my dear friend Havemeyer who intervened in my behalf and persuaded his son-in-law to sell me his "Batta." He did, and I shall not stop being grateful for it to both of them.

Conventionalities such as "out of this world" or "too good to be true" take on real meaning when applied to the "Batta," which safely can claim to be one of the finest works of art human hands have ever created. I own a letter in which Alfred Hill describes at length the touching history of this great instrument.

The "Batta" was born in Cremona in 1714, but its life during its first one hundred twenty-two years is mysteriously unknown. Not until it came to Paris in 1836 and was seen and played on by the famous Servais and then by his colleague Alexandre Batta did the cello's known history commence. Both Servais and Batta said that they had never heard such magnificent sound in their lives.

Batta fell passionately in love with it. But, having no money to acquire it, in his despair he called upon a friend who, responding to vehement pleading, generously presented the cello to him. He possessed that instrument for fifty-seven years. Cherishing his lifelong friend, he declined many offers to sell it, one of which came from a Russian nobleman who tendered a blank check to be filled in as Batta decided. Though in his old age Batta lived in retirement and played but little, yet he was loath to part with his treasure. The sole reason that prompted him to make the sacrifice was his anxiety to make some provision for an old and trusted housekeeper. The transaction concluded, he saw the last of his beloved cello when it was put into the carriage to be taken away. He bent forward, the tears running down his checks, and kissed the case.

I played the "Batta" for a long time before appearing in concert with it. In solitude, as is befitting honeymooners, we avoided interfering company until then. From that day on, when I proudly carried the "Batta" across the stage for all to greet, a new challenge entered into my life. While all other instruments I had played prior to the "Batta" differed one from the other in character and range, I knew their qualities, shortcomings, or their capriciousness enough to exploit their good capabilities to full advantage. Not so with the "Batta," whose prowess had no limitations. Bottomless in its resources, it spurred me on to try to reach its depths, and I have never worked harder or desired anything more fervently than to draw out of this superior instrument all it has to give. Only then will I deserve to be its equal.

I am still at it and perhaps I always will be. It keeps me striving and alert. And whenever I am downhearted, there is my marvelous "Baudiot," who stands by always ready to serve and obey, or just to be photographed with its master and his demanding concubine.

**Chapter Thirty**

SINCE my first year in America my managers stressed the importance of accepting invitations for parties after concerts, especially in small towns. It was almost as important as the concert itself, they said. In my particular case, being a representative of an instrument difficult to "sell," I was told I had to convince the music society that it had not made a mistake in engaging a cellist—first with my playing and later with myself as a person. The smaller the towns, the longer the parties, the more meager the food, and the more numerous the questions. "How do you like our audience?" "Do you hate jazz?" "Are we as appreciative of good music as they are in Europe?" "How many languages do you speak?" "How many hours do you practice daily?" "What was the name of your accompanist tonight?"

But I have no complaints. I like people and I like meeting them. If they enjoy the concert, I am gratified by their appreciation. And those rare hosts who know that the artist does not eat before the concert and that his train leaves next morning at an hour when only night watchmen are awake, and who do something about it, I downright love.

One of the advantages of attending parties in small towns is that the people you meet do not come to congratulate you and say how dreadfully sorry they were not to be at the concert, which they understand was perfectly thrilling. In small towns concerts and artists are remembered, even by the children.

“Who are you?” I asked a young man with the physique of a wrestler, trying to free myself from his embrace.

“Me? Bobby! Don’t you remember?!”

“Where was it I saw you the last time?”

“At Uncle Jimmy’s in Glendora. It was such fun,” the giant recalled. And after he finally let me know that it was twelve years ago, when he was ten, I still felt his disappointment at not being recognized at once.

Once, in a small town in Ontario, there was a party after the concert. I brought my cello and was still wearing full dress.

After being given a cookie and tea I apologetically told the hostess that I must leave soon because my train departed at an early hour the next day. She said that she would help me disappear unnoticed and that a car would be waiting for me in front of the house.

It was a dark and cold night, and the snow was deep. As I walked out of the house, I saw a car with motor running and, grateful for such promptness and consideration, I put my cello in the back seat and settled myself in the front next to the driver, who was a woman, she had a hat covering half of her face.

“It’s so nice of you,” I greeted her, but before I could tell her the name of my hotel the car sharply shot away and with unexpected gusto, rattling, and skidding sped along the deserted street. The car coughed and jerked and it moved away from the road and brushed into a snowbank, bounced off, and headed into another one. Stunned, I did not utter a word.

Soon there was no road at all, and I saw the car sliding downward toward a forest. My silent and unperturbed lady drove the car straight into the woods, where it finally stopped, sunk in the snow. Only then did I see the face of my driver. Really it was not a face, but a huge grin that covered everything that originally might have been a human face. Mute as before, she got out of the car and crawled under it.

Bewildered, but elegant in white tie and patent-leather shoes, I stood there not knowing what to do. After several vain attempts to communicate with her, I left the lady and my cello and rushed up the hill toward the road to look for help.

Soon I saw a truck coming. I stopped it and explained my predicament to the driver. He was willing to help and said that with his chains and other equipment he hoped that he could pull the car up onto the road. We gently

dragged the woman out from under the car, and with her peacefully at my side the truck driver towed us to the hotel.

As I entered the lobby, I saw the anxious hostess and a number of her guests. I was told that the lady was a mental patient. Related to the hostess, she had attended the concert and came to the party with her nurse and doctor, from whom she managed to escape.

Since that ride I am much more careful, and only if a lady driver is pretty will I entrust myself into her care for a journey in the dark.

“Oh please, Mr. Piatigorsky, tell us more of your experiences. It’s so exciting,” said the hostess, caressing me with her eyes. “Such a raconteur,” she whispered to someone loudly enough for me to hear. I was tired and uncomfortable in the wet shirt that stuck to my body and reminded me of the effort on the stage a short time ago.

“Grish!” I heard a familiar voice across the table. It was Ralph Berkowitz, my accompanist. Catching my eye, he said in his peculiar foreign accent (he was born in New York and brought up at the Curtis Institute of Music among Russian, French, Polish, and Italian fiddlers, singers, and pianists), “Grish, tell us of your visit at the royal palace in Bucharest.”

“It was in Bucharest,” corrected Ralph. His request surprised me, for on our travels together, sometimes locked for days in a train, he would seldom listen without looking at his watch.

“Yes, please tell us,” everyone demanded.

“It was in Philadelphia,” I began. “Just as it is now, only it was after a recital on my friend Artur Rubinstein, whose greatness as a pianist could be match only by his charm? As usual, he was in fine form. Artur’s intimate acquaintance with every member of every royal family had been universally known for years. After he had told several amusing anecdotes concerning them, I broke in. 'My experience with just one royal family, I dare say, will surpass many of yours.' Surprised, Artur accepted the challenge.

“Years ago, late one evening after concluding my concert engagements in Bucharest and preparing to leave next morning for Vienna, I received a letter from Queen Marie. 'My illness prevented me from attending your concerts, but please do not leave my country without seeing me.' The two gentlemen who had delivered the letter waited for my answer. I joined them with my cello, and their limousine brought us to the palace without delay. I was led to a chamber where I found the queen resting in bed. Though no longer young,

she was still very beautiful. She spoke with great warmth and I lost my self-consciousness in no time. I played for her and we talked, and the hours passed rapidly. She called me 'Dear Cousin' and asked me to stay and be her guest. ‘My chef knows the Russian cuisine,’ she said. ‘You will like it here.’

“My attention was so focused on the queen that I was only vaguely aware of the presence of two other ladies in the room. They were dressed simply and both were very quiet. When I left the palace at a very late hour of the night, delighted with my visit, I asked my escorts who the other ladies were. The reply was, ‘t he Queen of Greece and the Queen of Yugoslavia.'

“Turning to Artur, I asked, 'Did you ever spend a night with three queens in a bedroom?'

“'I concede. You win. They are Queen Marie’s daughters.'“

It was getting late. I saw Ralph give me a signal to depart. Everyone waited for everyone else to start thanking the hostess for a wonderful evening. Here I must confess that among my bad habits I possess one that is particularly hard on people who want to make a quick departure after a long evening. At that critical moment, as if waiting for such an opportunity, I begin to unfold my innermost thoughts. With devilish tenacity I use every device to hold people’s attention until they lose hope and submit. This was the time. I began to speak.

It took a long time to describe an expedition I once made into the jungles of Sumatra. But I didn’t stop there. I continued with an account of my peculiar behavior—something resembling running amuck—on the island of Celebes. The hostess’s approving comments sounded tired in spite of her efforts, but Ralph, to my astonishment, seemed genuinely interested. I knew that these episodes were new to him, and although he did not share my passion for jungles, he glanced at his wrist watch but once. Unwillingly I had to shorten my ecstatic painting in prose of the caves in Celebes and my near-fatal swim in the treacherous but incredibly beautiful lake that appears like a mysterious dream the moment one emerges from the caves.

On our way to the hotel I asked Ralph if he thought my talkativeness was an attempt to compensate people for something they did not get at the concerts.

Before falling asleep I painfully thought of the performance. “Was the tempo of the first movement too slow? Was the scherzo of the sonata too fast? Those triplets—terrible! I must find better fingerings ... never mind if they are more dangerous—what is a musician without courage?” It was hot in the room. I

got up and opened the window. The icy wind made me close it again. “My bow must be repaired ... I must buy some strings ... I will not read the reviews tomorrow.

“You said that before,” I reminded myself, crawling into bed. My last thought was of the hostess. “She yawns with her mouth completely closed—not a muscle moves.” I wanted to try it, but there was no energy left and I fell asleep.

**THE END**

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A photo gallery of Piatigorsky is at the Getty Images site.]