

In Memoriam - Francis Goelet

born: December 4, 1926, in Bordeaux, France

died: May 21, 1998, in Riverside, Connecticut

By Thomas Stacy
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American music has lost one of its most prolific benefactors. Music was one of two major interests in Francis Goelet's life (the other, fishing).

The Francis Goelet Commissions for the New York Philharmonic number an astounding 731. He was also responsible for numerous works for the American Composers Orchestra, several operas (Barber's *Vanessa* and *Anthony and Cleopatra*, John Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles*) as well as many new productions at the Metropolitan Opera. Premieres at the Metropolitan Opera funded by Mr. Goelet include Berg's *Wozzeck*, Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle*, Poulenc's *Dialogue of the Carmelites* and Satie's *Parade*.

Mr. Goelet's association with the New York Philharmonic began in 1959, when he was elected to its board of directors. He was one of the most active supporters and benefactors in the history of the Orchestra, and he served on the board's music policy committee, the artistic advisory committee, and the 150th Anniversary policy and planning committee. The 150th Anniversary Commission program was made possible through a fund Mr. Goelet established in 1965. This landmark project was the most ambitious in the Philharmonic's history. Then in 1977, through his generous gift, the Philharmonic launched an ongoing series of commissions, which included many concertos composed for the orchestra's principal players.

The concertos include the following works for double reeds:

Vincent Persichetti - *Concerto for English Horn and String Orchestra, Op. 137*.

Erich Leinsdorf, conductor

Thomas Stacy, English horn

November 17, 1977

Jon Deak - *Concerto for Oboe d'amore and Orchestra (The Fearsome Endeavor)*

Zubin Mehta, conductor

Thomas Stacy, oboe d'amore

October 9, 1980

Samuel Barber - *Canzonetta for Oboe and String Orchestra, Op. 48*.

Zubin Mehta, conductor

Harold Gomberg, oboe

December 17, 1981

Gunther Schüller - *Concerto Quaternio for Violin, Flute, Oboe, Trumpet and Orchestra*

Zubin Mehta, conductor

Charles Rex, violin; Paige Brook, flute; Joseph Robinson, oboe; Philip Smith, trumpet

November 21, 1984

George Rochberg - *Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra*

Zubin Mehta, conductor

Joseph Robinson, oboe

December 13, 1984

Ned Rorem - *Concerto for English Horn and Orchestra*

Kurt Masur, conductor

Thomas Stacy, English horn

January 27, 1994

John Williams - *The Five Sacred Trees, Bassoon Concerto*

Kurt Masur, conductor

Judith LeClair, bassoon

April 12, 1995

In 1975, Mr. Goelet was a central force in the creation of New World Records, a recorded anthology of American music, which was originally a set of one hundred records of American music of all genres developed for the Bicentennial. He gave substantial support to recordings of musical theater, chamber music, and jazz, as well as some of his commissioned works, and was the record label's chairman until his death.

It was my pleasure to have known this most uncommon man. I cherish the memories of the visits I had with him in his Riverside home where the recording collection looked only slightly smaller than that of Tower Records. His knowledge of American music was informed. He was a true "giver", expecting nothing in return, sometimes not even wanting recognition of his gifts.

On September 22, a celebration concert was held in New York City at The Juilliard Theater to honor his contribution to music. Following the program, the audience - comprised of family, friends, composers and music notables - and the performers ascended the Goelet grand staircase at the Metropolitan Opera House for a party, which I think Francis Goelet would have truly enjoyed.

Music has lost a true friend, but we can be ever grateful for his living legacy. ❖