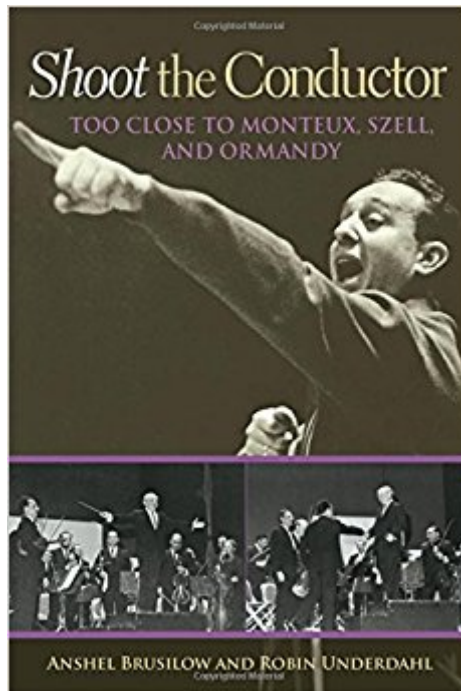


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Shoot The Conductor: Too Close To Monteux, Szell, And Ormandy (Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Series)



Synopsis

Foreword Reviews 2015 INDIEFAB Book of the Year Award Winner in Performing Arts & Music

Anshel Brusilow started playing violin in 1933 at age five, in a Russian Jewish neighborhood of Philadelphia where practicing your instrument was as ordinary as hanging out the laundry. His playing wasn't ordinary, though. At sixteen, he was soloing with the Philadelphia Orchestra. He was also studying conducting. Brusilow's tumultuous relationships with Pierre Monteux, George Szell, and Eugene Ormandy shaped his early career. Under Szell, Brusilow was associate concertmaster at the Cleveland Orchestra until Ormandy snatched him away to make him concertmaster in Philadelphia, where he remained from 1959 to 1966. But he was unsatisfied with the violin. Even as concertmaster of the Philadelphia Orchestra, he felt the violin didn't give him enough of the music. He wanted to conduct. He formed chamber groups on the side; he conducted summer concerts of the Philadelphia Orchestra. The price was high: it ruined his father-son relationship with Ormandy. Brusilow turned in his violin bow for the baton and created his own Philadelphia Chamber Symphony. Next he took on the then-troubled Dallas Symphony Orchestra. Unhappy endings repeat themselves in his memoir "and yet humor dances constantly around the edges. Musicians need it. Brusilow played with or conducted many top-tier classical musicians and has something to say about each one. He also made many recordings. Co-written with Robin Underdahl, his memoir is a fascinating view of American classical music as well as an inspiring story of a working-class immigrant child making good in a tough arena.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I didn't want this book to end. "Shoot the Conductor" reads like a great orchestral score. It commands like Mahler, it soars like Strauss, and it lilts like Debussy. Words float effortlessly off the page in this mesmerizing story of a five year old violinist, Anshel Brusilow, who rises to the highest ranks of the classical music world. Brusilow and his co-author Robin Underdahl walk the reader through the life of this enigmatic 20th century musical genius as we follow his path from violin prodigy to maestro. His vertiginous career intersected with, or crashed head on into, the musical mountains of his day; Monteux, Szell, and Ormandy. They were his greatest admirers - and his greatest impediments. His relationships with them were intense, both wonderfully and frustratingly, and seemed always to be destined for apocalyptic conflagration. Though a violin virtuoso, his 250-year-old prized instrument was too small for his true destiny. He grew to understand, that to his core, he was a conductor. Many would say, of enormous power and grace. He lacked only one thing, the musical canvas large enough for his expression, the full orchestra. He set his sights on the podium and that journey would prove to be Herculean. But not for lack of God given talent. Reading this book you come to understand that Brusilow had an absolute imperative to expel the roiling music inside of him outward, through his orchestra, and into the hearts of his audience. It reveals him to be a man who breathes in air and exhales Beethoven. And it does this with dry humor, deep pathos, and charm so beguiling you wish you could have been his poker buddy. The narrative is fluid and uncluttered (unlike this review...).

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