

Out of Time: The Vexed Life of Georg Tintner. By Tanya Buchdahl Tintner. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2013. x, 420 pp. ISBN 978-55458-938-8.

In the late 1980s, Symphony Nova Scotia attracted an outstanding conductor who subsequently recorded definitive performances of the Bruckner symphonies. This fine biography of the conductor/composer, Georg Tintner, provides a thorough analysis of how yet another refugee from Nazism eventually ended up as a Canadian citizen who notably enriched our culture.

Tintner's third wife, Tanya Buchdahl Tintner, admits that when she began her research, she knew little about the first two-thirds of his career. Because of his peripatetic life, Tintner kept little documentation of his accomplishments. Tanya lists 190 people that she interviewed, as well as forty-eight libraries and institutions that she visited in Australia, Austria, Canada, Great Britain, and New Zealand. In addition to chronicling the events of his life, she draws upon her personal experience of living for over twenty years with Tintner, a musician who strongly believed in the German Romantic ideal of inspiration coming from a female muse. Through her sensitive approach, we can comprehend what she calls his "eccentricities" including womanizing and his strong views as a pacifist, socialist, and vegan.

The thirty-three chapters, book-ended by a prologue and epilogue, are organized into four periods: 1917-1954, 1954-1965, 1966-1987, and the Canadian years, 1987-1999. Part 1 covers his family background and becoming the first boy of Jewish heritage to be a member of the Vienna Boys Choir, where Tintner absorbed the music of Bruckner, often directed by the composer's former student, Franz Schalk.

The sacred and secular music that he absorbed became Tintner's refuge in the midst of the anti-Semitism that he endured. By 1931 he had embarked on creating his own compositions. Studies in composition under Josef Marx and later conducting with Felix Weingartner led Tintner to a position as répétiteur and rehearsal conductor at the Volksopera. Shortly after the Anschluss of 1938, he was fired.

Fleeing to New Zealand via Yugoslavia and Britain, he found a nascent musical culture. Starting out as a choirmaster in a Presbyterian church, music teacher, and occasional performer, he tutored organizations such as the Auckland Choral Society and the Auckland String Players to give their first performances of major works such as Haydn's *The Seasons*, Beethoven's Eighth Symphony, First Piano Concerto, and *Missa Solemnis*, Schoenberg's *Transfigured Night*, Bruckner's Mass in F minor, and Smetana's *Bartered Bride*.

Part 2 deals with activities mainly based in Australia. The accounts of musical culture in New Zealand and Australia reveal how those countries were much more dependent on direction from the British Broadcasting Corporation than Canada. Indeed Tintner's career in Australia was

constantly thwarted because he was not “from England.” The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) persisted in giving him “crumb” jobs. He conducted over fifty different operas in his career, usually from memory, and frequently only with his piano accompaniment in outback communities. He also promoted the first televised operatic performances in Australia. Tintner was deeply offended by Richard Bonynges’s offer to be co-prompter for his new operatic company, but he took the “demotion” as he sorely needed the income to support his family.

Part 3 begins with Tintner conducting the Cape Town Municipal Orchestra. As he had done previously, he introduced South Africans to the music of Bruckner. When the orchestra offered him a one-year contract, Tintner desperately looked for positions in England, but none emerged. Returning to South Africa, Tintner introduced works such as Shostakovich’s First Symphony, Bartók’s Concerto for Orchestra, Bruckner’s Seventh Symphony, Walton’s First, Mahler’s Fourth and *Das Lied von der Erde*, Schoenberg’s Chamber Symphony, among others. Nevertheless, Tintner loathed the Apartheid system and went back to England after refusing to renew his contract.

Sadler’s Wells Opera eventually came through with a coaching position and during the next two years other conducting engagements occurred. However, Tintner was viewed as a foreigner with major eccentricities and so returned to Australia when offered a contract with the West Australian Opera Company. By hiring David Helfgott as an assistant for his responsibilities in Australia, Tintner was able to accept the invitation of the National Youth Orchestra of Canada (NYOC) in 1971, the first of eight seasons with that organization.

Accepting whatever occasional jobs came up in Australia or New Zealand, Tintner rarely conducted a major orchestral concert. Only after twenty-five years in Australia was Tintner hired for a main series concert by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (268). Little wonder then that the Tintners were amazed when an offer arrived from Canada to conduct Symphony Nova Scotia.

As before, Tintner introduced works that had not been previously heard in Canada. For the first time in his life, Tintner also felt accepted in Halifax and indeed beloved with his eccentricities.

This biography appeared first as a publication of the University of Western Australia in 2011. Although there is a discrepancy in the number of pages, 448 but just 420 in the Wilfrid Laurier University (WLU) Press edition, what I have been able to compare seems virtually the same. Still, it was somewhat jarring to find “down under” spellings and abbreviations (“Snr” for “Sr.”). On page 391, I discovered the author had decided to keep the spelling/punctuation used by Tintner in his own writings. As a reader, I would have appreciated a footnote to that effect with the appearance of the first passage.

Although the author has given an objective presentation of his first two wives, Tintner's preference for his youngest daughter, Hepzibah (named after Yehudi Menuhin's sister), is never made clear. A dancer and later a director of film, theatre and opera, she died of cancer not long after her father.

The NYOC is referenced in the book only under its old title, National Youth Orchestra (Canada). Speaking of this association that Tintner called his most rewarding, the author refers to his introduction of singing madrigals, a training element that "remained in the program for many years" (229). Yet, that practice is still a vibrant part of the NYOC experience as witness its most recent season.

His association with the Nova Scotia Youth Orchestra is also not mentioned. According to its [website](#), Tintner became the artistic director and principal conductor in 1988. He continued as artistic advisor through the 1995-96 season.

The analysis of Tintner's conducting (321f.) is good, but only passing reference is made to his recorded legacy and there is no discography. Surely the epilogue should have referred to the Naxos Tintner Memorial Edition of thirteen CDs that includes live performances of Symphony Nova Scotia and the NYOC. Tintner wished foremost to be a composer, yet the Naxos CD (2007) of some of his compositions is not mentioned.

The book also has no bibliography and important writings are not referenced. Paul Helmer's *Growing with Canada: The Émigré Tradition in Canadian Music* (2009) and Antony Hodgson's in-depth analysis of Tintner's recordings in *Classical Recordings Quarterly* (Summer 2011) both appeared before the WLU edition. Nevertheless, this wonderful documentation makes the lack of Tintner's projected recordings of Bruckner's vocal music that much more poignant.

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