

## Musical Treasure Chest #54

In another life, at least it seems that long ago, I co-directed a chamber orchestra. We were around for about ten years, and in many ways, we had a marvelous run. The orchestra had a concert series, functioned as the accompanying orchestra to many local choral societies, performed in the pit for Berkshire Opera and had a chance to do a bit of touring. During our decade we shared the stage with many wonderful soloists and conductors, and our programs were filled with great music.

The internet is an amazing resource, and researching one item can lead you into a spiral of information that seems infinite. On one of those fact quests the other day, I somehow stumbled onto a blog by Byron Nilsson (who has worked with me lots through the years and continues as the director and writer of many of our new video shorts) that included an article about one of our orchestra's little tours. Memories flooded back as I read the blog and looked at a picture of a very youthful orchestra.

I had forgotten that Byron had travelled with us to get a journalist's perspective of the performance, which was on Robert J. Lurtsema's *Morning Pro Musica*. The live broadcast out of the WGBH studios in Boston was our second from there. We chartered a bus and traveled together leaving the day before, in high spirits, extremely excited to be playing again on this well-known and popular classical music program. The program was carefully picked and meant to both show us off and to highlight some unusual repertory. With us was Czech pianist Antonin Kubalek, an incredible player that I had met through my work at Dorian Recordings. He was the soloist in one of the pieces: *Sinfonietta Giocosa* of Bohuslav Martinu.

We arrived in time to explore downtown Boston a bit, but our call was for early the next morning, and we all had a vested interest in playing our best, so most of us made it an early night. If my memory serves me correctly, the charter bus had difficulty finding the WGBH studios, and the ride there took much longer than it should have. But once arrived we settled into the studio, and the audio engineers

began the microphone placement. After a soundcheck and a little warm up, the time had come to be quiet and wait for Robert J. to open his microphone and introduce us. The nervous tension was palpable.

But the performance went beautifully. The experience was really quite special and memorable. Reading Byron's blog made me a bit nostalgic, the view from thirty years later, and much life lived in between, makes me miss the more innocent excitement and anticipation of events that I had back then. The blog also made me think of the Martinu, which I absolutely love, but haven't listened to in years, and I decided it's the perfect piece to share with you.

**Martinu** was a terrifically gifted composer, and he composed prolifically. His career featured prolonged tenures in both France and America (including significant time in the Berkshires). The ***Sinfonietta Giocosa*** was written while he was in France in 1940. It's a four-movement work, rather neo-classical in style, with fun and quirky jazz rhythms. Martinu wrote music in virtually all genres, and it's worth investigating. I have selected the original 1947 with the work's dedicatee Germaine Leroux, a lovely, energetic, and musical performance. I have also put a link to Byron's original article.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ggb5DpJkVxM>

<http://banilsson.blogspot.com/2013/08/musing-on-road.html#more>