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### Cover Page Footnote

I am particularly indebted to those esteemed performers, associates, friends, and relatives of Thomas Schippers whom I interviewed, for their patience, graciousness and willingness to share their personal experiences with me. My most sincere thanks to Ralph P. Locke for his patience, his understanding, and for the invaluable amount of help he has provided.

# Thomas Schippers in Cincinnati: A Forgotten Episode in the Life of a Conductor Renowned for Opera

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## Abstract

Thomas Schippers's experience as a conductor of symphonic literature, which seems to have been largely overlooked and nearly forgotten, is related in this article in some detail. There are interesting facts concerning his work as Music Director of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, where he expounds on some of his ideas about conducting such an orchestra and describes certain innovative programs he produced during his tenure there. Several well-known performers who worked with him evaluate or recount their experiences under his baton. In addition, two of his former conducting students share some fascinating details of what it was like to study with him if one was fortunate enough to do so. There is also some history of the CSO and the conductors who held the post of Musical Director preceding him. The essay includes some entertaining anecdotes from his friends together with an account of his final months.

Keywords: Thomas Schippers, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra—history

For much of his career, Thomas Schippers was known for his prowess as a great conductor of opera. On the other hand, his direction of numerous programs of symphonic repertoire has largely been overlooked and nearly forgotten. It is very likely that he was one of the most gifted American-born conductors of his generation, but perhaps not many are aware that he was a very accomplished pianist and organist from an early age, several years before he began his conducting career. When he arrived in New York at the age of eighteen, his experience as a pianist provided the opportunity for him to find work as a coach for aspiring opera singers which, in turn, led him to his first conducting experience with *The Consul* by Gian Carlo Menotti.

His style, if it could be so labeled, was in some way seemingly innate. Thomas Schippers had had neither conducting lessons nor conducting experience. He had had no mentor to follow and, more than likely, would not have tolerated one. Following his studies at the Curtis Institute of Music, although he had not previously conducted anywhere, he decided

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to enter the Philadelphia Orchestra's Young Conductors competition and was chosen by Eugene Ormandy, music director of the Philadelphia Orchestra at that time, as one of the six finalists out of forty entrants. Schippers had never had a conducting lesson in his life, stating that he "learned by doing."

Steven Monder, as the former President and CEO of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra during Schippers's tenure there, was able to closely observe his conducting methods. He found that he was not always an easy conductor with whom to rehearse or perform, developing his personal conducting technique and gestures that went far beyond beginning and ending the music together. They allowed Schippers, guest soloists, and the orchestra musicians to deliver a meaningful and personal experience to which every performer made an important and personal contribution. He was aware his approach to music making and conducting was neither "textbook" nor typical, but he believed strongly in his artistic instincts and goals, and felt he could best achieve them through his unique and personal gestures from the podium. Many of those gestures were physical indications of where and how he wanted the musicians to articulate and to breathe—including string and percussion musicians who did not produce their sound by blowing into their instrument. Still, the entire orchestra must include the sense of breathing and phrasing together in order to achieve the sounds and lines of a musical "collaboration" Schippers sought from the entire orchestra.

According to Raymond Gniwewek, who was the former Concertmaster of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra for over forty years, "Tommy's conducting reminded me of Mitropoulos. They used their hands in a similar way—the orchestra players used to call it 'painting pictures.'" He also observed: "Plenty of conductors beat time beautifully, but they don't get a thing out of the musicians. Tommy knew how to draw the music from the orchestra."<sup>1</sup> Even though he rose to fame in the conducting world in such a brief time, following his untimely death from cancer at the age of forty-seven, Thomas Schippers was all but forgotten. The music world remained largely indifferent following his death although he made a significant contribution to American cultural life by championing various important American composers such as Samuel Barber, Ned Rorem, Frank Proto, and Aaron Copland, among others, presenting their works with a most perceptive interpretation. Many young conductors do not seem to realize what an important part Schippers played in American musical life, or in European musical life.

Following his conducting début with *The Consul*, he began, in 1952, directing the New York Philharmonic, performing with them over sixty times. He took the orchestra on tour to many places and also accompanied Leonard Bernstein on a tour of Russia in addition to other European countries. The list of soloists (including himself) who worked with him there is extensive. His last engagement with the NYP was in September 1976, just a little over a year before he died. He conducted the symphonic repertory brilliantly and, although

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1. Quoted in Sonya Haddad, "A Short Season." *Opera News* 59, no. 13 (March 18, 1995): 14.

he had various engagements in many international venues, he was second to Bernstein at the New York Philharmonic and was considered his heir to the direction of that orchestra. This did not materialize. He was never given a position in the United States as Music Director until later in his rather brief life and was already forty years old when this opportunity was offered to him by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. He died at the age of forty-seven at the peak of his career.<sup>2</sup> In the relatively short time he was Music Director of the CSO, his orchestra came to have a great deal of respect and admiration for him. He truly appreciated the professionalism of his orchestra and very much enjoyed the lifestyle in Cincinnati, as will be seen here. This essay offers a brief history of the CSO's earlier conductors and then turns to an account of Schippers's work there; recollections both personal and professional from Schippers and others trace both the CSO tenure and his later years.

## The Orchestra's Previous Conductors

In the fall of 1970, a building in downtown Cincinnati displayed two signs. One read "Jesus saves." The other displayed a picture of the conductor Thomas Schippers and proclaimed: "The Best Musicians in the World Follow This Man." Schippers arrived in Cincinnati in the fall of 1970 to take up his position as Music Director with the CSO for its seventy-sixth season. The CSO Board of Directors had appointed him to succeed Max Rudolf.

Although not one of the "Big Five" orchestras of that time, which were considered by many to be New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, and Cleveland, it was, nevertheless, one of the five oldest symphony orchestras in the United States. It was founded in 1895 by a future First Lady of the United States, Helen Taft, who headed the board of trustees which entirely comprised women—a bit unusually, as women did not even have the right to vote. Then known as the Cincinnati Orchestra Association, it was also the first American orchestra to undertake a world tour sponsored by the US Department of State, and since its debut concert in 1917, has given forty-eight performances at New York's Carnegie Hall.<sup>3</sup> The Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra had seen a number of renowned conductors such as Eugène Ysaÿe, Fritz Reiner, and Max Rudolf as its director over the years. Some, however, were not so well known at the beginning of their tenure as opposed to Schippers, who had, by now, a glistering conducting career behind him.

Frank Van der Stucken was the founding Music Director of the CSO and conducted his first concert on January 17, 1895. He became a member of the College of Music faculty in 1895 and was appointed dean in 1897. Thus, he was in control of the musical and financial affairs of the college.<sup>4</sup> In 1901, due to his heavy workload, he resigned from the deanship but retained his control over the orchestra.<sup>5</sup> Despite his foreign-sounding name, he was born in

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2. His operatic performances at the Festival of Spoleto will be addressed in my forthcoming article in *Opera* (UK).

3. See <https://www.cincinnati-symphony.org/your-visit/music-hall/history/>.

4. William Osborne, *Music in Ohio* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2004), 187.

5. Osborne, *Music in Ohio*.

the United States in 1858 to a Belgian immigrant family in a little town in Texas called Fredericksburg, which still remains fairly small (the present population is just over 10,000). Van der Stucken continued as Music Director until 1907 and during his tenure there Richard Strauss appeared as a guest conductor. The United States première of the Symphony no. 5 by Gustav Mahler was performed there under his baton. In 1907, the orchestra was disbanded due to financial problems and was not reorganized until 1909, when Leopold Stokowski was engaged for the position.<sup>6</sup>

Like Schippers, Stokowski had begun his career as the organist and choir director of a church in New York. He resigned to further his conducting studies in Paris, but had heard of the opening of the position of Music Director of the CSO and decided to try to obtain it after having been in the United States for about a year. Despite having had little previous conducting experience, he won the position in 1909 and reportedly resigned in 1912.<sup>7</sup> He was very successful in Cincinnati, often performing the works of living composers. He also added a number of musicians to the orchestra, increasing the positions to seventy-seven (under Van der Stucken, there had been far fewer). In the meantime, and it could have been a credible motive for his resignation, he had found out through his wife, Olga Samaroff, that the Philadelphia Orchestra was searching for a conductor. Two months later he made his début with them.<sup>8</sup> Olga Samaroff was also one of Schippers's former teachers.

Stokowski's successor had a rather different background. The Viennese conductor Ernst Kunwald was born in 1868 and had achieved a degree in law in 1891. He studied piano and composition, which led him to conduct opera in several European cities. Subsequent to his position as the assistant conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic, he became, from 1912 to 1917, the Music Director of the CSO. He was not known for antics or ostentatious behavior on the podium but instead for his simplicity of style. Kunwald conducted the CSO's first recording made at the Columbia Gramophone Company Studios in New York.<sup>9</sup> When America declared war in April 1917, the increasing anti-German frenzy during the war years placed him in a particularly difficult position, as many German and Austrian nationals were suspect. Even certain streets in Cincinnati with German names underwent a name change. However, he remained adamant about performing German repertoire which led, among other issues, to his downfall. It was becoming more customary to perform the national anthem during concerts in many venues, but Kunwald was not in agreement with this practice as his heart remained with his own country. Audaciously and imprudently, he announced to the audience during one concert that "you all know where my heart and sympathies lie. They are on the other side with my country, but I will play your anthem for

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6. See <https://www.cincinnati-symphony.org/your-visit/music-hall/history/>.

7. See [www.stokowski.org/Leopold Stokowski Biography.htm](http://www.stokowski.org/Leopold%20Stokowski%20Biography.htm).

8. See [www.stokowski.org](http://www.stokowski.org).

9. See <https://www.cincinnati-symphony.org/your-visit/music-hall/history/>.

you.”<sup>10</sup> This remark truly led to his undoing. The United States declared war on Austria-Hungary on December 7, 1917. He was arrested the next day and freed the day after. But a few weeks later, J. Edgar Hoover, who was at that time in a position of little significance, signed a warrant leading to a second arrest.<sup>11</sup> He was taken to Fort Oglethorpe in Georgia and imprisoned. To his credit, he was able to organize an orchestra with the participation of the inmates, some of whom were professional musicians and others who were amateurs.<sup>12</sup> It was thought that Kunwald returned to his native land voluntarily.

The CSO's fourth conductor, Eugène Ysaÿe, was one of Schippers's most illustrious predecessors. Born in Liège, Belgium in 1858, he was considered a consummate violinist and acknowledged in his lifetime as the “King of the Violin.” Although of peasant stock, many members of the Ysaÿe family were musicians; thus, his father began teaching Eugène-Auguste violin at a very early age. After completing his conservatory studies, he found a place as principal violinist of an orchestra which later became the Berlin Philharmonic. So great was his fame that many well-known musicians of the time such as Clara Schuman, Joseph Joachim, and Franz Liszt went to hear him perform. He became a successful soloist and toured in many different countries, including the United States and Russia. Both Camille Saint-Saëns and César Franck considered him the greatest interpreter of their compositions. Unfortunately, he began having difficulty with his hands and was diagnosed with diabetes, which largely curtailed his career as a soloist. He turned to composition, teaching, and conducting, eventually becoming Music Director of the CSO in 1918 after having refused, some years previously, the directorship of the New York Philharmonic. In July 1927 he married Jeannette Dincin, who had studied with him in Cincinnati and was reputed to be an excellent violinist in her own right. It would not have been quite so noteworthy had she not been twenty-five years old and he sixty-nine. He held the position in Cincinnati until 1922, after which he and his wife returned to Belgium, where he devoted himself to composing and teaching. He died there on May 12, 1932 from complications of diabetes.

Fritz Reiner also had an inclination to study law, probably instigated by his father, but renounced it in order to study piano and eventually was able to study at the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest under Béla Bartók. He began his musical career as a *répétiteur* for a small comic opera company in Budapest. A short time later he was hired by the Budapest Népopera and there conducted many operas in diverse languages. He not only conducted a vast number of operas but also tried his hand at symphonic works, working closely with Richard Strauss.<sup>13</sup> He resigned in 1921 and shortly after was offered the position of

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10. Edmund A Bowles, “Karl Muck and His Compatriots: German Conductors in America during World War I (and How They Coped),” *American Music* 25, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 417.

11. Bowles, “Karl Muck,” 418.

12. Ibid.

13. Kenneth Morgan, *Fritz Reiner: Maestro and Martinet* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 47–48, quoted at “A Biography of Fritz Reiner,” [https://www.stokowski.org/Fritz\\_Reiner\\_Biography.htm](https://www.stokowski.org/Fritz_Reiner_Biography.htm).

conductor of the CSO, where he remained until 1931. Reiner was known to be difficult to get along with in some respects, often treating his musicians in an all-but-derogatory manner. He became very critical and often “phrases such as ‘dummkopf’ or ‘shoemaker’ were hurled at wayward players along with requests that they should play a particular passage repeatedly until the results were satisfactory.”<sup>14</sup> Eventually, his contract in Cincinnati was not renewed because of his problematic attitude in dealing with both the musicians and the board members of the CSO.

For someone who descended from two generations of well-known musicians, Eugene Aynsley Goossens eventually made quite a mess, if not a disaster, of his once brilliant conducting career. Born in Camden Town, London, he was the son of another Belgian conductor and the grandson of a conductor, both of whom answered to the same name of Eugène Goossens, although they both preferred the *grave* accent on “Eugène,” whereas their descendant did not.<sup>15</sup> He began his career as a violinist for Thomas Beecham’s orchestra but then rapidly progressed to assistant conductor. He held the position of Music Director with various American orchestras over a period of twenty-five years, the last being the CSO, which he held from 1931 until 1946. His tenure in Cincinnati seems to have been successful as his flamboyant style for conducting large choral works, operas, and ballet was much appreciated there. Goossens then decided to move to Australia, where he conducted the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, among others. However, in 1956, shortly after having received a knighthood, he resigned or was perhaps forced to do so. He had indulged in a particularly steamy affair with Rosaleen Norton, the Australian artist, known as the “Witch of King’s Cross,” exchanging erotic letters and photographs with her which were in the possession of the police in Sydney. Goossens was charged with possession of pornography and paid a fine, but his reputation was damaged, greatly curtailing his career.<sup>16</sup>

Schippers’s immediate predecessor, Max Rudolf, had quite the musical pedigree. Born in Germany in Frankfurt am Main in 1902, he began studying music at an early age progressing, at the age of seven, to the study of composition. One of his first engagements was in Darmstadt, where he had obtained the position of assistant conductor.<sup>17</sup> There he honed his trade and also met Rudolf Bing, with whom he was to collaborate at the Metropolitan Opera in New York years later. Due to the problems in Europe, he left for the United States in 1940, becoming a citizen in 1946, and in that same year made his *début* conducting Richard Strauss’s *Der Rosenkavalier* at the Met. Not long after his appointment as General Manager of the Met in 1950, Bing hired Rudolf in an administrative position but heavily

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14. See [www.stokowski.org](http://www.stokowski.org).

15. David Salter, “Goossens, Sir Eugene Aynsley (1893–1962),” at *Australian Dictionary of Biography* <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/goossens-sir-eugene-aynsley-10329>.

16. Salter, “Goossens, Sir Eugene Aynsley.”

17. Bernard Holland, “Max Rudolf, 92, Conductor Who Passed His Art On to Many,” *New York Times*, March 2, 1995, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1995/03/02/789795.html?pageNumber=33>.



relied on him for his musical knowledge.<sup>18</sup> Eventually, Rudolf began conducting quite regularly at the Met until his appointment as Music Director of the CSO. In 1970 he resigned from the directorship of the CSO because of an appointment to the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, leaving the position open.<sup>19</sup>

## Schippers Takes Over

It was an exceedingly rare occurrence for a conductor to be appointed Music Director of an important orchestra without ever having conducted it, much less without ever having seen it. In such a situation, no one knew what to expect when Schippers arrived for the first rehearsal. Until this time, he had been a guest conductor in a number of places in the US and in Europe but had never even visited Cincinnati. He felt the time had come to make his home in the US; thus, when the CSO offered him the position of Music Director, he accepted enthusiastically. Simultaneously he did, however, maintain his place as Music Director of the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto and kept his position in Italy with the RAI Italian television network. Schippers also sometimes conducted in Rome. The pianist Earl Wild gives an interesting account of the situation following a performance there together with Schippers:

I did perform with him and he knew what he was doing. It was with the RAI in Rome in 1972 or '73. When the concert was over a man, who looked very much like a gangster, came to us with all the cash in a package and we had to sign for it. They told us to be very careful on the way out because people are often waylaid on the way to the hotel. It's the only time it ever happened to me like that! They put us in the Hotel Hassler at the top of the stairs [*Trinità dei Monti*]. It was very pleasant. We didn't get to know him very well. I don't know why he was so mysterious. We knew that he was a fine musician and people seemed to like him very much.<sup>20</sup>

Rehearsals with the CSO began. The first took place less than a week before the opening concert. Schippers had chosen to perform the *Messa da Requiem* by Giuseppe Verdi, which is scored for orchestra, chorus, and four soloists. The soprano Martina Arroyo, the contralto Lili Chookasian, the tenor George Shirley, and the bass Bonaldo Giaiotti performed the solo parts. Although somewhat demanding to prepare this in a week, Schippers did so and conducted by memory as well. The orchestra he inherited was highly trained and disciplined, and for Schippers this was an extraordinarily significant moment in his life. He became well respected by the members of his orchestra, although appearing to some as

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18. Holland, "Max Rudolf."

19. "Rudolf Leaving Cincinnati," *New York Times*, October 30, 1968, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1968/10/30/76898855.html>.

20. Earl Wild, interview by author, April 4, 2006.

being aloof. According to Andy Zaplatynsky, who was the Associate Concertmaster of the CSO from the fall of 1974:

As a conductor, Schippers seemed impatient with scholarship and favored intuition. Given that approach, the same program could soar to almost mystical highs and then come off almost flat another night. One could tell almost immediately if it was going to be one of those special nights from the first few bars of the first piece on the program. Schippers was an organist and was accustomed to a delay between the gesture and the actual sound. When someone came in precisely with his beat he stopped conducting to correct the offending musician. The first recording done by the CSO (after a long spell of no recordings) was the Rossini *Stabat Mater*. The opening is in  $\frac{8}{6}$  time (it was a slow pulse in six) with pizzicati on the downbeat of each measure. To the best of my recollection, there was not a single measure in that opening that actually had six beats because Schippers gave the next downbeat as the spirit moved him. He never actually counted out the six beats in his mind. This is an example of that intuitive approach. By instinct, Schippers resisted the conformity of counting five empty beats. Thomas Schippers seemed a bit removed from the musicians. He was a charismatic mystery *persona*. His office/dressing room was off the beaten track as musicians left the building and I do not recall that he would ever stand in the hallway and chat with members of the orchestra. When leaving the stage, he would move quickly with his scores tucked under his arm (as if he were late for a train) down the hallway towards “his space,” simply nodding to musicians on the way. And yet, he manifested a very warm side when he sent flowers to a member of the violin section who had just given birth to a baby. There was an element of shyness in all this. He was a private man and his exuberance and warmth was manifested on the podium. I was never aware that any member of the orchestra was particularly close to him, but for us he was always a most interesting, unpredictable, and even magnetic personality.<sup>21</sup>

In an interview with Patricia Marx of New York Public Radio, Schippers even admitted, “In my case my only real contact with the orchestra is when I’m working with them. I don’t mean that I’m unsociable but, first of all, we’re all very busy. I’m not sort of a party-goer with my orchestra, I’m not the joker with the orchestra, not the intermission goodie boy with the orchestra. I need them in a performance. I need all their love and all their cooperation and I hope I usually get it [laughs].”<sup>22</sup>

Undeniably unpredictable, he imbued his musical interpretations with much emotion, sensitivity, energy, and enthusiasm but did not seem able, to a large extent, to bring this

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21. Andrew Zaplatynsky, interview by author, 2006.

22 Thomas Schippers, interview by Patricia Marx, January 17, 1962, <https://www.wnyc.org/story/thomas-schippers/>.

behavior to other situations. His intuitive approach to conducting occasionally made it difficult for the orchestra to comprehend exactly where his beat was. In a certain way, Schippers could be considered an innovator for his orchestra. With the CSO, he put together a very different and original presentation of Schoenberg's tone poem *Pelleas und Melisande*. Schoenberg, having been unaware of the fact that Debussy had just presented his opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* in Paris, began composing his symphonic poem on Maurice Maeterlinck's play, modifying the way in which the title was written in French with the appropriate accents, and changing it to *Pelleas und Melisande*. Richard Strauss had suggested the subject.<sup>23</sup> It is an early tonal work, written in one continuous movement which has perceptible sections that are linked together in the score. (Schoenberg was fond of pointing out that he did not come out of the womb as a twelve-tone composer.) It was not well received on its first performance at the Musikverein in Vienna on January 26, 1905 with the composer conducting. He often recounted that one of the critics suggested he be placed in a mental institution and that manuscript paper be kept out of his reach.<sup>24</sup> Schippers, knowing the piece well, had decided to create a performance with a live orchestra and an enormous screen on stage. It was complicated as there was a rear projection from backstage which required a lot of technicians. But the technicians had to be musicians and the musicians obviously technicians. It was never committed to film to be viewed anywhere else, it would seem.<sup>25</sup>

## Freshening the Repertoire

Schippers had met the composer Ned Rorem in passing several times more or less superficially. But for whatever reason, he thought to commission him to write a piece for the CSO in 1975. Rorem recounts:

He got out of Curtis and instantly started having something of a career as a conductor. And I think he even conducted the first performance or an early performance of one of Menotti's big operas. I saw him do it but not on television. Not *Amahl* necessarily. Perhaps *The Saint of Bleeker Street*. Then I met him off and on and I never felt that he was necessarily interested in my music. I liked him. He was very famous for being quite good looking. I saw him socially a lot and then, out of the clear blue sky, he phoned me one day from Cincinnati and said would I write a piece for him. And I said sure, how much money and I think it was something like ten thousand dollars. It would be like about forty or fifty thousand today. I wrote a piece called *Air Music* and he performed it in, I guess, 1975. Then it got the Pulitzer

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23. Herbert Glass, "Pelleas and Melisande: Arnold Schoenberg [program note]," <https://www.hollywoodbowl.com/musicdb/pieces/2687/pelleas-and-melisande>.

24. Glass, "Pelleas."

25. Thomas Schippers, Interview by Mary Hoffman, January 26, 2016, <https://news.wosu.org/classical-101/2016-01-26/mary-hoffman-archive-thomas-schippers>.

Prize in 1976 so we took each other very seriously. He did my piece and we were both terribly pleased about it. He died quite soon afterward. He was at the height of his career and he was somebody. Our relationship was mostly professional. We weren't friends but we were staunch acquaintances. And I think he even said something rather swishy about me in an interview probably from around ten years earlier which was why I was a bit bemused when he phoned me and extended that commission which, by a major symphony orchestra at that time and for a professional, was a lot of money. I went out there for the first performance. He was a hard worker, he knew thousands of very glamorous people, movie stars and so forth, but that didn't interfere with his working hard and getting to the point. As soon as I got off the plane in Cincinnati he started saying, after five minutes, "There's a mistake on page fifty-seven. You only used the tympani once in the whole piece so why don't we just get rid of it" or something of that sort.<sup>26</sup>

Rorem's assessment of Schippers's interpretation of his *Air Music* follows:

If sound were taste, Tommy Schippers's version of my *Air Music* would resemble the best sour cream mashed with hand-picked gooseberries; smooth without slickness, tart without bitterness, a healthful dessert. An unexpected surprise is that the music does sound like air—like a mean wind through flaming leaves of yew. A barrel of ice cubes flung into an enamel aviary. And so forth.<sup>27</sup>

An additional large-scale work, commissioned for Rorem by the CSO in 1979, is a suite of ten pieces scored for cello, piano, and orchestra and is dedicated to the memory of Schippers with the title *Remembering Tommy*.

Another subject that sparked Schippers's interest was the publication of four symphonies by Muzio Clementi composed in his later years. As Richard Wigmore wrote in a review of the symphonies in the British publication *Gramophone*:

There's plenty to intrigue and delight, too, in these four symphonies composed for large orchestra (including trombones) during the first quarter of the 19th century and performed throughout Europe. After a concert by the London Philharmonic Society in March 1824, the *Morning Chronicle* wrote that one of Clementi's symphonies (we do not know which) "charmed all lovers of beautiful melody and scientific contrivance." The use of "God save the King" in *The Great National Symphony*, no. 3, made it something of a popular hit. Yet none of the symphonies seems to have reached a form that satisfied the inveterate reviser in Clementi. Alfredo Casella edited nos. 1 and 2 in the 1930s; but it was not until the late 1970s that pianist-

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26. Ned Rorem, interview by author, April 15, 2006.

27. Rorem, *The Nantucket Diary of Ned Rorem, 1973-1985* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1987), 154.

musicologist Pietro Spada published an edition of all four symphonies, drawing on not-quite-complete manuscripts scattered between the British Library and Washington's Library of Congress.<sup>28</sup>

Clementi's manuscripts of the symphonies became the property of his wife when he died, and it is said that much of his material was discarded by an overly industrious maid. It particularly pleased Spada that this discovery forced people to take another look at this great composer. Many musicians thought and still do think of him simply as a composer of children's piano pieces, if they think of him at all. Schippers certainly did think of Clementi and understood the musicological and historical significance of these symphonies. He conducted the United States premiere of the Fourth Symphony, opening the 1975 season of the CSO with it in the same year the orchestra marked its eightieth anniversary.

He was very proud of the orchestra and remarked to Mary Hoffman in an interview:

This year marks the eightieth anniversary of the CSO. I feel like a child confronted with an anniversary of such magnitude and I feel like a father and I don't know why and I don't give myself the credit for it. I just think it was kind of a happy marriage when I came to Cincinnati. The orchestra is now is as good as any orchestra can be. First of all, I'm happiest on the podium with that orchestra, not because it's my orchestra, because it's not my orchestra, it's its own orchestra. They've gotten to a level which is almost scary but is very touching. It's a great orchestra.<sup>29</sup>

## The Hall; Schippers as Teacher

Music Hall, home of the CSO, underwent a number of renovations over the decades. The major renovation of which Schippers later speaks began in 1969 and was financed by the Corbett Foundation. Schippers stated in the *Dayton Daily News* that he would "fight for one to replace the old organ torn out of Music Hall during the recent renovations and it won't be an electronic instrument."<sup>30</sup> In fact, the original organ by Hook and Hastings, which had been installed when Music Hall was built, was dismantled and replaced by a Baldwin organ in 1974. It was a gift from the Corbett Foundation.

Patricia and J. Ralph Corbett began their Foundation in 1955 and donated many millions of dollars to diverse organizations. Corbett was a businessman who had founded NuTone Chimes Inc. in Cincinnati in 1936. Having become a very wealthy man, he sold his stake in the company in 1967 after which he and his wife, Patricia, who was a musician and music patroness, dedicated themselves to their Foundation supporting performing arts, medicine,

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<sup>28</sup> Richard Wigmore, "Clementi: Symphonies Nos. 1-4," *Gramophone* (May, 2017) <https://www.gramophone.co.uk/review/clementi-symphonies-nos-1-4>.

<sup>29</sup> Schippers, interview by Mary Hoffmann.

<sup>30</sup> Betty Dietz Krebs, "Cincy Conductor Teaches to End Mediocrity," *Dayton Daily News*, October 29, 1972, <https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/405364793/>.

and education. The couple also contributed heavily to the preservation and restoration of Music Hall.<sup>31</sup> As Schippers related:

Music Hall for me, not only by comparison with the other halls in America, is a bit like Versailles. If you haven't been to Versailles you can't describe it. Music Hall is unique because with the incredible renovations they've made three or four years ago, they were very careful not to affect the sound, not to affect the acoustics and some people say the acoustics are even better that they were before. Music Hall in Cincinnati has always been famous for its sound. I inaugurated the new organ in Cincinnati, a beautiful organ, a gift of Mr. Corbett to Music Hall and I played the Poulenc organ concerto while conducting it. I prefer not to do it, but in a strange way the Poulenc, he was a friend of mine incidentally, and although I know he didn't intend it that way, it is extraordinary the way the work is written. I didn't have to do any tricks. I certainly didn't have to miss any notes. I wasn't showing off by doing both things. The work almost cries for one performer and, as a matter of fact, this spring I've been invited to perform it on the new organ in Tully Hall in New York in Lincoln Center. And I will have a conductor and that makes me very nervous [laughs].<sup>32</sup>

Together with his appointment as Music Director, Schippers was also given the position of distinguished professor of music and gave his first master class in conducting at the Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music in 1972. It was difficult for him to find time for teaching, but he considered it an important matter as he had had to learn conducting practically without instruction. He confided to Betty Dietz Krebs that "I had none of this kind of teaching myself. No one had time. With pull, I might have been able to get to Reiner or Ormandy. But I didn't. So I had to learn (conducting) for myself."<sup>33</sup>

The conductor Peter Stafford Wilson (who is Music Director of the Springfield Symphony, Music Director of the Westerville Symphony, and Principal Conductor of the Tulsa Ballet) attended master classes under Schippers and also had some private lessons. He was convinced from a young age, like Schippers, that conducting was the path he wished to follow. He recounts, "I had pretty much focused on conducting as the career path I wanted to take as a sort of mid-teenager. I went to the Cincinnati College Conservatory as an oboe player as they did not offer a degree in conducting at that time. I did my research and of course knew of Maestro Schippers. He was doing a seminar at CCM and I was invited to attend." As did Schippers, Maestro Stafford Wilson had focused on another path first. For him it was playing the oboe in the orchestra, whereas Schippers dedicated himself to the

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31. See <https://friendsofmusichall.org/cincinnati-music-hall-history/music-halls-organs/music-halls-hook-hastings-organ>.

32. Schippers, Interview by Mary Hoffman.

33. Krebs, "Cincy Conductor."

keyboard. He gives a particularly perceptive account of what characteristics one should be aware of when deciding to embark on a conducting career:

To be a successful conductor, I think one must have been an orchestral player at one point. You learn so much about what the orchestra needs in rehearsal and performance from having this experience. One of the most important tools in our arsenal is the ability to breathe with the players in order to initiate the musical attack. It creates the best ensemble, and also helps the players sense the direction of the phrase. As a woodwind player, I acquired this skill naturally. It is interesting that this was something Schippers taught emphatically, even though he was an organist and pianist. I think it was his work with singers that helped him hone this skill. Schippers was emphatic that a conductor should be able to look at a score and “hear” it in his mind. He admitted that this is an acquired skill and easier with more transparent scores like Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven. Complex twentieth-century scores are the most challenging. Our lessons and even class situations had us conducting without musicians or piano. We simply relied on that inner imaginary orchestra, or by singing the line (conductors being famous for their bad voices).

The final session of the first season was a recap of what was discussed, and this went to more general terms. He listed three things that he HOPED we had gained:

1. Create! Don't simply follow the music.
2. Let the music breathe through the emotions and gestures of the conductor. Symphonic music should breathe in just the same fashion as a singer breathes.
3. Approach a rehearsal in a relaxed manner. If one is tense, then he cannot concentrate on what is going on. He cannot hear what is transpiring and therefore cannot compare what he is hearing from the actual orchestral sound as opposed to the ideal sound in his mind.<sup>34</sup>

## Recollections of Schippers's Conducting—and His Bridge-Playing

Maestro Carmon DeLeone was Schippers's Assistant, and later Resident Conductor with the CSO, and although he did not have formal lessons with him, he did gain much knowledge about conducting from observing Schippers. He recounts:

I was so very fortunate to carefully observe his every move, his comments to the orchestra, his silent influences on the music he was making, and his backstage, private office verbal elation or frustrations with every rehearsal or performance that had just taken place. These lessons were learned each week he was with us, usually during seventeen to twenty hours of rehearsals, followed by two or three weekend

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34. Peter Stafford Wilson, interview by author, June 2020.



performances. Because of this exposure to his brilliance and charisma, I even became a kind of “mini-Schippers,” reflecting his rehearsal habits, baton grip, and even his choice of clothing. Privately, we did have some serious chats about specific musical choices in the repertoire he was conducting at the time—that was always edifying. But, oddly enough, he would often suggest that I had a solution that he could not find—things like subdivisions of beats, when and how to best utilize them. Schippers seemed reluctant, even shy, to share “educational” thoughts about conducting. However, I do recall very vividly one occasion when he seemed to open up a bit on the subject. I scribbled down some notes on an old yellow piece of paper during an interview talk-forum he gave in the basement Auditorium of our Cincinnati Art Museum. These are some of his quotes from that day that I thought were revealing:

Form: “Live and breathe the work—the tempo comes naturally.”

Concept of: “Inner Orchestra.”

Analyze everything: “Musical Surgeon.”

Opera: (Fortunately) “The personal life of a composer has no real bearing on how words motivated them.”

“No composer can really tell when he has a hit.”

“I don’t know what I’m doing (physically), when conducting. That’s just how the music inside me is coming out.”

“The difference between any two first-rate conductors is sound. How? Who Knows?”

Schippers frequently showed his warmer and more humorous side in some of our correspondence, once writing a post card to me when he learned (to his dismay) that I did not drink at all, so he must have suggested orange juice at least. I wrote to him on March 16, 1975, saying that I ran out and bought a juicer: “No need to worry now, your Assistant Conductor cannot get the rickets.” He wrote back on a “Greetings from Florida” card with oranges on it, saying: “Will you now have a drink??? Best, Tommy S.”<sup>35</sup>

The well-known pianist André Watts performed with Schippers in Cincinnati, among other venues, and shares his impression:

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35. Carmon DeLeone, email to author, April 12, 2021.



I think I met him in 1965 in L.A. to do the Hollywood Bowl and I remember I was given directions about how to get to where he lived. It was Coldwater Canyon in a rented house. I'd like to think it was for the MacDowell that we met but I'm not certain. But in any case, I think I blocked that a little bit because it was not overly comfortable—just our meeting. I didn't even know him that well then, but the last times I played with him I really liked him a lot. At the beginning, he seemed a very patrician guy and he could be vaguely aloof. I got that very strongly and so it wasn't so great. I don't remember anything about the music making, but I do remember his piano playing. He was very good. He, of course, said "I can't really" but actually he played the orchestral part very well. That atmosphere hung over our NYP concerts where I played the Chopin F minor, which we later recorded. Then we had this one meeting in New York and I think it was quite nice but we were both now tense because we both thought, "Oh, this isn't really any good." He certainly was a cultured person so he was never really crude in contrast to some of his colleagues. He was never a rude person. First of all, I felt like a kid next to an established artist. I was brought up with good manners, so we were very polite to each other. I think my playing wasn't so bad. It was not really difficult to follow me in Chopin. We did the recording at the Manhattan Center and we ran out of time, not because of me, but because Regine Créspin was recording "Ah, Perfido" with him and he had run over. I didn't have any understanding that Créspin was, in principle, at the end of her career. It was very tough for her and she was a great singer. I knew that she was also a kind of perfectionist and she wanted it right. After all, it was a recording so I remember being awfully irritated: "She knows the piece, just sing it! What's the problem here?" She took more and more and more time so we actually did the Chopin Concerto in two different sessions. We couldn't finish it and we may have done the first and third movements and then did the slow movement a week or so later. In any event, it was all very complicated. You have to be very careful with me about chronology. I'm awful. What I do remember is Gus De Angelis, who was the personnel manager of the orchestra at that time. There we were in Manhattan. I was playing the slow movement and everything was quiet. But I have pretty good peripheral vision and from quite far away I saw Gus De Angelis walking out. I kept playing but I thought "what's he doing?" He was walking very slowly and he came all the way over to the piano. There's always rustling and stuff, but these guys are all pros and they acted like nothing was going on. I tried not to look at him because I was trying to concentrate and I was already distracted. He came out to let me know that there were two minutes of recording time left and he didn't want to waste time by interrupting the session to tell me that. Actually, it turned out that it was a kindness. It was a big risk and an enormous kindness to me because he wanted me to know that I shouldn't stop because this was not a question of going into overtime. Somehow, we did make it and the record is sort of okay. Because of that tension (this could be my

interpretation or it could be my fantasy life) I think that somehow Schippers thought “Well, that’s not bad.” There were no hysterics. The next time he and I met was in Cincinnati and he was very relaxed and very easy. I think it was probably the second Brahms that we did. First of all, my taste didn’t always agree with his, especially with the Chopin and maybe with the MacDowell that we did. I didn’t necessarily agree with everything he did. One thing about Schippers; I couldn’t imagine how it was physically possible for him to turn an unmusical phrase! Unbelievable. If you didn’t like it, that was one thing, but there were never any weird angles. That was impossible for him. It was amazing. So when I did the second Brahms with him in Cincinnati, which I enjoyed very much, we had a good time and lots of joking. In fact, we became incredibly silly because we had to go to this (Nonie, his wife, was with us) reception and we had to wait. I don’t know why we were waiting and why we were standing there. Suddenly, one of them, I don’t think I would have started it as I wasn’t that bold, said: “We’re waiting to do something, don’t we feel like bumps on a log? Nobody’s talking to us. What is this?” From there, it degenerated into three giggling little monkeys on the side of the room. We actually had quite a wonderful time. I remember the Brahms as somehow being very idealized, just lacking in a certain kind of muscle at some point. I found it quite fascinating to have encountered a musician who was always so (not very deep of me) melodic—reeking with melodic. I mean it in the positive way. Kind of unbelievable. It reminded me of a very different kind of music making, never having any roughness or any crudeness. But Schippers said something that was more mellifluous, always very smooth and rounded and quite amazing. And that was it. I was looking forward to playing with him again but he got sick. The next time I played with his orchestra, or what I considered his orchestra, he was gone and Bernstein conducted. I did have a strong experience with Schippers; he was a lightning rod for powerful emotions. There was something about Schippers that seemed to me as if he had been born heir to the throne of a very genteel, exclusive country. When he did want to be somehow above everything, he could pull that off very well. I did see him one other time. He did *Boris* at the Met and I went. He invited me. Actually somebody told him André would like to go. The rehearsals were very funny because I think Jerome Hines was in the production and something went wrong. They stopped the rehearsal and Hines stepped toward the pit and said: “It is I, Lord.”<sup>36</sup>

Shortly after Schippers had taken up the position of Music Director in Cincinnati, Nick Webster, who had previously worked with the New York Philharmonic, was appointed to the position of general manager. In an interview he had this to say:

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36. André Watts, interview by author, July 13, 2006.”

I met Schippers when he was conducting the NYP and I was just cutting my teeth there. I really met him in a much deeper sense ten years later when I became the executive director or general manager, I guess it was called, of the CSO. He started in the fall of 1970 and I in the spring of 1971. The way it works, structurally and organizationally in the orchestra world, which is different from the opera or theater world, is both the general manager, or whatever the business person is called, and the Music Director or artistic director, or whatever the artistic person is called, both report to the board. Generally, neither one reports to the other so, if you will, the dotted line between the two is probably the most critical line on the organizational chart. There are some orchestras where one or the other is *de facto* very much in charge and a few orchestras where the executive is in charge, having the title of president. But there aren't many of those.

Schippers threw a farewell party for me at his house when I left and as I drove up I saw he had big carved letters stuck in the grass in the big sweeping lawn. I don't remember exactly what they said but it was something like "We love you, Nick." The farewell party was wonderful. He had the whole world there and he roasted a whole lamb on the spit and had the Assistant Conductor tending the lamb. It was typical Schippers, the showman to the nth degree always. Schippers was famous for his style and the parties and the friends, not disparagingly at all, and the "glitterati," the people he knew.

He loved to play bridge and he considered himself to be a much better bridge player than I think he actually was, but he loved to play. The final round of my interview, in a community like Cincinnati, involved the manager coming out with his wife and going through a couple of social occasions to make sure of his capacity for the job. And in the course of that, Schippers, his wife, Nonie, my wife, Sally, and I worked together and he discovered that we both played bridge. And that immediately bonded us. So many times, we would escape from the orchestra's social functions or just plan it and spend the evening with the two of them playing bridge. Schippers would invariably keep score. As a matter of fact, the first time he sort of asked me out of curiosity "Do you want to keep score" and I said sure, so I kept score, or started to, and after the first hand when I was writing it down, I looked over and there was Schippers keeping score. I said, "What's going on?" He said: "Well. I just wanted to keep score also" so I said, "Well, here and I said fine. We don't both have to do it." I think he wanted to keep score. I suppose there's a form of control there or at least a sense of power that you're in charge. I have no idea. I always thought it was that maybe, initially, he didn't trust me to keep score right but that disappeared.<sup>37</sup>

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37. Nick Webster, interview by author, 2006.

The game of bridge, for Schippers, was something of a true challenge. As Merle Hubbard said in an interview, “Bridge was the only thing Tommy had not completely mastered.” Schippers even once attempted to initiate the soprano Martina Arroyo into playing bridge. But as she recounts:

We were in Rome sitting around after a rehearsal and he liked to play bridge and I couldn’t play bridge. I didn’t play any cards and so he decided to teach me how to play bridge and he said “Oh, don’t you realize, watch that bid, no no.” And for some silly reason, I guess it was beginner’s luck, or fool’s luck, I won the game! He was furious!! He got so angry he didn’t talk to me the rest of that evening. He snapped at me at rehearsal and I began to laugh, which made it worse. But it was just that he had that “I’ve gotta win”—that winner’s feeling that you get with some people like “I’m the one in charge here.” This is not a negative statement in any way. It was just so funny that he was annoyed. It was a game.<sup>38</sup>

Often, Schippers invited guests to his house in Cincinnati for dinner and a bridge game. An anonymous interviewee had the following to say:

I met Thomas Schippers when I moved to Cincinnati and enjoyed one memorable evening at his home playing bridge with the Maestro as my partner. Our opponents were a friend of Schippers’s and his sister-in-law. When we arrived at his Hyde Park home, we were greeted by a butler who served drinks and subsequently prepared our dinner. Schippers made a grand entrance and led us into a parlor. We quickly selected partners and commenced play. From the start, Schippers and I were dealt consistently superior hands. However, my play was “rusty” and we failed to take advantage. Schippers became increasingly frustrated with my bidding and card playing. Just prior to dinner, he and I engaged in some aggressive, almost competitive, cross bidding to reach a contract of six spades. Schippers was so angry with me that he threw his cards on the table in despair and refused to look at my cards. With a distribution advantage, I made six spades, doubled, and redoubled. That hand transformed a previously tense evening. Beating our opponents remains the highlight of my short and undistinguished bridge career. Schippers’s attitude toward me changed immediately and dramatically. Following a fantastic dinner, we returned to the card table, where Schippers and I enjoyed a continuing run of good cards and successful results. When the game ended, Schippers invited me to be his personal guest the following night at the CSO, which he had directed for several years. He was magnificent—almost radiant. His direction of the opening number, which was the *William Tell* Overture, remains seared in my memory. Following the concert, I visited him backstage, the last of many well-wishers. Schippers treated me

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38. Martina Arroyo, interview by author, 2006.

with considerable respect and introduced me as his “friend and bridge partner” to a retinue of admirers. We shared some private and humorous comments about our card game before saying good night. I never saw nor heard from Schippers again. He died shortly thereafter.

## The Last Months

Merle Hubbard relates another episode in which Schippers was nearing the end:

When he was dying, we lost track for a while. He was really ill. I got a handwritten letter from him apologizing for the silence. He asked if I would be free to come to Sloan Kettering Hospital and play bridge on a Saturday afternoon. So I did. He had a beautiful room set up with a refrigerator and sandwiches and lunch. He was in bed and we played bridge all afternoon until he got tired. And then, when he came home from the hospital, we kind of started to play bridge every Saturday night. In August he took a house out in Southampton, one of those chateaus on the beach, a huge *Wuthering Heights* style house. He gave a weekend house party which I went to and it happened to be the day Maria Callas died. I went out to East Hampton with my friend Florence who told me Schippers didn’t read the papers. He had also told me that he had stopped reading the newspapers, so I wondered if he knew or if he wanted to talk about it. When we got there he had the television set on and he was completely dejected because of Maria and he just looked at me and said, “I can’t save my life and she threw hers away.”<sup>39</sup>

Schippers’s friend, the soprano Jane Marsh, recalls:

I last saw him when we were both performing in Milan. We weren’t performing together but we went to lunch and I was thinking to myself; I don’t think he’s well. It had to have been a year before he died and I don’t think I was singing at La Scala. I guess I was singing in Milano with the RAI. I remember we somehow found out about each other being in the city at the same time and we went to lunch. I remember thinking that he didn’t seem himself but he didn’t look sick. He was normally very elegant, very electric and there was something very resolved and rather staid and I just thought; he’s not himself. He doesn’t have the energy. I don’t think other people noticed. It was 1976 and I think he stopped conducting shortly after we saw each other.<sup>40</sup>

In December 1976, Schippers conducted the Scala production of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* which opened on December 17. His personal temperament gave Schippers a rare affinity for conducting *Manon* or *Traviata* but the public this time was interested in his interpretation

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39. Merle Hubbard, interview by author, May 16, 2006.

40. Jane Marsh, interview by author, February 25, 2006.

of Rossini. Schippers's comprehension of Rossini's masterpiece demonstrated that he could offer a rigorous and authoritative interpretation which was also clean, correct, and full of subtle intentions. His taste revealed a reading which was more authentic, ready to capture in an opera that which it possesses of lyricism and sentimental expressiveness.

Schippers had been exceptionally popular in Italy among classical music enthusiasts, having established the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto with Gian Carlo Menotti. He also conducted opera elsewhere including a memorable performance of Cherubini's *Medea* with Maria Callas at the Scala in Milano. For him it very likely signified his "having arrived" in a certain sense. He was, after all, only thirty-one and Callas was the absolute diva of that time.

One of his greatest accomplishments was to have been appointed Music Director of the *Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia* in Rome. The *Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia* is one of the oldest musical institutions in the world. Officially founded in 1585, it has evolved over the centuries from an organization of largely "local" musicians to a modern academy and symphonic concert association of international repute. The *Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia* was the first orchestra in Italy to devote itself exclusively to the symphonic repertoire, giving premières of major masterpieces of the 1900s, such as Respighi's *Fontane di Roma* and *Pini di Roma*. Founded in 1908, the orchestra has been directed by some of the foremost musical figures of the twentieth century: from Mahler, Debussy, Saint-Saëns, Strauss, Stravinsky, Sibelius, Hindemith, Toscanini, Furtwängler, De Sabata, Karajan, and Abbado to the most impressive performers of our day including Gergiev, Thielemann, Dudamel, and Temirkanov, while Bernardino Molinari, Franco Ferrara, Fernando Previtali, Igor Markevitch, Thomas Schippers, Giuseppe Sinopoli, Daniele Gatti, and Myung-Whun Chung have been its Music Directors. Leonard Bernstein was Honorary President from 1983 to 1990.<sup>41</sup> Schippers was the first American to be appointed to this position, but he was never able to fulfill it. He was also to have prepared a program for President Jimmy Carter's inauguration the following January, but he was too ill to do so. In February 1977, Schippers cancelled his engagement to conduct *La Bohème* at the Metropolitan Opera because of what were thought to be complications of viral pneumonia. Regrettably, his problem was far more serious. Schippers, who had smoked very heavily for a very long time, had lung cancer. According to Margot Melniker:

During the last months of his life, he wanted a house in the Hamptons. There's an airport for small planes near La Guardia airport and we went there. He had hired a private plane so we flew out to East Hampton and the realtor met us at the airport and took us around to see various properties. Schippers had reserved two rooms at a hotel for us because it was too much for him to go back and forth. We found a house in Southampton that he loved. So when we got through with that, we had to get the plane. The first one we could have taken was around 5 o'clock but we got there earlier and had lunch. I didn't know what to do with him for three or four hours as

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41. For more, see *Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia*, <https://santacecilia.it/about>.

he was in an obviously debilitated state, so I suggested that rather than sit around for hours, we could rent a car and I could drive back. He said he would be so grateful if I did that, so we rented a car and were back in NY before the flight had even taken off. The house in the Hamptons was a very large house with about twelve bedrooms, including six master bedrooms and a dozen rooms for the servants. Toward September, he told me that he didn't think he could go out there anymore.

He went to Sloan Kettering in September. He didn't get along with the doctor, so I went to speak with him because Schippers was very unhappy in the hospital. I asked the doctor what the advantages of being in the hospital were. He said there were none because nothing could be done. So I asked that he be permitted to come home. I remember when I got him into the car he took my hand and said, "Promise me I won't have to come back." Around Thanksgiving, the doctor told me that there would come a time when things would get much worse. Thanksgiving weekend he worsened and from then on he had registered nurses around the clock and passed away at his apartment shortly afterward.<sup>42</sup>

During the time leading up to Schippers's final illness, Maestro DeLeone became responsible for filling in for several of his concerts. Schippers sent him a handwritten note; "Dear Carmon, I feel like an orphan—but a grateful one thanks to you. I am sorry for the bad timing. Forgive me, but I know you will do well. Yours, Tommy S."

It was 7:55 in the evening on December 16, 1977. At 550 Park Avenue in Manhattan, Thomas Schippers, who had been ill for quite some time, passed away, ending one of the most brilliant American conducting careers of that time. The attending physician, William G. Cahan, certified that his death was due to natural causes. From March 1977 until his death, Schippers was in the care of Dr. Cahan, who was a noted specialist for pulmonary carcinoma.

As he wished, there was no funeral. And as he wished, he was cremated at the Garden State Crematory in North Bergen, New Jersey two days later. According to his last will and testament, his ashes were to be scattered in the *Bosco Sacro di Monteluco* (Sacred Forest of Monteluco) outside of Spoleto, Italy. But it did not happen precisely that way. According to Margot Melniker, one of the two Executors of Schippers's will, his wishes were not carried out exactly as he had stipulated. The ashes were sealed and then sent to Italy, where they were placed in a room of the *Pinacoteca* (Picture Gallery) in Spoleto awaiting to be strewn. However, the city of Spoleto wished to honor him by placing his ashes in a small crypt in the wall of the Piazza del Duomo where he had conducted so many of the closing concerts of the Festival. Margot continues:

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42. Margot Melniker, interview by author, April 4, 2006.

Schippers wanted his ashes strewn on Monteluco in Spoleto. But what happened was that when I got to Spoleto, the Mayor wanted to inter the ashes near the cathedral. I went to Monteluco with Gian Carlo, Jacques Sarlie, who was an acquaintance of Schippers, and Wally Toscanini. Jacques got out of the car with the urn and strew part of the ashes. The rest were eventually placed in a crypt in the wall adjacent to the Duomo.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, on Friday May 18, 1979, following the unveiling the crypt dedicated to Schippers, a memorial concert, which included *Canto sulla morte di Haydn* by Luigi Cherubini, was performed in the Teatro Nuovo of Spoleto with the *Orchestra Sinfonica di Roma* conducted by Gabriele Ferro.

The last performance Schippers conducted was Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* in Milan. His scheduled performance to conduct *La Bobème* at the Met in February 1977 would have been the first live telecast from there, but he was too ill to do so. He never performed again.<sup>44</sup> His ashes are still kept in the wall of the Piazza del Duomo in Spoleto, where he had once bowed to so much acclaim at the Festival of Two Worlds.

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43. Margot Melniker, interview by author, September 1, 2007.

44. Margot Melniker, interview by author, 2018.



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