

Gerald Carlyss

Whether it was the murmur of distant thunder in a Beethoven or Berlioz symphony or the terrifying poundings of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, the sound of Gerald Carlyss' timpani drums in the magnificent Philadelphia Orchestra with Eugene Ormandy conducting was awe-inspiring. And I had the best seat in the house! As a member of the trombone section of the Philadelphia Orchestra, I sat within 20 feet of Gerry's timpani in the Academy of Music, as well as in the most famous music halls around the world, from the Musikverein in Vienna to the Buika Kikan in Tokyo. Later, when Gerry joined me on the faculty of the Jacobs School of Music, it was as if we just picked up where we had left off. In the summers we would often find ourselves again less than 20 feet apart, playing the same music, with the Festival Orchestra in the Musical Arts Center.

Gerry first became interested in percussion and timpani when at the age of 13 his percussion teacher in Pasadena, California, Robert Lentz, asked him if he would like to play the triangle part in Richard Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* overture with the Pasadena Symphony Orchestra. This was Gerry's first exposure to a symphony orchestra and the classical literature. Gerry agreed and he knew from then on that he wanted to play in an orchestra as a career. Gerry played two seasons with the Pasadena Symphony before going to France to study at the Paris Conservatory for one year with Felix Passerone.

Of all the percussion instruments, the timpani was the one instrument he preferred. Robert Lentz and Felix Passerone were both timpanists, though they did play all the other percussion instruments, and their timpani playing inspired Gerry to seek out a timpani teacher in New York City after he and his family moved there. Gerry met Morris Lang, the assistant to Saul Goodman, the principal timpanist of the New York Philharmonic, and studied with him prior to attending the Juilliard Prep Division, where he studied with Morris Goldenberg, principal timpanist of the NBC Orchestra. In his high school senior year Gerry played in the National Orchestral Association Orchestra, a training orchestra for young musicians with professional musicians in the first chairs. Goldenberg assigned Gerry the timpani parts, and he got to play three concerts in Carnegie Hall that year. In his first two years at Juilliard, Gerry continued to play with the National Orchestral Association before he started to get freelance jobs in New York.

Gerry was accepted to the Juilliard School of Music college division where he continued his studies with Saul Goodman and Morris Goldenberg. This invaluable training led to a great deal of freelance work in New York City, including the New York Philharmonic, the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the New York City Ballet, the New York City Opera, and many other performing groups. Graduating from Juilliard in 1964 with a Bachelor of Music and in 1965 with a Master of Science, he immediately won the audition for the principal timpanist position of the Cincinnati Symphony, which made a 10-week world tour in 1966. To gain such a position right out of school is a rare opportunity. Gerry played in Cincinnati until he was called by Eugene Ormandy to join the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1967.

The Philadelphia Orchestra at that time was called "The World's Greatest Orchestra." It made more recordings and television appearances than any other orchestra in the United States. It also traveled on performance tours to a greater extent than any other similar group. Although Eugene Ormandy was the principal conductor, many guest conductors vied to perform with the organization. Virtually every well-known conductor worked with the Philadelphia Orchestra. Throughout all this major musical activity, Gerald Carlyss was acknowledged by all as the leading pulse of the orchestra.

While in Philadelphia, Gerry was the chairman of the percussion department at the Curtis Institute of Music, one of the major music conservatories of the world. He has published two invaluable repertoire performance books that cover the nine symphonies of Beethoven, the six symphonies of Tchaikovsky, and the four symphonies of Brahms.

Gerry's students from Curtis and IU have gone on to very successful careers in symphony orchestras, major military bands, various educational institutions, and freelancing both on the East and West Coasts of the United States, as well as in Europe, Japan, and Australia.

Throughout his career, Gerry has been supported by his wonderful wife, Bea. She was often found on tour with him and later became the undergraduate recorder in the Jacobs School of Music Undergraduate Office. Their family of children and grandchildren are the pride of their lives.

Of course, it would be remiss to speak of Gerry Carlyss without mention of golf. He not only makes custom golf clubs and plays golf at any opportunity, but his house was built with extra high ceilings in the basement to accommodate his swing.

Although the future may lead us farther than 20 feet apart, my memories will remain of the elegant timpani performances of Gerald Carlyss.

M. Dee Stewart