

An Except from
LEONARD ROSE
AMERICA'S
GOLDEN AGE
and
ITS FIRST CELLIST

STEVEN HONIGBERG

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Chapter Six

The Cellists of Rose's New York Philharmonic

The success of an orchestral section begins with its principal. The leader ought to have several important attributes in addition to possessing superlative performing abilities. One is to have infallible rhythmic instincts. Another is a willingness to accept bowing suggestions initiated by the concertmaster, the player traditionally anointed as second in command. A section leader must also be prepared to accept suggested interpretive moods and colorations from whoever is conducting. Lastly, a section leader should communicate easily with fellow colleagues. With these attributes, optimism will abound, lifting the morale of the orchestra.

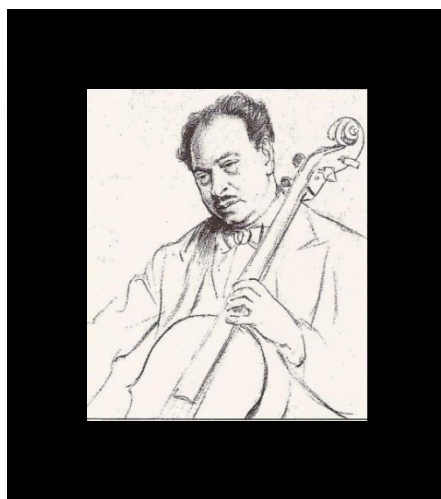
With noted experience as the leader while at Curtis, on first stand under Toscanini and solo cellist in Cleveland, Leonard Rose contained these traits in spades by the time he arrived in New York. There, he worked productively with long time concertmaster John Corigliano and the many brilliant and egocentric guest conductors who appeared before him. But it was the delivery of his solo passagework during intricate orchestral scores that had his fellow colleagues abuzz. If a concertgoer carefully observed Leonard Rose as an important symphonic cello solo drew near, the observer could see Rose getting ready to rid any uneasiness by rubbing his right hand over and over on his right thigh to remove any excess moisture. Closer to the solo entrance, he would lift his bow above his cello strings into the air two or three times in a feathery fashion painting the air with silent brush-strokes. Left hand securely in place on the note, his bow would land on the precise string at the exact fraction of a second. Whether nerves or adrenaline, this was how Rose greeted the solos that came his way. The music sounded soulful and magically spun as a listener can attest in the Cleveland Orchestra's seventy-fifth anniversary CD featuring Rose, as principal cellist, performing the delicate solos in Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* and in Shostakovich's Symphony No. 1. The distinctive quality that emanated from within was deeply felt.

With seven members of his New York Philharmonic cello section and celebrated soprano Bidú Sayão, Leonard Rose's name first appeared on a 1945 recording of Heitor Villa-Lobos' *Bachiana Brasileira* No. 5 (composed in 1938) with the composer conducting. The 78 proved to be the single disc sensation of Columbia Records for two years. It led to his signing a long-term contract with the record company in 1949. Grammy Awards didn't exist yet, but this recording's classic status was retroactively confirmed in 1984, the year of Rose's death, when it was voted into the Grammy Hall of Fame."*

By most accounts, Leonard Rose concentrated on his own playing as principal cellist. That was where his interest lay. He seldom felt any need to berate any members of his section or, for that matter, demonstrate authority over them, as some section leaders did. Because he was their best cellist, Rose's section liked and respected him. The Philharmonic group was known for their polished sound and solid intonation, and for its diversity. Russian, Hungarian, Turkish and American cellists played alongside Rose, many born in the nineteenth century. For the 1939-40 season, the Symphony League published a book, *The Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York*, of biographical sketches of the entire orchestra by William G. King, music editor of the *New York Sun*. E. Bernard Lintott created the following drawings of Rose's colleagues.ⁱ

**Rose received \$50 (\$600 in 2008) and no royalties at the time of the recording.*

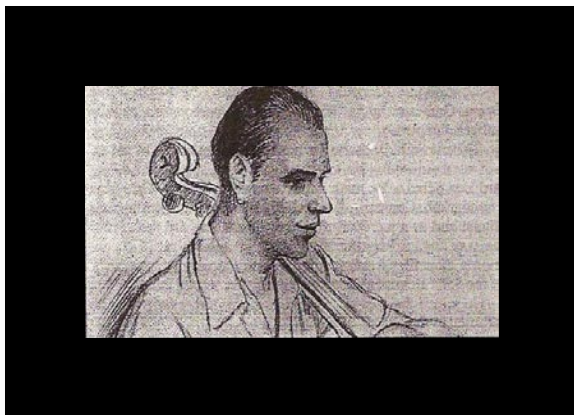
Abrascha Bass (1928-1952)



Many will tell you that Abrascha Bass was Victor Herbert'sⁱⁱ "favorite" cellist. Mr. Bass himself modestly admitted that "he liked me very much," and that one of his proudest memories is of the time he played the Herbert Cello Concerto under the composer's direction. Herbert sent for him and later told him he had performed the work exactly as he had always wanted to hear it.

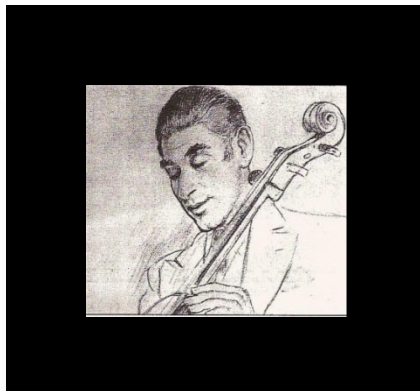
Mr. Bass was solo cellist with the Herbert Orchestra for a number of years. Bass, born in Kiev, Russia, April 18, 1892, began to study music at the age of nine, and at 11 won a scholarship to the Imperial Conservatory of St. Petersburg. He came to the United States in 1905, and joined the New York Symphony in 1921. Mr. Bass retained his position when that orchestra merged with the Philharmonic in 1928.

Mario Caiati (1928-1958)



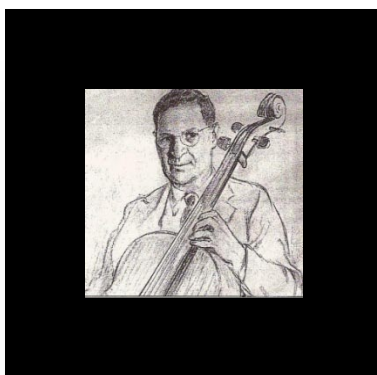
Mario Caiati was a nephew of Gaetano Merola, General Director of the San Francisco Opera Company, and of Professor Caiati of the Royal Conservatory of San Pietro a Maiella of Naples. He was born in Naples on Christmas Day, 1902. At the age of 10 he began the study of the violin, and later was admitted to the Conservatory from which he graduated in 1922. Before coming to the United States in 1923, he was a member of the orchestra of the San Carol Opera of Naples. Before joining the New York Philharmonic Orchestra in 1928 he played with the Kansas City Little Symphony.

Naoum J. Dinger (1925-1964)



Naoum Dinger came to the United States in 1921 to join the Cleveland Orchestra, with which, during the next four years, he frequently did solo work. He was engaged by the New York Symphony in 1925, and remained with that orchestra when it merged with the Philharmonic. He was born in Smyrna, Turkey, August 5, 1898, but his parents moved to Odessa, Russia, when he was only a few weeks old. It was in that city where he obtained most of his musical training, beginning with the piano at five years old, and the cello when he was nine. At the Odessa Conservatory, he was a pupil of Naoum Brunberg and Enrico Brambilia. With Leonard Rose, Dinger and Carl Stern performed David Popper's Requiem for three cellos and orchestra February 13, 1945 under Artur Rodzinski.

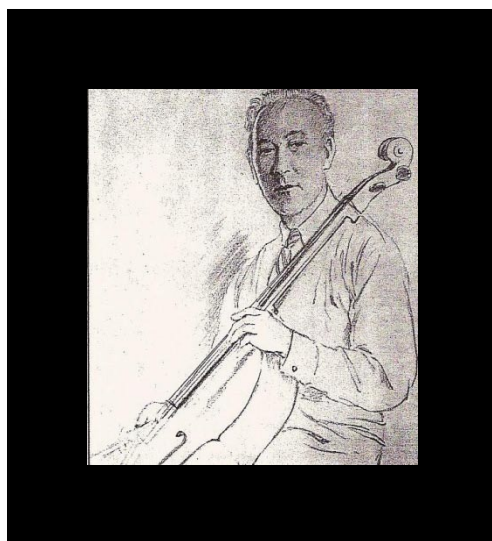
William L. Feder (1928-1949)



William L. Feder's entire career was centered in New York. He was born there on January 27, 1886, and entered the National Conservatory of Music at the age of 12 to study advanced cello under Leo Schulz and to play in the students' orchestra.

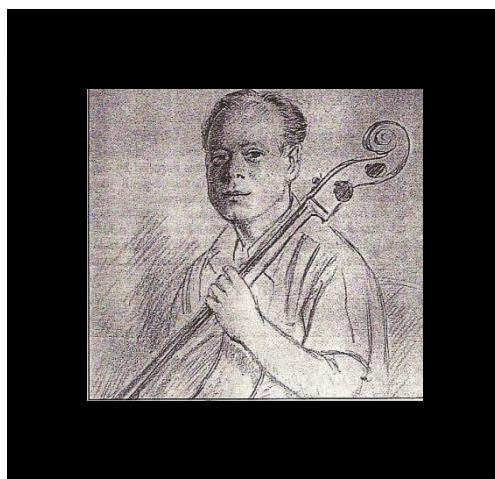
In 1889 he made his debut as a soloist in old Chickering Hall. He was a member of the National Symphony when it was merged with the New York Philharmonic in 1921, and before that, had played with Pinto's New York Boys' Symphony, with Victor Herbert's Orchestra, and the Russian Symphony. His strong, kindly face bears witness to his character, which caused his colleagues to have confidence and trust in him. He served as Chairman of the Orchestra Committee for ten years and was a Trustee of the Orchestra's Benefit Fund.

Alberico Guidi (1928-1949)



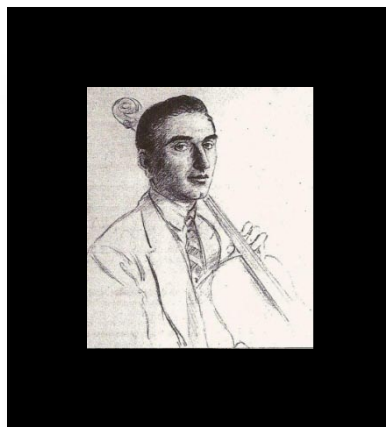
The Guidi are a Venetian family, but Alberico was born October 3, 1893, at Catania, Sicily, where, at the time, his father was teaching painting and drawing. He studied the cello with Achille Rossi of Venice, the Hungarian virtuoso Dezso Kordy, and finally with William E. Whitehouse (teacher of Felix Salmond) in London. He made his concert debut at Queen's Hall in that city when he was 18. He and his brother and sister formed the Trio Guidi, which made frequent appearances in England and France. He also was a member of the Musica String Quartet and, for several years, of the Queen's Hall Symphony in London. He joined the New York Symphony as solo cellist in 1924 under Willem Mengelberg and held that position until the merger with the Philharmonic in 1928.

Martin Ormandy (1929-1966)



Martin Ormandy graduated from the Royal Academy of Budapest, where Zoltan Kodály, Leo Weiner, and Eugen Kerpely were among his teachers. Later he was a pupil of Diran Alexanian in Paris, and Leo Schulz and Alfred Wallenstein in New York. When he came to the United States in 1922, he joined the Capitol Theatre Orchestra, of which his brother, Eugene Ormandy (conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra 1936-1980), was its conductor. He remained with that organization until 1929 when he was engaged by the Philharmonic-Symphony.

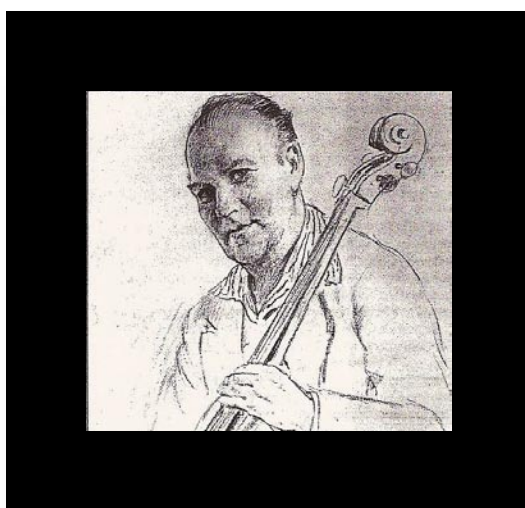
Rudolph Sims (1939-1966)



The Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra engaged Rudolph Sims only a few days before rehearsals began for the opening of the 1939-40 season. He was born in New York City, September 19, 1892.

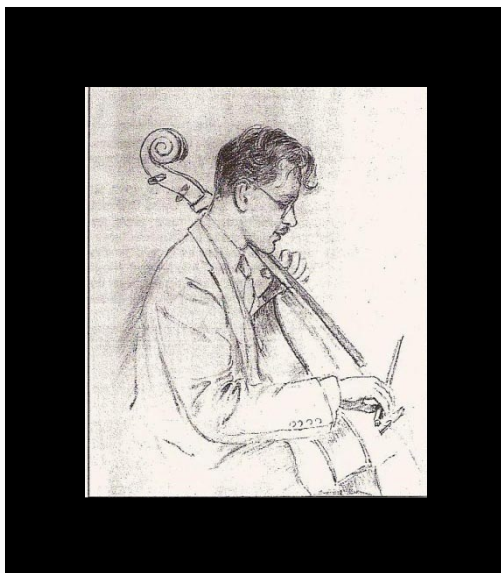
His father, a former viola player in the Moscow Opera Orchestra, taught music in New York until his retirement. Rudolph, a pupil of Leo Schultz, gave a number of recitals in old Aeolian Hall as a child prodigy, appeared as solo cellist under conductors David Mannes and Nicolai Sokoloff; and played for the Monte Carlo Ballet during its first New York season. He spent three years in Paris at the Conservatoire de Paris as a private pupil of Paul Bazelaire. He collected early phonograph records as a hobby; and performed on a Paolo Antonio Testore cello, dated 1745. Rose became quite friendly with Sims, 26 years his senior and who played behind him on the second stand.

Richard E. Stehl (1928-1946)



Two generations of Stehls were born in New York, studied music there, and practiced their art in that city. Richard Stahl began to study the cello at the age of seven, and numbered among his teachers Max Droge, Armand Ladoux and Leo Schulz. He made a few recordings for the Columbia Phonograph Company between 1910 and 1919, both as soloist and as a member of various ensembles and orchestras. He was engaged by the New York Symphony in 1917, but shortly thereafter went to war where he served as acting bandmaster of the 350th Regiment Band overseas. When he returned to the United States in 1919 he joined the New York Philharmonic Orchestra.

Milton Forstat (1938-1958)



Milton Forstat was born in Cleveland, September 24, 1910. He decided on a career as a professional musician when he was 12, and began to prepare for it at the Bronx House Music School, where he studied the cello under Willem Durieux and at the same time took full courses in harmony and counterpoint. In 1931 he won a fellowship in cello at the Juilliard Graduate School where his teacher was Felix Salmond. From 1928 to 1931 he played with the National Orchestral Association. Prior to his engagement by the Philharmonic-Symphony in 1938, he served as a member of the orchestras conducted each season by Mr. Stoessel at the Chautauqua and Worcester Festivals and at the concerts of the New York Oratorio Society.

The following men also played in Rose's cello section.

Nathan Stutch (1946-1990)

Nathan Stutch was co-principal cellist of the Philharmonic at the time of his retirement in 1990. He joined that orchestra in 1946, having previously played for two seasons with the Cleveland Orchestra. He studied at the Curtis Institute with Felix Salmond and Emanuel Feuermann. He was on the faculty of Manhattan School of Music from 1984-2003. "Leonard Rose changed my life," Stutch told this author. "He was the first person I met at Curtis. During my four years at Curtis, I spent a long time getting to know him. There was an instant bond that was formed that lasted all of our lives.

There were many sides to this man; he was a giving person and was always helpful – always. When I got out of the service and came to New York, there was a six-month period before I could get a union card. So I wasn't making any money at all. He frequently, maybe twice a week, took me to dinner and he would always pay for the meal. We used to go to his favorite restaurant on 98th and Broadway called *The Old Salt*. He loved fish. That was his favorite food. It was just the two of us. Rose used to tell me, 'You and I have something very special.' Often, we talked about music and the conceptions of the different composers. We talked about how to interpret these works."ⁱⁱⁱ

Carl Stern (1944-1964) Assistant solo cellist

Mr. Stern remained for seven years with the NBC Symphony and then in 1944 joined the New York Philharmonic-Symphony as assistant solo cellist to Leonard Rose. He was appointed solo cellist of the Lewisohn Stadium Symphony the same year and appeared as soloist with both organizations. The youngest member of a large family of New Jersey artists, Stern was born in Paterson, New Jersey. Entirely educated in America, he studied cello with Willem Willeke at the Institute of Musical Art. To support his belief in modern music, he formed the "String Quartet for Contemporary Music." Among first American performances given by Mr. Stern include the Shostakovich Sonata with Aaron Copland at the piano for the League of Composers. He recorded for Spa Records and played on a 1699 Guarnerius cello with a François Tourte bow [The Frenchman Tourte, 1747-1835, was considered to be the single most important figure in bringing the bow into its modern form.] With Leonard Rose, Stern and Naoum Dinger performed David Popper's Requiem for three cellos and orchestra February 13, 1945 under Artur Rodzinski. Although Rose left to recollection of his colleague, he played when Stern was heard as soloist February 5, 1949 performing Brahms "Double" Concerto with Michael Rosenker, then the associate concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic.

George Feher (1948-1974)

George Feher, a native of Hungary, moved to the United States in 1920. After winning several scholarships, he studied with Lieff Rosanoff at the Mannes School of Music. In 1937, he was engaged by the National Symphony in Washington, D.C., which he left at the outset of World War II to enlist in the Navy. From 1945 until joining the New York Philharmonic, he played with the Pittsburgh Symphony under Fritz Reiner, and with the ABC and CBS Symphony Orchestras. He taught the cello at his alma mater, the Mannes College of Music, beginning in 1945.

Josef Malkin (1944-1949)

Russian-born Josef Malkin (1879–1969) made his American debut in 1909. He later played as principal with the Boston and Chicago Symphonies, eventually forming a trio with his brothers. In 1933, the family founded the Malkin Conservatory, which Josef directed for 10 years. Then he joined the New York Philharmonic, retiring in 1949. In Europe his credits include principal cellist with the Berlin Philharmonic [while in Berlin, Malkin worked with Walter Grossman, Leonard Rose's first cello teacher].

Anthony Sophos (1949-1957)

Anthony Sophos was born in Peabody, Massachusetts in February 1923. He was raised in Cleveland and at 19 was appointed to the faculty of Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, Ohio. He played in the Cleveland Orchestra under Artur Rodzinski from 1942 to 1944. He then came to New York to study with Felix Salmond at the Juilliard School. In the 1947-48 season, Sophos was a member of Toscanini's NBC Symphony. He would join the New York Philharmonic under Dimitri Mitropoulos and Leonard Bernstein from 1947 to 1957. He was also a member of the New York Philharmonic Cello Quartet with Laszlo Varga, Nathan Stutch and Martin Ormandy, which recorded for Decca Records. Sophos left the Philharmonic in 1957 to join the CBS Symphony Orchestra.

❖No information was found for Heinrich Joachim (1949-1958; first teacher of Lynn Harrell) and Ralph Oxman (1943-1944) - cellists who also played in Leonard Rose's cello section.

ⁱ Courtesy of the New York Philharmonic Archives

ⁱⁱ The celebrated Irish born cellist, **Victor Herbert** (1859-1924), was conductor of the Boston Festival Orchestra in 1891, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra from 1894-1904 and the Victor Herbert New York Orchestra. He was soloist with the New York Philharmonic playing his own Second Cello Concerto March 10, 1894, and again on December 10, 1897. Herbert is chiefly remembered as a composer of light operas that contain wit, charm and simple harmonies.

ⁱⁱⁱ Nathan Stutch, personal interview in New York City, March 24, 2004. Born 1919.