

The Korngold Memorial Concert 7 June 1959, Los Angeles

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Following Erich Wolfgang Korngold's death in November 1957, his wife Luzi began to plan a memorial concert in his honor. The original idea of holding such an event in Vienna came to nothing, so she turned instead to a planning a concert local to their home in North Hollywood. A committee was established with help from Mrs. Erich Lachmann, Dorothy Huttenback (a wealthy friend and patron of the LA Philharmonic), and was chaired by Mrs. Willard Coe. Many patrons and sponsors were found to fund the event.¹

By April 1959, the concert and related events were established. The concert itself was scheduled for Sunday, 7 June 1959 at 8:30 PM, in Schoenberg Hall at the University of California, Los Angeles. In addition, a patrons and sponsors reception – originally scheduled for the afternoon of Sunday, May 3rd – was rescheduled to the Green Room of Schoenberg Hall immediately following the concert. Finally, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that a reception honoring Luzi Korngold was scheduled for Sunday afternoon, June 7th, at Rodeo Manor in Beverly Hills.²

The Korngold Memorial Concert led off with the reading by actor Robert Ryan of a tribute to Korngold written by Bruno Walter, who was unable to attend. The musical program consisted entirely of selections from Korngold's chamber music oeuvre: the Piano Sonata #3, op. 25, seven songs spanning his compositional career, the violin and piano suite from "Much Ado About Nothing," op. 11, and the String Quartet #3, op. 34. The event was recorded, and currently all musical performances except the String Quartet have been published.

The Piano Sonata #3 in C Major, op. 25, was performed by John Crown, the same performer who had given the US premiere in 1935. This performance is available on the Cambria label, as part of a three-disc collection of John Crown in Concert (catalogue # CD-C108 – cover image not available).

The Lieder were performed by the Norwegian contralto Eva Gustavson, and her principal accompanist at the time, Dr. Gerhard Albersheim, an Austrian émigré on the faculty of Cal State Los Angeles. The Lieder selected by both Luzi Korngold and Eva included three of the five Shakespeare songs, op. 29, one each from the Lieder collections opp. 18, 27, and 38, and concluded with Korngold's last published chamber work, the *Sonnett für Wien*, op. 41. Albert Goldberg, music critic to the *Los Angeles Times*, said in his review of the Memorial Concert that, "Miss Gustavson made the most of the melodious opportunities of the songs, and Mr. Albersheim's accompaniments were expertly sympathetic." This portion of the memorial concert is also available on the Cambria label (catalogue # CD-1142).



¹ Brendan Carroll specifically lists nearly twenty, including Fritz Kreisler, Miklos Rozsa, Lotte Lehmann, Darius Milhaud, and Bruno Walter among others. It is not stated if his list is selective or not.

² Confirmation that the two receptions happened is not available at present, but presumably they did occur.

The violin and piano Suite from “Much Ado About Nothing,” op. 11, was performed by Louis Kaufman and his wife Annette.³ Their performance of the Suite, one of Korngold’s most popular compositions, is available on the companion CD to Louis Kaufman’s memoirs, *A Fiddler’s Tale* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2003, 488 pages with companion CD).

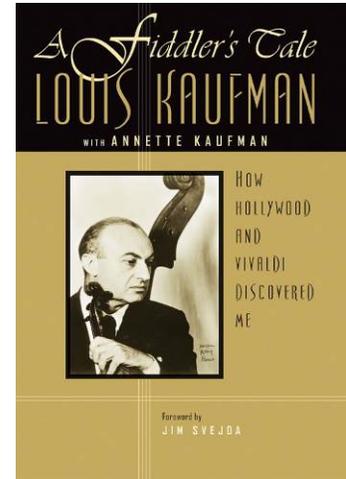
The String Quartet #3 in D Major, op. 34, played by the Kaufman String Quartet (Louis Kaufman and James Getzoff, violins; Cecil Figelski, viola; and Kurt Reher, cello), is the only performance from the memorial concert currently unavailable. Of this performance, Albert Goldberg wrote:

“The Quartet is not “advanced” music as we consider such things nowadays, being basically in the chromatic post-Wagnerian style of the early 20th century Viennese school. It is a soundly constructed work with forthright ideas extensively developed, and it has a particularly attractive slow movement in folksong manner. The writing is grateful for the instruments, and the Kaufman String Quartet offered a robust and brilliant performance.”

With glowing comments such as these, we can only hope that this last part of the Korngold Memorial Concert is someday released.

Memorial Concert UPDATE (01 May 2014)

On April 2014 Cambria released the complete original recording of the 1959 Korngold Memorial concert, including spoken introductions and intermission interview with Korngold's son, George. At the time of this posting, the recording is available as a download only (MP3 and FLAC).



³ Louis Kaufman (1905-1994) was a renowned violinist, the most sought-after violin soloist for Hollywood films, and reportedly was largely responsible for bringing the once-forgotten music of Antonio Vivaldi to its current popularity worldwide.