

# The Telephone Hour

A Retrospective

A Salute  
to a Tradition of  
Over 1,000  
Performances  
on Radio and  
Television  
from 1940 to 1968.

The Museum of  
Broadcasting



# The Telephone Hour

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A Retrospective

April 27-  
October 27, 1990

**MB**

The Museum of  
Broadcasting

With this retrospective, we celebrate the kitchen as concert hall, the sitting room as symphony stage. That, after all, is the lasting legacy of *The Telephone Hour*: bringing classical and popular music into the lives and homes of countless Americans.

During its twenty-eight-year run on both radio and television, *The Telephone Hour* let music speak for itself—to all cultures and ages. Each week it brought to American homes not only virtuoso performances but also a deeper understanding of music and an appreciation for the art and often its intricacies.

A large segment of the American public remembers those live performances and the uniqueness of the weekly interludes. Many performers also vividly recall their appearances, which often marked their radio or television debut.

But there also are many without the memories, young people who today take music's everyday presence for granted.

The people of AT&T, therefore, would like to dedicate this retrospective not only to those who nostalgically remember *The Telephone Hour*, but also to a generation that may just now be learning what came before them.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "R.E. Allen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "E" followed by a smaller "Allen".

ROBERT E. ALLEN  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer  
AT&T

**THIS EXHIBITION  
WAS MADE POSSIBLE  
BY AT&T.**



### CURATORIAL NOTE

**I**n 1940, American Telegraph and Telephone (AT&T) created a radio program called *The Telephone Hour*, which premiered on April 29 and ran for eighteen seasons. The radio series was devoted to presenting the world's foremost stars of opera, the concert stage, radio, and movies. When the format was transferred to television in 1959, first as a series of four specials and then as a weekly series, the title was changed to *The Bell Telephone Hour*.

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## A PERSONAL NOTE FROM KITTY CARLISLE HART

*The Telephone Hour* was unique in many ways, but perhaps what set it apart most was its prestige. I was the soprano and leading player on the *Coca-Cola Program* with Gus Henschen, which was a variety show. I sang on that program for a long time, but it never had the prestige of *The Telephone Hour*.

*The Telephone Hour* was a *must* for professionals and a most successful means of developing a general audience for classical music. In its day it performed the same function as *Live from Lincoln Center*, which developed a new audience by broadcasting opera on television. Several years ago I was in Rochester, which had planned four or five performances of *La Bohème*—and *Live from Lincoln Center*'s first broadcast performance was *Bohème*! The Rochester Opera Company was devastated. They feared their audiences would stay home and watch *Bohème* on television and never come to see their performances.

Well, what happened was the reverse of what they expected. That season was oversold, overbooked, and there were more requests for seats than ever before because everyone who had seen *La Bohème* on television wanted to see it live. And I believe that *The Telephone Hour*, through its many years of broadcasting, helped to promote the performing arts, and its influence remains with us to this day. I am very happy to join my voice in saluting *The Telephone Hour*.

Kitty Carlisle Hart

Kitty Carlisle Hart is an actress and singer with a record of achievement in the arts and public service. She is currently serving her fourteenth year as chairman of the New York State Council on the Arts.

# RADIO AND TELEVISION: A TELEPHONE HOUR OVERVIEW

by Robert Sherman

Precisely at 8:00 p.m. on Monday, April 29, 1940, a charming little waltz theme sounded on the NBC radio network. “The Bell System is glad you’ve tuned your radio to this station,” announcer Floyd Mack said, “because we’re starting a new series of musical programs which we hope will give you much pleasure.”

From that modest beginning, *The Telephone Hour* began its historic broadcast mission. For eighteen seasons on network radio, then another ten on prime-time national television, the series swept away the elitist connotations of classical music, introducing a generation of Americans with equal enthusiasm to the world’s most distinguished artists and most promising young talents.

“It was a way in which all of America could share an enriching experience,” renowned pianist Lorin Hollander recalled. Hollander, a child prodigy, was twelve years old when he made his 1956 *Telephone Hour* debut. “Even as a boy, the impact of reaching so many people was not lost on me. I sensed what it meant to touch so many millions of listeners at the same moment and the extraordinary power of that potential.”

The power would eventually be used well, but its potential was not fully apparent until the show’s third season. For the first two years, there were only two regulars—tenor James Melton and soprano Francia White—with Donald Voorhees conducting a chorus and what would henceforth be known as the Bell Telephone Orchestra. Far from a pickup ensemble, this was a dedicated cadre of New York free-lance musicians; in fact, twenty-nine of the fifty-seven players stayed with the orchestra throughout its radio life.

On April 27, 1942, *The Telephone Hour* radio program switched formats to a “Great Artists Series,” featuring a different soloist each week. True to the subtitle, the first guest was Jascha Heifetz. The legendary violinist’s fifty-four appearances would eventually stand as a series record, although soprano Lily Pons, who sang at least once every season from 1942 to 1957, wound up a close second with fifty-one.

American dramatic soprano Eileen Farrell, who began her career in radio, declared, “The thrill of having sung on *The Telephone Hour* (more than twenty-five times) is one of the greatest experiences of my career.” Her feeling was echoed by pianist Grant Johannesen. “I have no idea why they liked me so much,” he said, “but I played on sixteen radio broadcasts and several of the television shows as well, and it was always rewarding. Wallace Magill (the show’s producer from late 1941 through its final radio broadcast June 30, 1958) was astute enough to let me present more than just the Tchaikovsky concerto and other



*James Melton*



*Frits Kreisler*

super-popular pieces. I remember with especial delight doing the finale of the d'Indy *Symphony on a French Mountain Air* which was hardly known at all in those days."

And what days those were. Ferruccio Tagliavini, Maggie Teyte, Renata Tebaldi, and Michael Rabin, an incredible fourteen-year-old violinist, all made their radio debuts on *The Telephone Hour*. In 1951, Marian Anderson introduced "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands," which quickly became her signature piece. More than fifteen years later, the contralto recalled, "I received a tremendous number of calls about it." Victoria de los Angeles, the great operatic soprano, sang "Depuis le Jour" twice on *The Telephone Hour*, but never on any other public stage.

**T**he radio days of *The Telephone Hour* also boasted such musicians as Bing Crosby and Benny Goodman, who were crossover artists long before the word entered our musical lexicon. The program also may have had a hand in a celebrated crossover in the other direction. Donald Voorhees was surprised when Rodgers and Hammerstein not only came to several of the broadcasts featuring the Metropolitan Opera's Ezio Pinza, but asked him if the basso were flexible, if he were a good actor, and if he learned things quickly. One can only assume the answers were affirmative since Pinza was signed as the star of *South Pacific* with the right to continue to sing on *The Telephone Hour* specified in his Broadway contract.

Fritz Kreisler, one of the last holdouts toward radio performances, changed his mind one evening as he sat listening to one of the broadcast concerts. "That's the program I'd like to make my debut on," he told his wife Harriet. When the big day came, just after his sixty-ninth birthday, it made the front page of *The New York Times*: "Radio Finally Lures Kreisler and His Violin." Kreisler returned eighteen times over the next half-dozen years, eventually choosing *The Telephone Hour* for his final public appearance on March 6, 1950.

Five years later, the violinist taped a brief tribute (in the course of a radio series I scripted called *Encores from The Telephone Hour*) to conductor Donald Voorhees, a message not actually broadcast until 1968. "I certainly derived much pleasure in *The Telephone Hours* with you," Kreisler said in his gentle, courtly manner. "They left a great and kind reminiscence in my brain."

Not all farewells were equally happy. Like Kreisler, Josef Hofmann, universally acknowledged as one of the world's most brilliant pianists, made his nationwide radio debut on *The Telephone Hour*. Unfortunately, at the time of his last appearance in 1947, a week before his

seventy-first birthday, Hofmann's powers were in severe decline. After the broadcast, when one of his former students went backstage to greet him, Hofmann held up his hands pleadingly. "Don't say anything," he told her. "Please don't say a word." It was a heartbreaking moment. And true. The former student was my mother, Nadia Reisenberg, and I was there with her.

In a 1969 *Encores* program, Voorhees recalled an earlier and more whimsical experience with Hofmann. "His only movie appearance was in a film about *The Telephone Hour*," he said. "We recorded all the music one day, then photographed the actual performance the next. Except it didn't work with Hofmann. 'I never play anything the same way twice,' he said, 'so how can I recapture the exact mood I was in yesterday?' That was it—we had to record the whole thing over again."

Retakes are well and good for film, but *The Telephone Hour* was live. In fact, until tape took over in 1949, it was live twice per evening. The whole program, broadcast from New York, was performed again three hours later to enable West Coast listeners to hear the show at 8:00 p.m. Pacific time. Under the circumstances, there were remarkably few disasters. For instance, Heifetz broke his E string in the middle of a piece, but in time-honored tradition, he simply grabbed the concertmaster's fiddle and finished the number with no further incident.

It took a while, however, for all concerned to see the humor of the October 10, 1949 performance. Guimar Novaes was making her debut on the show, and after the concerto performance, with the audience still applauding, Floyd Mack announced her planned encore, only to find she had unexpectedly left the stage, not to return. There was a moment of confused silence, after which *The Telephone Hour* theme burst forth, followed by a quickly improvised script addition and a reprise of one of the orchestral numbers. After the sign-off, when producer Magill rushed backstage, he got a very simple explanation from the Brazilian pianist: "I didn't play the concerto that well, so no encore tonight!" As it turned out, that debut was also Madame Novaes's final appearance on *The Telephone Hour*.

Sometimes the studio audience heard more than the home listeners. When the famed duo-pianists Bartlett and Robertson were the featured soloists on July 6, 1942, the producers were notified that an air-raid drill had been called in the middle of the broadcast. The two artists were equal to the challenge—they played after the program ended and continued until the "all-clear" announcement allowed the folks to go home.



*(LEFT TO RIGHT) Raymond Massey, Walter S. Gifford (then president of AT&T), Helen Traubel, and Donald Voorhees*



*(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT TO RIGHT) Maria Tallchief and Rudolf Nureyev,  
Joan Sutherland, Harry Belafonte, Maurice Chevalier, and Robert Preston*



Contralto Cloe Elmo, on the other hand, had the dubious distinction of being the only soloist to perform a *Telephone Hour* broadcast that was never aired, due to a last-minute decision to cover a political convention. Thus on July 12, 1948, the studio audience was the only recipient of that show's performance, although Elmo's live repeat three hours later for the West Coast audience did go on as scheduled.

Despite the title, only two of the 935 radio *Telephone Hour* shows lasted an entire hour. The first, in 1947, marked the 100th anniversary of the birth of Alexander Graham Bell, featuring guest performers Jascha Heifetz and Helen Traubel along with Raymond Massey reciting a special dramatic piece. The second, in 1955, marked the beginning of the series' sixteenth year on the air and featured some of its most popular guests, including Lily Pons, José Iturbi, Eileen Farrell, Brian Sullivan, and Michael Rabin.

**T**he half-hour length of *The Telephone Hour* posed problems for producer, conductor, and soloists. "I always felt a little guilty about having to make cuts in great music," Donald Voorhees confessed, "but time was of the essence in the old radio days, and it was either make it shorter or not play it at all." Lorin Hollander agreed. "It became something of a family joke. The first question after we chose the piece was 'How do we cut it?'"

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It was during the radio days, specifically on June 29, 1949, that Jascha Heifetz and the Bell Telephone Orchestra joined for an unusual experiment from NBC's Studio 6B: a closed-circuit simulcast connecting radio to the newfangled medium of television. Nothing seemed to come of it at the time, but nine years and one day later, June 30, 1958, Theodor Uppman sang *The Telephone Hour*'s radio swan song. "As I remember it," he said, "there were no tearful farewells on that last show, but we were all very sorry to see it end. The whole series was handled in a superior way, and I felt very fortunate to be included." In any case, the stage was now set for the small screen.

If nothing else, the move to television made the program title come true at last, when on January 12, 1959, the show became *The Bell Telephone Hour* and went on the air from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. eastern time. But indeed there was more. During that first television season, the series presented an extraordinary array of international artists: Maurice Evans reading the Ogden Nash verses for Saint-Saëns's *Carnival of the Animals*; Renata Tebaldi singing Puccini arias; Grant Johannesen playing Gershwin's Piano Concerto in F; Eileen Farrell performing the "Liebestod" from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*; and José Iturbi, who

“...for its amazing total of twenty-eight years,  
The Telephone Hour made an indelible mark on  
America’s cultural awareness...”

anticipated the original instrument movement by a decade or more, playing the harpsichord for a couple of Rameau pieces, then a nineteenth-century piano for a Chopin waltz.

Added to the new musical mix were such pop, jazz, and folk stars as Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington, and Harry Belafonte, and taking advantage of the visual dimension, there was a significant new emphasis on dance. The first season featured such dancers as Melissa Hayden, Jacques D’Amboise, Maria Tallchief, and André Eglevsky.

From 1959 to 1960 and through the following six seasons, variety continued to be *The Bell Telephone Hour* hallmark. The dozen or so biweekly programs fused every style of music and presented such performing legends as Louis Armstrong, Maurice Chevalier, Mischa Elman, Gregor Piatigorsky, Ginger Rogers, and Andrés Segovia. In January 1960, Ray Bolger, Ethel Merman, Bea Lillie, and Benny Goodman teamed up for a show titled “The Four of Us”; two weeks later, Carl Sandburg narrated Copland’s “A Lincoln Portrait” (on a program also featuring Julie Andrews, Victoria de los Angeles, and Nanette Fabray).

The February 25, 1964 celebration of *The Telephone Hour*’s 100th broadcast was aired on both radio and television. Donald Voorhees welcomed master pianist Robert Casadesus, who specifically left France to make his American television debut, playing Bach’s Concerto for Three Pianos with his wife Gaby and son Jean. Never a series to rest on its family laurels, *The Telephone Hour* promptly introduced the father/son Soviet violinists David and Igor Oistrakh two weeks later, both in their first American television appearance.

With the advent of the 1966-1967 season, however, came another format change, the variety programs yielding to so-called “feature hours” that focused on a particular artist or concept. The first of these, filmed on location in Italy, spotlighted Gian Carlo Menotti and his Spoleto Festival of Two Worlds and included comments and performances by pianists Sviatoslav Richter (another American debut) and John Browning, singers Shirley Verrett, Judith Blegen, and John Reardon, and conductors Werner Torkanowsky, Thomas Schippers, and Zubin Mehta. Later came documentaries on the opening of the new Met and the Aldeburgh, Tanglewood, and Comblain-la-Tour Jazz Festivals. I was privileged to be the scriptwriter for several of these programs, including “First Ladies of the Opera” starring the incredible quartet of Birgit Nilsson, Leontyne Price, Joan Sutherland, and Renata Tebaldi, and what proved to be *The Telephone Hour* finale, the 1968 Christmas show hosted by Victor Borge.

There was also an innovative switch in the commercial approach during those last two seasons. AT&T decided not to interrupt the program content at all, but rather to group its messages into a “Commercial Theatre” at the end of each hour. “To level with you,” AT&T vice president Walter Straley said, “*The Telephone Hour* is mostly a corporate whim. As a part of our advertising program it is difficult—nay, impossible—to justify. Now and then a corporation should divert itself from waving its banner for the attention of great masses of people and wave one fine banner simply because it deserves waving.”

Alas, that banner will not wave again. Still, for its amazing total of twenty-eight years, *The Telephone Hour* made an indelible mark on America’s cultural awareness, educating and enlightening a vast audience to the joys of fine music, giving important career boosts to hundreds of top-notch performers, and proudly maintaining a standard of excellence that has yet to be surpassed.



*Ray Bolger*

\* \* \* \* \*

No assessment of *The Telephone Hour* and *The Bell Telephone Hour* would be complete without a deep bow to Donald Voorhees. He gave the first radio downbeat in 1940, the last television cutoff in 1968, and in between served as mentor, friend, and guiding spirit to countless performers who played, sang, danced, and acted under his direction.

“He was extremely happy doing radio, but he enjoyed television equally as much,” Marni Voorhees, the conductor’s widow, said. “I think Don’s greatest satisfaction was knowing that he brought so many stars of magnitude to the show. Heifetz, Pons, Rubinstein, all those famous people appeared with him one after the other, and bringing those wonderful artists to audiences that just wouldn’t have had any other way of encountering them was his special pride and joy.

“The other thing that pleased Don enormously,” she continued, “was working with young people. He was very fond of the kids he introduced on the shows, like Lorin Hollander and Michael Rabin, and felt that he had been partly responsible for getting their careers started.”

Hollander, for one, agrees. “Many of the people who came to my concerts in those days did so because of the broadcast exposure, especially on television. That was part of the excitement of putting classical music on network prime time, in slots which heretofore had been given over to variety or comedy shows. Television was still magical. People bought every product that was advertised, and they bought classical music too, simply because they had been exposed to it and something about it touched them.”

For Hollander, the Voorhees influence was clearly an advantage. “He was the dearest, sweetest, kindest man to me,” he continued. “Truly a loving, warmhearted, caring human being who stayed part of my life well into my twenties. When I worked with Don, I had an overriding sense of calm, emphatically not the stage fright nerves I would experience later in my life. As a matter of fact, it was shocking to me, as a child, to see how nervous *he* was before a performance. Nonetheless, I felt unending and endearing care and love from that man every time I was with him.”

Grant Johannesen echoed the praise. “*The Telephone Hour* was certainly a tremendous boost to my career,” he said. “I was another of the young ones, and I found the excitement and even the tension of live broadcast very stimulating. Now I’d think twice about it, but at that age, I absorbed it all readily. I also credit Donald Voorhees with making the



*Donald Voorhees conducting the Bell Telephone Orchestra*

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atmosphere surprisingly comfortable. He had a very suave manner on the podium, and offstage too, he made things very pleasant.”

The Voorhees legacy remains fresh, his place in the annals of broadcasting history altogether secure. The Allentown Symphony, which he founded and conducted for a quarter of a century, has established the Donald Voorhees Young Artists Awards to help talented singers and instrumentalists succeed. Somehow, I cannot help thinking he would be especially pleased to be remembered that way.

Robert Sherman is the executive producer for WQXR in New York and the author of *Nadia Reisenberg—An Artist's Scrapbook*, a book based on the life of his mother.



*Lily Pons with the Bell Telephone Orchestra*

# THE TELEPHONE HOUR REIGN ON RADIO

by Thomas A. DeLong

On Sunday, February 4, 1940, *The New York Times* informed readers of a probable new music series to be undertaken by a well-known corporation that had previously avoided radio as an advertising medium. The newspaper's radio section, "Studio News and Notes," reported, "Several program prospectuses have been submitted to the American Telephone and Telegraph Company which, according to the broadcasters, is considering the sponsorship of a nationwide network of telephone wires that may combine two or three of the major networks." Not an insignificant project for the "colossus of talk."

Two of the suggestions were thought to be most promising: the first, a symphonic string ensemble with slumber music for broadcast between 11:00 p.m. and midnight; the second, a variety show similar to a summer series heard the previous season featuring Donald Voorhees's orchestra, with soloists James Melton and Francia White. AT&T and its advertising agency N.W. Ayer leaned toward the latter course as its first coast-to-coast commitment.

AT&T had played a key role in first bringing commercial radio into the home. Its pioneering station, WEAf in New York, broadcast a daily schedule of news, market reports, dramas, forums, and music. Especially good music. But when the newly formed NBC acquired the installation, the telephone company remained content to provide the technical know-how and facilities to link the country by radio lines. And so it prospered. From time to time, the idea of program sponsorship was discussed by AT&T executives. But the question arose: why should a regulated monopoly indulge in advertising? Did the company need to blow its own horn when there really was not significant competition for its services and equipment? However, by 1940 there apparently remained an untapped market—a segment of the United States lacking phones and not being adequately told of the advantages of installing one. Moreover, many existing AT&T subscribers were not fully aware of the service benefits at their fingertips. Once it decided what it should or could say about itself on the air, AT&T turned to the program formula.

The 1939 *Ford Summer Hour* with Donald Voorhees, James Melton, and Francia White met their criteria of a show with familiar classical music, integrated with an occasional lesser-known, yet serious composition. Although the brief *Ford* series had been aired on Sunday evenings at nine, AT&T opted for a Monday night position next to the long-established *Voice of Firestone*, with its parallel format of fine music performed by outstanding singers. AT&T seems to have wished to avoid a place on the so-called "Sunday cultural ghetto." Here, many musical features ranged from the ultra-highbrow and noncommercial *NBC*

*String Symphony*, to the solidly middle-ground and somewhat staid *American Album of Familiar Music*, and to the broadly beamed and zesty *Manhattan Merry-Go-Round*. Thus, the award-winning, long-running *Telephone Hour* found a niche on Monday's lineup that would characterize NBC's offering as a night of fine music from such outstanding artists as Pinza, Pons, Iturbi, Kullman, Tibbett, Gedda, Tourel, Segovia, Heifetz, and Bjoerling.

According to *Variety's* observer, the initial broadcast on April 29, 1940 from NBC's Cathedral Studio at 711 Fifth Avenue shaped up "like a hardy newcomer likely to be around for quite a bit." This critic noted what was good for Ford, also an Ayer account, was good enough for AT&T. The results were gratifying, and the entire show, he added, "should please even those not musically inclined."

Company president Walter Gifford spoke, welcoming listeners to the new show and stressing the company's tradition of courtesy and service. He referred to the twenty-one million phones in the United States and the 750,000 phone company stockholders. Overall, the commercial message, no more than an institutional plug, was deftly geared and brief.

The musical selections met with approval. Tenor James Melton sang "Hills of Homes" and lyric soprano Francia White rendered Delibes's "Maid of Cadiz." Together, they performed the love duet "O Soave Fanciulla" from *La Bohème*. A vocal chorus presented a medley of Stephen Foster works and the Voorhees orchestra played a Welsh folk song.

With the considerable corporate resources behind him, conductor Voorhees readily convinced his sponsor to augment his orchestra into symphonic proportions. The aggregation expanded to embrace fifty-seven players, one of the largest radio orchestras apart from the ninety-two-piece NBC Symphony. Voorhees's musicians came from the leading symphonies of the world. Lucien Schmit, for one, had been first cellist in the New York Symphony Orchestra under Walter Damrosch. Thirty-four members, including concertmaster Yacob Zayde, started with the series and stayed with it over a dozen years.

From the start, the program won a sizable weekly audience between six and nine million listeners, at a cost, proudly noted N. W. Ayer, of approximately one cent per listener for most broadcasts. A leading critic observed that Jimmy Melton had not sung better at any time during his radio career than on *The Telephone Hour*. Undoubtedly he was acquiring valuable experience both in concert and opera repertoire. In fact, he attained his goal of singing at the Met, debuting there as Tamino in *The Magic Flute*, in December 1942.





*Francina White*



*Donald Voorhees and Jascha Heifetz*

*“The Telephone Hour did not brook any  
barriers, musical or racial. It became one of the  
few prime-time series to present a black  
artist on a regular basis.”*

James Melton’s voice blended well with Francina White’s, and their duets from light and grand opera were among the most memorable moments of each broadcast. White had established her reputation on the Pacific coast with the Los Angeles and San Francisco opera companies before her first major series with Nelson Eddy on the *Palmolive Beauty Box Theatre*. The career of the diminutive soprano virtually ended with *The Telephone Hour*, for in 1946 she was stricken with chronic arthritis and unable to continue performing.

Above all, the success of the show stemmed from radio veteran Donald Voorhees. Born in Allentown, Pennsylvania in 1903, Voorhees studied music at an early age and by twelve had his own orchestra. In 1925, while directing the pit band for the *Earl Carroll Vanities* on Broadway, he discovered the wireless and soon formed a unit that broadcast from the theater. Two years later he joined the fledgling Columbia network as a house conductor (together with Howard Barlow, future maestro of *The Voice of Firestone*, and such staff musicians as Red Nichols, Elizabeth Lennox, Charles Harrison, and Ossip Giskin). In the 1930s Voorhees held sway over the popular music segments of the *Ed Wynn* and *Show Boat* programs and directed the orchestra for the prestigious *Cavalcade of America* dramatizations. When he could not find anything to fit as background or “bridge” music for the *Cavalcade*, he composed it himself. When it came time for *The Telephone Hour* to have a signature theme, he composed “The Bell Waltz,” a charming and widely recognized piece that opened and closed the program.

Contralto Elizabeth Lennox once described Voorhees as “an animated conductor who simmers with nerves and excitement and never appears to rest or relax.” He appeared to be the embodiment of the public’s idea of a temperamental maestro with long hair that was continually falling into his eyes. He had a volcanic style of conducting. But in spite of his fire, he was a friendly leader with a flair for inventing new orchestral effects.

Voorhees conducted with a wooden pencil. Upon his tenth anniversary on *The Telephone Hour* podium, his musicians gave him a silver version of his beloved “stick.” During the first rehearsal with it, he whacked the silver pencil-baton so hard on the music rack that the engineer requested he go back to the less elegant, but less noisy, pencil.

*The Telephone Hour*—a misnomer as it only filled a half hour—generated comparatively high ratings each season. It vied successfully opposite the popular *Lux Radio Theatre* from CBS Hollywood. It held firm against a growing attraction for quiz and game shows that brought

forth three new and durable programs that season: *Take It or Leave It*, *The Quiz Kids*, and *Truth or Consequences*. In concert music, *The Telephone Hour* gradually outpaced its closest rivals, *Ford Sunday Evening Hour* (which debuted in 1928) and *The Voice of Firestone*. Indeed, on one particular Monday night in 1940, both the Firestone and AT&T programs offered listeners back-to-back renditions of “I’ll Take You Home Again, Kathleen.” Overall, the Voorhees aggregation presented more solid works—those by Rimsky-Korsakov, Bizet, Verdi, Debussy—than Alfred Wallenstein’s Firestone orchestra (circa 1940), which seemingly emphasized Victor Herbert, Johann Strauss, Franz Lehar, and Sigmund Romberg.

Not long after the program moved into Radio City and the newly constructed NBC Studio 6A, AT&T and Voorhees revamped the format. They dropped the ongoing vocal duo and chorus and inaugurated a “Great Artists Series” with a different soloist each week, complete with printed programs for the studio audience of several hundred music lovers. A force exerting a pivotal role in the switch was the show’s new producer, Wallace Magill. He had been interested in music since his high school days in Ohio and later studied voice at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. In 1928 he came to New York and soon joined the music department at NBC. For nine years he sang on radio and in concerts and churches. In the late 1930s he returned to the network as staff producer of musical programs and in late 1941 became producer-director of *The Telephone Hour*. Magill, who earlier worked as Jascha Heifetz’s personal manager for several seasons, chose the violin virtuoso as the first soloist for the new format. At the beginning of the program’s third season on April 27, 1942, Heifetz chose selections ranging from a Bach interlude to a gypsy air and from a Tchaikovsky waltz to a Russian melody.

With a half dozen or more appearances each year, Jascha Heifetz would become the most frequently heard artist on the series and, by all accounts, Voorhees’s favorite Monday night guest. He was often brought back for important program anniversaries and telephone company milestones. For a special hour presentation on the centennial of Alexander Graham Bell, he shared the mike with soprano Helen Traubel and actor Raymond Massey.

He also helped to salute the seventy-fifth anniversary of the first commercial telephone exchange, which took place in 1878. Frequently, Voorhees traveled to the West Coast to accommodate Heifetz, an undertaking that required mustering musicians from the Los Angeles Philharmonic, as well as from local radio stations and film studios.



*Helen Traubel*

*The Telephone Hour's* West Coast announcer-commentator Richard Joy remembers one of Heifetz's Hollywood appearances well. As he was performing a particular composition, there was a pause for a long tutti passage from the orchestra. At that moment, the E string on his Amati broke. The sound was like a whip, and the studio audience gasped collectively. Heifetz barely blinked, re-fingered, and finished his piece. "The next number featured the orchestra, so Jascha and his personal accompanist Emmanuel Bay left the stage and tried to re-string the fiddle; there wasn't enough time," Joy said. "So he completed the program using the Stradivarius offered by the concertmaster. . . . He grimaced as he played the first notes—there *was* a difference!"

Along with Heifetz, the West Coast regulars in the 1940s were John Charles Thomas and Nelson Eddy who, after his series of light opera films with Jeanette MacDonald, was the biggest vocal attraction. Broadcasts from New York to the West called for a "live" repeat three hours later at midnight—a procedure that continued until transcribed versions were made and aired, starting in April 1949.

The program undoubtedly had the choice of the foremost artists of opera, the concert hall, and radio. Grace Moore, Lily Pons, Helen Jepson, Licia Albanese, Lawrence Tibbett, Risè Stevens, Ezio Pinza, Gladys Swarthout, Bidu Sayão, and Blanche Thebom came from the top ranks of the Met. José Iturbi, Alec Templeton, Josef Hofmann, Robert Casadesus, Arthur Rubinstein, and Clifford Curzon represented the predominant masters of the keyboard. Apart from his weekly stint on *Information, Please!* pianist Oscar Levant, an early "crossover" performer, was a frequent guest, usually presenting a special all-Gershwin show.

*The Telephone Hour* did not brook any barriers, musical or racial. It became one of the few prime-time series to present a black artist on a regular basis. Marian Anderson first came to the program on September 14, 1942 with a selection of sacred songs (Hummel's "Allelujah"), spirituals ("My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord"), and operatic arias (Massenet's "Pleurez, Pleurez, Mes VeuX"). This broadcast, as did many during the war years, ended with the guest artist leading the studio audience in "The Star Spangled Banner."

A contralto with a phenomenal range of almost three octaves, Anderson sang with remarkable intonation and timbre. Her spirit of warmth and reverence registered superbly across the land in those troubled times. Seven weeks after her *Telephone Hour* debut, she



*Marian Anderson*

returned to the program and thereafter sang with Voorhees again and again. By the end of the decade, Anderson compiled twenty-six memorable broadcasts. Only Heifetz and Pons completed more.

These artists, and indeed, most guests, were given their choice of selections for the half hour. But as musical director, Voorhees apparently had the final say. In a 1943 interview, he provided an insight into his approach, emphasizing there were no sacred cows in his radio music. “The conductor will realize that timing, in the theatrical sense of contrast and mood change, is all-important and accordingly he will have no hesitancy about playing Herbert or Friml right after a composition by Beethoven. But in doing so he will have sound programming as his only objective, and sound programming calls for the selection of numbers that will please varying tastes and will give satisfaction with the program as a whole.” By tuning in each week, the average musically inclined listener “enrolled” in an abbreviated music appreciation course. Their “pedagogues” were Voorhees and the world’s most accomplished artists. Moreover, by familiarity and repetition, the program made good music an indelible part of a common culture, “shared by the fisherman in Maine, rancher in New Mexico, banker in Oregon, and housewife in Alabama,” as the program’s announcer said.

No radio sponsor seemed more attuned to the sound quality the program projected over the air. It had to be as clear as a bell. After all, telephony had combined with radio to make chain broadcasting feasible. There could be no shortfalls on the production of music. *The Telephone Hour* had to be in the vanguard for the transmission of music with complete clarity and fidelity of tone. The placement of microphones evolved from many hours of experimentation in cooperation with AT&T engineers, and it was strictly adhered to whether the broadcast emanated from Radio City, Sunset & Vine, or Carnegie Hall. A directional microphone on a 7½-foot-high stand stood about eight feet in front of the first row of the thirty-four-member string section. The pedestal of the mike rested on a section of portable hardwood floor, not unlike the type of roll-up slats used for dancing. Most performers stood on this hardwood section; Heifetz claimed it both “brightened” his violin and reflected sound upward. Approximately ten to fifteen feet above the audience at a distance of about twenty-five feet in front of the stage apron was a suspended second microphone. This picked up both the orchestra and the natural sound of the auditorium. “With only two mikes thus situated,” N. W. Ayer executive Glenhall Taylor recalled, “the sound caused such complimentary remarks as ‘who needs stereo?’”



Undoubtedly the sound quality convinced the last major virtuoso to reconsider his antipathy toward the medium. Beloved violinist and composer Fritz Kreisler had avoided the air, shuddering at the thought he might be competing with static or switched off in the middle of a piece. Music, he said, is not tap water. As early as 1932 he was convinced that a great deal of music, especially the great concertos, would have to be performed much differently for the microphone. "I have heard my colleagues broadcast and have not been favorably impressed." A decade later, and some sixty years after his debut at age ten in Vienna, he became a late convert to radio. Yet it was not the fee of \$4,000 or \$5,000 that lured him, Kreisler said, but rather the thought that, without radio, many people eager to hear him would not be able to. A press release proclaimed, "the last of the major prophets of interpretative musical art to consent to appear," and Kreisler performed with the Bell Telephone Orchestra on July 17, 1944. He opened the proceedings with Albéniz's Tango in D and his own *Caprice Viennois*. Appearing in a black, full-dress suit, in contrast to the white summer jackets of the musicians, he was greeted just before airtime by resounding applause from the capacity audience in the studio. While music commentator Floyd Mack thanked him after the final number, Kreisler lingered at one side of the orchestra, then walked up to the front and joined in the closing bars of "The Star Spangled Banner." This was undoubtedly one of the more memorable thrills of the evening.

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The series single-handedly regenerated an American career for English concert and opera star Maggie Teyte. During the war she had been confined to engagements in the British Isles. Producer Magill had not personally witnessed her singing, although she was known to him and Voorhees from phonograph records. She was in her late fifties but remained the world's foremost interpreter of French songs. Magill took the gamble of bringing her to New York, and the long shot more than paid off. Soprano Teyte made a brilliant U.S. radio debut and returned to *The Telephone Hour* microphone a dozen times.

Another major British artist made her first postwar American appearance with Voorhees. Pianist Myra Hess performed Bach, Glazunov, and Mozart on October 28, 1946, and she added a short speech thanking the American public for the help they gave during the Blitz. Also from Europe was lyric tenor Ferruccio Tagliavini, who sang in the United States for the first time on *The Telephone Hour*. His appearance came just weeks after his highly acclaimed debut in January of 1947 at the Met as Rodolfo in *La Bohème*. He electrified listeners with arias by Donizetti, Puccini, and Leoncavallo.



*Esio Pinza (FAR LEFT) with announcer Floyd Mack and Donald Voorhees conducting the Bell Telephone Orchestra*

Ezio Pinza, an operatic favorite among program listeners since 1943, had caused a sensation as the leading man in the Broadway musical *South Pacific*. A month after the sellout show opened, Magill scored a tremendous coup. He persuaded its producers to close the show for one night and allow costars Pinza and Mary Martin to perform an entire program of songs from the Rodgers and Hammerstein production on *The Telephone Hour*. Later in the year Pinza returned, and in a departure from the usual format, the studio audience was given the opportunity to choose a selection for Pinza to sing. Predictably, it requested "Some Enchanted Evening." Subsequently, in April of 1950, he appeared as a guest on the program's tenth anniversary celebration and sang arias by Mozart, Donizetti, and Mussorgsky. For this milestone, the program was broadcast from Carnegie Hall for the first time. The new surroundings dictated an augmented orchestra of seventy-five musicians and a large chorus of sixty voices. The series returned to Carnegie regularly during the 1950s, with such guests as Igor Gorin, Jussi Bjoerling, Eileen Farrell, Isaac Stern, George London, Victoria de los Angeles, Grant Johannesen, Jarmila Novotna, William Warfield, Lucine Amara, Leonard Pennario, Renata Tebaldi, Mildred Miller, and Brian Sullivan.

*The Telephone Hour* had no qualms about mounting a divertissement once or twice a year. In the waning months of the war, it brought in the WAVES Singing Platoon, conducted by Ray Charles, and aired an entire show of American songs by Bing Crosby, the most popular crooner of the day and recent Academy Award-winner for *Going My Way*. In 1946, "King of Swing" Benny Goodman and his sextet provided a distinct change with "After You've Gone." Benny also soloed on Rimsky-Korsakov's "Hymn to the Sun" and Weber's Concertino for Clarinet and Orchestra. In 1947, actor Basil Rathbone became one of the first non-musical guests chosen and narrated a full half-hour musical dramatization of *Peter and the Wolf*. In 1949 the sixty-six-voice Yale Glee Club celebrated its 100th anniversary by performing "'Neath the Elms," "Down the Field," and "The Whiffenpoof Song." And a few seasons later, comedian Fred Allen narrated a repeat of the musical fairy tale *Peter and the Wolf*.

Donald Voorhees occasionally combined two musical talents from the same family. Tagliavini and his wife Pia Tassinari, a soprano, sang together on a half dozen broadcasts. Robert Casadesus and his concert pianist wife Gaby shared the microphone, along with their son Jean, also a keyboard soloist. Pinza, his daughter Claudia, a soprano, and tenor Glenn Burris performed the trio from the last act of Gounod's *Faust* in December 1947.

Perhaps the program fell short in the area of new works. Few original compositions were aired—a situation common to most commercial presentations. However, there was an ambitious symphonic suite for solo voices, piano, chorus, and orchestra titled “Pilgrims” by Irving Caesar. Lily Pons introduced “Song of a Young Iranian Girl” by Russian Leon Knipper. Bidu Sayão sang the first presentation of “The Children’s Letter” to mark the opening of the United Nations. Heifetz played “Carmen Fantasy,” a work based on the music from *Carmen* and orchestrated by Franz Waxman. Spanish guitarist Andrés Segovia gave the radio premiere of the first movement of the Concerto in D by Castelnuovo-Tedesco. Voorhees introduced an orchestra choral piece titled “Washington March” for Independence Day 1957.

By 1951, Monday meant good music on NBC, starting at 8:00 p.m. with the *Railroad Hour*, a streamlined vehicle for well-remembered operettas and musicals. Following *The Voice of Firestone* and *The Telephone Hour*, *The Band of America*, a forty-eight-piece aggregation specializing in stirring march techniques, rounded out two full hours of music. The *Firestone* show now reached a growing visual audience; it had become a “simulcast” aired both on television as well as radio.

The availability of moderately priced television sets and the fast-growing lineup of daily video fare began to affect the airing of good music on radio. Several networks cut their classical music presentations as more and more of their home audience focused on the home screen. Television soon started to absorb every spare dollar the networks could lay their hands on. They claimed not enough people listened to good music and that those who did tune in did not demonstrate their support.

Only a comparative handful voiced complaints that the increasing dearth of fine music was a blind disservice on the part of the broadcast industry. Critic Jack Gould weighed the two mediums in terms of good music. “If there is one single type of television program which cannot hold a candle to the effectiveness of radio, it is the presentation of fine music addressed primarily to the ear.”

*The Telephone Hour* remained undaunted amid increasing departures of old favorites from the radio dial. Its music and institutional messages won wide acclaim and solid loyalty. During the war, the program offered a platform for the government to thank telephone employees for their vital part in the war effort and to urge telephone subscribers not to make unnecessary long-distance calls, especially to Washington. It provided a means to

*“The Telephone Hour remained undaunted  
amid increasing departures of old favorites from  
the radio dial.”*

introduce and demonstrate new technical developments by AT&T labs and the latest telephone set features. It told human interest stories in which the telephone and/or company employees played an unusual or inspirational, and sometimes, lifesaving role. Corporate milestones, such as the fifty millionth phone installation, were highlighted. Week after week, Floyd Mack and commercial announcer Tom Shirley shared the story and glory of the AT&T family with listeners. Prestigious awards were received or announced, including the George Foster Peabody Award for outstanding entertainment in music and the American Legion Award for highest cultural and educational standards.

The program continued well into its second decade with AT&T's staunch and somewhat sentimental loyalty to the medium which had done so much to build goodwill among the public. Established artists and rising new performers filled the roster, becoming one of the dwindling radio platforms for musicians after the NBC Symphony disbanded in 1954. In the summer of 1957 the program took its first summer “break.” Listeners wondered if it actually would return in the fall. But Voorhees and his fifty-seven players regrouped back in NBC's Studio 6A in October. It proved to be the last cycle of the long-cherished musical staple. On Monday June 30, 1958 *The Telephone Hour* gave its 935th and last concert and bade farewell to radio. Guest Theodor Uppman sang the final selection, Massenet's “Le Roi de Lahore.”

In eighteen years, the program missed only five broadcasts. Two were wartime cancellations; three were preemptions for political conventions. Shifting patterns of radio listening finally led to the end. Changes in listening habits, namely television, brought an increasing loss of audience, resulting in higher advertising costs per home reached. And thus *The Telephone Hour's* new hope for a wide audience beckoned. From 1958 to 1959 it announced four music specials on television, with equal emphasis on dance and folk music as well as serious concert music.

*The Telephone Hour* was the last of its kind on “live” network radio—to broadcasters, a beloved dinosaur that no longer fit the dial. Legions of fine music listeners lost a familiar “companion,” a welcomed cultural influence in their lives. When the final bell tolled and the old *Telephone Hour* rang no more, it truly signaled the end of a majestic reign.

Thomas A. DeLong is the author of the ASCAP award-winning *Mighty Music Box: The Golden Age of Musical Radio*; *POPS*, a biography of Paul Whiteman; and a forthcoming book on the first fifty years of radio and television quiz and game shows.



*Joan Sutherland*

# PRODUCING THE BELL TELEPHONE HOUR FOR TELEVISION

by Henry Jaffe

**T**he shadows are lengthening across my sun-splashed Beverly Hills garden as I start to write this. It's been one of those trademark California fall days—bright and notably warm.

But it's the excitement of one particular New York winter night—snowy and very cold—that I recall now. Memory takes me back more than thirty years to Monday, January 12, 1959. We were gathered in a huge old barn of a studio in Brooklyn to do our first live telecast of *The Bell Telephone Hour* on NBC.

Guest stars for our debut show were Harry Belafonte, Maurice Evans, Renata Tebaldi, George Balanchine's New York City Ballet, duo-pianists Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale, and the Baird Marionettes. The program was subtitled "Adventures in Music," but it was an adventure in much more, a high-class feast indeed.

Perhaps, as some chroniclers have written, we marked an important milestone in the relatively new medium of television that night. For me, as the show's executive producer, determinedly pursuing perfection, it was definitely a memorable evening.

In the following nine busy and creative years, *The Bell Telephone Hour* earned a prestigious reputation. We started out with what was then a somewhat novel premise—that there was definitely a place in television for great music, great dance, and the fine arts.

If we could present these things in the right way, in a popular form, we could appeal to mass audiences. I wanted to take great performers off the hallowed concert stages, out of the small expensive halls and the limited Broadway theaters, and put them right into America's living rooms.

We sought to provide something for everyone's taste—providing that taste was good! And, H. L. Mencken's famous theory notwithstanding, it usually was.

In its successful nine-season run, *The Bell Telephone Hour* documented the arts for television viewers in a way no program had done before, or has since. Of course, that's my slightly prejudiced opinion. But I'm happy to say there are a good number of more neutral critics who share it with me.

How did we manage this? There are a number of interesting answers. First, we operated under a deceptively simple, but firm rule—we always tried to get the best. Our goals were so high, we always had to stretch. It was seldom easy, but we persisted. And frequently we were greatly rewarded.

Next, we knew the value of having fine talent behind the cameras as well as in front of them.

We put together a great production team. It was composed of an interesting mix of seasoned veterans with impressive résumés and promising unknowns who would later become famous in their respective fields.

Our rehearsal pianist was a shy, young Juilliard student, still in his teens. His proud mother frequently altered hand-me-downs for him to wear at his piano recitals. His name was Marvin Hamlisch. Our choreographer was a youthful Herbert Ross.

One man who contributed greatly to our shows was Sol Hurok, the famed and flamboyant impresario. We hired him as a consultant and gave him an office. He could produce anything from a tremendous circus, to opera, to ballet. He brought us the brilliant Balanchine, the ultimate perfectionist. He brought us the great ballet companies from all over the world, the opera divas, the baritones, the tenors, and the great musicians like Andrés Segovia, Gregor Piatigorsky, José Iturbi, and Isaac Stern, to name only a few.

For our first four shows we enjoyed the services of the celebrated scenic and costume designer, Rouben Ter-Arutunian. In planning each show, I strongly encouraged originality and imagination. Ter-Arutunian had plenty of both, especially the night he caused a near panic among the quite proper and ever vigilant representatives of AT&T.

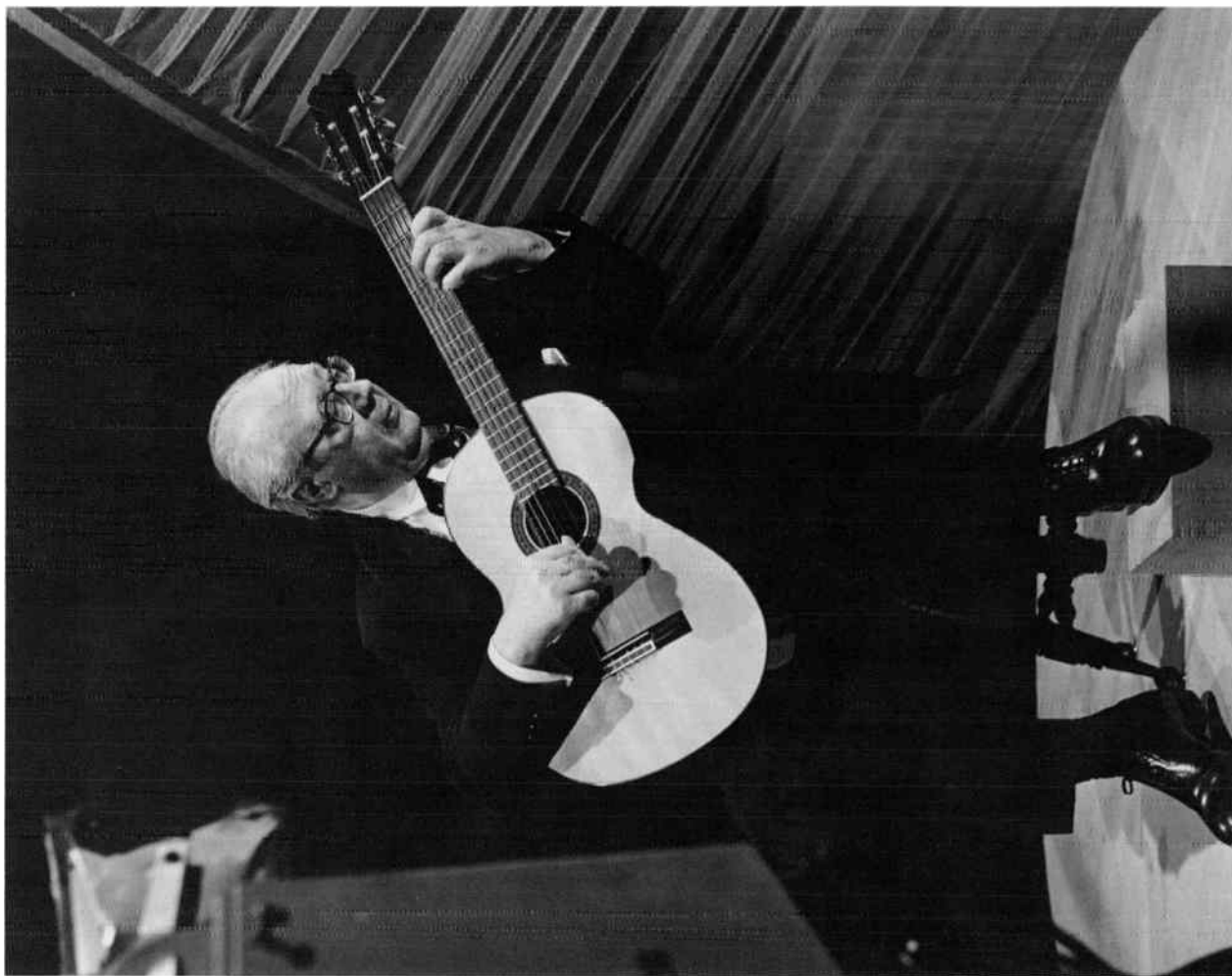
He had designed a costume for ballerina Melissa Hayden, who was dancing a role in *The Cage*. A lifelike serpent appeared to be coiled around her bodice, its head bobbing out from her bosom, the eyes glittering.

The boys from AT&T objected strenuously. They sent for me and a pair of scissors. I was ordered to cut off the offending head. I dutifully, if reluctantly, performed the surgery. But Ter-Arutunian had another snake up his sleeve. He quickly tacked a new head on moments before Melissa glided onstage.

Our show was live. There was nothing the executives could do but wring their hands and wish they could enclose those same hands around my neck. I recall trying to soothe them with the comment, "There'll come a time, probably years from now, when perhaps you'll be glad this happened." Now that many of the outstanding shows are being released on video-cassette, my prophecy may come true. Our serpent may intrigue viewers for generations to come.

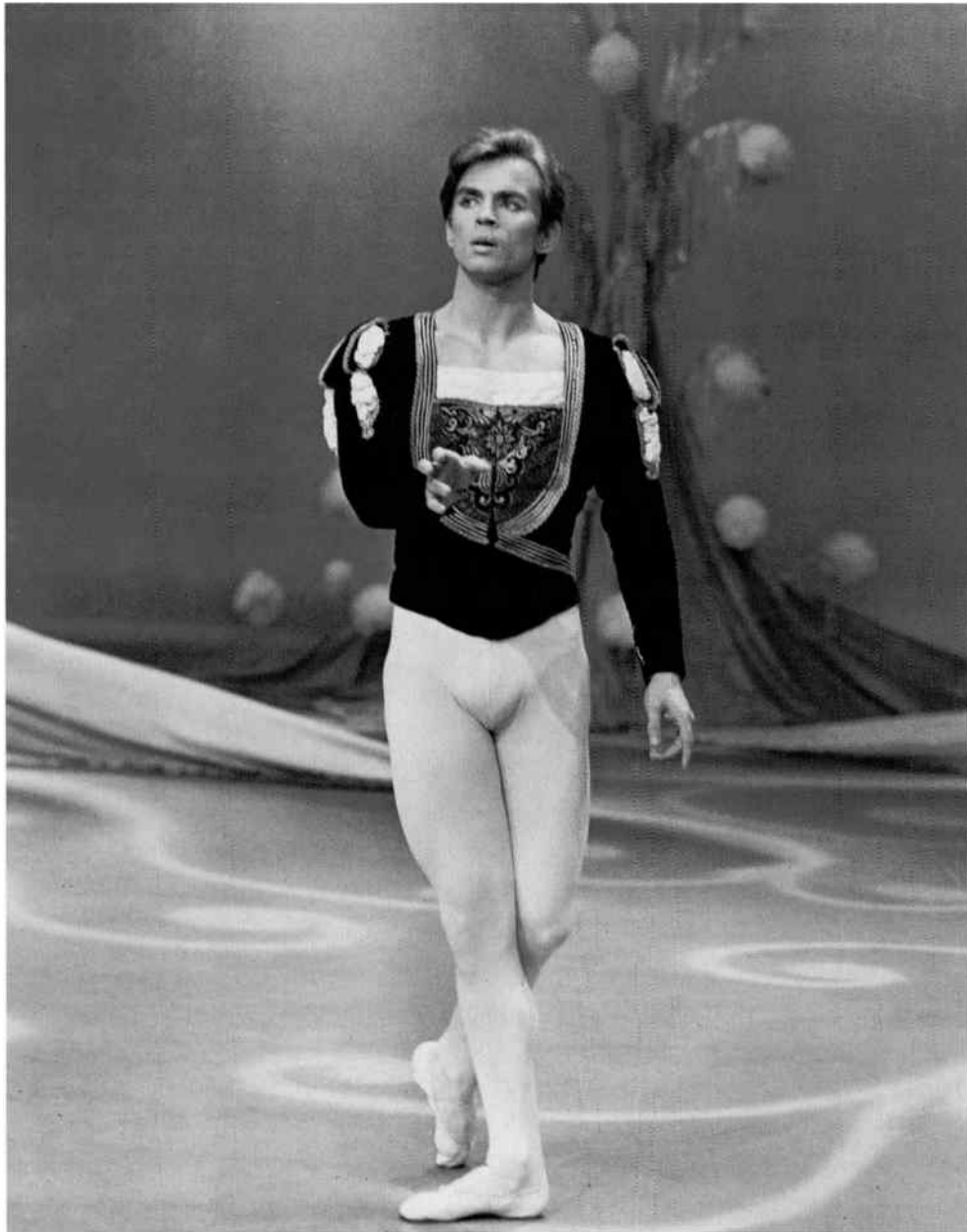
It all started in the fall of 1958. AT&T decided to wind up its eighteen seasons of radio broadcast of great classical music and make use of that "new medium," television. They





*Andrés Segovia*

*“One classical highlight was the American television debut of a relatively unknown performer from Russia. It was January of 1962....That night a young, almost incandescent Rudolf Nureyev shot across our stage like a blazing comet.”*



*Rudolf Nureyev*

invited a number of different producers to submit ideas for a program befitting their dignified image.

At that time I was already a year into producing the hit *The Dinah Shore Chevy Show*, which originated from NBC's Burbank studios every Sunday night. From the West Coast I was also producing *Shirley Temple's Storybook*, a monthly dramatization of famous fairy stories.

However, I was so enthusiastic about attempting such a unique program for AT&T that I managed to find time between the adventures of both Dinah and Shirley to work on a presentation with a bright, young man in my company, Mike Dann.

How did we get our ambitious project off the drawing board? In fact, we didn't have a drawing board. We had an easel. Literally.

We invested considerable money and commissioned a series of fine oil paintings, each one representing a segment of our proposed first four programs. We then filmed the paintings in proper sequence with an off-camera narration. In effect, we distilled the essence of the show into something completely visual. Instead of an elaborately written or verbal pitch, we simply resorted to that old adage—a picture (or, in this case, an inventive collection of pictures) is worth a thousand words.

When it was all put together, we invited AT&T over for a "screening." By the time it was over that New York fall afternoon I knew we had won out over all the other applicants. I was about to begin one of the most creative and rewarding periods in my long career.

At first the shows ran as a series of specials. Then we settled in as a regular biweekly or monthly program on the entire NBC network. The guest rosters would boggle the minds, if not the budgets, of today's producers.

Consider the talent that ranged from magnificent opera divas to top pop singers, classical ballerinas to zippy tap dancers, joyous jazz bands to celebrated concert virtuosos. Most were legendary in their respective fields. Others were destined to become so as the result of exposure to our audiences.

One classical highlight was the American television debut of a relatively unknown performer from Russia. It was January of 1962. We booked a last-minute substitute for the injured American ballet star, Erik Bruhn. That night a young, almost incandescent Rudolf

Nureyev shot across our stage like a blazing comet. The rest, of course, is history.

During the run of the show our themes varied. Different hosts presided over each hour. Some programs were built around holidays like Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Easter. Others dealt with seasons—we celebrated spring, winter, summer, and fall. Often we dealt with special topics—love, opening nights, western music, and jazz. Back in 1959 we were country before country was cool, featuring performers like Johnny Cash and Burl Ives.

**W**e saluted popular composers like Gershwin, Berlin, Porter, and Rodgers. Memorable programs honored the work of great lyricists like Oscar Hammerstein II and Alan Jay Lerner. We captured the magic of “Opening Night,” “Music in Manhattan,” “The American Girl,” and “The Younger Generation.”

We even marked Veterans Day with a rousing show that featured the U.S. Naval Academy Glee Club, the U.S. Marine Corps Choir, the U.S. Army Drum and Bugle Corps, and the riveting split-second routines of the Army Silent Drill Team.

Jazz received our serious attention. We presented Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, and Woody Herman. There was the special night we teamed Ella Fitzgerald and Duke Ellington, together for the first time on television.

Our costume and set designers ignored the then prevalent belief that television cameras could not photograph stark white. Duke was resplendent in white satin tie and tails. Ella was lovely in flowing white chiffon. We even painted the grand piano to match them. The result was dazzling, the whole show a breathtaking success.

There were so many exciting shows, so many magical moments, so many splendid stars who contributed greatly to those nine rich years. It is impossible for me to do any of them justice in this short space. There is not even room for a representative list.

Do I mention Yehudi Menuhin and not Benny Goodman? Leontyne Price and not Lena Horne, Jan Peerce and not Jack Jones, Jacques D’Amboise and not Ray Bolger, Maurice Chevalier and not Steve Lawrence, Helen Hayes and not Beatrice Lillie, Carl Sandburg and not Groucho Marx, The Mormon Tabernacle Choir and not the McGuire Sisters? It is frustrating.

It is rewarding to look back and find the programs have withstood the passage of time. I play the tapes and find them as fresh today as they were thirty years ago, confirming my belief

that the tenets that guided us then are just as valid now.

In putting together a total of 126 separate *Bell Telephone Hours*, we had the best of all possible worlds. We had a wonderful sponsor who put prestige before profit, quality before quantity, particularly when it came to ratings.

I shall always be grateful to AT&T for its staunch commitment. We managed to cover a wide spectrum, to open new doors for a generation of viewers.

Most of all, I want to thank all the great performers, who for nine years gave their all in a genuinely collaborative effort and in so doing helped to make television history.

Henry Jaffe is the originator and executive producer of *The Bell Telephone Hour*.



*Larry Douglas, Julie Andrews, and Carl Sandburg*



*Benny Goodman*

## THE BELL TELEPHONE HOUR IN A CHANGING WORLD

by Howard Kissel

On November 10, 1964, a week after Lyndon Johnson was elected president of the United States by a huge landslide, *The Bell Telephone Hour* paid tribute to Oscar Hammerstein II, the man who wrote the lyrics to such songs as “Some Enchanted Evening,” “The Last Time I Saw Paris,” “You’ll Never Walk Alone,” and “Cockeyed Optimist.”

Hammerstein’s friend Henry Fonda is the host. He does not sing, but with the orchestra playing in the background, he gives an eloquent reading of the lyrics of “Ol’ Man River.” Shortly before the program ends we hear a voice tape of Hammerstein, who died in 1960, speaking the lyrics of “Hello, Young Lovers.” The voice may lack an actor’s forcefulness, but the simplicity and strength of his convictions make a deep impression as he reads, “I know how it feels to have wings on your heels/ And to fly down a street in a trance—/ You fly down a street on a chance that you’ll meet/ And you meet, not really by chance.”

As Fonda pays Hammerstein a final, moving tribute, Richard Rodgers’s music for “Hello, Young Lovers”—a waltz—blends into the lilting strains of “The Bell Waltz,” heard on the nation’s airwaves for almost thirty years. It was composed by Donald Voorhees, who conducted the Bell Telephone Orchestra and was often its host. During the credits, as “The Bell Waltz” draws to a close, we hear a promo for the program that will appear in this time slot the following week, an NBC news special “Vietnam: It’s a Mad War,” which, the announcer emphasizes, will be “in color.” This “mad” war, of course, had played a major role in the recent presidential campaign. The defeat of the “militaristic” Barry Goldwater, it was thought, had insured that the Vietnam War would not get out of hand.

In retrospect there is a sad irony in the juxtaposition of Oscar Hammerstein’s sunny world and the mention of a war that would forever change the face of America and its culture. Four years later, when the Vietnam War had mushroomed beyond anyone’s expectations, it would have been inconceivable that a network would devote an hour to the lyrics of a man of such unbounded optimism and patriotism. By late 1968, these attitudes, which Hammerstein shared with the average American, were gravely imperilled: the Fonda on the public’s mind was Jane, and *The Telephone Hour*, which had mirrored the cultural mood of the nation since 1940, was about to go off the air.

In February of 1964, *The Telephone Hour* had celebrated its thousandth broadcast. (The count includes eighteen seasons on radio before the show moved to television in 1959.) The guests on the commemorative broadcast indicate the range of the program’s musical



*Ethel Merman*



concerns. From classical music came the distinguished family of French pianists—Robert, Gaby, and Jean Casadesus. The pop world was represented by Jack Cassidy and Shirley Jones, jazz by the legendary Count Basie, and ballet by Maria Tallchief.

This kind of grouping was standard on *The Telephone Hour*. A few weeks earlier, for instance, the lineup featured actor Robert Ryan (who was both host and narrator for Aaron Copland's "A Lincoln Portrait"), soprano Joan Sutherland, trumpeter Al Hirt, the Brothers Four, and members of the New York City Ballet, among them Suzanne Farrell in George Balanchine's "Concerto Barocco." The week before that there had been a tribute to Cole Porter, with hostess Ethel Merman, and a few weeks later, *The Telephone Hour* offered its viewers a rare appearance by Soviet violinists David and Igor Oistrakh.

After years as a variety show, *The Telephone Hour* changed format in the 1966-1967 season to filmed musical documentaries. Henry Jaffe, producer of the television show for most of its on-air life, said the shift to documentaries represented the progressive thinking of the decade. A new, aggressive AT&T management team felt such a format would be a better way to reach an influential, upper-class audience. This desire to target an elite viewer led to such highly sophisticated programs as: Gian Carlo Menotti's Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy (which includes footage of Sviatislav Richter, Shirley Verrett, Zubin Mehta, and Thomas Schippers); a portrait of Van Cliburn; programs about Tanglewood, Marlboro, Benjamin Britten's Aldeburgh Festival, and the 1966 opening of the new Met. The latter contained its own drama, since there was some concern about the possibility that the musicians would go on strike during the performance; fortunately they did not, granting a triumphant evening for the audience, which included Lady Bird Johnson and Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos.

One remarkable aspect about these documentaries is the glimpses of young performers who are now luminaries. In "Casals at Marlboro," we see a fifteen-year-old Murray Perahia rehearsing a Shostakovich Quintet with performers many years his senior. In "The Virtuoso Teacher: Joseph Fuchs," we see his eighteen-year-old student Pinchas Zukerman. In "One Man's Triumph: George Szell," we see Szell working with three young conductors, one of whom is an earnest James Levine.

These documentaries are also impressive in their lack of condescension toward the viewing public. They assume there is a large television audience with an understanding of and concern for classical music. Nothing needs to be sugarcoated. Thus, in the profile of



*Harry Belafonte; New York City Ballet dancers Roy Tobias, Janet Reed, and Jonathan Watts; Renata Tebaldi; Bil Baird with puppets; and Maurice Evans*

George Szell, we watch him coach violinist Rafael Druian in the difficult Alban Berg Violin Concerto (which Szell describes as “quite pretty”). We see him giving such technical advice to the young conductors as, “The shorter the downbeat, the sharper the orchestra’s response.” We also hear him making remarks that presuppose a knowledge of music: “The rests aren’t there to rest but to prepare,” he tells the Cleveland Orchestra. In a rehearsal of Brahms’s *Academic Festival Overture*, he tells them a certain passage “has to be a little more sarcastic,” a note based on his knowledge of the German university songs Brahms had adapted for his symphonic piece; in this song older students are mocking freshmen. As the narrator, *Saturday Review* music critic Irving Kolodin, points out, there is no stipulation of “sarcasm” in the score—it is Szell’s acquaintance with German academia that gives the performance “character.” Similarly, in “Casals at Marlboro,” there is no spoken introduction to the program. We simply see Casals rehearsing with the Marlboro orchestra. He sings a phrase. They perform it. He says they did not hear the second note clearly enough. They repeat. He tells them it “must be more diminuendo.” No hushed voice-over tells us what diminuendo means.

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This assumption of the audience’s musical sophistication characterized *The Telephone Hour* throughout its existence. On its first telecast, January 12, 1959, Renata Tebaldi sings Puccini, Harry Belafonte sings from his repertoire, and Maurice Evans reads Ogden Nash’s poems for Saint Saëns’s *Carnival of the Animals*, which were enacted by Bil Baird’s puppets. But the kickoff telecast was not merely a program of the familiar. The eminent American duo-pianists Gold and Fizdale perform Samuel Barber’s “Souvenirs,” which had been written especially for them. Today, thirty years later, Barber seems an amiable, somewhat Romantic composer. At the time he had not yet reached the status of either a venerable, beloved old man or a “standard.” The inclusion of Barber was still a risk in a medium where the turn of a dial represented a fortune in revenue.

Henry Jaffe recalls, in fact, that AT&T management, an extremely conservative group in the 1950s, was looking for just the right way to embark on a television show. Jaffe, one of several producers asked to submit ideas, was so eager to do it that he commissioned an artist to create hundreds of oil sketches of how the show would look. He showed the executives the paintings in quick succession while playing recordings of programmed music. As the art whizzed past, they began to share his enthusiasm.

Although the avowed goal of the show was to reach an upscale audience, *The Telephone*

*“The range of artists on any given  
show suggests not only a high level of cultural  
awareness on the part of the audience,  
but also a homogeneous one.”*

*Hour* was not produced with the premise that popular tastes must be eschewed. A November 25, 1960 program devoted to Tchaikovsky featured the host Jane Powell singing “Tonight We Love,” the pop song based on Tchaikovsky’s First Piano Concerto, and Johnny Desmond singing “Our Love,” based on the *Romeo and Juliet* overture. It also had a sequence on “The Love Story of Tchaikovsky and the Baroness von Meck,” which must have been written either in ignorance or willful denial that the relationship was intellectual since Tchaikovsky was a homosexual. (This was never really a secret, though scholarly documentation of his sex life dates, of course, from a later, more sexually obsessed era.) Despite this overt popularization, the caliber of performers remained high. Excerpts from Tchaikovsky’s concerti were performed by Grant Johannesen and Michael Rabin.

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**T**he range of artists on any given show suggests not only a high level of cultural awareness on the part of the audience, but also a homogeneous one. The idea behind “The Many Faces of Romeo and Juliet,” for example, is that the viewer who wants to hear Jason Robards and Claire Bloom read from Shakespeare will be just as eager to see Erik Bruhn and Carla Fracci dance Prokofiev’s ballet, to hear Anna Moffo and Sandor Konya sing from Gounod’s opera, or to hear Larry Kert and Carol Lawrence perform Leonard Bernstein’s 1957 *West Side Story*. (As impressive as these rosters of performers are, equally so is the list of people who handled the direction and technical side of these broadcasts. Among the directors and choreographers are Herbert Ross and Donald Saddler, both by then well-established figures on Broadway. Several shows were written by Martin Charnin. A documentary on Zubin Mehta used several young cinematographers, including Haskell Wexler and John Alonzo, who went on to distinguished Hollywood careers.)

There is, of course, a long American tradition of blending European high culture and indigenous popular culture. In his useful study *Highbrow/Lowbrow, The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, Lawrence W. Levine, professor of history at Berkeley, points out that nineteenth-century minstrel shows frequently made use of Shakespearean parodies. To do this implies both the performers and the audience were well acquainted with Shakespeare. Indeed they were, partly because until well into the nineteenth century Shakespeare was performed in a vaudeville-like atmosphere. Scenes from his plays were presented alongside gymnastics, popular songs, and patriotic spectacles. The same was true of opera. In 1825, for example, a New York theater presented Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro* in English followed by a farce entitled *Presumption; or, the Fate of Frankenstein*.

Levine suggests that by the end of the nineteenth century this cultural unity had been shattered by the increasing stratification of urban society. One way higher classes could distinguish themselves from their inferiors was by their ability to endure high culture without any leavening of popular entertainment. (Of course, not everyone who could afford a box at the Met shared wholeheartedly this commitment to cultural purity; it is from this period we conjure the familiar stereotype of an opera box containing a wife listening ardently to a hefty soprano—wearing a helmet and carrying a spear—while her husband dozes.)

Levine makes a strong argument that high culture became the province of an economic elite who had a distaste for their inferiors. He does not, however, address the fact that the cultural oligarchy that gained control of the museums, the symphony orchestras, and other artistic institutions across the country was never able to keep the riffraff away. “High culture” never became the exclusive province of any class because its appeal was too strong. Even without the lagniappe of, say, “AN UNEQUALLED PROGRAMME OF ETHIOPIAN SONGS, CHORUSES, SOLOS, DUETS, JIGS, FANCY DANCES, &C,” which enlivened an early nineteenth-century performance of *Don Giovanni*, a variegated audience continued to love Mozart’s opera.

High culture remained a valued part of popular culture at least through much of this century. The introduction of sound to Hollywood films brought many of the leading musical figures of the 1930s and 1940s to the silver screen, including José Iturbi, Jascha Heifetz, Lauritz Melchior, Kirsten Flagstad, Risë Stevens, and Grace Moore. The “crossover” phenomenon has seen a resurgence in the last few years in the curious and enormously popular recordings of musical comedies made by opera stars. Now it is an effort by high-culture figures to broaden their audience. In movies, however, the inclusion of opera scenes was a way to enhance the prestige of the Hollywood product, generally thought to be a lowbrow art form.

But in a medium like radio and later television, the content of a program is geared toward the needs not only of the potential listener but also of the sponsor who wants to attract that listener. High culture was a valuable commodity for several reasons. It would presumably attract the economic elite that defined itself, among other ways, by its devotion to serious music. Such music was also perceived as something which a large part of the listening and viewing audience actually desired. If they didn’t want it, after all, they could simply

change the station or turn off the set. For every businessman dozing in a box at the Met, there were thousands of listeners all across the country for whom broadcasts of opera—especially before the widespread availability of recordings—were highly valued. Broadcasts of classical music would not have been useful to sponsors if a large part of the public did not regard these programs as a gift.

When AT&T began sponsoring its radio show, the company was still a monopoly. It did not need to use commercial time to fight competitors, but simply to confirm its own high-quality image. Even in the late 1960s, documentaries often ran without any commercial interruption, itself a gesture of great cultural savvy, implying that nothing sold was as important as the viewer's ability to enjoy the show.

By 1968, however, the cultural consensus that had for so long given *The Telephone Hour* a large audience was disappearing. The high culture that had given the show its original impetus in 1940 was now highly suspect. Anything, after all, not directly pertaining to the Vietnam War and its manifold revelations of the “rotteness” of American life fell under the dread heading “irrelevant.” If this applied to century-old European music, it was even more true of Broadway music that had also played an important role in the programming of *The Telephone Hour*. After all, 1968 was the year *Hair* opened on Broadway. “The Age of Aquarius” was light years away from the world of Oscar Hammerstein.

By that same year another factor had gained importance. The abstract prestige of a program mattered far less than its ratings. Despite the high quality of the documentaries, ratings were disappointing for AT&T executives. Numbers were playing an increasing role in determining the fate of American popular media. Interestingly, other comparable cultural institutions began to experience difficulties during this period, magazines like *Harper's*, the *Atlantic*, and particularly *Saturday Review*, all of which were addressed toward a general-interest reader, intellectual but not academic. These publications tried to bridge the gap between highbrows and middlebrows and to reach an influential readership. The *Atlantic* and *Harper's* had come to prominence in the nineteenth century; *Saturday Review*, born in the 1920s, suffered the most dramatic reverses of the three and is now no longer published. Even radical changes of format and a move away from New York City were not able to save it. Shortly before *Saturday Review* disappeared in the early 1980s, its longtime editor Norman Cousins remarked, “Ad agencies don't understand quality magazines. Quality magazines offer a readership capable of getting things done. Those assets

*“By 1968, however, the cultural consensus that had for so long given The Telephone Hour a large audience was disappearing.”*

don't show up in computer studies.”

The people “capable of getting things done” were the ones AT&T wanted as its audience. Henry Jaffe said the people they strove to reach were “teachers, politicians, people who were opinion makers.” Until 1968 such people might have been pleased to think of themselves as “the Establishment.” But in the late 1960s those words too had become poisoned, and the people “capable of getting things done” now defined themselves by their rejection of the status quo. If venerable institutions like *Saturday Review* and *The Telephone Hour* were having trouble with their numbers, it was because the population was experiencing upheavals unlike any since the Great Depression.

In 1967, *Time* magazine named as its “Man of the Year” the entire generation under twenty-five. (The tone of the cover story was admiring, but, only a few years later, as young people became increasingly vociferous in protesting the war *Time* supported, the tone changed.) Certainly the cultural tastes of this generation reflected a sharp break with the past. They rejected both highbrow classical music and middlebrow Broadway music. Their music, rock 'n' roll, created a whole new culture that had nothing to do with either of these traditions.

If, over the course of its run, *The Telephone Hour* had seemed remarkably prescient in its inclusion of young performers destined for greatness, a program in the spring of 1968 showed that this may no longer have been possible. On April 26, 1968 *The Bell Telephone Hour* featured “Jazz, the Intimate Art,” with profiles of such veteran performers as Louis Armstrong, Dave Brubeck, Dizzy Gillespie, and a newcomer, Charles Lloyd. Lloyd was described as a thirty-year-old who was “the jazz world’s newest star. . . who puts into music all of the personal rapport he feels with today’s young generation.” (Even Lloyd’s age is significant. In the wisdom of the period, thirty was the final age a person could still be “trusted.”) One segment shows the Charles Lloyd Quartet performing one of Lloyd’s compositions, “Forest Flower,” at Reed College in Portland, Oregon.

Presumably Lloyd had been selected by *The Telephone Hour*’s producers with the same care, the same intuition as such young performers as Murray Perahia or James Levine. But there is something about even the title “Forest Flower,” with its evocation of bucolic serenity, that sounds quite out of sync with the mood of 1968. Whether Lloyd fulfilled his promise as a jazz musician is hard to know. (One of the members of his quartet, Keith Jarrett, did achieve great recognition.) Certainly his name is not as familiar as his costars

on that particular show, whose status remains uncontested twenty years later. This is not Lloyd's fault; the culture itself no longer supported and nourished talent in conventional ways. It publicized rebels who regularly appeared on the scene. It hyped the idols of the youth culture who dominated the press. The notion of a general culture, in which past and present found common ground—the foundation of *The Bell Telephone Hour*—was a casualty of Vietnam.

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**S**tting once said in an interview that his boyhood musical tastes were formed by the BBC, which introduced him to both Beethoven and Vera Lynne (as well as the Rolling Stones). In many ways *The Telephone Hour* provided this sort of musical orientation for several generations of Americans. In a *Bell Telephone Hour* “special” broadcast Christmas Eve 1968, a few months after the series' end, Victor Borge narrated footage of children from all over the world singing Christmas carols. Carols, though harmonically retrograde, were not. The harsh mood engendered by the “mad” war eventually subsided. But by then the civility and cultural aspirations of *The Telephone Hour* no longer seemed suitable for prime time. They had taken on the charm of the irretrievable past; they seemed part of a language that sounded appealing but was no longer spoken, the language of another world, another time, like the melody that, to anyone who knows it, still recalls the show's long powerful spell—“The Bell Waltz.”

Howard Kissel is the drama critic for *The New York Daily News*.



## THE MUSEUM'S COLLECTION OF THE TELEPHONE HOUR

The Museum of Broadcasting's exhibition "*The Telephone Hour: A Retrospective*" recaptures the era of network broadcasting when the living room became a concert stage for the world's most distinguished artists. *The Telephone Hour* premiered on radio on April 29, 1940 and quickly became identified with the stylish presentation of the performing arts from opera's grand arias to Broadway's hit tunes. After running for eighteen seasons on radio, the program was transferred to television in 1959 as a series of four specials. The weekly television series, called *The Bell Telephone Hour*, debuted on October 9, 1959 and continued as a showcase for a diverse cavalcade of outstanding musical performances. The collection highlights some of the exciting moments in the history of radio and television, including: Rudolf Nureyev's television debut in 1962; readings by poet Carl Sandburg; the radio debuts of contralto Marian Anderson and violinist Fritz Kreisler; and a television adaptation of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* starring Groucho Marx.

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Most of the programs in the exhibition were transferred from original material and represent the best possible copies of *The Telephone Hour* broadcasts. *The Bell Telephone Hour* was one of the first television series to be preserved on videotape, and it has a special quality of color and image associated with the early 1960s. In fact, the show's creative team worked to highlight and enhance performance with the latest advances in color technology. The programs include their original commercials, which document how the telephone was advertised to the general public through the years.

The Museum gratefully acknowledges Henry Jaffe, for providing access to his television archive, and Paul Surratt of Research Video, who worked diligently with the Museum to obtain the best possible transfers.



## THE RADIO PROGRAMS

### THE TELEPHONE HOUR

April 29, 1940-June 30, 1958

**Producers:** Arthur Daly (1940-1941)  
Wallace Magill (1941-1958)

**Music:** Donald Voorhees and the Bell  
Telephone Orchestra  
Robert Armbruster and the Bell  
Telephone Orchestra (most Holly-  
wood programs)

**Radio History:** April 29, 1940-March 30, 1942  
Monday evenings 8:00-8:30 p.m.

April 6, 1942-July 1, 1957  
October 7, 1957-June 30, 1958  
Monday evenings 9:00-9:30 p.m.

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**PREMIERE**

April 29, 1940

Producer: Arthur Daly

*The Telephone Hour* was inspired by the success of *The Ford Summer Hour*, a Sunday evening CBS program that combined the talents of Donald Voorhees and his orchestra, veteran tenor James Melton, and lyric soprano Francia White. The Ford program was dropped following the 1941-1942 radio season. Melton, an alumnus of the radio and recording vocal group the Revelers, had been a regular on Jack Benny's *Chevrolet Program*, NBC's *Intimate Revue*, Bob Hope's first regular radio series, and CBS's *Ziegfeld Follies of the Air*. White had previously been heard on NBC's *Packard Show* and *Magic Key* program, and the *Palmolive Beauty Box Theatre* with Nelson Eddy, who would also be heard regularly on *The Telephone Hour*. In addition to Melton, White, and Voorhees, Ken Christie led the chorus, Floyd Mack was the master of ceremonies, and Tom Shirley made the commercial or "institutional" announcements. AT&T's president Walter Gifford spoke on the first and subsequent programs on topics that included the company's part in national defense. Selections on this premiere included a Stephen Foster medley and Mimi and Rodolfo's love duet from Giacomo Puccini's *La Bohème*.

**INDEPENDENCE DAY PROGRAM**

June 30, 1941

Producer: Arthur Daly

Actor Henry Hull is the guest star in a program of American music featuring regulars James Melton and Francia White. Included is Hull's recitation of Walt Whitman's "I Hear America Singing."

**PREMIERE OF PILGRIMS**

November 24, 1941

Producer: Wallace Magill

*Pilgrims*, Irving Caesar's ambitious symphonic suite for solo voices, piano, chorus, and orchestra, is premiered on *The Telephone Hour*. Caesar also contributed the lyrics to George Gershwin's first hit song, "Swanee," in 1919.

**GREAT ARTISTS SERIES**

April 27, 1942

Producer: Wallace Magill

*The Telephone Hour* begins its "Great Artists Series," which, master of ceremonies Floyd Mack explains, is devoted to the world's foremost stars of opera, the concert stage, radio, and movies. Violin virtuoso Jascha Heifetz inaugurates the series and makes his *Telephone Hour* debut, performing works by Bach and Tchaikovsky.

**ALL GERSHWIN PROGRAM**

August 31, 1942

Producer: Wallace Magill

Oscar Levant, perhaps as well-known for his wit as his musicianship, is the guest soloist on a broadcast heard shortly after the fifth anniversary of George Gershwin's death. The program opens with a four-part overture of Gershwin's "Swanee," "Somebody Loves Me," "Embraceable You," and "Strike Up the Band." Levant then plays Gershwin's Second and Third Piano Preludes, and following a Gershwin Broadway medley, he returns to play the second movement of the composer's Piano Concerto. The program concludes with Levant, the orchestra, and the chorus joining for "Oh! Lady, Be Good," "Do It Again," "Liza," and "Wintergreen for President."



*Marian Anderson*

## DEBUT OF MARIAN ANDERSON

September 14, 1942

Producer: Wallace Magill

Contralto Marian Anderson makes her first of more than two dozen *Telephone Hour* appearances. Following the orchestra's performance of Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty* waltz, Anderson sings Hummel's *Allelujah*. The orchestra returns for Beethoven's Minuet in G, then Anderson sings the traditional "Sometimes I Feel like a Motherless Child," with orchestration by Lawrence Brown. As was frequently the custom during wartime broadcasts, the program concludes with Anderson leading the audience in the national anthem.

## GRACE MOORE AND CHARLES KULLMAN

February 15, 1943

Producer: Wallace Magill

The program opens with Metropolitan Opera tenor Charles Kullman singing "Yours Is My Heart Alone" by Franz Lehar. Next, the orchestra performs a clever arrangement of "The Old Grey Mare" containing an allusion to the popular 1920s song, "Horses." Grace Moore presents two selections: a Spanish tango and a beautiful and tender aria from Massenet's *Heroliade*. Following Kullman's performance of a selection from *Tosca*, the orchestra returns with the first of Brahms's Hungarian Dances, characterized by the announcer as faithful portrayals of the vigorous and colorful Magyar gypsies. Moore and Kullman join voices for "Will You Remember" from Romberg's light opera, *Maytime*.

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## NELSON EDDY

April 14, 1944

Producer: Wallace Magill

Nelson Eddy, *The Telephone Hour*'s biggest vocal attraction, presents a program of songs for the fighting men and women overseas. Selections include "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning" from *Oklahoma!* and Schubert's *Ave Maria*, which Eddy explains confirmed his belief in the GI's "deep and abiding faith in God and country." Eddy also introduces a new number, "Troubador's Serenade," with lyrics by the Army's Corporal Paul Tripp. In addition to the third movement from Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, the orchestra plays Debussy's 1895 art song, "Rêverie," which gained popular acceptance in 1938 as "My Reverie."



### DEBUT OF FRITZ KREISLER

July 17, 1944

Shortly after becoming an American citizen, sixty-nine-year-old Austrian violinist and composer Fritz Kreisler makes his radio debut on *The Telephone Hour*. He opens with Spanish composer Isaac Albéniz's *Tango in D* and his own *Caprice Viennois* and then joins the orchestra for the concluding "Star Spangled Banner." Kreisler, who returned seven times during the 1944-1945 radio season, played his nineteenth and final public recital on March 6, 1950.

### ALL OPERA PROGRAM

February 26, 1945

Producer: Wallace Magill

Metropolitan Opera soprano Christina Carroll, contralto Lidia Summers, tenors William Haim and Edward Kane, baritone John Baker, and bass Alden Edkins are featured in this program of operatic works. Five of the artists perform the third act quintet from Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. From Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*, the orchestra plays "another of those short but exquisitely satisfying bits of music known as intermezzi," and the program concludes with all artists enacting the second act sextet from Donizetti's most popular work, *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

### ANNOUNCEMENT OF PEABODY AWARD

April 16, 1945

Producer: Wallace Magill

In a program devoted to Fritz Kreisler's light violin pieces and transcriptions, an announcement is made that *The Telephone Hour* has received the 1944 George Foster Peabody Award for outstanding entertainment in music.

### TRIBUTE TO EUROPEAN VICTORY

May 7, 1945

Producer: Wallace Magill

Tenor James Melton, an original member of *The Telephone Hour* cast, returns as a guest artist in a program featuring songs of the United Nations, including "The Lord's Prayer" and "The Star Spangled Banner." There are no commercials on this broadcast. Instead, messages of gratitude are heard along with a dedication to the tasks still lying ahead.

### PATRIOTIC SONGS WITH BING CROSBY

July 2, 1945

Producer: Wallace Magill

Guest star Bing Crosby joins the chorus in "Grand Old Flag," a folk music medley and, what Crosby characterizes as a solid western, "Home on the Range." In an informal exchange, Crosby promotes a film he has produced, *The Great John L.* He sings a song from the picture, "A Friend of Yours," written by Johnny Burke and James Van Heusen. Following a medley that "paints a picture of America in the Gay Nineties," Crosby echoes the thoughts of 135 million people and sings "God Bless America."

## BEETHOVEN TRIBUTE

December 17, 1945

Producer: Wallace Magill

Pianist Robert Casadesus presents a 175th birthday tribute to Ludwig van Beethoven. Included are his Sonata in C-sharp Minor, *Moonlight Sonata*, and *Emperor Concerto* no. 5 in E-flat Major. Casadesus, who was first heard on the program June 7, 1943, played more than a dozen times throughout the series. On December 5, 1953, he was joined by fellow pianists Gaby Casadesus, his wife, and their son, Jean.

## BENNY GOODMAN

June 3, 1946

Producer: Wallace Magill

One of the biggest stars of the Swing Era, clarinetist Benny Goodman performs "After You've Gone" with his sextet, Rimsky-Korsakoff's *Hymn to the Sun* with the Bell Telephone Orchestra, and Weber's Concertino for Clarinet in C Minor.

*Frits Kreisler (far left)*  
*Benny Goodman (below)*



### DEBUT OF MYRA HESS

October 28, 1946

Producer: Wallace Magill

British concert pianist Myra Hess makes her first post-war American appearance, performing the works of Bach, Russian composer Alexander Glazunoff, and Mozart. Hess concludes by thanking the American public for its support of Great Britain during the Blitz.

### DEBUT OF FERRUCCIO TAGLIAVINI

February 24, 1947

Producer: Wallace Magill

Weeks after his Metropolitan Opera debut as Rodolfo in Puccini's *La Bohème*, lyric tenor Ferruccio Tagliavini performs arias by Puccini, Donizetti, and Ruggiero Leoncavallo.



### SEGOVIA DEBUT

June 23, 1947

Producer: Wallace Magill

Nearly two decades after his American debut, Spanish guitarist Andrés Segovia makes his first appearance on *The Telephone Hour* in a joint recital with Brazilian guitarist and soprano Olga Coelho. He presents the radio premiere of the first movement of the Concerto in D, written for Segovia by Italian composer Castelnuovo-Tedesco.

### PETER AND THE WOLF

July 21, 1947

Producer: Wallace Magill

Basil Rathbone narrates a thirty-minute adaptation of Serge Prokofiev's musical fairy tale, *Peter and the Wolf*, which was first performed in 1936.

*Jascha Heifetz (above right)  
Gladys Swarthout (far right)*



## GLADYS SWARTHOUT

October 20, 1947

Producer: Wallace Magill

American contralto Gladys Swarthout, who made her first appearance on *The Telephone Hour* in November of 1943, presents the premiere of Francis Poulenc's waltz, "Les Chemins de l'Amour."



## CHRISTMAS BROADCAST

December 20, 1948

Producer: Wallace Magill

Longtime *Telephone Hour* favorite, baritone John Charles Thomas, is the featured artist in this holiday program of children's songs, carols, a lullaby, and a character piece. "Twas the Night before Christmas" is performed in a special arrangement by Ken Darby. The institutional announcement proclaims additional long-distance lines and thousands of new switchboards, but still suggests placing calls before or after Christmas. The orchestra performs Victor Herbert's 1903 "March of the Wooden Soldiers" from *Babes in Toyland*.

## SOUTH PACIFIC

May 16, 1949

Producer: Wallace Magill

The Broadway production of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II's *South Pacific* is closed for one evening so its principals, Mary Martin and Ezio Pinza, can perform songs and music from the show on *The Telephone Hour*.

## TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TELEPHONE HOUR

April 10, 1950

Producer: Wallace Magill

Ezio Pinza, guest artist on this first *Telephone Hour* originating from Carnegie Hall, sings arias by Mozart, Donizetti, and Mussorgsky. The orchestra performs "Scotch Poem" by American composer Edward MacDowell. For this tenth anniversary special, the Bell Telephone Orchestra was augmented to seventy-five pieces, and the chorus to sixty voices. Pinza, who sang with the Met for over twenty years, was a *Telephone Hour* favorite, first heard on July 26, 1943.

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## DIAMOND JUBILEE OF THE TELEPHONE

March 5, 1951

Producer: Wallace Magill

Nelson Eddy is the guest on a program originating from Hollywood that celebrates the seventy-fifth anniversary of the telephone. Featured on the broadcast is "The Vision of a Man Called Bell," narrated by Walter Hampden, who is characterized as the "Dean of the American theater." This work was repeated March 3, 1952, the 105th anniversary of Bell's birth, and again on March 9, 1953.



### EZIO PINZA

February 16, 1953

Producer: Wallace Magill

Following the orchestra's performance of an excerpt from Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, celebrated basso Ezio Pinza sings "September Song" from *Knickerbocker Holiday*. The song was a hit in 1939 (for Walter Huston), a hit again in 1944 (for Nelson Eddy), and it topped the charts a third time at the time of this broadcast in 1953 (for Liberace). Mention is made of Pinza's appearance in the Twentieth Century Fox film *Tonight We Sing*, a biography of Sol Hurok that starred David Wayne as the impresario. Four mandolins are added to the orchestra for a performance of Riccardo Drigo's *Serenade*. Pinza returns for selections by Pergolesi and Scarlatti, followed by an orchestra performance of the fiery "Ride of the Valkyries" from Wagner's *Die Walküre*.

### PETER AND THE WOLF

December 14, 1953

Producer: Wallace Magill

Fred Allen makes a special radio appearance as narrator of Serge Prokofiev's musical fairy tale, which announcer Floyd Mack said has "long been a favorite of Mr. Allen's." This work was originally presented with Basil Rathbone as narrator in 1947. The institutional announcement tells the story of a twelve-year-old from Sacramento who returns the thirty-five cents he finds in a phone booth. His honesty is rewarded with a baseball glove.

### DEBUT OF THEODOR UPPMAN

April 19, 1954

Producer: Wallace Magill

Baritone Theodor Uppman, who debuted as Pelleas with the New York Opera in 1948, makes his first appearance on *The Telephone Hour*. Mention is made that Uppman was chosen by composer Benjamin Britten for the title role in *Billy Budd*, which he first performed in London in 1952 and then on American television in 1952. Featured on the program is *Nancy Hanks*, Katherine Davis's musical adaptation of a poem by Rosemary Benét about Abraham Lincoln's mother.

### FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TELEPHONE HOUR

May 16, 1955

Producer: Wallace Magill

This celebration of the program's fifteenth anniversary unites *Telephone Hour* regulars Lily Pons, Brian Sullivan, Eileen Farrell, Michael Rabin, and, via tape, José Iturbi.



## DEBUT OF LORIN HOLLANDER

September 3, 1956

Producer: Wallace Magill

Twelve-year-old pianist Lorin Hollander, the youngest performer ever to appear on *The Telephone Hour*, makes his debut. His pieces include Chopin's Nocturne in F-sharp Major, Heber's "The Little White Donkey," and Rachmaninoff's arrangement of Rimsky-Korsakoff's "The Flight of the Bumble Bee." In honor of Labor Day weekend the orchestra plays "Heigh-Ho, Heigh-Ho" from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and the polka from Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*. Following an informal exchange with Donald Voorhees, Hollander plays Mendelssohn's *Capriccio Brillant*. A comparison is drawn between Hollander and Mendelssohn, who both composed five symphonies and other works at the age of twelve. The broadcast concludes with a mention of the television program, *Telephone Time*, "on another network."

## MEMORIAL DAY TRIBUTE

May 27, 1957

Producer: Wallace Magill

Soprano Eileen Farrell, who first sang on *The Telephone Hour* May 7, 1951, makes one of her frequent visits on this program devoted to Memorial Day. Farrell sings "At Parting" and "God of Our Fathers," and the chorus performs "Song for America." In the institutional announcement, Tom Shirley pays tribute to the communications system being utilized by the United Nations Headquarters in New York City.

*Esio Pinza (above, far left)*  
*Donald Voorhees and Fred Allen (left)*  
*Tom Shirley (right)*

## DEBUT OF RITA STREICH

November 11, 1957

Producer: Wallace Magill

Following appearances at the Hollywood Bowl and the San Francisco Opera, internationally known coloratura soprano Rita Streich makes her debut on *The Telephone Hour*. She sings a selection from Ambroise Thomas's *Mignon* and introduces Rosina's aria from *The Barber of Seville*. In honor of Veterans Day, the institutional spot features a reenactment of a French army officer's announcement, made by phone, of the Armistice.



## FINAL BROADCAST

June 30, 1958

Producer: Wallace Magill

Metropolitan Opera baritone Theodor Uppman is the final guest on the last *Telephone Hour*, which is devoted in part to the observation of Independence Day. Floyd Mack concludes the series by thanking all those who have made the last eighteen years possible. He reminds listeners, "This coming winter we will be appearing on television with a new program devoted to fine music. We hope you will join us then."



## THE TELEVISION PROGRAMS

### THE BELL TELEPHONE HOUR

October 9, 1959—April 26, 1968

(Preceded by a series of four specials in the winter and spring of 1959)

#### A Production of Henry Jaffe Enterprises, Inc.

Executive Barry Wood (1959-1967)  
Producers: Henry Jaffe (1967-1968)  
Music: Donald Voorhees and the Bell Telephone Orchestra

Telecast History: October 9, 1959-April 29, 1960  
Friday evenings 8:30-9:30 p.m.

September 30, 1960-April 28, 1961  
Friday evenings 9:00-10:00 p.m.

September 29, 1961-April 27, 1962  
Friday evenings 9:30-10:30 p.m.

September 24, 1962-April 11, 1963  
A series of specials at various times and dates.

October 8, 1963-May 25, 1965  
Tuesday evenings 10:00-11:00 p.m.

September 26, 1965-April 23, 1967  
Sunday evenings 6:30-7:30 p.m.

September 22, 1967-April 26, 1968  
Friday evenings 10:00-11:00 p.m.

For most of its run, *The Bell Telephone Hour* was seen on alternate weeks. All programs were shot in color.

**ADVENTURES IN MUSIC (special)**

January 12, 1959

Executive Producer: Dan Lounsbery

Producer/Writer: William Nichols

Director: Bill Colleran

Production Designer: Rouben Ter-Arutunian

The weekly *Bell Telephone Hour* series was preceded by four color specials that inaugurated the television format of presenting a wide range of music. This first special does not have a host, but features soprano Renata Tebaldi singing two arias from Puccini's opera *Madama Butterfly*, as well as Maurice Evans narrating verses written by Ogden Nash to Camille Saint-Saëns's *The Carnival of the Animals*. Harry Belafonte performs folk songs from around the world, and the New York City Ballet Company, featuring Janet Reed, dances to Samuel Barber's *Souvenirs*.

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**A NIGHT OF MUSIC (series premiere)**

October 9, 1959

Producer: Roger Englander

Director: Sidney Smith

Writer: Larry Markes

Choreographer: Donald Saddler

This premiere of *The Bell Telephone Hour* series was broadcast from NBC's Brooklyn Studio and features musical-comedy stars Alfred Drake and Sally Ann Howes in a medley of songs from Broadway musicals (including *Kiss Me Kate* and *West Side Story*) adapted from great literature. Other performances include concert violinist Zino Francescatti, The Kingston Trio folk group, jazz musician Red Nichols with vocalist Connee Boswell, and the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo.



**MUSIC OF THE WEST**

October 23, 1959

Producer/Director: Bill Hobin

Writer: Lucille Kallen

Burl Ives, folk singer and actor, hosts the first program with a theme in this tribute to the American West. Edie Adams and Johnny Cash perform classic music hall songs, including "You Naughty, Naughty Men" and "Camptown Races." On the classical side, Patrice Munsel and Brian Sullivan enact a scene from Puccini's opera *La Fanciulla del West*, and the American Ballet Theatre performs *Billy the Kid* with music by Aaron Copland.

## ON STAGE WITH MUSIC

November 6, 1959

Producer/Writer: Ted Mills

Director: David Brown

Choreographer/Staging: Gene Nelson

Actor Burgess Meredith hosts the first of many holiday tributes in this celebration of Veterans Day. "The Salute to the American Soldier," with original music by Hershey Kay, features Meredith and Broadway star John Raitt discussing the meaning of heroism against images of various American wars. Also featured is a medley of Irving Berlin songs performed by such artists as Raitt, Jaye P. Morgan, and Johnny Desmond, along with "An American in Paris" ballet performed by Allegra Kent, Taina Elg, and Jacques D'Amboise.

## WE TWO

January 15, 1960

Producer/Director: Sid Smith

Writer: Larry Markes

Choreographer: Ralph Beaumont

In this instance the "two" refers to a team. This program focuses on famous couples in the performing arts. Among the pairs showcased are recording artists Les Paul and Mary Ford, dancers Marge and Gower Champion, vocalists Gordon and Sheila MacRae, and brother and sister concert pianists, José and Amparo Iturbi.

## THE FOUR OF US

January 29, 1960

Producer/Director: Bill Hobin

Writer: Lucille Kallen

Choreographer: James Starbuck

The premise of this episode is to showcase four entertainers performing songs not readily associated with them. Ray Bolger sings and dances "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue" from *On Your Toes*. Clarinetist Benny Goodman plays Weber's Concertino, while Beatrice Lillie sings ballads in a comic style. Finally, Ethel Merman sings ragtime tunes. For the finale, each performs a selection for which they are best known.

## PORTRAITS IN MUSIC

February 12, 1960

Producer/Writer: Burt Shevelove

Director: Sid Smith

Choreographer: Donald Saddler

The imagination is stirred in this program that evokes a gallery of portraits. Julie Andrews and Larry Douglas perform Sigmund Romberg's *Operetta Miniatures*. Nanette Fabray salutes 100 years of the American woman. In the final segment, a celebration of Abraham Lincoln, the orchestra performs Aaron Copland's "A Lincoln Portrait" with poet Carl Sandburg reading from the president's writings.

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*Burl Ives (above left), Mary Ford, Dorothy Collins, Raymond Scott, and Les Paul (left)*

## THE MIKADO

April 29, 1960

Producers: Barry Wood, Martyn Green

Director: Norman Campbell

Production Designer: Paul Barnes

Choreographer: Jack Regas

Cast:

Groucho Marx: Ko-Ko, Lord High Executioner

Stanley Holloway: Pooh-Bah, Lord High Everything

Robert Rounseville: Nanki-Pooh, Disguised son of  
Mikado

Barbara Meister: Yum-Yum

Melinda Marx: Peep-Bo

Sharon Randall: Pitti-Sing

Dennis King: Mikado, Emperor of Japan

Helen Traubel: Katisha, an elderly lady

The first season ends with a spectacular from Hollywood, a television adaptation of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado*, which was first produced at the Savoy Theatre approximately seventy-five years earlier. Producer Martyn Green serves as host and introduces the principals in starring roles. Only a black-and-white kinescope survives of this famous telecast, which was originally broadcast in color.







### THE MUSIC OF ROMANCE

November 25, 1960

Producer/Director: Norman Campbell  
Choreographer: Donald Saddler

In this program, the romantic work of Tchaikovsky is honored in a stunning musical salute. Actress and host Jane Powell and Johnny Desmond sing "Long May We Love" and "The Things We Love." Lupe Serrano and Jacques D'Amboise dance "The Black Swan" pas de deux from *Swan Lake*. Pianist Grant Johannesen performs the Piano Concerto no. 1 in B-flat Minor with the Bell Telephone Orchestra. Also included is a special dramatic segment, "This Lonely Heart." Written by Arch Oboler, this portion is based on the composer's letters and features Helen Hayes and Farley Granger.

### ALMANAC FOR FEBRUARY

February 3, 1961

Producer: Frederick Heider  
Director: Dick Feldman  
Writer: Draper Lewis  
Choreographer: Bob Pagent

This program, hosted by Polly Bergen, salutes four special dates in February: St. Valentine's Day; the premiere of George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*; Victor Herbert's birthday; and a vaudeville anniversary. Guest stars include soprano Roberta Peters, conductor Paul Whiteman, pianist Jorge Bolet, and entertainer Carol Lawrence.

### MUCH ADO ABOUT MUSIC

March 17, 1961

Producer: Burt Shevelove  
Director/Writer: Richard Dunlap  
Choreographer: Donald Saddler

Dramatic and musical interpretations of Shakespeare's work are the focus of this telecast. Metropolitan Opera star Joan Sutherland makes her television debut with "Willow Songs" from Verdi's *Otello*. Patrice Munsel and Alfred Drake sing a medley of songs from the Rodgers and Hart musical *The Boys from Syracuse*, based on *A Comedy of Errors*. Jacques D'Amboise and Violette Verdy perform ballets from Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliet*. The program concludes on a dramatic note with John Gielgud reciting several Shakespearian passages including the "mad scene" from *Hamlet* and the closing scene from *The Tempest*.

Groucho Marx (with glasses) in *The Mikado*  
(far left), Helen Hayes (above left)



## ENCORE

April 28, 1961

Producers: Barry Wood, Burt Shevelove

Director: Hal Venho

Writer: Draper Lewis

Marking the close of the second season of *The Bell Telephone Hour* is this first of several compilation specials featuring great moments from past programs. Rosemary Clooney and the Eddie Condon All-Stars perform a medley of Irving Berlin songs, and Robert Preston and Mahalia Jackson are seen from a 1960 telecast. Segments also feature Marge and Gower Champion and the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo.

## A MEASURE OF MUSIC

January 19, 1962

Producer/Writer: Robert Herridge

Director: Robert Scheerer

Choreographers: Marc Breaux, Deedee Wood

This salute to a wide array of musical expression is distinguished by the television debut of Rudolf Nureyev. Nureyev, a recent Soviet defector, is partnered by Maria Tallchief in a Bournonville pas de deux from *The Flower Festival of Genzano*. Other performers include guitar virtuoso Andrés Segovia, folk musicians the Chad Mitchell Trio, actress Jane Powell, and musical-comedy star Sally Ann Howes.

## PORTALS OF MUSIC

February 16, 1962

Producer/Writer: Robert Herridge

Director: Robert Scheerer

This musical potpourri features Mahalia Jackson in a special tribute to the Gospel and spiritual songs of America. It also includes a selection from Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E Minor performed by Isaac Stern. George London and Anna Moffo perform operatic works by Mozart and Verdi, and Tex Beneke and his orchestra re-create the Big Band moods of Glenn Miller.

## SECOND PROGRAM OF SEASON

October 22, 1962

Producer: Dan Lounsbury

Director: Sid Smith

Set Designer: Peter Dohanos

Even though *The Bell Telephone Hour* placed a great emphasis on classical recordings and performances, contemporary politics were not always easy to elude. This program, which showcased Robert Goulet and Barbara Cook performing Broadway favorites, is notable for two news interruptions of the developing Cuban missile crisis. Since the program was taped live, the newsbreaks are included. The program also presented Cyril Ritchard and Martyn Green performing selections from Gilbert and Sullivan; pianist Claudio Arrau playing the third movement of Beethoven's *Emperor Concerto*; and Carla Fracci and Erik Bruhn dancing a pas de deux from *La Sylphide*.

Chad Mitchell Trio (above left), Grant Johannesen (right)

## THANKSGIVING SHOW

November 22, 1962

Producer: Dan Lounsbery

Director: Sid Smith

Writer: Lucille Kallen

Choreographer: Carol Haney

Carl Sandburg's poetry reading is the highlight of this holiday celebration. He reads "Fire Dreams" and "Theme in Yellow" and joins the cast of John Raitt, Mahalia Jackson, Martha Wright, and the West Point Glee Club in a stirring rendition of "America the Beautiful." Concert pianist Grant Johannesen also performs the third movement of *Symphony on a French Mountain Air* with the Bell Telephone Orchestra.

## FINAL SHOW OF THE SEASON

April 11, 1963

Producer: Dan Lounsbery

Director: Sid Smith

The finale of the 1962-63 season features two distinctly different voices—Harry Belafonte and the Metropolitan Opera's Birgit Nilsson. Belafonte is joined by a teenage chorus, singing the spiritual "Sit Down" as well as "Try to Remember" and several folk songs. Nilsson performs "In Questa Reggia" from Puccini's *Turandot* and "Elizabeth's Prayer" from Wagner's *Tannhäuser*. Other highlights include several selections from Andrés Segovia and a New York City Ballet performance of Patricia McBride, Patricia Wilde, and Edward Villella in a pas de trois from *Paquita*.



## 1963-64 SEASON PREMIERE

October 8, 1963

Producer: Dan Lounsbery  
 Director: Clark Jones  
 Writer: Bill Gammie  
 Art Director: Peter Dohanos

*The Bell Telephone Hour's* fifth season premiere is hosted by Robert Preston, who begins the show with a rousing "Strike Up the Band." Tenor Richard Tucker and soprano Anna Moffo perform selections from Puccini's *La Bohème*. Rudolf Nureyev and Svetlana Beriosova dance "The Black Swan" pas de deux from *Swan Lake*. Also appearing are the Chad Mitchell Trio and concert pianist Grant Johannesen, who plays Ravel's Piano Concerto in G Major.

## THE PARIS SHOW

December 3, 1963

Producer/Writer: Charles Andrews  
 Director: Clark Jones  
 Art Director: Peter Dohanos  
 Choreographer: Donald Saddler

*The Bell Telephone Hour's* journey to France is highlighted by a pretaped segment with the consummate entertainer Maurice Chevalier. He performs more than ten songs including "Mimi," "Thank Heaven for Little Girls," "My Ideal," and "Louise." Also appearing are singer Jacqueline François, pianist Philippe Entremont, and Metropolitan Opera stars Theodor Uppman and Janet Pavek.

## MUSIC OF COLE PORTER

January 28, 1964

Producer/Writer: Charles Andrews  
 Director: Clark Jones  
 Choreographer: Jonathan Lucas

Ethel Merman hosts this Cole Porter extravaganza that includes the performance of fifty-two songs. Merman, who opens the show with a rousing medley featuring "Anything Goes" and "From This Moment On," is followed by pianist Peter Nero who performs "Night and Day" and Gretchen Wyler who sings and dances to "Don't Fence Me In." John Raitt and Martha Wright each perform solos as well as a duet of "Everything I Love." The entire cast takes part in the finale featuring interpretations of many Porter classics, including "At Long Last Love," "Be a Clown," "I've Got You under My Skin," and "You're the Top."



Rudolf Nureyev and Svetlana Beriosova  
 (left), Al Hirt (above, far right)

**ALMANAC**

February 11, 1964

Producer/Writer: Charles Andrews

Director: Sid Smith

The annual salute to famous February anniversaries features a musical poem by Aaron Copland titled, "A Lincoln Portrait." Actor Robert Ryan hosts the program and reads excerpts from Lincoln's speeches and letters. The classical section of the show features Joan Sutherland singing "Casta Diva" from *Norma* and Suzanne Farrell, Patricia Neary, and Conrad Ludlow of the New York City Ballet performing George Balanchine's "Concerto Barocco." Trumpeter Al Hirt plays several numbers including "Over the Rainbow" with the Bell Telephone Orchestra, and The Brothers Four sing a medley of classic folk tunes.

**WORLD'S FAIR PROGRAM**

April 21, 1964

Producer: Sid Smith

Director: Dave Geisel

Writer: William Nichols

Choreographer: Matt Mattox

Choreographer for Donald O'Connor: Louis Da Pron

The 1964 New York World's Fair is the inspiration for this program hosted by singer and dancer Donald O'Connor. He opens the show singing the theme song of the current World's Fair, Richard Rodgers's "Fair Is Fair." In a tribute to all World's Fairs, O'Connor evokes the 1893 Chicago Fair by singing "Daisy, Daisy" and dancing a cakewalk. He performs the Charleston for the 1926 fair, the jitterbug for the 1939 fair, and the Twist for the current fair. Musical-comedy star Gretchen Wyler joins in, performing songs from the era of the 1904 St. Louis Fair. Guests also include jazz musician Pete Fountain performing "The St. Louis Blues," opera star Gianna D'Angelo singing the "Bell Song" from *Lakme*, and Diahann Carroll singing "The Sweetest Sounds" and "Someone to Watch over Me."

**HARRY BELAFONTE**

May 19, 1964

Producer: Dan Lounsbery

Director: Clark Jones

Writer: Lucille Kallen

Choreographer: Matt Mattox

This show marks calypso singer Harry Belafonte's second appearance on *The Bell Telephone Hour*. The program opens with Woody Herman and his band performing "The Woodchopper's Ball," "Caldonia, What Makes Your Big Head So Hard?" "Early Autumn," and "Jazz Hoot." Metropolitan Opera star George London performs the "Farewell to His Son" and "Death of Boris" scenes from Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*. Pianist Grant Johannesen plays Beethoven's Piano Concerto no. 3 in C Minor. The show ends with Belafonte and the Belafonte Singers performing their hits "Coconut Woman," "Island in the Sun," "Mama Look a BooBoo," "Jamaica Farewell," and "Going Down Jordan."



### MAURICE CHEVALIER

December 8, 1964

Producer/Writer: Burt Shevelove

Director: Sid Smith

Choreographer: Matt Mattox

Les Poupées de Paris Producers: Sid and Marty Krofft

Parisian singer and entertainer Maurice Chevalier returns to *The Bell Telephone Hour* and opens the program with songs associated with his film career, such as "Mimi," "You Brought a New Kind of Love to Me," and "I Remember it Well." With Les Poupées de Paris, Chevalier performs "Thank Heaven for Little Girls" and "On the Wings of Romance." Also on the program is British variety artist Stanley Holloway performing a medley of music hall favorites, including "A Bit of Cucumber," "Burlington Bertie," and "Henry the Eighth." Jazz musician Pete Fountain performs "Shine" and "Lazy River," and in the opera segment Teresa Berganza sings "Nacqui All'Affanno . . . non Piu Mesta" from *La Cenerentola*. Chevalier wraps up the program by performing a medley of well-loved French songs, including "C'est Si Bon" and "La Vie en Rose."

Maurice Chevalier (above), Lena Horne (right), Robert Preston (above right)

### THE SOUND OF MUSIC

January 19, 1965

Producer: William Hammerstein

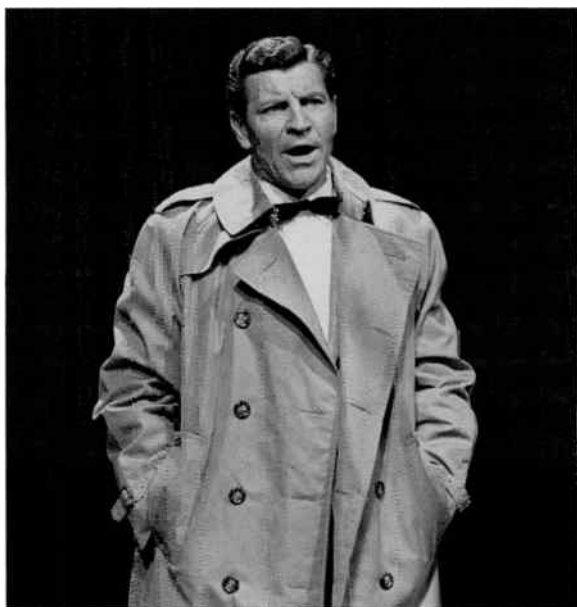
Director: Clark Jones

Writer: Lucille Kallen

Choreographer: John Butler

Drawing on talents as diverse as Lena Horne, Guy Lombardo, Regina Resnik, Robert Merrill, and The Brothers Four, this program takes an upbeat look at romantic music. The Brothers Four, known for their mellow harmonizing, sing "The Green Leaves of Summer," "Somewhere," and "San Francisco Boy Blues." Metropolitan opera stars Resnik and Merrill perform "The Gypsy Song," "The Toreador Song," and "Si Tu M'Aimes" from Bizet's *Carmen*. Later Lena Horne sings "Something Wonderful," "My Blue Heaven," and "It's All Right with Me." Finally, Guy Lombardo and his orchestra perform a medley of ten songs including "Sweet Georgia Brown," "The Object of My Affections," "In the Mood," "Tennessee Waltz," and "Moon River."





## THE MANY FACETS OF COLE PORTER

May 25, 1965

Producer: Dan Lounsbery

Director: Clark Jones

Writer: Joseph Liss

Choreographer: Matt Mattox

For the 1965 season's final program, singer and dancer Donald O'Connor acts as host in the series' second tribute to composer Cole Porter. In the opening number "Another Opening, Another Show," O'Connor is joined by the entire cast which includes Broadway performers Dolores Gray and Nancy Dussault, Metropolitan Opera star George London, jazz musician Erroll Garner, and the Bell Telephone Orchestra. Other highlights feature Gray singing "Easy to Love," London's renditions of "Night and Day" and "In the Still of the Night," and Dussault with a male chorus performing "Why Can't You Behave?"

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## GREAT MOMENTS

April 27, 1965

Producer/Writer: Robert Herridge

Director: Clark Jones

This program recalls highlights from the series' twenty-five years on the air. Memorable moments include recently defected Soviet ballet star Rudolf Nureyev making his 1962 television debut as a last-minute replacement for an injured Erik Bruhn; Australian soprano Joan Sutherland in her American television debut in the "mad scene" from *Hamlet*; and actor Robert Preston singing "Seventy-six Trombones" from the show that made him a Broadway star, *The Music Man*. Harry Belafonte and the Belafonte Singers perform "Try to Remember" and "Amen." And finally, from the 1963 "Paris with Stars" program, French entertainer Maurice Chevalier performs a medley of his best-loved songs.

## VICTOR BORGE

October 24, 1965

Producer: William Hammerstein

Director: Clark Jones

Writer: Gordon Auchincloss

Choreographer: Matt Mattox

*Sylvia* Choreographer: George Balanchine

Pianist and comedian Victor Borge hosts this star-studded program. His guests are soprano Joan Sutherland, in a taped segment performing "Ah, Forse's Lui" and "Sempre Libera" from Verdi's *La Traviata*; Benny Goodman and his orchestra playing "Let's Dance," "I Walk with You," "Yesterday," and "King Porter Stomp"; New York City Ballet stars Jacques D'Amboise and Allegra Kent dancing the pas de deux from *Sylvia*; and singer Patti Page performing "Never the Less," "The Things We Did Last Summer," and "All My Love."



## THE MUSIC OF HAROLD ARLEN

December 5, 1965

Producer: Herbert Ross  
 Director: Clark Jones  
 Writer: Martin Charnin  
 Choreographer: James Starbuck

In this tribute to songwriter Harold Arlen, singer Dinah Shore is joined by Duke Ellington and his orchestra, musical-comedy stars Gordon MacRae, Leslie Uggams, and Gretchen Wyler, and from the New York City Ballet, Edward Villella and Patricia McBride. The program is divided into four segments: "Hooray for Love," "Out of This World," "Blues," and "Get Happy." Memorable moments include Shore singing "That Old Black Magic," Ellington performing "Blues in the Night," Uggams singing "Let's Fall in Love," and McBride and Villella dancing the "Sleepin' Bee Ballet." For the finale, Shore is joined by Harold Arlen and the entire cast in singing "Over the Rainbow."

*Leslie Uggams, Dinah Shore, and Gretchen Wyler (above), Duke Ellington (right), Patricia McBride and Edward Villella (above right)*

## VALENTINE'S DAY PROGRAM

February 13, 1966

Producer: Dan Lounsbury  
 Director: Dave Geisel  
 Writer: Gordon Auchincloss  
 Choreographer: John Butler

Actress Julie Harris hosts the annual Valentine's Day program. She not only reads from the works of Robert Burns, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Dorothy Parker, and Ogden Nash, but in an unusual turn, sings "Makin' Wootie!" Other segments devoted to love and romance feature singers Jack Jones and Anita Gillette performing "Love Is Sweeping the Country" and "Blue Room," operatic baritone Giorgio Tozzi singing "Some Enchanted Evening," and Barbara McNair performing "Love Walked In" and "The Glory of Love." The Brothers Four sing "The Green Leaves of Summer," Harris recites a monologue from *Romeo and Juliet*, and finally a scene from Prokofiev's ballet version of Shakespeare's play is danced by Maria Tallchief and Conrad Ludlow.







### THE LYRICS OF ALAN JAY LERNER

February 27, 1966

Producer: Herbert Ross

Director: Walter C. Miller

Writer: Lucille Kallen

Choreographer: James Starbuck

This stellar tribute to the lyricist is hosted by Cyril Ritchard. From *Brigadoon*, Florence Henderson sings "Heather on the Hill," and Patricia McBride and Edward Villella dance the pas de deux "Come to Me, Bend to Me." In highlights from *My Fair Lady*, Stanley Holloway, the original Mr. Doolittle, performs "Get Me to the Church on Time," and Ritchard sings "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face." Next, from *Gigi*, Holloway and Barbara Harris perform "I Remember It Well" and John Cullum sings "Gigi." Ritchard performs the title song from *Camelot*, and Harris and Cullum re-create the Broadway roles that earned them each 1966 Tony nominations in *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever*. They perform "What Did I Have That I Don't Have" and "On a Clear Day." The program ends with an all-star medley and a reprise of *Camelot*.

### A MAN'S DREAM— THE FESTIVAL OF TWO WORLDS

September 25, 1966

Producer/Director: Robert Drew

By the mid-1960s, the television documentary had become a successful way of examining issues and events. For the series' eighth television season, executive producers Henry Jaffe and Barry Wood changed the format to hour-long documentaries made by such respected producers and directors as Robert Drew, Richard Leacock, Donn Pennebaker, and Nathan Kroll. The new season began with a profile of composer Gian Carlo Menotti, creator and director of the Spoleto Festival. Filmed on location in Italy, filmmaker Robert Drew uses a cinema-verité style and intersperses the Menotti reflections with location shots and scenes of the guest artists in rehearsal and performance. Among them are Soviet pianist Sviatoslav Richter, making his American television debut, British cellist Jacqueline du Pré, and conductors Zubin Mehta and Thomas Schippers.

### PORTRAIT OF VAN CLIBURN

October 16, 1966

Producers: Richard Leacock, Donn Pennebaker

Filmmakers Richard Leacock and Donn Pennebaker, who became well-known for *Rainforest* and *Monterey Pop*, offer a behind-the-scenes look at the life of the concert pianist who achieved international fame when he became the first American to win the coveted Tchaikovsky competition in the Soviet Union. Cliburn is seen conducting student classes at Interlaken Music Camp in Michigan, in a recording session in New York, with his parents in Shreveport, Louisiana, at the White House, and in performance at the Hollywood Bowl, where he was reunited with Soviet conductor Kirill Kondrashin, who led the orchestra during Cliburn's award-winning performance in Moscow. Soviet composer Dimitri Kabalevsky and conductor Erich Leinsdorf are also featured in this program.



**TANGLEWOOD. . .**  
**MUSIC UNDER THE TREES**

October 23, 1966

Producer/Narrator: Warren Wallace

In 1936 the Tanglewood estate, in Massachusetts's Berkshire Mountains, was given to Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra in order to build a permanent American music teaching center. Thirty years later, at what is now the Berkshire Music Festival, Erich Leinsdorf is seen conducting the Symphony Orchestra in Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*. He also leads the orchestra in Stravinsky's *Symphony in Three Movements*, Elgar's *Enigma* variations, and, in an interview, discusses aspects of the training a musician must have. Composer Aaron Copland reflects on Tanglewood, as do opera singers Phyllis Curtin and Jane Marsh, composer and teacher Gunther Schuller, and various students and musicians.

**THE NEW MET—**  
**COUNTDOWN TO CURTAIN**

November 20, 1966

Producer/Director: Robert Drew

This program documents the final weeks of preparation and rehearsal that culminate in the opening night of the new Metropolitan Opera House at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Leontyne Price is seen rehearsing Samuel Barber's *Anthony and Cleopatra*. General manager Rudolf Bing and director Franco Zeffirelli cope with crises ranging from a threatened walkout by the orchestra on opening night to a gigantic turntable that refuses to turn.

*Birgit Nilsson (left)*  
*Leontyne Price (above right)*

## THE CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA— ONE MAN'S TRIUMPH

December 4, 1966

Producer/Director: Nathan Kroll

Writer/Narrator: Irving Kolodin

This profile of George Szell, the Cleveland Orchestra's impassioned and uncompromising conductor, features the only existing footage of Szell in rehearsal. Szell is seen working with the orchestra on Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and Brahms's *Academic Festival Overture* and discussing score interpretation and stick technique with student conductors, including James Levine.

## FIRST LADIES OF THE OPERA

January 1, 1967

Producer: Dan Lounsbury

Director: Kirk Browning

Writer: Robert Sherman

Set/Costume Designer: Rouben Ter-Arutunian

Opera legends Birgit Nilsson, Leontyne Price, Joan Sutherland, and Renata Tebaldi perform eight familiar arias and are interviewed by host Donald Voorhees. First, Nilsson sings "Dich Teure Halle" from Wagner's *Tannhäuser* and "In Questa Reggia" from Puccini's *Turandot*. Next, Price sings "Io Son L'Umile Ancella" from Cilèa's *Adriana Lecouvreur* and "Pace Pace, Mio Dio" from Verdi's *La Forza del Destino*. Sutherland performs "The Bell Song" from Delibes's *Lakme* and "Io No Sono Piu L'Anette" from Risci's *Crispino e la Comare*. Finally, Tebaldi sings "Voi Lo Sapete" from Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* and "Suicidio" from Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*.



## THE SOUNDS AND SIGHTS OF SAN FRANCISCO

January 29, 1967

Producer/Director/Writer: Edward Spiegel

Narrator: Carl Princi

*The Bell Telephone Hour* variety formats almost always revolved around a theme celebration of seasons, holidays, genres, or individuals. This program was the first of a series exploring the musical and cultural life of various American cities. Along with location footage of San Francisco, Josef Krips conducts pianist Patricia Michaelian and the San Francisco Symphony in excerpts from Schumann's Piano Concerto in A Minor. The John Handy Quintet perform "Spanish Lady" at a Stern Grove outdoor concert, and choreographer Lew Christiansen directs a class at the San Francisco Ballet, followed by a performance of *The Marriage of Figaro*. The Jefferson Airplane performs at the mecca for 1960s pop stars, the Fillmore Auditorium.

### INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL

February 26, 1967

Producer: Robert Drew

Narrator: Don Morrow

Filmed the previous August in the Belgian village of Comblain-la Tour, this program combines performance footage with the documentation of the festival's impact on the pastoral village. Among the high points are Benny Goodman relaxing, rehearsing, and then performing a piece written especially for the festival that he renamed "The Monk Swings" as a result of a practical joke that was played on him; The Bratislava Traditional Jazz Band performing a piece at a church service; and organist André Brasseur booted off the stage as he attempts to play rock'n'roll.

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### TOSCANINI— THE MAESTRO REVISITED

March 12, 1967

Producer: Gerald Green

Writer: Harold C. Schonberg

Arturo Toscanini's 100th birthday is celebrated with a tribute that includes a photographic essay on the great conductor's life. Previously unseen candid film clips, films, and kinescopes of many of his greatest performances are presented, along with commentary by fellow conductors George Szell, Eugene Ormandy, and Erich Leinsdorf.

### THE SOUNDS AND SIGHTS OF NEW ORLEANS

April 9, 1967

Producer/Director: Warren Wallace

Narrator: Michael Tolan

The diverse sounds of New Orleans are captured in this unique tribute to the city's musical heritage. Filmed on location, this program includes interviews with jazz musicians Al Hirt and Pete Fountain who are seen performing in their Bourbon Street Clubs. Along with Dédé Pierce, who sings "Eh la Bas," is his wife Billie performing a 1930s rendition of "Song of the Nile." Metropolitan Opera star Gianna D'Angelo is shown rehearsing *Lucia di Lammermoor* with the New Orleans Symphony. Werner Torkanowsky, director of the New Orleans Symphony, performs selections from Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*. The Young Tuxedo Brass Band leads a lively funeral procession that continues long after the graveside ceremonies are completed.



*Pete Fountain (right), Jason Robards and  
Claire Bloom (far right)*



## EL PRADO: MASTERPIECES AND MUSIC

April 23, 1967

Producer/Director: Nathan Kroll

Shot entirely in the Prado, this tribute to Spain's cultural legacy is hosted by classical guitarist Andrés Segovia. The program gracefully combines works of art by El Greco, Velázquez, and Goya, with performances by Segovia, soprano Victoria de los Angeles, pianist Alicia de Larrocha, and flamenco singer Roque Montoya.

## THE MANY FACES OF ROMEO AND JULIET

September 22, 1967

Producer: Dan Lounsbery

Director: Clark Jones

Writer: Lucille Kallen

Choreographer: Lee Theodore

Ballet Choreographer: Erik Bruhn

Shakespeare's tragic love story has inspired composers from Tchaikovsky to Bernstein. Jason Robards and Claire Bloom perform scenes from *Romeo and Juliet* that serve as introductions to their counterparts in music and dance. Erik Bruhn and Carla Fracci dance the pas de deux balcony scene from Prokofiev's ballet; soprano Anna Moffo and tenor Sandor Kenya perform the balcony scene from Gounod's *Romeo et Juliette*; and in a re-creation of their Broadway roles in *West Side Story*, Larry Kert and Carol Lawrence sing "Maria" and "Tonight."

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## ZUBIN MEHTA, A MAN AND HIS MUSIC

December 15, 1967

Producer/Writer/Director: Ed Spiegel

Narrator: Francis Robinson

This profile of the then thirty-year-old conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic opens with Mehta and the orchestra performing Mahler's First Symphony in the Hollywood Bowl. During an interview, Mehta discusses his philosophy of conducting and his great love of German music. While the profile shows Mehta rehearsing Richard Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* with the Philharmonic, it also provides an opportunity to see him with his family and his teacher Hans Swarowsky, and conducting *Aida* in Rome. Finally, the program ends with Mehta conducting *Ein Heldenleben* in performance at the Los Angeles Music Center.

### CASALS AT MARLBORO

December 29, 1967

Producer/Director: Nathan Kroll

Writer/Narrator: Harold C. Schonberg

Filmed at the Marlboro Festival in Vermont, this program was aired on Pablo Casals's ninety-first birthday. The cellist-conductor is seen rehearsing and conducting the first movement of Mozart's *Haffner* Symphony. Also featured are violinist Alexander Schneider, pianist Rudolf Serkin, and Murray Perahia, who was young and still unknown at the time.



Producer/Director Nathan Kroll (with glasses, above)

### THE SOUNDS AND SIGHTS OF CHICAGO

February 16, 1968

Producer/Director/Writer: Ed Spiegel

Narrator: Studs Terkel

This tribute explores Chicago's cultural institutions and the musical variety found in ethnic neighborhoods. Among the highlights of this musical tour are: a recording session with the Chicago Symphony; a visit to the Fellowship Baptist Church with its 200-voice choir; the Chicago Zither Orchestra; Junior Wells and His Chicago Blues Band; the Joe Bushkin Trio performing at a street fair; the contemporary chamber players of the University of Chicago rehearsing a concerto for clarinets; accordianist Joe Paterek performing at a Polish picnic; a rehearsal of a community production of the Lithuanian folk opera *Grazina*; and, finally, the all-male choir of the Czech Lyra Chorus.

### MAN WHO DANCES: EDWARD VILLELLA

March 8, 1968

Producers: Robert Drew, Mike Jackson

Narrator: Don Morrow

This portrait of New York City Ballet star Edward Villella clearly illustrates the courage and stamina required by a dancer. On November 19, 1967, cameras follow Villella on and offstage during the grueling day he must dance three major roles. During his second performance of the day, he collapses on stage due to muscle spasms in his legs. Villella, who had never collapsed before, is faced with a third performance in "Rubies" that evening. Despite his wife's protests, Villella chooses to go on. The camera records the courageous performance and also reveals him to be near collapse when he is backstage.

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