

## OBITUARY

# Anthony Wentworth Morss, 1931-2018: A Life-Long Contribution to Art

All improvement in the political sphere is to proceed from the ennobling of the character—but how, under the influence of a barbarous constitution, can the character become ennobled? We should need, for this end, to seek out some instrument which the State does not afford us, and with it open up well-springs which will keep pure and clear throughout every political corruption.

I have now reached the point to which all the foregoing considerations have been directed. The instrument is the Fine Arts, and those well-springs are opened up in their immortal examples.

—Friedrich Schiller

*On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Ninth Letter

Aug. 26—Anthony Wentworth Morss died at the age of 87 in New York City on August 6, 2018. Maestro Morss was known to most as a meticulous and passionate opera, choral, and orchestral conductor, but to those who had the privilege of knowing him and working with him closely, he was a personal inspiration: Maestro Morss was always teaching—in almost every conversation—in the realm of music, of history, and of the highest Ideas. At the same time, he always saw himself as a student of what was new to be learned in Art and in Classical culture. He credited his over thirty-year association with Lyndon and Helga LaRouche with revealing to him the real, living Friedrich Schiller, whom he regarded as his personal hero and Ideal.

Maestro Morss, the artist, musician, and conductor, came from a long line of New England industrialists and military engineers. His forebears were among the early settlers of Newburyport, Massachusetts in the 17th Century. Charles Anthony Morss founded a small wire manufacturing company in 1841 called Morss & Whyte. In about 1885, when Thomas Edison was lighting the first electric street lamps in New York City, Morss & Whyte moved into the production of insu-



EIRNS/Stuart Lewis

Anthony Morss

lated electric cable. The family business, later named Simplex Technologies, Inc., was to play a large role in U.S. defense communications in World War II, and today is a world leader in transoceanic fiber optic cable research and production.

With this as background, Tony Morss would often relay the story from his student days at Harvard College, when he “broke the news” to his father that he planned to make a career, not in the family business, but as a musician. His father’s reaction was shock, dismay, and the strongest disapproval. However, Tony was not to be dissuaded from his early path towards becoming

either a concert pianist or conductor.

In an interview published in the *Koussevitzky Recording Society Journal* in 1995, Tony Morss recalls that at age eight or nine, he attended a symphony concert for the very first time at Boston’s Symphony Hall, conducted by its director, Serge Koussevitzky, who concluded with Tchaikovsky’s Sixth Symphony (“*Pathétique*”). The experience shaped his life and career: “The whole experience was absolutely magical, riveting. . . . Much of what I heard went over my head. What I did hear was something that was thrilling, some-

thing that was tremendously important in ways I did not fully comprehend—and an enormously emotional experience. The conductor seemed to be absolutely spent and so did the orchestra. I later discovered the orchestra really felt this way.”

Later, at age fourteen, through a friend, young Morss was invited to spend a weekend with Koussevitzky and his family at his home near Tanglewood. Tony drank everything in, and later noted that “People who knew [Koussevitzky] much better than I, and who spent hours conversing with him, were always astonished at how well-informed he was, at the breadth of his interests, whereas somebody like Toscanini was so exclusively focused on music that he was, I would say, considerably less informed. . . .”

While still a student, Tony Morss was chosen by Leopold Stokowski to be his Choral Master and Associate Conductor for his Symphony of the Air. Later he became the Music Director of the Majorca and the Saragossa Symphonies in Spain. He was especially proud of the mixed professional and amateur choruses which he directed there. These choruses toured the country under his direction, winning praise and prizes in many competitions. Maestro Morss was Music Director of the Norwalk Symphony and Chorus Master of the American Opera Center at Juilliard in the United States. He guest conducted the Madrid, Barcelona, Cape Town and Marseilles symphony orchestras as well as opera companies throughout the United States. He counted well over one hundred operas in his working repertoire.

In 1990, Maestro Morss conducted a concert version of Beethoven’s opera *Fidelio*, performed at the Verdi tuning of A=432 Hz, in conjunction with the Schiller Institute. Maestro Morss was a tireless public advocate of a lowering of the current, arbitrarily high tunings to the scientific pitch of approximately A=432. He recruited other musicians to this requirement on the basis of, firstly, the urgency to stop the physical destruction of young voices, and secondly, the requirement that Art must be beautiful, an impossibility at the elevated tuning. In the recent period, Maestro Morss was working on solving the technical challenges of allowing all the instruments of the Classical orchestra—including the woodwinds—to play at the Verdi pitch on modern instruments.

When the Schiller Institute NYC Chorus was first formed in 2014, Maestro Morss became one of its greatest advocates and a loyal stalwart in the Bass section.

The chorus was enriched by his voice, but even more so, by his constant presence. As the chorus grew in size and renown, new singers and players would come to their first rehearsal, see Maestro Morss’ tall presence in the Bass section, and say, in effect, “Well, if Maestro Morss is in this chorus, this must be on the highest level.” Maestro Morss loved the joy and the work of bringing the greatest art to large New York City audiences, many of which comprised young people who were “new” to Classical music. Recently, he would often remark that singing in the Schiller Institute NYC Chorus was “certainly the greatest experience of my entire life!”

Maestro Morss served as the Music Director of the New York State Opera Company, the Verismo Opera, the Asociacion Pro-Zarzuela en America, the Eastern Opera Theater of New York, and the Lubo Opera Company of New Jersey. He served on the executive board of the Foundation for the Revival of Classical Culture, which is dedicated to the education of young people in the principles of composition and discovery in Art and in the Sciences. He received the Lifetime Achievement Award for his twenty-year role as Music Director and Principal Conductor of the New Jersey Association of Verismo Opera in 2015, and in 2018, he received the first Walter Damrosch Award from the Musicians Club of New York.

Maestro Morss was lucid and compelling in his insights to his last breath on Earth. In our last conversations with him, he talked at great length and specificity about Beethoven’s life and his compositional method in the *Ninth Symphony*, Schiller’s breakthroughs in military science as conveyed to Russia’s Czar for the military defeat of Napoleon’s army, and of the significance for history of the individual whom he called, “that greatest polymath, Lyndon LaRouche.”

A good many years after the young Tony Morss angered his father by choosing a life for Art, his father traveled to Spain to hear him direct a symphony orchestra. Yes, his father happily agreed, then, with Maestro Morss’ early wisdom: to devote his life to what Schiller called “the instrument [of] the Fine Arts.”

A Memorial Service will be held at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, September 29, 2018 at St. Ignatius of Antioch Episcopal Church, 552 West End Avenue, New York, N.Y. In lieu of flowers, please send donations to The Musicians Club of New York, 360 Cabrini Blvd., Apt. 1D, New York, N.Y. 10040.

—Richard A. Black