

Sigurd Rascher Biographical Notes from press kit

Written by Robert Haley

Friday, 14 May 2010 14:51 - Last Updated Friday, 14 May 2010 15:03

These notes are from Sigurd Rascher's press kit in the 1950s.



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"Born in the first century of the Saxophone in Europe. Lived for some time without making contact with the chief item of my later exploits. A delay, as inexplicable as unexcusable.

Studied Clarinet & Piano at Academy of Music in Stuttgart, until lack of funds terminated this development. At that time a friend suggested to support myself, playing the Saxophone, "because it is the easiest instrument". Young and lighthearted, I believed this and joined a danceband, proud possessor of a pawn-shop relic. After a few years the glamor of the night club tasted stale. Teaching shop and music in a school was far more satisfactory. And there was time to practise.

A thorough absence of knowledge of "what can and what can not be done" on the Saxophone imbued me with a desire to try everything, however improbable it seemed. Thus my experiments to extend the range of the instrument beyond the traditional two and one-half octaves. My adventures into instrumental no-man's land were not always as interesting to the landlady as they were to me. Frequently, a quick change of habitat saved me from the attacks of irrate house-neighbors. But unfettered curiosity led me eventually to a systematic method of playing fully 4 octaves, without changing a single key, nor adding any. No one before me had done this. Today, 25 years later, some of the more ambitious players are beginning to follow my lead.

In 1933 I was called to head a Saxophone class, established especially for me, at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen. Within the year, I joined in a similar capacity the faculty of the Conservatory of Music in Malmo, Sweden. Teaching at these two institutions as well as concertising throughout Europe kept me busy for a few years. I appeared with most of the top orchestras, as well as the smaller ones, as soloist (Berlin Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic London, BBC Symphony, Prague Philharmonic, Concertgebouw, Warsaw Radio Orchestra, Tonhalle Zurich, Budapest Symphony, etc., in all: over 200).

Ever since beginning to concertise, the lack of original literature compelled me to encourage composers to write for my instrument. Many of them responded enthusiastically, dedicating Concerti, Sonatas, Suites, etc. to me. (Glazounov, Ibert, Coates, Larsson, Jacobi, Hindemith...) The Concerti by Ibert and Glazounov are already counted by musical connoisseurs among the "classics" of the instrument's literature.

Toured Australia in 1938 and auditioned on return to Europe for Koussevitzki in Boston and

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Barbirolli in NY. American debut with Boston Symphony and NY Philharmonic in October 1939. Lived in USA ever since. Very active in Music Education throughout the nation, and concertising in every state. 3 tours to Europe since the war, on of them 74 concerts in 7 weeks.

Living with family on large acreage in NY's beautiful upstate hill country. Studying new works, written for me by young American composers, and working on a book on the Saxophone, as well as a new film, between tours of playing, lecturing and recording."