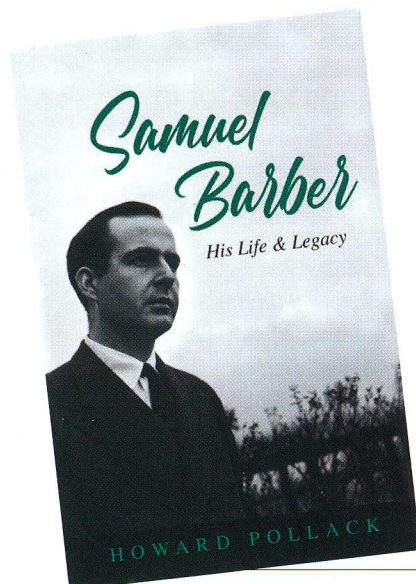


The Curtis Bookshelf



Samuel Barber: His Life & Legacy
by Howard Pollack
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS, 2023

Despite his established place in the 20th-century canon, Samuel Barber (Composition '34) is "relatively understudied and undervalued among musicologists, music theorists, and cultural historians," writes Howard Pollack in the introduction to this 700-page critical study of the composer's life and works. Mr. Pollack, the author of sweeping biographies of Aaron Copland and George Gershwin, devotes five chapters to Barber's formative years, including the nine years he studied at Curtis. After taking piano lessons in the nascent preparatory division in 1924, Barber's full-time studies included

Biographers make their cases for Barber and Schoenberg, and a venerable publicist tells her story.

a lengthy apprenticeship with Rosario Scalero, an exacting mentor who heaped on counterpoint exercises while nurturing his better creative instincts.

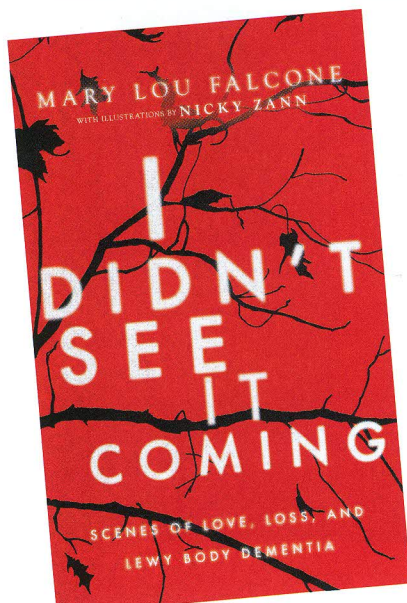
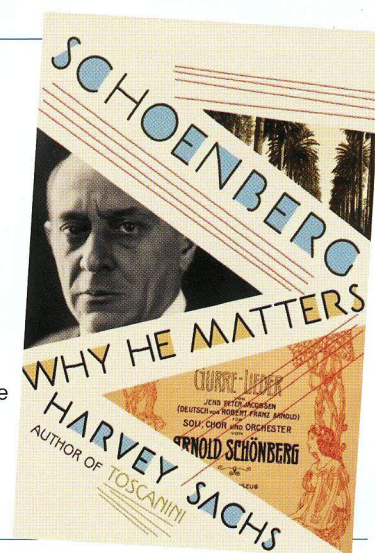
Barber's friendships and his budding romance with Gian Carlo Menotti (Composition '33) are chronicled through diary excerpts, but especially remarkable is the lavish support from Curtis founder Mary Louise Curtis Bok. "Bok's sponsorship of Barber and Menotti seemed to touch every aspect of their professional lives," Pollack writes, whether providing financial assistance with car, piano, and home purchases or facilitating contacts with publishers and conductors. Barber and Menotti dedicated several works to Mrs. Bok and remained close to the conservatory well into their later years.

Schoenberg: Why He Matters
by Harvey Sachs
LIVERIGHT, 2023

Curtis music history teacher Harvey Sachs acknowledges from the start of this, his twelfth book, that he has an uphill climb in promoting the merits of Arnold Schoenberg, noting that the composer's music is mostly absent from orchestra calendars and shunned by many top soloists. It goes beyond a simple dislike of atonality. "I know of no musician who would claim that Debussy, Rossini, Wagner, or Brahms destroyed music's future," he writes,

"whereas I have heard many make that claim, explicitly or implicitly, about Schoenberg."

But Mr. Sachs fervently believes that Schoenberg's story has yet to be fully understood or solidified. In a lively, accessible prose, he explores the composer's Viennese roots, Jewish heritage, financial struggles, and eventual exile in America. Particularly engaging is a chapter on Schoenberg in California, where his students included the pianist-actor Oscar Levant and baseball legend Jackie Robinson—the latter of whom was excused from class to attend batting practice.



I Didn't See It Coming: Scenes of Love, Loss, and Lewy body dementia
by Mary Lou Falcone
EAST END PRESS, 2023

Mary Lou Falcone (Voice '66) emerges from her background role in guiding public relations campaigns for leading artists (including Gustavo Dudamel, Van Cliburn, and Georg Solti) and organizations (the New York Philharmonic) to tell her own story—and that of her late husband. In 2019, Nicholas "Nicky" Zann, a noted illustrator and cartoonist, was diagnosed with Lewy body dementia, a relatively unknown neurodegenerative disease. He died the following year. The memoir is, in part,

an effort to raise awareness about the condition and shed light on the role of a caregiver.

The larger story spans Ms. Falcone's New Jersey childhood, studies at Curtis in the 1960s (where director Efrem Zimbalist, Sr. identified her talents), a period as a freelance singer and elementary school music teacher in Bryn Mawr, Pa., and the launch of her New York P.R. firm in 1973, the same year she met Mr. Zann. Ms. Falcone uses an intriguing literary device that involves inhabiting the voices of those who have known her, including Mr. Zann. Chapters are dotted with meaningful anecdotes and lessons about caregiving and compassion.

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