

## MARIA LIDKA

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Here is a musician who must never be forgotten. She was an outstanding violinist and noted for the many premieres she gave of British works. For this purpose I have given dates for the most of the people who were important in her life.

She was born Marianne Louise Liedtke in Berlin on 27 May 1914 of a highly cultured Jewish family. Her father was a Court lawyer until the Nazis came to power in April 1933.

From an early age, perhaps mid to late teens, she kept a notebook of concerts she attended and the performers she heard.

She was rigorously schooled in the Carl Flesch System of violin playing and she played the 1734 Wilmotte Strad which she acquired in 1955. The Flesch System was recommended to her by the great Gregor Piatigorsky. (1903-1976). Her first two teachers were pupils of Flesch namely Josef Wolfsthal (1899-1931) and, after his death, Max Rostal (1905-1991).

She fled to London in 1934 and taught German and gave violin lessons. She performed music with the pianist Peter Gellhorn (1912-2004) and the cellist Eva Heinitz (1907-2001), her housemate. She performed at the Wigmore Hall in 1939 with Gerald Moore (1899-1987), and, in 1941, joined the Czech Trio with Walter Susskind (1913-1980) and Karel Horic. (born 1913 but took his own life after the death of Lisa Marketta). Maria was chosen to replace Maria Hlounova and, in order to sound more Czech, she changed her name to Maria Lidka.

During the War years she appeared at the National Gallery Concerts with Watson Forbes (viola) (1909-1917) and Vivian Joseph (cello) (1916-2005). Early in the War, she broke the curfew by lingering at a chamber music concert and spent the night in a police cell. The next morning she found her home obliterated.

After the War, she premiered many British works including those by Tippett (1905-1993), Richard Rodney Bennett (1936-2012), Peter Racine Fricker (1920-1990) whose first concerto was written for her, Francis Routh (1927-) and the John Joubert (1927-) Concerto. For a time, she worked with Britten (1913-1976) but did not enjoy his dictatorial and pompous attitude. She had joined the London String Trio (they premiered the Schoenberg Trio). She broadcast many times and appeared at the Proms twice in 1952 and 1953.

Working with Britten was not successful but she found in Margaret Kitchin (1924-2008) an excellent pianist and, in 1946, they premiered Reizenstein's Violin Sonata in G sharp and, later, Fricker's Violin Sonata and Iain Hamilton's Variations for solo violin. Reizenstein's dates are 1911-1968 and Hamilton lived from 1922-2000.

She was a formidable teacher both at the Royal College of Music (1968-1985) and privately, and performer as many have testified including Norman Del Mar (1919-1994)

In 1955 she married the Cologne-born business man Walter May and they had two sons namely Simon who became a philosopher and Marius who became a cellist. Walter's brother Edward was a cellist.

Maria formed a piano trio with Franz Reizenstein and the splendid cellist Derek Simpson (1928-2007), With the pianist Otto Freundenthal (1934-) she performed all the Beethoven violin sonatas at the York Festival as well as the Bartok Sonata and the Schoenberg Fantasy.

In the 1960s, she paired up with the pianist Peter Wallfisch (1924-2003) and, in their repertoire, were works by Matyas Seiber (1905-1960), Janacek (1854-1928) and Kenneth Leighton (1929- 1988) With the cellist Christopher Bunting (1929-2005) she premiered Routh's Double Concerto on 11 May 1970 with the London Mozart Players conducted by Panufnik (1914-1991). A year earlier she had premiered Routh's Dialogue for violin and orchestra with the same ensemble conducted by Harry Blech (1919-1989). Routh was born in Kidderminster in 1927.

Her husband died in 1963.

She was a brilliant musician and not trammelled by just playing the standard repertoire. There are too many musicians would only play 'safe' music and disregard the 'moderns'.

Maria was an extraordinary woman in many ways. She had a pleasant personality and when I asked her permission so that I could write about her she was both humble and modest.

She died on 12 December 2013. She was 99 years old.

We shall not see her like again.

(692)

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