Louis Kaufman and Annette Kaufman: *A Fiddler's Tale: How Hollywood and Vivaldi Discovered Me.*

Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003 [xv, 462 p. + 1 sound disc, ISBN: 0299183807. \$26.95] Illustrations, bibliography, discography, index.

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Which violinist won the Naumberg Award in 1927, the Grand Prix du Disque in 1950, and was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 2002? Can't think of his name? Here are some clues: he made the first commercial recording of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* in 1949, introducing the music into the general repertoire. He premiered works of Copland, Milhaud, William Grant Still, and Martinu, and made the first recording of Samuel Barber's Violin Concerto. Still no idea? He prepared editions of the works of Louis Spohr, Veracini, Telemann, and Vivaldi, and was eventually awarded, along with his wife, the degree of Honorary Doctor by Oberlin College. For a time he was the violist of the Musical Arts Quartet, and in later life he helped launch a chamber music series still in existence today, the South Bay Chamber Music Society in southern California. Otto Klemperer invited him to become the concertmaster of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, and if these last clues don't reveal his name, it will at least hint at why it is not better known: this violinist spent much of his working life in California, working in Hollywood. His is the

sound of the solo violin you hear in over 500 movies, including some of the most famous American films: *Gone with the Wind*, *Key Largo*, *Casablanca*, *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, *A Star is Born*, *Intermezzo*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, *The Quiet Man*, *Sunset Boulevard*, *Modern Times*, *Vertigo*, *Psycho*. The list goes on and on, and he seems therefore to have been roundly ignored by the East Coast concert establishment.

His name is Louis Kaufman (10 May 1905–9 February 1994). He once remarked, to some New York colleagues who resented his "betrayal" of serious music, "No one ever asked me to play badly, and the checks are always good." The irony is that given the current interest in film music, the book he wrote about his life is far more engaging than any musician's biography I've read in a long time.

Kaufman was a splendid violinist. His artistry can still be heard on dozens of LPs he recorded (they are particularly highly prized in Japan), and that early recording of *The Four Seasons* was just re-released last summer as a Naxos Historical Recording, occasioning a major review in the *New York Times*. A fine CD of his playing, ranging from the most serious artistry to the most silky schmaltz

accompanies the autobiography he wrote with his wife, Annette Kaufman—one of many reasons to read *A Fiddler's Tale: How Hollywood and Vivaldi Discovered Me.*

Kaufman's book is hard to put down. It spans almost the entire 20th Century, and since he lived an active life in the highest musical circles both in America and in Europe, a host of famous names (Elman, Heifetz, Korngold, Klemperer, Kreisler, Piatagorsky, for a start) march across the pages almost nonchalantly. Kaufman studied at the Institute of Musical Arts (now Juilliard) with Franz Kneisel. His substantial account of that experience is the only one I know describing what it was like to study with one of the seminal violinists in America.

Kaufman assembled an important art collection, some of which now hangs in the National Gallery in Washington. He lived in a house built for him by Frank Lloyd Wright Jr., and generally led and enjoyed as full and rounded a life as is granted to anyone. He writes absorbingly about the musical/political life of the time (including his role in desegregating the Los Angeles local of the Musician's Union, and musical life

in post-war Europe, where he lived for several years in the 1950s).

This short review barely does justice to a book I enjoyed immensely. It is beautifully produced, including color plates and

photographs. It provides a useful scholarly apparatus—discography, list of publications and films, reviews, a good index—but for all that lies lightly in the hand. In addition, University of Wisconsin

Press has released an audiobook read by Annette Kaufman (2005, ISBN: 029921110X. 14 CDs, \$29.95).