

## Olga Samaroff Stokowski

\*8. August 1880 +17. Mai 1948 New York



Bd. VII S. 160

Madame **Olga Samaroff-Stokowski** (nee **Lucy Mary Olga Agnes Hickenlooper**) was born in San Antonio, Texas, August 8, 1880, while her father was an officer in the United States Army stationed there. At the age of three she astounded her mother and grandmother (both of whom were music teachers) by improvising melodies at the keyboard. At twelve years of age, she was taken to Europe by her grandmother, where she remained until she was twenty-one. She was the first American woman to be given a scholarship in the piano class at the Paris Conservatoire, where she studied with **Antoine Francois Marmontel** (teacher of **Bizet**, **Dubois**, **Giraud** and others), **Ludovic Breitner**, and with **E.M. Delaborde** (the illegitimate son of **Charles-Valentin Alkan**). She made a highly successful debut in Paris and shortly thereafter she married a Russian engineer, **Boris Loutzky**, and went to Berlin where she studied with **Ernest Hutcheson**, **Otis B. Boise** and **Ernest Jedliczka** (pupil of **Anton Rubinstein** and **Tchaikovsky**). Her marriage was brief and ended in an annulment.



Her successful pianistic debut in America was January 8, 1905, at Carnegie Hall, with the New York Symphony Orchestra (**Walter Damrosch** conducting). This was followed by extensive tours in America and Europe. She ranked with the foremost women pianists, such as **Clara Schumann**, **Annette Essipov** and **Teresa Carreno**. Upon the advice of her manager, **Henry Wolfsohn**, she chose the professional name of **Olga Samaroff** from a remote Russian relative and used it throughout her career.

In 1911, she became the wife of **Leopold Stokowski**, then at the beginning of his brilliant career as a conductor. Their marriage also ended in divorce twelve years later. Their one daughter, **Sonya**, married Lieutenant **William Thorbecke**, the son of a Dutch diplomat.

During the 1920s, **Samaroff** made an extensive series of recordings for the Victor Talking Machine Company, including works of **Bach**, **Chopin**, **Liszt**, **Juon**, **Lecuona**, and others. Most of **Samaroff's** recordings have been reissued on a compact disc produced by Pearl Records of England.

An injury to her left arm in 1926 compelled **Samaroff** to cancel all concerts for the season, after which she accepted the position of chief music critic of the New York Evening Post which she continued for two years. Her broad knowledge, varied musical experience and clear style were highly praised. The Post attempted to retain her for three more years but she declined their offer to devote herself to educational work and lecturing.

When the Juilliard Foundation organized its Graduate School in 1925, **Samaroff** was asked to join the faculty. In 1927, she became head of the Piano Department of the Philadelphia Conservatory. She held both positions, traveling between New York and Philadelphia, until her death.

In 1927, she founded the **Schubert Memorial, Inc.**, with a view of providing opportunities for young artists to obtain a hearing in the larger concert and opera field. In 1931, she was one of the four founders of the Musician's Emergency Aid of New York, which collected and distributed large funds to musicians in need during the Great Depression.

**Samaroff's** services as a lecturer were in great demand. She appeared at Yale, Harvard, Columbia and many of America's finest universities. Her lectures were prepared with extreme care and delivered eloquently. Realizing that one of the great needs of America was a layman's music course for listeners, she arranged, in 1935, with the W.W. Norton Company, to publish a series of books to bring together musical ideas and information to educate the layman. "The Layman's Music Book" resulted,

followed by her autobiography, "An American Musician's Story," a few years later. Her success with "The Layman's Music Course" was outstanding, resulting in several years of subscription lecture series given at Town Hall in New York.

Notwithstanding her eminent position as a virtuoso, a critic, an author, lecturer and organizer, **Samaroff** is perhaps best known for her distinguished career as a teacher. She was extremely dedicated to her students and would go to extraordinary lengths to provide for them the best, well-rounded education possible in preparation for a concert career. Some of her more distinguished pupils were **William Kapell**, **Claudette Sorel**, **Rosalyn Tureck**, **Joseph Battista**, **Eugene List**, **Sigi Weissenberg** and **Raymond Lewenthal**.

**Samaroff** died after a brief illness on May 17, 1948 in her New York apartment.

**Quelle:**

<http://www.lib.umd.edu/PAL/IPAM/IPAMsamaroff.html>

**Samaroff** was born **Lucy Mary Agnes Hickenlooper** in San Antonio, Texas and grew up in Galveston, Texas) where her family owned a business later wiped out in the great hurricane of 1900. There being then no great teachers in the US, after her talent for the piano was discovered she was sent to Europe to study, first with **Antoine Francois Marmontel** at the Conservatoire de Paris, and later with **Ernest Jedliczka** in Berlin, where she married, very briefly, Russian engineer **Boris Loutzky**. After her divorce from **Loutzky**, and the disaster which claimed her family's business, she returned to the United States and tried to carve out a career as a pianist but soon discovered she was hampered both by her rather awkward name and her American origins. An agent suggested a change and her professional name was taken from a remote relative.

As **Olga Samaroff** she self-produced her New York debut at Carnegie Hall in 1905 (the first woman ever to do so), renting the hall, orchestra and conductor **Walter Damrosch**, and making an overwhelming impression with her performance of the **Tchaikowsky** Piano Concerto. She played extensively in the United States and Europe thereafter. **Samaroff** discovered **Leopold Stokowski** (1882-1977) when he was church organist at St. Bartholemew's in New York and later conductor of the Cincinnati Orchestra. At that time much more famous than he, **Samaroff** lobbied her distinguished contacts to get him appointed (in 1912) to the vacant conductor's post at the famed Philadelphia Orchestra, launching his international career. She married **Stokowski** in 1911 and their daughter **Sonia** was born in 1921. **Samaroff** made a number of recordings in the early 1920s for the Victor Talking Machine Company.

In 1923, **Stokowski** left her for actress **Greta Garbo** in a scandal that made headlines. **Samaroff** never recovered from his infidelity and took refuge in her friends which included **George Gershwin**, **Irving Berlin**, **Dorothy Parker**, and **Cary Grant**. In 1925 **Samaroff** fell in her New York apartment, suffering an injury to her shoulder which forced her to retire from performing. She worked primarily as a critic and teacher from then on. She wrote for the New York Evening Post until 1928, and gave guest lectures throughout the 1930s. **Samaroff** was also the first music teacher's to be broadcast on NBC television. She taught at the Philadelphia Conservatory and in 1924 was invited to join the faculty of the newly formed Juilliard School of Music in New York. She taught at both schools for the rest of her life. Called "**Madam**" by her adoring students, she was a tireless advocate for them, supplying many of her Depression-era charges with everything from concert clothes to food, and pressing officials at Juilliard to build a dormitory - a project that was not realized for decades after her death. Her most famous pupil was concert pianist **William Kapell** who was killed tragically in a 1953 plane crash at 31.

**Mme. Samaroff** published an autobiography, *An American Musician's Story*, in 1939. Teacher to the end, she died of a heart attack at her home in New York on the evening of May 17, 1948 after giving several lessons that day.

**Quelle:**

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olga\\_Samaroff](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olga_Samaroff)

**Neubeuern:**

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