

IRVING FINE

by

Dr. David C.F. Wright

Rarely does one meet a composer of supreme quality, a composer who is flawless in his craft, personal in his musical expression, original in his style, even if it is a blend of existing styles, and who had the ability to write with technical accuracy and precision and yet could write music that happily marries intellect and emotion.

One of these rarities is Irving Fine.

Aaron Copland has given me permission to quote his essay on Fine.

“The art of music has, for a long time now, suffered from an overdependence on consecrated names. When music lovers speak of composers, they are generally referring, in the whole history of music, to half a hundred famous names of whom perhaps half a dozen belong to our own era. This does serious injustice to many valuable composing talents, both of the past and the present. Irving Fine may be taken as a typical case in point. During his comparatively brief lifetime, his was not a famous name;

nevertheless, he enjoyed the high regard of his musical peers, and for the very good reason that his music has quality, sincerity and vitality. The fact that his music — especially his chamber music — has had increasing performances since his passing in 1962 proves its viability.

As his friend and colleague, I had plenty of opportunity to observe Irving Fine as a musical creator and musical reactor. To my mind his outstanding quality was his musical sensitivity — he had an ear that one could trust. His students and his fellow composers depended on him to tell the truth about their music, and in the sureness and rightness of his judgment we recognised ourselves. The loss of that kind of instinctive musicianship cannot be replaced.

The sureness of musical instinct informed his every activity, as composer, teacher and performer. He worried considerably about each new work in the process of composition. And yet, when we came to know them, they had elegance, style, finish and a convincing continuity. His problems as a composer concerned matters of aesthetics, of eclecticism, of influence.

These limitations he recognised; they made him modest to a fault. But all his compositions, from the lightest to the most serious, “sound”; they have bounce and thrust and finesse; they are always a musical pleasure to hear.

Fine grew up musically during the ascendancy of the neoclassic movement. The style, as developed by Stravinsky and his followers during the thirties and forties, had a profound influence on the younger composer. It satisfied a deep need in Fine’s creative psyche — the need for an emotive world that includes imaginative freedom along with a sense of order and control. There is intensity and movement in all his music, and sometimes a surprising pathos. Yet always one is aware of the craftsmanship that shapes the composition with a sure hand.

In many ways he wrote music that was thoroughly representative of its time. Whether it is elegiac and richly textured as in the *Serious Song*, or rhythmic and athletically vigorous as in the *Toccata Concertante*, or dramatically dissonant and daring as in the *Symphony*, his music wins us over through its keenly conceived sonorities and its fully realized expressive content.

Special reference should be made to the *Symphony* partly because it represents the composer in his final phase and partly because it demonstrates a reaching out toward new and more adventurous experiences, in certain ways experiences outside the frame of reference of most of Fine’s music. It is strongly dramatic, almost operatic in gesture, with a restless and somewhat strained atmosphere that is part of its essential quality. It is saddening to think that Fine was not fated to carry through to full fruition the new direction clearly inherent in the best pages of the *Symphony*.”



Irving Gifford Fine was born in Boston on 3 December 1914, of an Eastern-European Jewish family who originally came from Latvia. His father, George, who was born in Hartford, Connecticut on 16 April 1891,

who became a lawyer and married Charlotte Friedman, also born in Hartford, in 1894 and the marriage was not very successful and George was sometimes violent to his wife. When Irving was eight he came home from school one day to find his mother huddled in front of the stove with the gas jets on. The Fines had two daughters, Audrey (B 1916) and Barbara (B 1922).

Irving had perfect pitch and began piano lessons at the age of five at the East Boston Music Centre. He had acquired the nickname of Golem (monster) but he was obsessed with playing the piano and made the family maid quite annoyed. Irving did not have the best relationship with Audrey particularly when Papa George bought her a baby grand but he was always protective towards his sister Barbara. Father kept alcohol even in the days of Prohibition and Irving always had a voracious appetite and throughout his life there was concern at his weight.

He was a precocious youth and was sexually active early on. This was probably due to the fact that when he was six he was sexually interfered with by a 12 year old girl who was babysitting him. In our day it is taken that all sexual offenders are male but this is not so. Many men who offend do so because they were abused as boys by females including babysitters. Recent surveys in the USA and Australia have shown that 72% of men who become sex offenders or paedophiles were sexually abused when very young by members of the female sex. Nonetheless Irving was fascinated by women's breasts and his two sisters were well-endowed. He was a flirt and a charmer and would wolf-whistle girls. He was a normal red-blooded man.

His early education was at Chapman School in East Boston and then at Winthrop Grammar School. He was good at German and a successful academic and later applied to go to Harvard with Amherst College as his second choice. Harvard rejected him and he was devastated believing the rejection was anti-Semitism. He had had his bar mitzvah at 13, spoke Hebrew and was quite expert at Jewish history.

Between 1924 and 1935 he studied the piano with Frances L Grover who was a most respected teacher. At this time he met Leonard Bernstein and there were friends for the rest of Fine's life.

Perseverance led to Fine being accepted at Harvard in 1933 at the age of eighteen. Papa George was not in favour of his son studying music and it was the time of the great American Depression. Papa George wanted his son to take up medicine. His son did study zoology and other boring sciences but prevailed to take up music. Fine joined the Harvard Glee Club and sang with them in Bach's B minor Mass with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in a performance conducted by Sergei Koussevitzky. Irving was elected Chairman of the Glee Club and absorbed some Marxist teaching.

But he had health problems. As a youth Irving worked in a delicatessen store in Winthrop doing the menial tasks when he was knocked over by a car and thrown into the air. He was in hospital for a while but for the rest of his life he had regular headaches.

He coped with this and studied theory and composition at Harvard with Walter Piston, orchestration with Edward Burlingame Hill, choral conducting with Archibald T. Davidson and counterpoint with Arthur Merritt.

He was slow in the art of composition agonising over every detail. On 1 June 1938 he completed his Fugue in F minor for string quartet. He was not happy to write an orchestral piece as he thought Burlingame Hill was not a good teacher.

In 1937 he gained his B A and, the following year, obtained his M A both from Harvard.

Nadia Boulanger came to Cambridge, Massachusetts to take up a professorship at Radcliffe College. Fine pursued his composition studies with her at Radcliffe College and privately in Cambridge, and Fine, sailed for France in June 1939 on a Fulbright Research Fellowship to continue his studies with her in Paris. The ship docked in Ireland and in Plymouth before arriving in France on 7 July.

Boulanger was strict and very busy. Some lessons were at 2 am. Fine was working on a Cello Sonata with her. The main excitement for him was not Boulanger but that he met Stravinsky. But, by October 1939, the threat of Nazism was very worrying. Boulanger fled to the USA and Fine returned home to Boston.

Fine had fallen in love with Marsha, a student at Radcliffe, who was several years younger than he was, but she came from a non-Jewish family. Another Jewish-American composer Harold Shapero was also in love with her. Marsha's parents did not want their daughter to marry a Jew. This unhappy affair ended and Audrey took her brother to a party where he met a nineteen year old student of mathematics studying at Wellesley College. Her name was Verna Rudnick. They began dating and sometime in the Fall of 1940-1941 they became engaged. She was also Jewish and came from a rich family that owned many properties in Boston including the Kenmore Hotel. Irving and Verna were married on 25 June 1941.

Koussevitzky had been the conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra since 1924 and encouraged

Fine to take conducting as well as composing and teaching. He joined the teaching staff at Harvard at the age of twenty five. When America entered the war in December 1941 the US navy established a Navy Training School at Harvard. Fine wanted to join up and passed all the tests but an electro-encephalogram showed irregular brain waves and he had no reflexes on his right side. He was rejected. While he drank at parties this aggravated his head injury.

In 1943–1944 he met Stravinsky again and became a friend of Aaron Copland, who became part of the family. Fine, Shapero and Lukas Foss they were known as the three musketeers.

Fine had to write about the music of other composers. He was not impressed with Copland's Symphony no. 3 and it is badly designed. He found William Schuman's music to be sometimes full of cliches and stated that Stravinsky had found perfection in *Dumbarton Oaks* and that his Symphony in three movements was the most impressive work of the season, Samuel Barber's Cello Concerto was effective and attractive, John Ireland's *The Forgotten Rite* was pale and ineffective, Lukas Foss's Piano Concerto of 1944 had some delicious themes.

Between 1947 and 1950 he was the Assistant Professor of Music at Harvard but he was not happy with the way the music department was run. It was being run by musicologists and not musicians. He joined the faculty of Brandeis University where he was Walter W Naumburg professor of music and Chairman of the School of Creative Arts. Between 1946 and 1957 he was nine times a member of the faculty of the Berkshire music centre at Tanglewood. This appointment came about on the personal recommendation of Copland to Koussevitsky.

His first daughter Claudia Carol was born on 12 December 1947 the year of the composition of the exciting *Toccata Concertante* which he dedicated to his wife. Emily Alice was born in Boston on 11 March 1952 and Joanna Lisa was born on 11 September 1953.

By now he had two major chamber works to his name: the Violin Sonata and the String Quartet, written in his personal serial style. It is unquestionably one of the greatest American string quartets. The *New York Times* called it a deeply thoughtful and beautiful string quartet. Leon Kirchner said it was a beautifully conceived work. Klaus George Roy said it was impressive, deeply felt and of impelling motion.

After Koussevitsky's death in 1951, Copland and Fine conceived the idea of putting on a festival at the Waltham, Massachusetts in June 1952 as a Koussevitsky memorial. Irving Fine was the recipient of two Guggenheim Fellowships, a National Institute of Arts and Letters Award and numerous prizes and commissions.

But his marriage was going stale partly because Verna was not interested in sex. Fine never admitted to any affairs but it seems certain that he had an affair with an English Jewish girl, Irene Orgel, whom he had met at the MacDowell Colony.

In 1953 there were the McCarthy anti-Communist trials. Irving skipped classes to attend this. He hated television and was not interested in watching the proceedings on television. Verna was troubled by this and concerned about her husband's weight. She was also concerned about the committee calling Copland to the hearings as he was both Jewish and a homosexual.

One of his most glowing works is the *Serious Song*, a lament for string orchestra composed at Natick in 1955. Bernstein said it was in the tradition of Chausson's *Poème* and Schönberg's *Transfigured Night*. It is a glorious work and, to quote non-musical terms, it scored the winning goal.

The death of his mother-in-law, Florence Rudnick, in November 1955 had a profound effect on Fine. He became more subject to depression, hypochondria, anxiety, insomnia not helped by Verna's lack of understanding. These depressions Fine used to call his blackies and they worried his daughters.

He consulted a therapist but that was useless. He had "psychic things done to him" which he rightly interpreted as weird. This therapist told him to end his friendship with Shapero. He also went to Dr Nemiah at the Boston Psychoanalytic Institute at the Massachusetts General Hospital between 1954 and 1958. During this time Fine could only write little piano pieces mainly for his daughters. But then he had a \$400 commission from the University of Illinois and the result was the *Fantasia* for string trio, another serial work. It was successful and had many performances.

Another matter which troubled Irving Fine was that some music was highly private music to be played by public-oriented extrovert virtuosi and this locks the composer away from the real world. Copland had rightly said that too many music lovers suffer from ancestral worship being besotted with a famous composer like Schubert, for example, and convincing themselves that Schubert was both a faultless composer and a flawless human being and they would make enemies and persecute anyone who disagreed with them. Fine could be a little distant and aloof in his verbal presentations but what he said made sense. Music has to communicate and, therefore, cannot be

confined to a minority public. What is the point of composing something that only a few can play or appreciate?

And yet Roger Sessions's music falls into this category and Fine is on record as saying that "he is one of our most able writers and profoundest thinkers on music. But his music is too serious and appeals to the brain. It is uncompromising and lacks immediate charm but it is music of great integrity and any musician will recognise this, even if he does not respond to the music."

In August 1958 the Fine family set sail on a cruise from New York which would stop at Casablanca, Barcelona, Mallorca, Genoa, Cannes and Naples.

From there they would hire a car and drive to Sorrento. Fine was unsuccessful in meeting up with the great Italian composer Goffredo Petrassi, who he understandably admired.

Back home the increase in Fine's weight was a problem, although he was never fat. Verna used to exaggerate his size and she was persecuting him. He was encouraged by Ned Rorem's praise of his *Diversions* for piano and Papa George gave a very substantial donation to Brandeis University.

In 1961 Irving and Verna toured Puerto Rica and, later, Spain and Portugal.

On his return to Natick his behaviour was sometimes bizarre and he uncharacteristically developed toilet humour.

In 1960 he had begun work on his *Symphony*, his final and most ambitious score. It is a magnificent work combining the neo-classicism of Stravinsky and the serial technique of Schönberg. Leon Kirchner said it was a totally new work for Fine, the work of an undisputed master. Jack Gottlieb said that he did not like it at first, but that it was a symphony with a new language.

Harold Shapero said that because Fine died soon after he had conducted the symphony himself it was a resurrection.

The premiere took place in Boston's Symphony Hall on 23 March 1962 with Charles Münch conducting, who did not understand it. It received two more performances shortly afterwards. The reports said it was vigorous, succinct and continuously interesting, of self-assured professionalism, rich and dramatic and free of pomposity and pretension.

Bernstein said, "Irving was not serene on the inside. He was rather a tragic person inside. It is a symphony of anguish and conflict, yet of great beauty."

Fine was offered \$200 to be the guest conductor of his *Symphony* on 11 August 1962. He was delighted but very nervous. It was a splendid performance after which he took a brief holiday into Canada to see the Niagara falls but he was not well. The headaches were intense and he had a lot of medication.

He believed he had cancer and a tumour on the brain. Then, because he had regular heatburn, he thought he had stomach cancer. When they were returning to Natick, Verna had to stop the car many times when Irving's pain was so crippling. He had a heart attack in Boston's Beth Israel Hospital where he was placed in an oxygen tent. The staff did all they could to save him. His arteries were seriously clogged.

He died of a massive coronary in Boston on 23 August 1962, nine days after conducting his *Symphony*.

The interment took place in Sharon, Massachusetts at the Memorial Park on Friday 24 August. The pallbearers included the composers Arthur Berger, Aaron Copland and Leon Kirchner. At the preceding service at the Leah and Mendel Berlin Memorial Chapel the mourners included Bernstein, Randall Thompson and Natalia Koussevitzky. The music played was Haydn's "Sunrise" quartet Op 76 no. 4.

Looking at his all too short career, it is the melodic lyricism that first endeared Fine to the musical public. At Harvard he was assistant director to the Glee Club and his choral music is exemplary. Of these *The Hour Glass*, the setting of six poems by Ben Jonson, which he set in 1949, is a splendid example.

The first song is *O know to end as to begin* has rich harmonies, a marvellous sense of direction, splendid contrasts and a concertante style about it. This is followed by the most beautiful setting of *Have you seen the white lily grow?* The key of E minor has never sounded lovelier. Here is quiet passion with well spaced chords and an effortless melody line of stunning beauty. When I hear this most glorious of song cycles I want to play this track over and over again. I never tire of its beauty.

Coquetry is behind *O do not wanton with those eyes* and the composer has caught the seductive art of flirting to perfection. Copland said that this was a really sexy song.

Against Jealousy comes next, as you might expect. The composer controls the rage at infidelity and here is passion on several levels, again, expertly caught.

The fifth song is a *Lament* where Fine marries the words perfectly to his music:

Slow, fresh fount, keep time with my salt tears,

Yet slower, yet, O faintly gentle stream,
List to the heavy the music bears,
Woe weeps out her division when she sings,
Droop herbs and flowers,
Fall, grief, in show'rs
Our beauties are not ours,
O! that I could still.
Like melting snow upon some craggy hill, drop.
Since nature's pride is now a withered daffodil.

The final song *The Hour Glass* is movingly beautiful and profoundly satisfying.

Do but consider this small dust
Here running in the glass by atoms moved,
Could you believe that this the body
Ever was of one who loved?
And in his mistress' flame, playing like a fly,
Burned into cinders by her eye?
Yes, and in death, as life unblest,
Even ashes of lovers find no rest.

The music is truly sad (that is very rare in music) with a valedictory passion. It is nothing short of perfection. Listening to this undoubted masterpiece you are challenged with something ultra-special.

Another British writer is behind his two groups of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* settings. The first series comprise three songs and the second series, scored for women's voices, sets *The Knave's letter*, the *White Knight's Song* and *Beautiful Soup*.

This second series was commissioned by Bradford Junior College and completed in 1953.

All of these songs are wonderfully realised and eminently enjoyable to sing and hear. The music is infectious, catchy and totally unforgettable. The melody in the *Quadrille* is exquisite and the *Father William* is the same... memorable, durable and tremendous fun.

They are audience friendly, singer friendly and on the highest level of quality. They do not fade on repeated hearings either. A great composer's music is durable.

A third choral work is McCord's *Menagerie* which was composed for the 100th anniversary of the Harvard Glee Club. David McCord is a prolific writer of light verse and four of his poems are set here. They are *Vulture Gryphus*, *Jerboa*, *Mole* and *Clam*. The words are quite daft as, for example, the words of *Mole* :

Man has an over-soul,
But not the mole.
What the mole has isn't clear,
But it's an under-soul, I fear.

Copland rated Fine's chamber music highly.

In 1957 Fine composed his *Fantasia* for string trio. It is in three movements namely *Adagio ma non troppo*, *Scherzo: Allegro molto ritmico* and *Lento assai, tranquillo*.

On a recording issued by RCA Victor (SB-6692) in 1967 Peter Ustinov wrote the sleeve note as follows:

"It is always sad when a man dies young ; it is sadder still when that man leaves behind evidence of irreplaceable talent. On hearing this concise *Fantasia*, the listener is at first convinced that he is at grips with a delicate post-romantic work, treading the well-worn, misty path of Celtic twilight, but it becomes quickly and surprisingly evident that here is no conventionally tonal shred of chamber music but a work of extremely subtle and emotional balance composed according to the serial technique. The language becomes more and more personal as the little work progresses, even though its motive force is an undisguised and honest romanticism. Fine sings even if we notice, in the body of the work, strange fanfares and strange echoes; they are stones in a mosaic which, when completed, surrenders a satisfying and engaging pattern.

With Fine, American music lost a discreet talent, more personal by far than most."

We must refer again to his finest chamber work. The String Quartet uses serial technique and dates from 1952. It is in three movements. The opening movement is carefully argued and has bursts of energy and a melodic lyricism. The music is narrative in style as if a story is being told. The middle slow section is full of both nostalgia and yearning often imitating human sighs. The music builds up again with very beautiful melodic fragments. It is patchwork music and continuity is a problem. But it is very deep music and extremely personal. Is Fine a tragic figure or a deep thinker? Or are these pages from his diary? The bustle returns but it is always under control. This is not the bustle of a New York street but a busy College corridor. The second movement has a rich texture and repeated notes in the prominent violin part. The viola takes up the discourse briefly and the hushed stillness is quite eerie and the pizzicato cello adds to the fascinating sinister feel of the piece. A melodic line struggles through a labyrinth. This is music of strange beauty. Even more sinister elements appear and a passion ensues. This leads into the last movement which begins in that bustling fashion as four note themes are hurled about before the music calms down into yearning. The violin line is glorious at times and the support from the other instruments does seem to convey very personal feelings. The intensity never becomes oppressive. The final pages are akin to the final passage in the Symphony, a threnodic ode complete with pizzicato heartbeats on the cello which then takes flight. The end is a curious statement. It clearly has a private meaning. The work will be too profound for many and will, therefore, be devalued.

Fine was working on a Violin Concerto at the time of his death. Only a few bars had been written. His preference for the violin is shown in the fact that he wrote a Sonata for violin and piano.

In 1947 he had composed a suite for piano simply called Music for Piano dedicated to Nadia Boulanger on her sixtieth birthday. The pianist, Michael Boriskin says, "The work reflects concern for meticulous craftsmanship, textural clarity and precision of thought. Upbeat, optimistic, and carefree. It is a young man's score." The piece is in four movements, a prelude, a waltz-gavotte, four variations — andante, allegro, andante and lento assai, respectively — and interlude-finale. It lasts about sixteen minutes. Even Leonard Bernstein, the great communicator, the loquacious individual, could not find the words to describe this work. The charm and elegance which it possessed could not be adequately defined.

One of Fine's colleagues, Joel Spiegelman, later orchestrated this and called the result Music for Orchestra.

Fine was particularly good at "light" music. In 1959 he composed his march Blue Towers. It is an occasional work, a variation of a college football piece. His Diversions for piano was premiered in November 1960 at a Boston Symphony Youth Concert. They are dedicated to his three daughters Claudia, Emily and Joanna. The work begins with a Little Toccata which is followed by two pieces he originally composed for music to Alice in Wonderland namely Flamingo Polka and the Red Queen's Gavotte. Then comes Koko's Lullaby written about his favourite, oversized, devoted and sensitive poodle of that name. In these four little pieces we discover something of Fine's character. The music is tender without being coy, witty without being vulgar, appealing without being banal and utterly sweet without being cloying as someone said. It also shows his devotion as a father. He always had an interest in children's literature and fun subjects which children, including his own, would enjoy.

His orchestral music is of the rarest quality. The exciting Toccata Concertante of 1947 is an orchestral showpiece without being showy. It is written in a slightly altered sonata form. The composer wrote, "When I writing this piece I was aware of a certain affinity with the energetic music of the Baroque concertos, hence the qualifying adjective concertante. Moreover, the adjective seemed particularly appropriate because of the soloist nature of music of the orchestration, especially in the second theme group and closing sections of the exposition and the recapitulation."

The painstaking care that Fine took over his work meant that the work started in 1946 was not completed for about a year. The work was commenced at the MacDowell Colony where Fine spent many summers. In the composing stages he was undecided about a title. Sinfonia and then Masque were considered. The persistent fanfare motifs and its obstinacy makes for a marvellous coherence. Patterns of sixteen notes generate the piece. There are some more relaxed moments where the woodwind are given lyrical solos but it is the driving force and sheer orchestral brilliance that makes this piece a classic. It was premiered by the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Serge Koussevitzky on 22 October, 1948.

By contrast there is the Serious Song, a lament for string orchestra. This is the finest American work for string orchestra surpassing the famous Barber Adagio. The sheer refinement of the work, its poignancy, its

depth of feeling, the wonderful use of the string orchestra as vocal soloists rather than gymnasts, its tenderness and serenity all combine to make a sublime work. Variety is essential to produce a great composer. Here we have it and in tonal structures as well. It starts and ends in E but in three ways, sometimes major, sometimes minor and sometimes modal. The central section is in C minor. The intensity and passion is matched by the threnodic feel which was also to display itself in the closing pages of his Symphony.

There is no British work for string orchestra that can compare with this or even approach albeit it with bowed head.

The Symphony was his final work and his largest work in terms of length and forces used. I quote the composer's notes about this work:

“The work is dedicated to the Boston Symphony Orchestra and its conductor Charles Munch, who commissioned it as part of the American Music Center's Commissioning Series under a grant from the Ford Foundation. The composition was begun about a year and an half ago. I was applying the finishing touches to the orchestration on February 20, 1962, nervously watching the television set out of the corner of one eye when the news of Colonel Glenn's return from outer space was announced.

The first movement, *Andante quasi allegretto*, suggests a kind of choreographic action in which characters enter, depart, and reappear altered and in different groupings — all of this serving as a background for a lyrical or at times pastoral narrative. The music begins quietly in the bassoons and low strings, and passes through a number of episodes in which other instrumental groupings are featured. After reaching a strong but essentially lyrical climax for full orchestra, it subsides gradually into a kind of night music for English horn, other solo woodwind, harp, celeste and muted strings.

Although the second movement, *Allegro con spirito*, occasionally has overtones of the orchestral concerto, it is essentially an extended scherzo in which 4/4 metre predominates and in which the customary contrasting trio has been replaced by a series of connecting episodes. This first of these is playful and soloistic in character; the second, with its alternating and syncopated massed sonorities featuring the brass, is more sardonic and aggressive, in the last of these, beginning with solo bassoons accompanied by percussion and low chords in the piano and strings, the meter shifts into a 6/8 burletta. Material from the first part of the movement reappear either in varied form or in altered form in the brief section and coda.

The last movement, *Grave*, is essentially a dithyrambic fantasia with a concluding recessional or epilogue. In the fantasia, much of the material employed in the Symphony recurs highly metamorphosed in fragmentary statements or outbursts, in brief dramatic canons, or static ruminating passages with florid figuration. The tempo becomes grave, and picks up considerable momentum as it passes through and agitated and highly syncopated section in which the brass toss around a five-note motto related to the opening theme of the Symphony. Both motto and theme occupy the centre of the stage from this point on until the end.”

The movements are entitled *Intrada* (originally *Eclogue* was considered), *Capriccio* and *Ode*. Arthur Cohn said of the work, “It is not only technically logical but dramatically convincing.”

It was first performed by the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Charles Münch on 23 March 1962. In August it was presented at Tanglewood with the composer conducting. During the 1966–67 season it was first heard in New York under the baton of Leonard Bernstein.

Four years earlier, in September 1962, and at the opening New York concert season Bernstein paid tribute to Fine who had died the previous month by playing a movement from Fine's *Notturmo* for strings and harp. This is what Bernstein said:

“Tonight I don't believe the music needs any words, but I think the occasion does, because with this concert we are commencing a new season, dedicating a new home, a presenting a major new American symphony — all of these acts of celebration and birth. But “beginnings and ends partake of each other”, as Eliot told us once, and sometimes the terminal points of our life cycles are strangely co-existent. And so, tonight, we also mark the death, just over a month ago, of a beautiful spirit in the world of music, the young and gifted composer, Irving Fine. He was one of those people of whom one can only think good. He was goodness itself, almost to a saintly degree, and

that goodness radiates from his music. We are playing this Adagio in his memory, not only out of respect for him and because he was a dear personal friend of mine, but because the music is filled with that radiant goodness. Last year we lost our former Philharmonic manager George Judd. He too was a kind of saint, and I said at the time that the world could ill afford, in its present condition, to lose its few saints — pitifully few. The same must be said of Irving Fine, who brought only amity and help to his colleagues, inspiration and encouragement to his students, and honour to everything he touched. We shall all miss him greatly.”

What can I say?

All of his music is of the highest quality. I can find no error or flaw in any of it. That is almost unique. His music marries intellect and emotion. It is personal and therefore original. His music is durable. I play several of his works very regularly and have never tired of them. I would not be without them. Most famous names such as Copland and Bernstein sincerely praised his greatness. I remember in 1965 Copland talking to me about Irving Fine and then he turned his tearful eyes, paused and said, “He was the greatest of us all.”

I cannot help feeling that the final tragic pages of the Symphony to be very prophetic. Within nine days of Fine conducting it, he was dead. It adds to both the tragedy and pathos of this incomparable masterpiece.

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