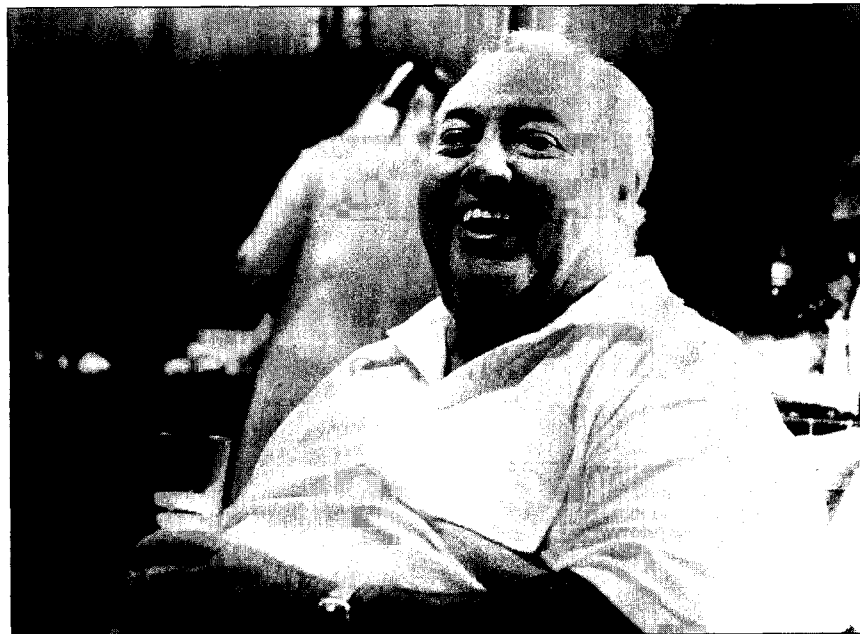


In Memoriam



Bert Whyte 1920-1994

Editor's note: The following obituary of Bert Whyte, which was published in the June issue of Audio Magazine, has been edited with their permission.

Bert Whyte, AES fellow, associate editor of *Audio* magazine, and renowned audio critic, died on March 31, 1994 in Centereach, New York. In 1977, when the AES awarded him a fellowship, the citation read: "For early contributions to stereophonic recording and for continuing audio criticism of a high order."

Bert Whyte was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, in 1920. He came to the United States at the age of four and, after schooling in New York, went to sea. He was assistant to the director of the British Ministry of War Transport before the U.S. entry into World War II and later served three years with the U. S. Army Medical Corps. Mr. Whyte began his professional audio career in 1949 as director of audio sales for Concord Radio in Chicago, continued as sales coordinator and musical director of

Magnecord, Inc., then became general manager of Fine Sound and the Perspectasound Division of Loew's/MGM in New York. He was co-founder with Harry Belock of Everest Records, where he served as recording director/engineer and director of classical artists and repertoire, pioneering the use of 35-mm magnetic film for multitrack stereo recording. Subsequently, he became musical director with RCA Victor Red Seal classical recordings. Whyte made the first modern classical stereo recordings with Leopold Stokowski in 1951 and the first big band stereo recordings with Benny Goodman, Woody Herman, and Stan Kenton. After collaborating with Major Edwin Armstrong on special stereo recordings for the development of multiplex stereo FM sound, he continued work with multiplex FM pioneer Murray G. Crosby. He made numerous multitrack stereo recordings with major symphony orchestras here and abroad. All this served Whyte since 1953 in the added capacity of audio

writer/reviewer, record and tape critic, and as associate editor of *Audio*.

I first knew Bert through his articles on sound recording and reproduction in *Radio/TV News* during the mid 50s, just as the Everest era was getting underway. Along with Mercury, Everest had stolen a march on many of the major American classical labels by launching 7 1/2 in/s stereo tapes in that day before the stereo disc. These smaller companies could respond faster to market needs, and under Bert's influence Everest made "stereo history" through a succession of notable recordings in the UK with such conductors as Eugene Goossens, Adrian Boult, and Leopold Stokowski. Bert's first choices for recording in London were Walthamstow and Watford Town Halls. These naturally live venues permitted placing the orchestra on the main floor, with none of the usual stage constraints. Careful arraying of the orchestra enabled Bert's choice of only three basic microphones to pick up everything in complete balance. In the late 50s, Everest exited the record business, leaving behind a remarkable legacy of fine recordings little known to today's generation of audiophiles.

I became a fast friend of Ruth and Bert Whyte during our years with RCA Records in the mid 60s. At that time, RCA was involved with the Lear Stereo-Eight endless loop cartridge, and one of Bert's challenges was to establish guidelines for transferring classical recordings into this tricky medium that too-often called for brute force "chopping" of the program into four equal time segments. After long frustration, Bert decided that this arbitrary division of most programs would never work. He informed RCA of his opinion, suggesting other, more sophisticated procedures. It is to Bert's credit that he stood his ground, and it is unfortunate that he never had ➤

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the opportunity to supervise any recording sessions at RCA.

As the audiophile movement got underway in the early 70s, many high-fidelity manufacturers and record companies sought Bert's expertise. Notable are the recordings that he supervised which were issued by Crystal Clear. Most of these were done direct-to-disc but with digital backup via the Soundstream recording system. Bert's landmark Fiedler/Boston Pops recordings and Virgil Fox's organ recordings at the Crystal Cathedral are available on CD from Bainbridge and Laserlight. However, the London Philharmonic recordings on Crystal Clear conduct-

ed by Morton Gould and Walter Susskind dating from 1977 have yet to be reissued.

Most readers of *Audio* knew Bert as a perceptive commentator on current technological events in recording and video, and the releases later this year of CDs made from the original tapes of the Everest sessions may be their first hearing of Bert's recording work. I have heard most of these recordings via first-generation copies from their originals, and they will certainly be the match of any of the RCA or Mercury archival reissues, both musically and technically.

During the last 15 years Bert had curtailed his recording activities to

spend more time writing and consulting. Along with many younger recording engineers, I had long sought Bert's advice and had spent many an evening with Ruth and Bert in their home as guest, student, and colleague. Over the years, we spent literally hundreds of hours listening to new recordings, and I always marvelled at Bert's ability to pinpoint their virtues and defects and sum them up in a few well-chosen words. And that included my recordings, too.

We shall all miss him. He was both best friend and best teacher.

John M. Eargle
JME Consulting Corp.
Los Angeles, CA 90068

Avery Robert Fisher, audio industry pioneer, musician, and philanthropist, died on February 26, 1994 at the age of 87. He was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1906. Fisher started his professional life as a graphics designer in book publishing, a profession which he loved and at which he excelled. As a practicing musician and music lover, he started his own audio designs as a hobby and developed them into a business as friends started to ask him for copies of the advanced home audio equipment he was building for himself.

Fisher's first company, Philharmonic Radio, was founded in 1937 in partnership with Herman Hosmer Scott, another high-fidelity pioneer, who later founded Scott Radio. In 1945, he sold Philharmonic Radio and founded Fisher Radio. State of the art performance at premium prices was the charter for this new company. Fisher's talent for building an effective team, coupled with his keen sense for marketing, made this endeavor highly profitable. In 1969, when it became clear that the audio market was changing toward mass merchandising, he sold Fisher Radio to Emerson Electric of St. Louis. Today, Fisher Radio continues to flourish,

now owned and operated by Sanyo of Japan.

In 1956 Avery Fisher hired me away from Grundig in Germany as a design engineer for Fisher Radio. I was promoted to vice president of engineering in 1957, a position I held until my retirement in 1977. Soon after my arrival in this country, I was joined by four other German engineers, a group which Fisher liked to call his "Dutchmen." During the many years of working with him, I got to know him as a farsighted, generous and caring person. Demonstrating his generosity, Fisher distributed a sizable portion of the proceeds from the sale of Fisher Radio among his key employees.

After he sold Fisher Radio, he devoted himself to philanthropy, or, as he put it, "repaying old debts." His most public gift was the endowment fund to Lincoln Center, which in part was used to refurbish Lincoln Center's Philharmonic Hall, a venture he took pleasure in supervising personally. Today, the much improved venue is known as Avery Fisher Hall.

The other part of the endowment fund was set aside for the Avery Fisher Artist Programs, two award projects especially close to his heart. The larger and more prestigious one is the

Avery Fisher Prize, a tax-free \$25,000 gift awarded to young, established American instrumentalists. Among the recipients are pianists Andre Watts, Murray Perahia, Richard Goode, Emanuel Ax and Horatio Guiterrez, cellists Yo-Yo Ma and Lynn Harrell, violinist Elmar Oliveira and the clarinetist Richard Stoltzman. The Avery Fisher Career Grant is the other prize, a \$10,000 fund against which recipients can draw for career-related expenses.

A violinist himself, one of his most prized possessions was a genuine Stradivarius violin, which he delighted in loaning to promising artists for special performances. A Bösendorfer Grand Piano, the assembly of which he personally witnessed during a visit to Vienna, rounded out his private collection of musical instruments for his Park Avenue apartment. Avery Fisher thoroughly enjoyed leading musicians to his apartment for evenings of chamber music.

As a man of a great many accomplishments, far reaching interests and genuine generosity, Avery Fisher will be remembered and mourned by many.

Fred Mergner
Poway, CA