

BRIEF NARRATIVE HISTORY OF LEON AND HENRIETTA STRASHUN

Leon Isadore Strashun was born in Vilna, Lithuania on May 20, 1876. His father was Israel Strashun, and his mother was (Unknown) Gittel, born in Russia. According to his naturalization papers, he became a naturalized citizen on May 7, 1898 in (?) County Illinois, having apparently arrived as a minor under 18 years and having resided in the USA for at least 5 years and in the state of Illinois for at least 1 year, i.e., he arrived in the US in about the year 1893 at the age of 17. This conflicts with the letter Leon has from his teacher Leopold Auer, dated October 1, 1895 in St. Petersburg, "*The pupil of the Saint Petersburg Conservatory, Leon Strashun, possesses good musical qualities and conducts himself as a diligent scholar. It would be desirable for him to be given the opportunity to further perfect his skills.*" It may be possible that this letter was written by Auer in response to Leon's request after he had already reached America. Another reference indicates he was accepted as a student by Auer at age 15, which would have been in 1891. (Although his death certificate gives his birth year as 1880, this is almost certainly a mistake made by Tedi, who was the only one present when the death certificate was made out and who had previously said she was confused as to his actual birth date.) Leon Isadore Strashun died in Los Angeles, age 85, on November 30, 1961.

Henrietta Martha (Foy) Strashun was born in Whistler, Mobile, Alabama on December 21, 1873. Her background is interesting and runs something as follows ... Her mother Emily (Amelia) C. Curran was born in Alabama in 1829, married her father Eugene E. Foy sometime in the late 1840s, had one daughter in 1848, Josephine, who grew up during the Civil War era, married Charles H. Warren, and much later (in 1887) moved to Chicago (Josephine was described as having been in her youth "a noted belle of Mobile during the Civil War period"). Henrietta's father, Eugene E. Foy, was born in Queenstown, Ireland in about 1824 and left for the US from Liverpool, England arriving in New York City on September 5, 1842 on the ship United States. After the birth of their first daughter, Josephine, he went off to the California gold fields around 1850, came back around 1870, had two other children -- Henrietta and Eugene, Jr., and was then killed by a train while walking across a trestle (he had become deaf from blasting noise in the gold fields). His wife (Henrietta's mother Amelia, also known as Emily) ran a boarding house to support her family until sometime in the mid-to-late 1880s, when she also died. At this point Henrietta moved to Chicago to live with her sister Josephine Warren. She and Leon apparently met while both were employed by the Henry W. Savage Castle Square Grand Opera Company and were married on June 1, 1904. Tedi described Leon at that point as something of a "stage-door Johnny" while he was courting Henrietta. Henrietta Martha (Foy) Strashun died in Los Angeles, age 86 on July 13, 1959.

The family moved a great deal due to Leon's profession as a musician. His career was marked by five separate phases -- first as a violin player in opera orchestras (1896-1915), then as a conductor of vaudeville/theater orchestras (1918-1927, before sound was introduced into motion pictures), transitioning to a conductor of radio orchestras (1927-1936), then working as librarian for a WPA project to preserve old musical scores (1936-1940) which was later continued at UCLA (1940-1947), and finally writing popular songs while in retirement between 1947 and 1961. A short period between 1915 and 1917 is unaccounted for. Their approximate meanderings are as follows:

1896-1904 -- Henry W. Savage's Castle Square Grand Opera Company as concert master
1904-19xx -- Oscar Hammerstein's Manhattan Grand Opera Company as concert master
1909-1910 -- New York Met (signed 06/16/1909)
1910-1915 -- Chicago Grand Opera (part of time was concert master under Campanini)
1915-1917 -- ???
1918-1919 -- New Fillmore Theater in San Francisco
1919-1924 -- New Fillmore, Pantages Theatre, Fox Oakland. (1603 Lincoln Way, SF, CA)
1924-1924 -- Mission Theater Orchestra LA for 6 months
1925-1925 -- Hawaii Theatre in Honolulu for 6 months (317 Saratoga Road, Honolulu, Hawaii)
1925-1925 -- Bard's Pasadena Theater for 6 months, also at Colorado Theater, Pasadena
1927-19xx -- Bagdad Theater in Portland, Oregon
1927-1936 -- Radio Work, starting with KGO, SF in 1927
1936-1940 -- Los Angeles to work on WPA Music Project
1940-1947 -- Los Angeles for UCLA Library continuation of WPA project
1947-1961 -- Retired in Los Angeles