

Grisha Goluboff was a famous boy violinist during the 1920s and 30s. His parents were Russians who emigrated in the 1910s. His family moved a great deal and he traveled extensively for his concerts, but spent a great deal of time in California. For Grisha's upcoming 5th birthday, his father asked him what he wanted for a gift. What Grisha asked for was a violin. His father was able to locate the smallest size violin for him and found a teacher who taught Grisha all he (the teacher) knew in about 1 year. His manager was Isidore Nobel of New York/San Francisco. Grisha gave his first concert at age 6. He performed throughout America and Europe. Grisha gave a concert with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra when he was 6 years old. After that he played all over the United States, then from about the age of 9, started concertising in Europe and other countries. A German nobleman presented him a Guarnerious, but Hitler demanded it be returned. Grisha was interviewed about reincarnation and genius by Geoffrey Hodson in 1939. He was performing with the Peninsula Symphony Orchestra in 1952 when he played the Beethoven Concerto, which was recorded by the Ampex Corp.. Almost amazing as Grisha's music is the number of people whose lives have crossed his. He met and worked with many prominent musicians of the 20th century. But his life story is not only liked with the great luminaries in the music world, but such diverse individuals as Albert Einstein, Henry Ford, Adolph Hitler, Hedy Lamarr, Max Reinhardt, and many others.

Family

Grisha's parents were Russian Jews. Both parents came to America from Russia (separately) about 1914, although I'm not really sure of the year. Times were very difficult in Russia for people of Jewish heritage. The Tsar, 'pogroms', prejudice, etc. I don't know of a specific reason except that there were more opportunities in America than in Russia. Grisha's does know why their mother's family emigrated. She explains, " There were five surviving children in the family, four girls and one son. The Jewish people did not even keep track of the children's birthdays because when the boys got to be a certain age they would have to serve in the Tsar's army. So when the one son became old enough, our grandfather took him and they traveled by foot at night and hid in the fields by day and made their way to Germany where they were able to book passage on a ship to America. [HBC note: It is interesting that before World War I that Germany was a haven for Russian Jews. Not all emigrated to America. Many stayed in Germany and this influx from the East was a factor in the rise of anti-Semitism in Germany.] When they reached America, our grandfather sent for the rest of the family. It takes a great deal of courage for people to come to a strange country, not speaking the language, and carving out a decent life for themselves."

Grisha came from a musical family. His father played the violin and always had good music playing (at the beginning, on his crank-arm victrola). His mother also wanted to learn the violin as a child but family finances made it impossible for her to do so. He had numerous relatives in music and the arts. His maternal grandfather (the one who fled the Tsar's Army) was a violinist and made it his life's work. He was the father of Lennie and Agnes Niehaus, the music arranger, and Agnes, the concert pianist. His sister was a concert pianist, another cousin was an opera singer, and another an artist (twice nominated for an Oscar for his work in the film industry), and another uncle who played the violin professionally.

Siblings

Grisha had a brother and sister. Gladys was about 4 1/2 years younger than Grisha, the youngest in the family. Gladys remembers her brother fondly, "He was such an amazing child, it was a rare blessing that I was born his sister to see him growing up and also as an adult." His sister also remembers that the family moved a great deal. " Our family moved several times, to my memory we lived in California (Stockton, San Francisco, and Los Angeles). We did, however, spend a great deal of time in San Francisco. When he would go to Europe, it was from the east coast (New York primarily). At such time the rest of our family (there was also another brother) would move to the west coast where our mother's family lived). When he returned to the U.S., we moved back to the east coast. (I went to 16 different schools between the two coasts by the time I reached the 6th grade.)" [Chase]

Childhood

Grisha was born May 4, 1919. His early childhood was uneventful except that he showed a considerable interest in music. For Grisha's upcoming 5th birthday, his father asked him what he wanted for a gift. What Grisha asked for was a violin. His father was able to locate the smallest size violin for him and found a teacher who taught Grisha all he (the teacher) knew in about 1 year. [Chase]

Clothing

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Figure 2.--Grisha is seen here in 1932 aboard the "SS Europa" on the way to Bremen. He wears a white sailor suit in which he often performed. This was to be his last visit to Germany because Hitle and the NAZIs seized power in 1933. Image courtesy of Gladys Chase.

We have only limited information on Grisha's clothing as a child prodigy. Most prodigies at the time wore Sailor suits. It was a popular style at the time and almost like a uniform for boy prodigies. Grisha very commonly wore sailor suits, even as a teenager. He wore several different styles of sailor suits. Several photographs taken aboard ocean liners crossing the Atlantic for his European tours show him wearing these sailor suits. He also performed in them. One photograph taken about the *Bremen* during 1934 when he was 14-15 years old shows him with Misha Elman, another famous violinist. Grisha wears a sailor suit. He was very small, even diminutive as a child. He looked much younger than he really was. In fact his birth date was sometimes moved up as much as 3 years to 1922, effectively extending his career as a child prodigy. [Gold]

Practice

In retrospect, it was amazing that so young a child showed so much self-discipline and passion for music. He practiced for hours each day because HE wanted to. Our parents were simple, poor people but sacrificed a great deal so Grisha could develop the way he did. Grisha was a very serious youngster. Music was his whole life. He was about as close to egoless as anyone I have ever known. He was simply what he was and accepted that role in life and practicing was not a 'chore', it was his fulfillment. [Chase]

GRISHA GOLUBOFF, ANOTHER VIOLIN PRODIGY 1919-2002 [USA]

This redirected cover reveals an interesting glimpse at yet another American violinist prodigy who performed around the world with a short visit to Australia at the age of twenty. It is addressed to Grisha Goluboff Esq. and there is a re-direct label from the downtown Wentworth Hotel Sydney to the Australian Broadcasting Company, Market Street, City with a further re-direct to C/- Australian () Theatres , 51 Castlereagh St., Sydney. The red 2d KGVI stamp is postmarked at a suburb of Sydney: LIDCOMBE/ 9¹⁵P- 13 AP 39/ N.S.W. [Type 2C(T) 1936-49] (Figure 1).

The reverse is unusual in that it has a roller cancel with a boxed SYDNEY/ NSW.AUST/ 1/ 6-PM/14 APR/1939/ 1/ POSTED IN/ CITY BOX cancel with the slogan REGISTER/ VALUABLE/ MAIL (Figure 2).

Grisha was a famous boy violinist during the 1920s and 1930s who was born into a very musical family. His parents were Russian Jews who emigrated in 1914 to the USA, with most of their time spent in California (Stockton, Los Angeles and particularly San Francisco), but they moved a great deal and traveled extensively for his concerts. Grisha was born May 4, 1919 and for Grisha's 5th birthday he asked for a small violin, and his first teacher was 'outgrown' in the first year. Grisha gave his first concert at 6 years, performing with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra.

He was educated for a few years at a public school, but then had a private tutor. Ruggiero Ricci, another Californian violinist prodigy was his childhood friend. He played all over America and at the age of 9 he gave concerts in Europe and other countries. A German nobleman presented him with a Guarnerius violin in 1932, but Hitler later demanded it to be returned. Then he was given a Stradivarius by Henry Ford, the motor car magnet, but on Ford's death it was recalled by Ford's son saying that his father's collection of violins couldn't be broken up. Shortly later he was presented with another Stradivarius by an English nobleman and he used it until a few years before his death.

With the advent of WW2 in September 1939 concert tours of Europe were no longer feasible and Grisha's career declined in the 1940s. As an adult in 'polite society' Grisha used the name of George Holcombe, but on the stage he always used Grisha Goluboff. He married Jo-Ann Johanson, an accomplished cellist. Their daughter Bethany, an accomplished violinist, lived in Canada and wrote her Master's thesis about her father.

Grisha's exposure to Australia was at the time of the above cover in April 1939. He gave at least one concert with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra at the Town Hall, Sydney on April 13 and Edgar Bainton was the Conductor. The only picture of him that I was able to access was in a 1946 advertisement when he was probably beyond his prime (Figure 3).

Grisha was described as humble, gentle person, caring for other people and even as an adult he had a child-like innocence about him, with a youthful demeanor which stayed with him to old age. He died April 5, 2002.

Berlin Gushed over Boy Prodigy, Cuts Concert, Demands Violin

May 21, 1933

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Grisha Goluboff, 10-year-old concert violinist, is sad. He must part with his violin, an original Guarnerius, which was lent to him by the German firm of Wilhelm H. Hammig. For two years he has used it in all his performances. It is priced at \$25,000, but to young Grisha it is priceless. "It took me a year to break it in, to get the feeling of the instrument and to be able to render every intonation as I wanted to. To give it back means the loss of a year's hard work!"

Grisha at ten is well-poised, charmingly mannered and wholly unspoiled by the adulation he has received since infancy. He is a robust youngster, with brown wavy hair and large eyes, and his physical development is amazing. Grisha has been reared in an atmosphere of peace and wholesomeness, but his ability to converse, his knowledge of many subjects is striking. The results of his upbringing are evident in his reaction to the bitter blow he has just received. He is not bitter against the Nazi government, although many credit it with having instigated the request for the return of the violin.

NOT TO APPEAR IN BERLIN

"I love the German people," he said, earnestly. "They love and appreciate music." He mourns only the impending loss of his beloved violin. He is sad too that he will not be able to appear with the Berlin Symphony, as he had been scheduled to, this summer, For that engagement has been cancelled. Grisha, you see, besides being a genius is a Jew. And Jews are not performing in Germany this season although last September they may, as Grisha did, have deserved an official reception with government officials and their wives falling all over themselves in their eagerness to tell him how much pleasure his playing gave them.

Dr. Hans Borchers, acting consul for Germany here, has denied that the Berlin firm requested the return of the violin. He declared that all the firm wished was assurance that the violin was being cared for and was properly insured. "Ridiculous," said I. M. Noble, Grisha's manager. "Why did they wait two years? In the first instance they gave the violin to Grisha without even demanding that a paper be signed showing that we acknowledged the loan of the instrument. I voluntarily spoke to the owners, telling them that we would sign such a paper and would insure the instrument against theft or fire. For our protection I would have done so. We could not afford to incur such a loss. Young genius needs care and tending. Grisha comes from poor people. To have to pay put such a sum of money in case of loss would have been impossible. How would we have dared travel with an instrument of such value if it were uninsured?"

ROLLER-SKATING HIS PLAY

Grisha was anxious to be off. The young prodigy, whose playing has moved critics to bursts of rapture, has a passion for roller-skating. He bowed charmingly and unaffectedly and went off for a few hours of fun such as any child of his age would enjoy. But young Goluboff has another side, a terrific urge for perfection in whatever he undertakes. He practices without being urged. Before making a public appearance he has, in fact, to be persuaded not to overtax himself. He is meticulous and exacting about his performances. Unless his playing is satisfactory to himself he hates to appear before an audience.

“The boy’s going to suffer from the loss of the Guarnerius,” Mr. Noble said, after seeing Grisha out. “He is scheduled to appear at concerts in London, Paris, Vienna and other European cities. But he will have to appear without the instrument to which he has become attached. I tell you that is a severe loss to a musician of worth.”

The firm which is demanding the return of the instrument, at first became interested in Grisha through Baron von Schlippenbach, who admired Grisha and realized what a genius he was. “No violin is too good for that boy to use,” he told the firm’s representatives.

“We do not care, however, to enter into any controversy about the violin’s return,” Mr. Noble stated. “I am taking steps to have it returned at once. As for Grisha, who knows? There may be another rare old violin which he will learn to use and love as he has learned to use and love his Guarnerius.”

GRISHA GOLUBOFF

Boy Violinist's Rise

As reported, the Broadcasting Commission will bring Peter Dawson to Australia next March. Last time the bass-baritone gave concerts in Australia was 1933, and that was a successful season.

Mr Dawson will not arrive in Sydney until May. Before that, the public will have heard two other distinguished visitors, Lotte Lehmann, who is billed to open the concert season at the end of March, and Grisha Goluboff, who will appear during April.

Goluboff is still only 14 years old.

His father, a well-to-do Russian jeweller, was shot in the arm during the stormy scenes of the October Revolution; but he managed to escape from Russia and finally he reached America.

There, he married. For many years

the young couple had to struggle for a bare existence. Goluboff senior passionately loved violin music, and he possessed an old instrument. But he had neither the time nor the money to learn to play it. One day, the inevitable happened. He found his three year-old son, Grisha, drawing the bow across the strings. It was obvious that the child was predestined to music. When Grisha was five, his father sacrificed food and clothes in order that the boy should have lessons. He made extraordinary progress. After only two years' tuition, Grisha Goluboff appeared as soloist with the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra, and created a sensation.

His parents, with their limited experience, were bewildered as to what to do next. So they turned for advice to Mr I. M. Nobel, a lawyer. Mr Nobel, who realised the boy's rich musical gifts, appointed himself as Grisha's guardian and companion. Henry Ford heard the child play. He invited Grisha to his home, presented him with a limousine, and later bestowed on him a Stradivarius violin worth £30,000.

According to report, Grisha Goluboff is a healthy lad, with a splendid physique. He plays soccer and billiards, skates and rides, and can handle a sailing boat well. He is also like Yehudi Menuhin, an enthusiastic photographer. In fact, he has written "a scientific treatise on possible improvements in the construction of miniature cameras." Add to this that Grisha speaks four languages and is a keen student of astronomy, and he emerges as a lively and interesting figure. Mr Nobel will come to Australia with him.

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Mischa Elman and Grisha Goluboff - a musical interlude.

Sometimes, when researching, I find myself going off at a tangent and following some obscure 'twiglet' that I have come across on Google. There are some amazing websites on the internet, if only one had the time to explore them. One such site is called, 'Discovering Chaplin' and is all about Charlie Chaplin, the famous film star. There is a photograph of Charlie Chaplin with Feodor Chaliapin and his daughter, in Biarritz. The two men, whilst staying in the Hotel Miramar, in Biarritz, were invited to a party at the home of Mischa Elman, the virtuoso violinist, who owned 'an estate in St Jean de Luz'. This was in 1931. At this party they joined in the entertainment, reversing their normal roles. Charlie sang some old Russian songs and Chaliapin did a comedy routine!

Mischa Elman was born in Russia in 1891 and he died in 1967. He became a US citizen in 1923 but made many of his recordings in Paris. During the summer months he taught the violin in his St Jean de Luz estate, on the bay. Suzuki, the Japanese man who started the method named after him, of teaching very young children to play the violin, is said to have done so after hearing recordings of Elman playing the violin.

There is a photograph of Mischa Elman on another website which concerns historical clothing (histclo.com). He is sitting on board the ship SS Bremen, going from New York to Europe, with his arm round a young boy called Grisha Goluboff. I have found them returning to New York, again on the SS Bremen, in 1934. Having been a child prodigy himself, Mischa Elman took a great interest in Grisha Goluboff.

Grisha was the son of another Russian emigre who changed his name to Holcombe. He had been a wealthy jeweller in Russia but escaped, after being shot in the arm. He managed to reach America where he married and had a family. In the 1930 census he is a Watchmaker. The story goes that his three year old son picked up his Father's violin one day and showed such promise that his Father paid for him to have lessons. After a couple of years he was good enough to perform with the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra.

LETTER TO THE FATHER OF PRODIGY GRISHA GOLUBOFF FROM LOUIS PERSINGER
PASSING ON THE BOY, INSINUATES HE IS A WEAKLING Great letter dated 10/28/1930 to the father of the violin prodigy telling him he has heard good things about his son but wouldn't consider taking him away from his current teacher Mr. Piastro. Shockingly, Persinger also states "owing to some rather heart - sickening experience of my own, I have made it a rule to accept no young children as pupils. The task is far too ungrateful". Obviously he changed his mind on both issues, taking on Goluboff as a student and becoming famous as a teacher of children. Fascinating content. This is probably his retained copy as is signed with his initials "L.P." Light age toning, very good condition

Louis Persinger (11 February 1887 – 31 December 1966) was an American violinist and pianist . Persinger trained at the Leipzig Conservatory where he studied with Hans Becker, before finishing with Eugène Ysaÿe in Brussels and studying with Jacques Thibaud in France for two summers. He served as leader of the Berlin Philharmonic orchestra and the Royal Opera Orchestra in Brussels before being appointed leader and assistant conductor of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra in 1915 and succeeding Leopold Auer at the Juilliard School in New York in 1930. He was best known as the teacher of great violinists Yehudi Menuhin , Ruggiero Ricci , Isaac Stern , Camilla Wicks , Almita Vamos , Fredell Lack , Guila Bustabo , Arnold Eidus , Donald Erickson , Zvi Zeitlin , Leonard Posner and Louise Behrend. He was also Ricci's piano accompanist for many recitals and recordings, and Menuhin's for his first few recordings. NO RESERVE! Terms of Sale: PLEASE READ!! 1. Payment is due within 5 days of the close of this auction. 2. Payment methods: All major credit cards & PayPal accepted. If using PayPal, we ship to confirmed addresses only ! It will only delay shipment of your item if you do not have a confirmed address! 3. Pennsylvania residents must include 6% sales tax. 4. If you have any questions, please ask prior to bidding. 5. All items are guaranteed authentic. COAs issued upon request. We are members of the UACC and Manuscript Society. You can buy with complete confidence. 6. Buyer pays for shipping. (combine shipping for multiple items) 7. WE SHIP TO U.S. ADDRESSES ONLY! PLEASE NOTE IF BIDDING OUT OF THE US - WE ONLY SHIP THROUGH EBAY'S GLOBAL SHIPPING PROGRAM SO PLEASE READ AND UNDERSTAND THEIR TERMS AND CONDITIONS!! Thanks for looking and Good Luck bidding! Please visit us at: for other fine authentic autographs.

Letter to Grisha's Father....

Thanks for your letter regarding your little boy. I am quite sure that the little fellow must be exceptionally gifted, and no doubt you will intine have good reason to be proud of him. Several articles in California papers concerning Grisha have come to my notice, and I was very interested in reading about him.

Knowing Mr. Piaastro as I do, and admiring him as one of the most brilliant violinists to be found anywhere, I cannot urge upon you strongly enough my humble opinion that your boy must be in splendid musical hands, and under Mr. Piaastro's guidance he should develop into something fine and worthwhile. I know how deeply interested Mr. Piaastro must be in Grisha, and under no circumstances could I consider taking ~~taking~~ boy away from him. Then, too, for some time past, owing to some rather heart-sickening experiences of my own, I have made it a rule to accept no young children as pupils. The task is far too ungrateful.

I understand that Grisha is not very strong, physically. But I am hoping, for the sake of the boy's future years, that you will be discerning enough-being his father-to see that the child's physical and mental (spiritual) development go along hand in hand with the musical. First of all one must be a good "animal", as Tseye used to say. Otherwise it is all useless; music can be a cruel taskmaster.

Thanking you again and wishing you and yours every good fortune, I am

Yours very sincerely,

L.A.

Hedy told Otto Preminger a different version of her London meeting: "A hotel suite full of cigar smoke and men in shirt sleeves playing cards. He [Mayer] was no longer interested in her. He told Bob Ritchie, one of his assistants, to offer her the standard seven-year contract with six month options, starting at a hundred and fifty dollars a week."⁷

Hedy refused and decided to risk another approach. Mayer was to travel back to Hollywood in early September on the *Normandie*. The French liner was the pride of the ocean, having just crossed the Atlantic in three days, twenty-three hours, and two minutes, a new record. Hedy decided that she too would be on board and, according to her own account, made swift arrangements to travel as governess to the child prodigy, violinist Grisha Goluboff, whom Bob Ritchie was also trying to promote.⁸ In fact, in 1937, Goluboff was now eighteen years old and in little need of a governess. Born in California to Russian émigré parents, he had already made his name in America and Europe, giving his first recital when he was barely ten. In 1932, in the wake of a successful European

tour, he was gifted a Pietro Giovanni Guarnerius by Baron von Schlippenbach, an influential patron of the arts in Berlin. When Hitler heard of this, he was enraged the violin had ended up in the hands of a Jewish child and, barely a day after his inauguration, cabled the German consulate in New York, demanding the precious instrument be returned. Soon after, Henry Ford, ironically a notorious anti-Semite himself, loaned Goluboff a Stradivarius. In 1936, Goluboff was invited to play in the Salzburg Festival by Max Reinhardt and stayed with him as his guest. It may be that he and Hedy met each other through Reinhardt at Salzburg, though soon afterward Goluboff decided to settle in Los Angeles, where he made his first film recording, a short orchestral piece for Paramount Pictures. He was next invited by Louis B. Mayer to play for him, with a view to signing a contract with MGM. His manager, Isadore Noble, however, was unsure how the studios would handle a musical prodigy and how this would affect his image. Bumping into Max Reinhardt in Los Angeles, Noble consulted with the director as to how to proceed; Reinhardt advised against signing and Noble agreed that, for the time being, it would be better to stay clear of Hollywood.⁹

When Goluboff met Hedy on the *Normandie*, therefore, he was already an established performer, who had made his first film recording. His family is clear that Hedy was not his mentor despite her claim otherwise: "I got Bob's little violinist a contract too!"¹⁰ "It was Grisha who helped her, actually," his sister, Gladys, said. "From what I remember Grisha's manager and others say, she was rather an opportunist and used it to advance her own career."¹¹



Frau Mandl's flight in the summer of 1937 led her to London, and there to the hotel of Louis B. Mayer, the chief of M-G-M, and thence to the S.S. *Normandie*, bound for New York. Mayer just happened to be traveling on the same boat; the actress presented herself as a governess to a violin prodigy named Grisha Goluboff; by the time the boat docked in New York, she had acquired M-G-M contracts for both the violinist and herself (at five hundred dollars a week), and a new name as well. When a *Daily News* reporter went to the pier to interview "The Ecstasy Lady, brunette Hedy Kiesler," she said, "My name is Hedy Lamarr. Please call me that." Mayer had apparently named her after Barbara La Marr, a great beauty he had admired in the 1920's, who had succumbed to drugs and alcohol. After Mayer shipped his newest acquisition to Hollywood and signed her up for English lessons, however, he didn't know what to do with her. It was apparently Charles Boyer who encountered her at a party and then persuaded the producer Walter Wanger to borrow her, for a fee of fifteen hundred dollars a week to Mayer, as his leading lady in *Algiers*.