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PERCY FAITH

With Strings Attached

Percy Faith has been cited as “a composer who specialized in turning the simple melodic line supplied by other composers into full-scale orchestrations.” In so doing he “succeeded in leaving the imprint of his own easy-listening style on dozens of popular favorites.”¹ Another critic pontificated: “Faith can make even *Dancing in the Dark* sound like a little something by Stravinsky, only more familiar to the masses.”²

The orchestral arrangements of Percy Faith leaped unrepentantly in a couple of directions.

The Canadian-born composer-arranger-conductor passionately, yet unapologetically, favored the stringed sections of any instrumental aggregate. His signature sound is embedded with the lush melody of violins, violas, cellos, harpsichords, double basses, mandolins, zithers and acoustic guitars. Creating arrangements replete with these catalysts, Faith’s instantly identifiable reverberations featured rich countermelodies and harmonic developments across the multiplicity of sections embracing instrumental music makers. The *Dictionary of American Biography* maintained that Faith could “turn a simple melody into a full-scale orchestration, loaded with violins and vivid tone color.”

In his own words, Faith summarized his perspective.³

Since I write my own arrangements, I have both the opportunity and the responsibility for getting them “right.” To me, there is no tone quite as beautiful as that produced by the strings when they play music properly written for them. There is always the choice, then, of when and where they will play, making sure, however, that what they play will indeed be “string music.”

In my orchestra I use a minimum of twelve violins, three violas, three cellos, and bass (two basses if one is playing rhythm), but usually the number and order is sixteen, four, four, one. I write for the conventional first and second violins, never hesitating to divide them into as many as eight parts and at the same time trying not to miss the chance for that broad, sweeping unison.

The strings, then, are the core of my orchestra just as they are of the traditional symphony orchestra.

While projecting the stringed instruments to lofty heights, Faith concurrently emphasized the feminine chorale, too, particularly so in the 1960s. In that regard he gave girl singers potent recognition in the musical selections cascading behind their accents. While they chanted and sometimes sang literally, they mostly “vocalized without words,” intimated one wag. Faith’s lady lyricists were particularly apparent in his mid- to late-1960s “Young Lovers” recordings. The style was repeated in his final holiday album in 1967, *Christmas Is*

To Faith, the paramount essential in celebrating both strings and distaff choristers was that listeners must be able to clearly hear them to appreciate them. A founder of easy listening music of the 1950s and 1960s, “His easy listening sounds assured a place on the dial

until television pushed aside live music," a pundit asserted.⁴ He invariably brought multiple elements together to form a paradigm of audibly pleasurable reward.⁵ "Faith refined and rethought orchestration techniques, including use of large string sections, to soften and fill out the brass dominated popular music of the 1940s."⁶

It is with strings attached that Faith is best remembered as an outstanding composer, arranger and impresario.

Faith's delicate balance between being too mellow and too raucous was both a musical gift and a career scourge. On the one hand, he was a champion of sweet strings; but on the other, he always grew skittish when his reputation got too caught up in them. He never alluded to this angst in 1950, however, when he described his goal as being that of "satisfying the millions of devotees of that pleasant American institution known as the quiet evening at home, whose idea of perfect relaxation is the easy chair, slippers and good music." These were cozy sentiments from someone who never wanted to get *too* comfortable.⁷

Faith proliferated in penning stunningly pleasing pieces of music for the strings nevertheless. Painstakingly he toyed with his works until perfection eventually emerged.

Percy Faith emanated from a Jewish clan with origins in what was then Galicia, acquired by Austria in the First Partition of Poland (1772). Today that land is some of the restored Republic of Poland (since 1918). Of nearly a dozen offspring born to patriarch Pasiach Feight, several members eventually left their homeland for more promising opportunities elsewhere, including America. The last two progeny in the tribe, Max and the youngest, Abraham, departed from their native digs for Canada.

Max arrived at 18 in 1898, and Abraham at 19 in 1903. Those young men settled in the metropolitan capital of the province of Ontario at Toronto and both eventually met life mates there. The siblings each encountered and wed a migrant from Austria during the year in which the two girls arrived separately in Toronto. In 1900, Max and Rosie Tergendhaft tied the knot; Abraham and Minnie Rotenberg followed suit in 1907.

Despite the prolific dispersion of the Feight family, to them ancestral tribute was nonetheless imperative. In Canada the brothers applied an anglicized spelling to their surname netting *Faith*. Maybe to honor his dad, Max and Rosie labeled their second son after his paternal grandfather, born on May 22, 1901. The Austrian *Pasiach Feight* was traded for an anglicized *Percy Faith*. But just two years after the boy's birth, he died in 1903. In fact, no fewer than four and perhaps five of their offspring died younger than age four (one still-born) although at least three others grew to adulthood. Survival, so it seemed, was precarious.

Do you think it's a stretch to believe, when Abraham and Minnie Faith subsequently bore a son, that what had transpired so recently with their kin was lost on them? It would hardly appear so. Together they found a way to revere their late nephew's grandfather, the nephew himself and also *his* father. They did it all by simply replicating the nomenclature that Max and Rosie had already selected. Abraham and Minnie Faith's son, Percy, born April 6, 1908, was the eldest of eight siblings.⁸ Those Faiths resided in Kensington Market, a working-class district of Toronto populated by numerous Jewish immigrants.

While Abraham earned gainful employment as a tailor, young Percy was influenced by his uncle Max's adroit abilities with the violin. That man, who provided his living as a traveling salesman, gained some amateur notoriety among family and friends for his exhibited proficiency with the stringed instrument. None of this was lost on his nephew who — at the tender age of seven — took up the violin too, after his parents were convinced that he had perfect pitch. The smell of resin made him ill, however, and he never liked the din

of a scratchy bow. Following three years of practice the lad opted for piano lessons, to which he earnestly applied himself. In time he became a rather astute master of the ivories.

At the city's east end movie theater, Iola Flicker, he made his public debut as a pianist at age 11. So good was he there that this child prodigy was soon earning a small paycheck. Young Percy accompanied silent films screened by just such an establishment for \$3 nightly plus carfare. A reporter observed: "He had to sit on a stack of sheet music to feel in full command of the situation, and ... many Torontonians listened to vintage Faith without realizing it."⁹

Although his career may have been in its infancy, his occupational options almost certainly had been narrowed significantly by that time. Just four years hence, at 15, the youth's concert premier took place at Toronto's most revered venue for such performances — Massey Hall. On that occasion he played Franz Liszt's *Hungarian Fantasy*. He was a student of classical music at the time under a renowned regional virtuoso and possibly of still greater repute, Frank Welsman. Welsman taught at the Royal Conservatory of Music (since renamed Toronto Conservatory of Music) where young Percy was enrolled.

Percy's seemingly unabated success as a concert pianist ended instantly, however, when fate intervened. At 18, about 1926, his career plans came crashing down around him when his little preschool sister Ruth's clothing caught fire. She was only six or seven then. Without concern for his own welfare he used what he had to put out the flames — at that moment, his hands. It saved Ruth's life but it simultaneously damaged his hands so badly that he was unable to play piano again for nine months. All was not lost, however. In the interim, out of inexorableness, he began to cultivate a talent and proficiency for arranging and composing. Without completing his degree due to a lack of sufficient financing, he terminated his formal training at the conservatory.

In 1928, at 20, Faith wed his childhood sweetheart, the former Mary Palange, forever known as Dolly. She was 19, born on November 24, 1909.¹⁰ The couple bore two offspring, Marilyn Faith, on December 5, 1931, and Peter David Faith, on August 25, 1937. A dozen years following their parents' nuptials a newspaper account illuminated: "Faith is married, has two children, smokes too much, and is an avid hockey fan."¹¹

Percy and Dolly were together 47 years, until his death following a four-year battle with cancer. The Faiths resided in Beverly Hills when he died at 67 on February 9, 1976, in a Van Nuys, California, hospital. Peter Faith operated a talent bureau and wed at 35 in 1972. He died on August 18, 1974, in Los Angeles. Dolly died on Thanksgiving Day, November 24, 1997, at Mission Hills, California. Marilyn, the last member of Percy Faith's nuclear clan, passed at Westlake Village, California, on New Year's Day 2010 of cancer. Three children and six grandchildren survived. Marilyn and first husband Alan L. Gleitsman (1930–2006) produced four offspring, one preceding her in death. The Gleitsmans divorced in 1967. Marilyn wed Jack J. Leonard (1916–93) in 1969. They did not have children together.

Following the fire that occurred during his youth in which his hands were badly injured, Faith studied composition with Louis Waizman, by one account "a musician straight out of the story books."¹² Waizman, who later joined the arranging staff of the Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC), was a native of Salzburg, Austria, born in the house that was the 1756 birthplace of acclaimed composer Wolfgang Mozart. Faith, meanwhile, soon began arranging music for the hotel orchestras of Rex Battle and Luigi Romanelli.

He branched out into radio in 1927, arranging and conducting multiple programs for local station CKCL, possibly most notably *Simpsons' Opera Hour*. The following year he and vocalist Joe Allabough sang duets billed as *Faith and Hope* over CKCL. It may have

been his first gig as a headliner but it was just the start of something big. From 1929 to 1932, Faith penned arrangements for the orchestra of Geoffrey Waddington that aired regularly over another local radio station, CKNC. One account affirms that Faith also conducted his own broadcast string ensemble in 1931.¹³

In spite of the fact that Faith didn't hold any formal scholastic credentials, his track record as a concert pianist, theater orchestra conductor, arranger, and performer — all in the exciting new medium of broadcasting — held him in good stead. His premier on the American airwaves seems to have occurred on Thursday, September 3, 1931, over the NBC Blue network.¹⁴ He appeared there on an 11:30 P.M. *Concert from Toronto* that featured a handful of Canadian artists including instrumentalists, vocalists and a comedian.

By 1933, Faith's name was projected to officials of the CBC.¹⁵ The state-owned agency hired him where he soon rose to the web's chief arranger and conductor. From 1933 to 1940, he was a staple of the CBC's live music broadcasting ventures.¹⁶ For about three years beginning in 1935, Faith arranged and conducted tunes for a handful of CBC series: *Bands Across the Sea*, *Cosmopolitans*, *Gaiety and Romance*, *Mardi Gras*, *Singing Strings*, and *Streamline*. By 1937 (some sources say 1938), the CBC found a spot in its schedule for a program Faith could headline. With the debut of *Music by Faith* he was attracting widespread interest and matching recognition. It was the first of a surfeit of major transcontinental radio features for which Faith would be privileged to compose, arrange and direct the music.

Billboard, one of the leading U.S.-based entertainment trade periodicals, proclaimed it was in *radio* (italics mine) — and not some other medium — that Faith “developed his lush pop-instrumental style” which characterized the remainder of a multifaceted career.¹⁷ Airing sporadically, those radio series were heard over a period that encompassed two decades on the aural airwaves coast to coast (1937–57). Yet at the inception of his groundbreaking CBC show, Faith's good fortune took an especially promising turn at a most pivotal juncture.

Persuaded that the arranger-conductor had something to offer Americans, too, that was both singular and gratifying, one of a quartet of transcontinental U.S. chains picked up the CBC broadcasts to air in *this* country. Carrying *Music by Faith* as a sustained entry, MBS (later hyped as “Mutual, the Network for *All America*”) beamed the feature on Wednesdays at 9:30 P.M. Eastern Time between October 5, 1938, and April 24, 1940. A commentary on Faith by the Mutual Broadcasting System was subsequently published in a Canadian newspaper shortly after the start of 1940. It proved not only illuminating but also provides a critical assessment of Faith's early contributions.¹⁸

Each week more and more coast-to-coast listeners are discovering the imaginative music of Percy Faith. Through the facilities of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Mutual transmits these half-hour periods from Toronto Wednesdays....

The 32-year-old Toronto-born arranger and conductor belongs to the company of such-day-after-tomorrow artists as Schiaparelli, Noel Coward and Rivera. He has dared to tamper with the classics. His streamlining of Beethoven, Delibes and Liszt has not rocked the graves of these immortals.

Another scribe indicates that Faith headlined a second Canadian-originated MBS feature, *Percy Faith and His Cosmopolitans*.¹⁹ It was designed to introduce him to still more American listeners although it seems to have gained less notoriety than *Music by Faith*. The affirmation he acquired there projected him as one of the foremost conductors on the ether during the prewar era — a period in which he joined a handful of the better-known impresarios of North America.

Years later a journalist commented: “During his seven years with the CBC he turned

stock scores into joyous, decorative pieces that made programs like *Music By Faith* the most listened-to on the air."²⁰ *Music by Faith* resonated with listeners in dual nations. It remained so until its headliner abruptly left his CBC perch in 1940, relocating south of the border. That was his swan song in his homeland, his Canadian sunset: while Faith's music would continue to be esteemed and grow profoundly in his native land — and he returned from time to time for public appearances in his homeland — the rising, soon-to-be-celebrated personality would soon swear his allegiance to a new nation forever.²¹

Faith's decision to leave his beloved Canada was precipitated when the CBC proposed a drastic reduction in budgeting for his program.²² The young man, who had channeled his musical career almost totally into the CBC, was convinced that the series would be little more than a figment of its former glory when the retrenchment kicked in. Simultaneously more than one reporter revealed that he also harbored ill will for a perceived anti-Semitic stance that was displayed by the hierarchy of the government-controlled broadcasting unit. Faith viewed himself as the network's "token Jew" and resented the baggage it saddled him with.²³ For at least two reasons, then, he was fully persuaded that it was time to move on.

Chicago was his initial stop in America but that wouldn't last forever. By August 1940 Faith had signed a 52-week contract paying him \$1,000 weekly to conduct a *Windy City* orchestra.²⁴ While in Chicago he also earned \$1,000 in prize money for penning a 1943 operetta, *The Gandy Dancer*.

In the meantime Faith's radio ties helped him get on the air in Chicagoland, too. After the legendary native Polish conductor Josef A. Pasternack died of a heart attack on April 29, 1940 — leaving NBC's celebrated Chicago-originated musical cabaret *Carnation Contented Hour* sans impresario — Faith was summoned to pick up the baton.²⁵ His livelihood would be largely influenced by NBC for the first seven years of his residency in America, in fact. During part of that time he also prepared himself for undertaking preparations for naturalized American citizenship. He became a U.S. national at last in 1945.

It was, of course, almost a foregone conclusion that the creative genius Faith exhibited had destined him for yet greater professional accomplishments. In late 1945, he moved to New York City with the NBC *Carnation Contented Hour*. While he persisted as the show's conductor-composer-arranger, the orchestra he directed in Gotham was new and the show's format was overhauled beginning with the broadcast of January 7, 1946.²⁶

Rather than featuring a recurring deputation of vocalists — as it had done until then with soprano Josephine Antoine and bass Reinhold Schmidt as stars along with a cadre of recurring visiting soloists — the program then pitched weekly guest stars only, including singers and instrumentalists. Of those alterations, a critic acknowledged: "Percy Faith and his new orchestra ... manage to project considerable more sparkle in their renditions.... The new 'Contented Hour' is a decidedly more polished article than its predecessor."²⁷ About six months later, however, the new design was thrown out in favor of a few stars that appeared for lengthy runs: Buddy Clark, Tony Martin, Dinah Shore, and Jo Stafford.²⁸ Faith remained at the podium, however.

In 1947, Faith shifted broadcasters, leaving NBC to join competitor CBS.²⁹ In time the *Carnation Contented Hour*, which had been heard for several years over NBC on Monday nights at 10 o'clock, followed him to CBS. Singer Dick Haymes was its lead vocalist then following Buddy Clark's death in a plane crash on October 1, 1949. The show aired on CBS in a Sunday night half-hour at 10 o'clock between October 2, 1949, and December 30, 1951.

In early December 1947, meanwhile, Percy Faith had signified his intent to terminate his ties with NBC's *Carnation Contented Hour* after seven years effective January 1, 1948.

He announced it after that chain revealed its plans to shift *Carnation's* origination from New York to Hollywood. He had already moved with the same show once, you recall, from Chicago to New York. Faith also extended a commitment to the Coca-Cola Company's Sunday evening show on CBS — to be explored presently — by signing a new four-year contract that included the possibility of some television appearances as well.³⁰

Even then Faith wouldn't rely exclusively on a single network to wholly produce his income. On May 29, 1947, he was tapped to conduct an orchestra for the ABC Radio network. It was a prestigious special event underwritten by the American Federation of Labor. *Lift Your Voices* featured the legendary singers Alfred Drake, Frances Greer, Conrad Thibault, Lawrence Tibbett, and Gladys Swarthout with a script by George Faulkner. This was definitely verification that, when radio broadcasters aired extravaganzas, Faith was to be among the celebrated impresarios that they wanted on their rostrums.

At CBS, meanwhile, Faith succeeded the durable Russian-born arranger-conductor Andre Kostelanetz on a long-playing radio musicale underwritten by the Coca-Cola Company.³¹ From August 17, 1947, to February 18, 1949, Faith took over the orchestra of *The Pause That Refreshes on the Air* that Kostelanetz had directed at CBS from 1940 to 1944.³² Ginny Simms was the featured vocalist at the 1947 debut on Sundays at 6:30 P.M.

It is thirty minutes of popular music presented with the same symphonic richness so effectively employed by Andre Kostelanetz and David Rose.

In the tradition, Mr. Faith makes generous use of harps, violins and any other strings that may be handy and, while the resultant lilting effect may be overdone at times, there is no denying that generally it makes for easy and relaxed listening. Certainly, it is a pleasant antidote to the surplus of brass on so many shows.³³

In reality, Faith had already had an ethereal dress rehearsal for this assignment and had proven himself much more than sufficient for the job. When Kostelanetz took a summer hiatus in 1944, Faith was tapped as the seasonal replacement conductor with the Coke orchestra.³⁴ *The Pause That Refreshes on the Air* sobriquet was one Coke had adopted at NBC as early as 1934, when maestro Frank Black led an aggregate that bore that nomenclature. Following a second off-the-air break from 1944 to 1947, *The Pause That Refreshes on the Air* resumed under Faith's baton, completing the feature's enduring radio run. Faith, as had Kostelanetz before him, directed a 45-piece band. "The common denominators were large orchestras and 'quality' music," a respected radio historiographer maintained.³⁵

In the show's second season on CBS, meanwhile, 1948-49, Jane Froman replaced Ginny Simms as the regular vocalist. Froman was making a comeback after sustaining near-fatal injuries in a Lisbon plane crash a quadrennial earlier. The Froman-Faith combination was "an asset to broadcasting," so a leading newspaper's pundit sanctioned.³⁶

During the succeeding decade — in the fading days of network radio's golden age — Faith turned up at the CBS podium once again. That time he headlined the full instrumental ensemble of one of the spectacular musical delicacies still available to listeners. On Sunday afternoons for nearly an hour Faith conducted a 36-piece studio orchestra for *The Woolworth Hour*. Hosted by Donald Woods, the program aired over CBS at 1:05 P.M. for more than two and a half years, running between June 5, 1955, and December 29, 1957. It was one of the few features of its class to remain on coast-to-coast radio that late in the ethereal day.³⁷

Faith "never made the transition to television," a biographer lamented.³⁸ Did he simply arrive on the scene too early? That assessment regrettably may be accurate. While the acclaimed conductor was heard on numerous radio series, including a handful for which he was a headliner, Faith had no regular gig on the tube. Not only that, with evidence lacking

to the contrary, his small screen horizons might have been limited to a solitary series' exhibition although that seems highly unlikely at face value.³⁹

On ABC-TV Faith was one of a few visiting conductors that succeeded venerated impresario Howard Barlow with the durable *Voice of Firestone*.⁴⁰ Airing from 1928 to 1959, first on radio, then simulcast, then on television only, *Firestone* was returning to the air after a three-year absence in 1962. It had been one of broadcasting's most prestigious musical jewels. Between September 30, 1962, and June 16, 1963, Faith joined a handful of his contemporaries to direct the distinguished classical and pop showcase. Others with one or more guest shots at the *Firestone* podium included Xavier Cugat, Arthur Fiedler, Spike Jones, Andre Kostelanetz, Paul Lavalle, Eugene Ormandy, Wilfred Pelletier, Fred Waring, and Paul Whiteman.

While Faith didn't make a lot of appearances on television, he did write the distinctive theme for the medium's initial 90-minute western series, *The Virginian* (NBC, 1962–70). Sporadically he also returned to Canada to conduct music for various CBC-TV specials.

Over a multiyear span Faith taped numerous radio programs for the Voice of America shows beamed to many foreign nations. In the same era, after briefly recording for Decca and RCA Victor during the late 1940s, the talented artist signed with Columbia Records in 1950. Faith worked closely alongside legendary conductor-arranger Mitch Miller at Columbia. That engagement was a good one; in fact, Faith remained linked with Columbia until his death more than a quarter-century after joining up. His working arrangement in tandem with Miller extended for many of those years, their friendship continuing for the rest of their lives. "Mitch Miller ... found Faith's rich but not overbearing string work perfect for the sound he was trying to cultivate," a scholar sustained.⁴¹

Mitch hired the famous vocalists, and assigned various arrangers who worked for him (and he arranged music as well) to launch their careers. Such "youngsters" as Rosemary Clooney, Tony Bennett, and many others saw huge careers that were launched by contracts with Columbia and Mitch; and often through the orchestral magic of Percy Faith!

This was a good deal for Percy, as he really wanted to record instrumentally and not be involved with vocalists; so for the duration of the 1950s Faith had a deal with Columbia and Mitch ... he'd record for the "youngsters" — and in turn he could record orchestral albums under his own name.⁴²

Not only was Faith tied to Clooney and Bennett, he arranged and conducted some of her records of Vic Damone, Doris Day, Burl Ives, Johnny Mathis, Guy Mitchell, Jerry Vale, and Sarah Vaughan. Day, for one, was impressed with Faith's arrangements so much that she requested he work with George Stoll scoring her dramatic breakthrough film *Love Me or Leave Me* (MGM, 1955). The movie earned an Academy Award nomination for Faith that year. He had already gained a sterling reputation with Hollywood's major industry for the 1953 Romulus movie production theme *The Song from Moulin Rouge*, commonly also dubbed *Where Is Your Heart?*

While his career spanned five decades in radio, movies, Broadway and live concerts, in many respects Faith reached his zenith during the 1950s as musical director at Columbia in charge of artists and their repertoire. "His ability to match singers and hit songs with just the right arrangements and backing orchestration became immediately apparent," claimed one source.⁴³ "Tony Bennett, who'd had a run of failed singles on Columbia, had a million-selling hit with *Because of You*, a song suggested by Faith. Rosemary Clooney's *Come on-a My House* became one of the biggest hits of the early 1950s."

Between 1951 and 1953, Faith arranged chart-topping *Cold, Cold Heart* and *Rag*

Riches for Bennett. The conductor-arranger is credited with adapting Guy Mitchell's million-selling single *My Heart Cries for You* in 1951, a tune originating as an 18th century French melody. During the 1950s, all of the assortment of musical diversions that contributed to Faith's phenomenal triumphs — composition, broadcasting, recording, performing — coalesced to make him a powerful presence in the industry, firmly establishing his permanent legacy in 20th century melody.

Some astute academicians have divided Faith's professional career into two halves: the radio epoch followed by the recording era. During both, he conducted large performing aggregates of skilled instrumental musicians. Most importantly, perhaps, throughout his life he created and recorded more than a thousand arrangements "with a style," according to one pundit, "that could never be duplicated." In a quarter-century with Columbia Records the maestro released an estimated 85 albums.⁴⁴

"Faith's strings and Ray Conniff's choral band gave Columbia a one-two punch that dominated easy listening sales for nearly three decades and now fills the shelves of thrift stores around the county," a modern Web site affirmed.⁴⁵ In addition, Conniff and Faith further collaborated in nurturing the Columbia Record Club, a mail-order outlet that became middle America's foremost album distributor.

"Like Conniff, Faith's worst sin may have been that of being too good a craftsman," the same source insists. "He worked strings, woodwinds, and brass together so seamlessly that the result often achieves a surface of schmaltz that belies the fine work underneath." Touting Faith's Mexican and Cuban music, such as albums titled *Viva!* (1957) and *Malagueña* (1959), the reviewer professes that the arranger-conductor's "best effort" may have been in those releases: "Faith puts splashy trumpets and powerful trombones right up front, and fills every corner of the room with sounds."

"Don't think Faith was all about novelty tunes in the first half of his career," another contemporary Web site warns.⁴⁶ Faith supplied "some very sophisticated work for *The Consentent Hour* and *The Melody Hour*." The scholar hints that the latter show just may have been *Carnation* programs adapted for the Voice of America radio network in the mid-to-late 1940s. "Given that the radio work was the first half of Percy Faith's career ... this very early collection of 45s is not indicative, in any way, of the 25 years that were to follow," the modern Internet site insists.

According to a preponderance of music critics, irrefutably, Faith's most memorable arrangements — which he also recorded — were the trio of *Delicado* (1952), *Moulin Rouge* (1953) and *Theme from "A Summer Place"* (1960). Stan Freeman played what some critics branded "the hot instrument of the 50s," the harpsichord, or amplified harp, on the Brazilian tune *Delicado*.⁴⁷ Its distinct din instantly resonated with legions of radio and performing venue audiences, all tangibly demonstrated with record-buyers. Faith's all-time top seller was the 1960 release from *A Summer Place*. It was the frontispiece to a 1959 motion picture that starred Sandra Dee and Troy Donahue as young lovers.

For nine weeks in 1960, Faith's lilting arrangement of Max Steiner's *A Summer Place* composition led U.S. music charts. The single also earned the arranger a Grammy as Record of the Year. Before the decade ended, however, Faith gained a second Grammy for the Other Pop-Rock and Roll Contemporary or Instrumental Recording category with *Love Theme from Romeo and Juliet* (BHE, 1969). He penned the scores of 11 movies, in fact, over his lifetime, including a plethora in that same decade (1960s). Among them were *Tammy Tell Me True* (Universal, 1961), *Id Rather Be Rich* (Universal, 1964), *The Love Goddesses* (Continental, 1964), *The Third Day* (Paramount, 1965), and *The Oscar* (Universal, 1966).

“With a personality as easy-going as his music,” claimed one journalist, “he kept the members of his 45-man orchestra on a gentle rein and was an accommodating host to the dozens of music students who invariably came backstage for advice and encouragement following his radio broadcasts.”⁴⁸

In 1960, Faith and his family finally relocated from New York to Los Angeles, having refused to do so when NBC wished to move him there in at the start of 1948.

As determined as he was to succeed, Faith was equally determined to keep his private life out of the public eye. Unpretentious but also quite handsome, Faith, who loved Los Angeles, disdained the glitzy Hollywood social scene. He frequently visited Canada, but geography, time, and personal changes distanced him from his past. He found Canada too provincial and his old friends envious of his American success.⁴⁹

Despite the move to Los Angeles Faith persisted in producing up to three albums annually for Columbia Records. A partial discography of his albums between 1948 and 2002 more than a quarter-century following his death in 1976, includes this handful among its treasures: *Fiesta Time* (1948), *Music of Christmas* (1954), *Festival of Strings* (1955), *My Fair Lady* (1956), *South Pacific* (1957), *Camelot* (1960), *The Sound of Music* (1960), *Themes for Young Lovers* (1963), *More Themes for Young Lovers* (1964), *Latin Themes for Young Lovers* (1965), *Today's Themes for Young Lovers* (1967), *Those Were the Days* (1969), *Leaving on a Jet Plane* (1970), *Jesus Christ, Superstar* (1971), *Summer Place '76* (1975), *Sixteen Most Requested Songs* (1978), and *Ultimate Collection* (2002).

Around 1966, Faith launched a concert tour of about a month's duration to the cities of Japan. “People loved to hear his renditions of popular music, including Gershwin and show tunes,” a modern Web site suggests. A few months following Faith's death, impresario David Rose conducted a “tribute to Percy Faith” tour. For many years Alan Broadbent followed by Nick Perito in the 1990s and Terry Woodson today conducted “the sounds of Percy Faith” on occasional tours to a handful of Japanese cities.

A couple of years prior to his death, the conductor-arranger — always interested in encouraging young people with musical abilities to reach their potential — established a trio of Percy Faith awards on a like number of far-flung college campuses. Those 1974 scholarships were endowed at the universities of Jerusalem, Southern California and Toronto. More than 20,000 pages of Faith's compositions and arrangements, incidentally, survive him in a repository at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

An enduring fan, Bill Halvorsen, has elaborated on Faith's career.

New generations ... probably think an orchestra is some “old lame construct” that the days of electronic synthesizers have rendered obsolete. Not so. Percy's Columbia catalog as reissued by Collectables and Taragon [records] shows that Percy's music is an oasis in the desert of radio talk shows and noise — and mindless noise they call music.... [Here's] hoping that the new generation can step away from their .mp3's for a second and hear some full-fidelity orchestral pops.⁵⁰

If they do, the time likely won't be protracted before Percy Faith's arrangements — as addictive now as they were back in the day — have the youngsters hunting more. In truth, his captivating genius maintains a perpetual facility for stringing anybody along who finds easy listening, which he elevated to an art form, the delight that the maestro persistently intended.