

= Jacques GersHKovitch =

Jacques GersHKovitch (1884 ? 1953) was a Russian conductor and musician who became the first music director of the Portland Junior Symphony (now known as the Portland Youth Philharmonic) , the first youth orchestra in the United States , based in Portland , Oregon . Born to a musical family in Irkutsk , GersHKovitch was sent to Saint Petersburg in his late teens to study at the Imperial Conservatory . In 1913 , he graduated with honors in flute and conducting , and was awarded the Schubert Scholarship for a year of study under German conductor Arthur Nikisch in Berlin . GersHKovitch returned to Irkutsk to enlist during World War I , and by 1916 he had become head of the Imperial Russian Army 's military symphony orchestra . He held this position through the Russian Revolution and thereafter , as concerts were often presented as benefits for orphans and the Red Cross .

GersHKovitch married in Irkutsk in 1918 . There , he established a fine arts conservatory and symphony orchestra which continued under the Bolshevik regime . In 1921 , he and his wife crossed the border in China to escape from Russia . Ballerina Anna Pavlova offered GersHKovitch the assistant conductor position with her orchestra , which was touring throughout Asia . GersHKovitch remained in Japan to lead the newly organized Tokyo Symphony Orchestra . However , the 1923 Great Kantō earthquake disrupted the organization and caused GersHKovitch and his wife to emigrate to the United States . The couple arrived in San Francisco in November 1923 and made their way to Portland in 1924 . There , GersHKovitch was approached to lead the Portland Junior Symphony . Known for his discipline and high performance standards , GersHKovitch conducted the orchestra for twenty @-@ nine years , gaining national attention for the ensemble and pioneering the youth orchestra movement until his death in 1953 .

= = Early life and education = =

Jacques GersHKovitch was born in 1884 to a Jewish family in Irkutsk near Lake Baikal in Siberia , Russia . His father , an amateur violinist " who made up in enthusiasm what he lacked in skill " , and mother had seven children , six of whom became professional conductors or singers . Chamber music was a common activity in the household .

GersHKovitch was sent to Saint Petersburg in his late teens to study at the Imperial Conservatory . The 4 @,@ 000 @-@ mile (6 @,@ 400 km) journey took two weeks via the newly constructed Trans @-@ Siberian Railway , and GersHKovitch arrived with " 17 rubles in his pocket and his flute under his arm " . He auditioned and was awarded a scholarship . There he learned from respected Russian composers such as Alexander Glazunov , Nikolai Rimsky @-@ Korsakov and Nikolai Tcherepnin , and completed coursework in opera and ballet production . To pay his own expenses , and to assist in paying the expenses of two of his siblings who were also studying at the Conservatory , GersHKovitch performed with bands and orchestras . This delayed his undergraduate work , but in 1913 he graduated with the title of " laureate " (the conservatory 's highest honor) with honors in flute and conducting , and was awarded the Schubert Scholarship for a year of study under German conductor Arthur Nikisch in Berlin . However , this period was shortened due to World War I , and GersHKovitch returned to Irkutsk to enlist .

= = Early career = =

In 1916 , GersHKovitch became head of the Imperial Russian Army 's military symphony orchestra , a position he held through the Russian Revolution . Army duties continued after the war as concerts were often given as benefits for orphans and the Red Cross , and it was during this period that GersHKovitch met his future wife Lucia . Then an engineer working on a construction project near Khabarovsk , she had previously been a piano student at the Conservatory during the same period GersHKovitch was there . The two met in 1917 , and in 1918 they married in Irkutsk . In Irkutsk , he organized a fine arts conservatory and symphony orchestra . The institute was successful , and by 1920 enrollment had reached more than 1 @,@ 550 students . Following a successful takeover of

the city by the Bolsheviks , GersHKovitch conducted bands for funeral services under the new regime . During a service rehearsal , GersHKovitch removed a man causing numerous interruptions . As a result , GersHKovitch was commanded to visit the Cheka , the presiding chief of which was the victim of the previous day 's incident . However , the chief was a devotee of music and requested that GersHKovitch produce a grand opera . He provided a collection of musical instruments previously confiscated by the Bolsheviks . GersHKovitch 's conservatory , orchestra , and newly established opera continued under the Bolshevik regime .

= = Relocation = =

When living conditions deteriorated , GersHKovitch traveled to Chita and obtained permission to visit Vladivostok via Manchuria . After crossing the border to China in 1921 , he remained in Harbin , where he met Lucia , who had also escaped from Russia . Together they made their way to Tientsin , where they met and became close friends with composer Aaron Avshalomov . When ballerina Anna Pavlova heard that GersHKovitch had escaped from Russia , she offered him a position as assistant conductor with her orchestra , which was touring throughout Asia . Following three months of touring , GersHKovitch settled in Tokyo to undertake the newly organized Tokyo Symphony Orchestra under the patronage of Baron Okura , a wealthy nobleman and relative of the Mikado .

The orchestra 's premiere concert took place at the Imperial Hotel auditorium ; many concerts followed and were well received until the Great Kant? earthquake of 1923 " disorganized all the business and musical interests of the city " . GersHKovitch and his wife , guests at Baron Okura 's home , endured the earthquake for six days before leaving for Kobe . With assistance from Americans , the Norwegian consul , and financial aid from Baron Okura , the couple left for San Francisco , arriving in November 1923 . Following the advice of San Francisco Symphony conductor Alfred Hertz , GersHKovitch and his wife made their way to Portland , Oregon , in 1924 . It was here that GersHKovitch was approached by Mary Dodge and two of her students to lead the Portland Junior Symphony (PJS) . He taught flute and conducted the Ellison @-@ White Conservatory 's student orchestra , at the time directed by Jacob Avshalomov , until the PJS duties required his full attention .

= = Portland Youth Philharmonic = =

Under GersHKovitch 's leadership , the Portland Junior Symphony (now known as the Portland Youth Philharmonic) was founded in late 1924 as the first youth orchestra in the United States . The symphony performed for the first time on February 14 , 1925 , at the Lincoln High School Auditorium (which later became Portland State University 's Lincoln Hall) , playing Schubert 's Unfinished Symphony . GersHKovitch allegedly introduced the composition and stated " You play , or I keel [sic] you " in his heavy accent at the ensemble 's first rehearsal . Concert attendees reportedly surged the stage after the concert to congratulate the musicians , GersHKovitch and Dodge , who was present and called to the stage . One reviewer for the Oregon Sunday Journal wrote the following day that the " audience that almost filled the auditorium to capacity broke into storm upon storm of applause " . According to Ronald Russell , author of A New West to Explore (1938) , the audience " had experienced a new emotional thrill , and forthwith became strong advocates and supporters of the junior symphony cause " .

GersHKovitch , known for his discipline and high performance standards , conducted the orchestra for twenty @-@ nine years , gaining national attention for the ensemble and pioneering the youth orchestra movement . By the 1930s , PJS concerts were broadcast nationally on the CBS Radio Network . In 1956 and 1958 both NBC and CBS transmitted broadcasts of the orchestra 's programs across the United States , and three transcribed programs were broadcast overseas from Voice of America in Washington , D.C. GersHKovitch was also responsible for adding a Preparatory Orchestra (later renamed the Conservatory Orchestra) due to increased membership . He tried to incorporate at least one American composition in each concert . GersHKovitch had a distinctive personality and a unique way with words , using expressions such as " More nicely , can 't you more

? " and " Debussy is beauty , French beauty " (as recollected in one former student 's diary) . For twenty @-@ five years , David Campbell served as Master of Ceremonies for the Children 's Concerts since Gershkovitch " never gained a command of English sufficient enough for public use " . Gershkovitch 's often @-@ quoted philosophy was that he did " not teach music " , but rather he taught " young people through music " . Though there were times he desired to conduct professional ensembles , Gershkovitch 's primary concern was educating the youth . Apart from music education , he stressed the importance of proper conduct , manners , and " values in life and art " in order to build character . Following Gershkovitch 's death in 1953 , guest conductors led the orchestra for its thirtieth season ? one conductor was Jacob Avshalomov , a Columbia University teacher and PJS alumnus who had studied under Gershkovitch while a student at Reed College (1939 ? 1941) .