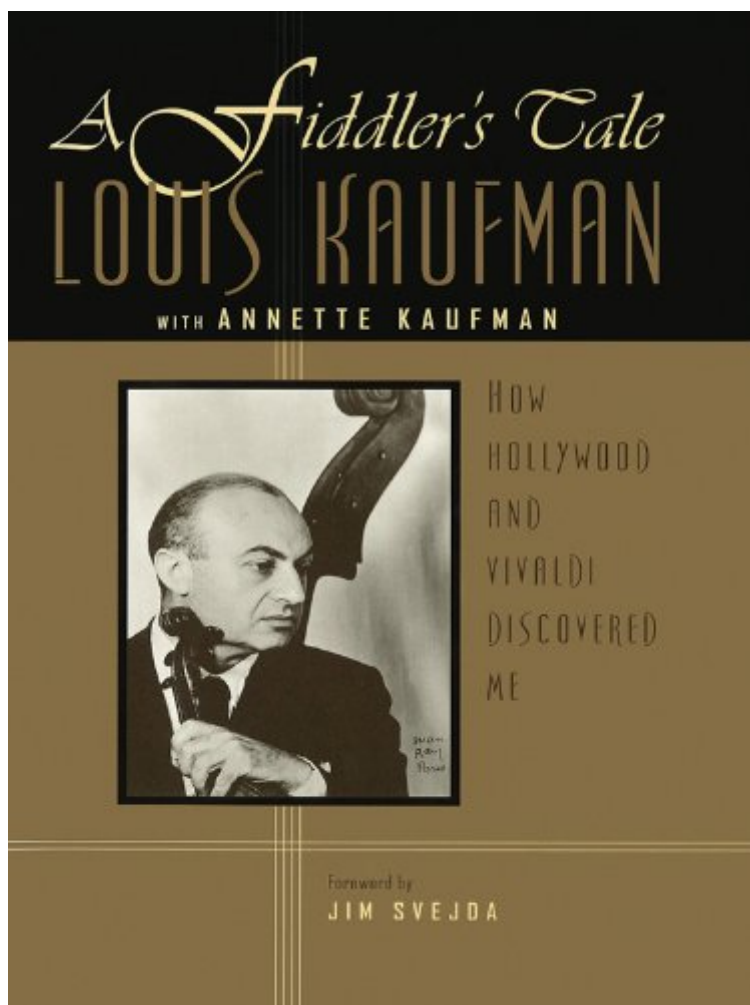


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# A Fiddler's Tale: How Hollywood And Vivaldi Discovered Me



## Synopsis

This fascinating memoir, written by one of the greatest American violinists of the twentieth century, recounts an extraordinary life in music. Once called by the New York Times "a violinist's violinist and a musician's musician," Louis Kaufman was born in 1905 in Portland, Oregon. He studied violin with Franz Kneisl at New York's Institute of Musical Art. He was the original violist of the Musical Art Quartet (1926-1933) and won the Naumburg Award in 1928, the year of his American solo recital debut in New York's Town Hall. During these early years, he played chamber music with Pablo Casals, Mischa Elman, Jascha Heifetz, Fritz Kreisler, Gregor Piatigorsky, and Efrem Zimbalist, among others. After performing the violin solos for Ernst Lubitsch's 1934 film *The Merry Widow*, Kaufman became the most sought after violin soloist in Hollywood, playing in some 500 films, including *Casablanca*, *Gone with the Wind*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Wuthering Heights*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and *Spartacus*. He worked closely with Robert Russell Bennett, Bernard Herrmann, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Alfred Newman, Miklós Rózsa, Max Steiner, Franz Waxman, and Victor Young. Extraordinary as it seems today, Kaufman was largely responsible for bringing the once-forgotten music of Antonio Vivaldi to its current popularity worldwide among both classical musicians and the general population of music lovers. The book includes a music CD with Kaufman's performances of Vivaldi's Concerto 2 of op. 9, *Havanaise* by Camille Saint-Saëns, *Nocturne for Violin and Piano* by Aaron Copland, *Much Ado about Nothing* Suite for violin and piano by Erich Wolfgang Korngold, and *Smoke Gets in Your Eyes* by Jerome Kern, among other favorites.

## Book Information

File Size: 6163 KB

Print Length: 488 pages

Publisher: University of Wisconsin Press; 1 edition (February 1, 2013)

Publication Date: February 1, 2013

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00C2MXGVO

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Not Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #1,011,669 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #58

inÃ Â Books > Humor & Entertainment > Sheet Music & Scores > Composers > Vivaldi #381

inÃ Â Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Classical

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## Customer Reviews

A Fiddler's Tale is a wonderful tribute to two fine musicians. Both Annette and Louis Kaufman were great performers. After the passing of Louis, Annette completed this book for her husband. Yes, how many of us would if we rose to the top of a profession give up our first love or stop growing at all. Louis was in Hollywood as the top soloist/concertmaster yet he continued performing recitals and recording beautiful performances of old and new music in NY and elsewhere. Their friendships with many composers gave birth to many wonderful new works as is recalled in the book. He is the first in modern time to play and record Vivaldi's Four Seasons! The Kaufmans grew in knowledge of art together and bought great art from their artist friends. Now many of these items have been donated to major institutions. One interesting fact is that the book is available in hard cover, CD (read by Mrs. Kaufman) and recently published in a Chinese translation! Please enjoy the CD of performances from 1942-52 that is included in the book.

I always enjoy reading biographies of well-known, creative people. In many instances their lives are more interesting and . surprising than any fictional novel. Autobiographies such as this one are especially enlightening since they provide first-hand accounts of events rather second hand, albeit well-researched, information.

Given the fact that Louis Kaufman is "the most heard violinist in history" (thanks to his career as concertmaster of film studio orchestras),I was expecting quite a bit more out of this thick, dust-jacketed volume. There are some great anecdotes and interesting material about Kaufman's early days as a young violinist studying with the great pedagogue Kneisel in New York, moving out to Hollywood, hearing the scores for such films as "Gone With the Wind" WHILE they were being written, finding unknown opuses by Vivaldi, and premiering new works. However, this is all surrounded by uninteresting, self-important material about all the expensive artwork and stuff he was buying with his checks from the film recordings, and the world traveling that he and his wife

Annette were doing and the people they met. There's even a separately inserted color-plate section in the book of his favorite paintings!! As a violinist, I'd much rather have had a shorter volume that cut out all the extraneous stuff and just focused on his life as a musician.

Fascinating. Not just for music lovers only.

Bought this book for an elderly professional musician who's heard all the virtuosos, and knew some of them pretty well. He considered this book disappointing, and little more than a puff-piece, one long "press-agent's blurb". There are many much better first-person books about the world and life of great violinists.

Lovers of the violin and modern art will enjoy this fascinating story of Louis Kaufman (1905-1994), known as "a violinist's violinist" during his career from the 1920s to the 1970s, and one of the first American violinists to be celebrated worldwide. Mr. Kaufman tells about making music here and in Europe with many of the top musicians of the 20th Century. Louis and Annette Kaufman were also great collectors of art, focusing on Milton Avery and other modern artists, and their passion for art is also in this book. Mr. Kaufman can be heard on many of the classic movies of the 1930s and 40s, when he worked in Hollywood as concertmaster and soloist in films such as "To Have and Have Not," "Top Hat," and "Key Largo." He was also a leader in the rediscovery of the violin concertos of Vivaldi, and an enthusiastic exponent of many works by contemporary composers. A CD of selections from Louis Kaufman's recordings ranging from Vivaldi to Copland comes with the book.

This memoir was written by one of the greatest American violinists of the twentieth century, and he recounts an extraordinary life in music. Born in 1905, Louis Kaufman studied and played violin with many of the big names of that era. He eventually became the most sought after violin soloist in Hollywood, playing in around 500 films, including Casablanca, Gone with the Wind, The Diary of Anne Frank, Wuthering Heights, The Grapes of Wrath, and Spartacus. The book includes a music CD with Kaufman's performances.

The book doesn't do justice to its author. There's little to really sink your teeth into. Svejda's Foreward says: "If it weren't for Kaufman, the best-known cue in the history of film music - Tara's Theme from Gone with the Wind - would not have been heard so expressively, but that's another story and one far better told by the violinist himself." But "the violinist himself" hardly tells the story at

all! "One Sunday morning, Max [Steiner] called unexpectedly. "Louis, are you free today?" "Yes, Max." "Come right over with your violin. I have some themes to submit to Selznick for Gone with the Wind. He wants to hear them. It's not very interesting with just piano." Annette and I drove to Max's home, where he had set up a small recording machine. Max and I tried out and played over the themes for Scarlett, Rhett, Melanie, Tara, etc. Selznick enthusiastically approved these samples."Jim Svejda couldn't tell that story?Disappointing.

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