

Paul Howard

Paul Howard was born in London in 1875 and came to Australia in the early 1880s as a young boy with his mother and sisters. He always resided in Adelaide and in 1911 married Lilian Clare Waterman. They had seven children, 5 boys and two girls; the second youngest Mary, was the only one living with him at the time of his death in 1953. He was referred to as Popsi by his family, as was Godowsky.

Paul Howard's musical interests began in his early childhood when he attended recitals with his mother. When he was in his twenties and thirties, he gave many recitals across Australia but was an amateur in the sense that he did not earn a living from this. His recitals often included Godowsky pieces but his repertoire was broad and innovative for his time. He was also passionate about photography and business. He ran the Howard Correspondence College which specialised initially in training girls for secretarial work (he was a shorthand record-breaker) and later diversified to subjects for primary producers such as wool classing. His photography skills are evident in the range of stylish portraits he took of friends and family, often around the piano or in his beloved garden.

Howard initially came upon Godowsky's music in Allan's music store in Adelaide. He was so impressed that he continued to explore Godowsky's works. He initially predicted that Godowsky with normal longevity and good health would become one of the greatest composers of all time so he set about doing everything in his time to make him better known. With that commitment and passion he formed the International Godowsky Society. There were no fees required from members, simply the pledge to play or encourage others to play Godowsky's music. Its members included distinguished critics, pianists and composers such as Clinton Gray-Fisk, Sorabji, Clarence Adler and York Bowen. Other devotees included Rosa Widder and Marcelita Kabayao who performed the Bach-Godowsky Sonata in Barcelona as a European first. The membership was extensive and large instalments of literary documents were posted across the world to hundreds of members a few times a year. Paul Howard paid all the expense himself. This was despite having a large family to care for, a demanding business to run and in spite of the impact of the global financial crash and the Depression. Yet before, during and after the war, Howard continued in his mission insisting that Godowskyite pianists include at least one Godowsky work in their recital programs. Godowsky's great friend and editor of New York's 'Musical Courier' Leonard Lieblich pointed out that Paul Howard excelled in the art of honourable and exquisite propaganda,

Paul Howard's large family home in Woodville was an open house and a mecca for music lovers. Popsi taught his children to play the piano and together with them played the Miniatures for four hands, described as a garden of glory enabling little children to succeed in the path of perfection and to attain cultured taste, exquisite skills and refinement of expression. He was a devout Catholic and enjoyed entertaining priests and brothers, with liqueur and cigarettes while he played for them. The artistically adorned partly

subterranean music room with two baby grand walnut pianos was where he played music into the wee hours. It is also where he entertained Arthur Rubenstein while touring Australia by performing thirty compositions of Godowsky from memory. These included his Sonata, the Java Suite, Paraphrases of Chopin Etudes and Triakontameron. Later Rubenstein told Godowsky of Howard's fanatical devotion and thus Godowsky wrote to him in appreciation and their amazing correspondence ensued. The beautiful letters contain Godowsky's ideals and philosophies, his world view as well as his musical and artistic views. Paul Howard's "After Midnight Thoughts" are a testament to his utter devotion to Godowsky: the instalments encapsulate the discourse of the International Godowsky Society members, and the insightful exchanges between Godowsky (the Master or maestro) and Howard, its founder (referred to as Mr Howard by Godowsky, but sometimes referred to as the Disciple or the Apostle Paul by others in the IGS).

When Godowsky passed away after much illness and suffering in 1938, Howard was devastated but determined to continue his work as he considered the master to still be alive. Even during the difficult war years he continued to promote Godowsky's work tirelessly focussing on new members in England. It is remarkable that Leopold Godowsky and Paul Howard never had the chance to meet and demonstrates the hardships of the time. Even when Godowsky travelled to Indonesia where the beautiful Java Suites were conceived, their meeting did not occur. Although Java is not far north of Australia, Howard was in South Australia and in those days before the advance of air travel, the means of international travel was so much slower. Howard had large responsibilities caring for family and his Howard Correspondence College business and virtually everyone including Godowsky was hit hard by the financial and psychological impact of the Depression and then the War. In his letters, Godowsky lamented their inability to meet in person, and invited him to New York to see him. Unfortunately this never happened.

Paul Howard was renowned for his never ending generosity, prodigious hard work as well as his numerous talents and sharp wit. When he died in 1952, hundreds of letters were written to the Howard family from IGS members expressing their sorrow at losing such an inspirational founder.

Compiled by his granddaughter Helen Piotrowski