

Harry J. Brabec ~ Known Recordings

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This document, which originates at <http://TheDrummerDrives.com>, is excerpted from the book, *The Drummer Drives! Everybody Else Rides—The Musical Life and Times of Harry Brabec, Legendary Chicago Symphony Percussionist and Humorist*, a memoir and biography by Barbara Brabec. [Visit Amazon](#) to read the book's glowing five-star reviews and purchase the book.

As documented in the book's text, Harry made countless recordings through the years as a jazz drummer or percussionist with various big bands, radio and television orchestras, symphony orchestras, and other groups. This is merely a listing of a few recordings on which his playing can be heard today, and the instruments he said he was playing.

National Symphony Orchestra

Harry was in this Symphony from 1946 to 1949 with Hans Kindler, conductor. The Orchestra made several 78-rpm recordings for RCA while Kindler was there, so Harry would have been playing on some of these recordings. Regrettably, none of them found their way into his record collection.

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

The following list includes only some of the many recordings the Chicago Symphony Orchestra made during the years Harry was in the Orchestra or performing there as an extra percussionist. As he indicated in one of his letters, “. . . refer to any of the Chicago Symphony recordings made from 1951–1959, in which I am usually playing play snare drum or mallets.”

During the sixties and seventies, Harry acquired a small collection of Chicago Symphony recordings on vinyl that he made with Fritz Reiner or Rafael Kubelik in the fifties. After dubbing some of these albums to tapes for me and friends, I asked him to tell me what instrument he was playing in each recording. Given his steel-trap memory, even after so many years I didn't doubt that he remembered exactly what he was playing in each of the recordings documented below.

NOTE: Many vinyl albums lack any reference to the date or even the year a recording was made, but I have included dates I was able to verify through Web research or album notes. (Pictures of these vinyl album covers can be seen on TheDrummerDrives.com website.)

Reiner/Chicago Symphony (RCA LSC-2214)

Dvorak: *New World Symphony* (Recorded in 1956; Harry on triangle in the 3rd movement)

Reiner/Chicago Symphony (RCA VICS-1424)

- Weinberger: *Schwanda, the Bagpipe Player: Polka and Fugue* (Recorded in 1956; Harry

on snare drum)

- Dvorak: *Carnival Overture, OP. 92* (Recorded in 1956; Harry on tambourine)
- R. Strauss: *Salome, Op. 54: Dance of the Seven Veils* (Recorded in 1954; Harry on snare drum)

Reiner/Chicago Symphony (RCA Victor LM-1934 Red Seal)

Bartok: Concerto for Orchestra (Recorded in 1956; Harry on snare drum)

Reiner/Chicago Symphony and the Sauter-Finegan Orchestra (RCA Victor LM-1888 Red Seal)

- Liberman: *Concerto for Jazz Band and Symphony Orchestra* (Recorded in 1954. In a letter, Harry said he played “legit snare drum,” with ‘Mousie’ Alexander doing the jazz drum solo.)
- R. Straus: *Don Juan* (Harry on bells)

Reiner/Chicago Symphony (RCA Victor LM-2201 Red Seal)

Mussorgsky: *Pictures at an Exhibition*. (Recording date unknown; Harry playing triangle, gong, and chimes)

Reiner/Chicago Symphony (RCA VICS-1025 Stereo)

- Tchaikovsky: *1812 Overture*. (Harry on snare drum)
- Liszt: *Mephisto Waltz* (Harry on triangle)

Reiner/Chicago Symphony (RCA VICS-1042 Stereo)

Strauss: *Ein Heldenleben* (Harry on snare drum)

Reiner/Chicago Symphony (RCA VICS-1068 Stereo, 1964)

- Tchaikovsky: *Marche Slav* (Harry on snare drum)
- Moussorgsky: *Night on Bald Mountain* (Harry on chimes)

Kubelik/Chicago Symphony (Original recording on Naxos label; reissued on Mercury SRI 2-77006)

Kubelik made many recordings with the Chicago Symphony on the Naxos Classical Archives label during Harry’s tenure with the orchestra, but this is the only one that found its way into Harry’s LP collection:

Smetana: *Ma Vlast* (Recorded in 1952; Harry on snare drum).

Kubelik/Chicago Symphony (Recorded 1952)

A reference to this album on the Web listed all the percussionists who made it: Harry Brabec, Allan Graham, Lionel Sayers, Otto Kristufek, John Morgando, and Sam Denov.

- Stravinsky: *Les Noces*
- Mendelssohn: *Fingal’s Cave Overture, OP. 26*
- Brahms: *Symphony No. 3*

Solti/Chicago Symphony (London CSA-2227)

Mahler: *Symphony No. 6—Songs of a Wayfarer* (Recorded in 1970. This album has a beautiful picture of the Orchestra, with Harry on bass drum.

Gould/Chicago Symphony (MCA DPLI-0245 Stereo)

Fischer: *Chicago* (arr. Gould). Recorded June 18, 1966 in Orchestra Hall, this album features Benny Goodman on clarinet, with Morton Gould conducting; Harry is playing snare drum. (Titled *Chicago*, this album includes nine other works and other conductors. Selections were recorded over a period of years from 1940 to 1976.)

Classic Percussion Albums

Percussion in Hi-Fi (David Carroll, Mercury Records SR60003)

Recorded at Universal Recording, Chicago, 1956; percussionists were Dale Anderson, Hubert Anderson, Harry Brabec, Bobby Christian, Sam Denov, and Frank Rullo.

Harry is playing chimes in “Hell’s Bells”; bongos in “Maleguena” and “Jungle Drums”; bells in “Quiet Talk”; and one of the snare drums in “Flamenco.”

An email on the Web from Brian Phillips comments on this classic album, saying, “This is a fantastic album and not just because I enjoy drums. The tunes are great (‘Jungle Drums,’ ‘Discussion in Percussion,’ ‘Malaguena’) and the arrangements are lively. The recording is indeed impeccable. If you see it and pass it up, imagine Dick Butkus. In a dress. Singing. And then tackling you.”

Re-Percussion in Hi-Fi (David Carroll, Mercury SR60029)

Recorded at Universal Recording, Chicago, 1956; percussionists were Dale Anderson, Hubert Anderson, Harry Brabec, Gil Breines, Bobby Christian, Sam Denov, Norm Jeffries, Morrie [SIC] Lishon, Ed Metzenger, Jim Ross, Frank Rullo, Dick Schory, and Bob Tilles.

Harry is playing chimes in “Bells and Little Bells”; vibes in “Dizzy Fingers”; and snare drum in “George Washington Slept Here.”

Big Band Recordings

Chuck Foster and His Orchestra (1945-1946)

From one of Harry’s letters: “I made one album with Foster that included performances from August 13, September 27, and October 18, 1945 . . . all done at the Hotel New Yorker in New York. I may be on the 1945 broadcast from the Blackhawk, too.”

Wayne King Recordings (1950)

In a reminiscent letter in 1999, Harry wrote that a friend of his in a recording studio had sent him copies of the LP recordings he did with King on November 12, 1950 at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago. No other details are known.

Other Recordings

Walt Disney World Band (Vista STER-3337)

This souvenir album released in 1972 by Disney World includes a collection of recordings made on different dates between the park’s opening and the album’s release. Harry is playing bells in “Seventy-Six Trombones” and may be heard in the marching band as well.

Bensenville/Wood Dale Concert Band

All concerts of this band are recorded live, and many recent concerts can be heard on the band's website. The 1986 "Circus Ring Concert" and selected numbers from concerts that feature Harry's drumming can be heard as MP3 downloads on this book's companion website at TheDrummerDrives.com.

Heritage of the March (Vol. 71–J. Pecsí–E. Stolc).

(Album includes several marches of Josef Pecsí and Emil Stolc. Recorded in 1981 by Foeller's Illinois State Alums and Friends with George Foeller directing the band.)

This particular album came to my attention only because Harry's picture was on the cover, along with his old friend, Boyd Conway, plus other musicians who made the recording. Harry often played with "Foeller's Easter Bunnies" through the years and may have been on other Heritage of the March recordings in his collection (which numbered about 200). This was a series of band music albums created and funded by Robert Hoe, who traveled the world in search of marches. The Navy Band (Washington, DC) made the first Heritage series, and the Naval Academy Band recorded four. A number of universities and other service bands made recordings as well. Apparently, many of the vinyl albums are now available on CD.

Visit TheDrummerDrives.com companion website to the book, *The Drummer Drives! Everybody Else Rides*. It features a wealth of rich content on a variety of music-related topics discussed in the book. A Sample of the book may be downloaded [here](#).

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