

Tubby the Tuba - Part 5

Later recordings and performances

Douglas Yeo

CONCERT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
Saturday Morning, October 19, 1946 at 11.00 a.m.
THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA
ALEXANDER HILSBURG, *Conducting*
SAMUEL MAYES, *Cello*—MARILYN COSTELLO, *Harp*

†HANDEL-ORMANDY.....Suite from the "Water Music" (excerpts)
Allegro Hornpipe
Bourree Allegro

SAINT-SAENS....."The Swan" for Violoncello and Harp
SAMUEL MAYES, *Cello*
MARILYN COSTELLO, *Harp*

*TCHAIKOVSKY....."Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" from "The Nutcracker Suite"
SMETANA....."Dance of the Comedians" from "The Bartered Bride"
ROSSINI..... Overture to "William Tell"

Intermission

"EVERYBODY SING"
AMERICA, THE BEAUTIFUL

O beautiful for spacious skies, For amber waves of grain, For purple mountain majesties Above the fruited plain. America! America! God shed His grace on thee, And crown thy good with brotherhood From sea to shining sea.	O beautiful for heroes prov'd In liberating strife, Who more than self their country loved, And mercy more than life. America! America! May God thy gold refine Till all success be nobleness, And every gain divine.
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*MCDONALD..... Legend of the Arkansas Traveler
KLEINSINGER..... "Tubby, the Tuba"
PAUL TRIPP, *Narrator*

*Victor Records Columbia Broadcasting Systems †Columbia Records

The STEINWAY is the official piano of The Philadelphia Orchestra
and of the Worcester County Musical Association
STEINWAY piano by courtesy of
M. Steinert & Sons Co.

Programs subject to change due to circumstances beyond our control

Figure 2. Philadelphia Orchestra, Alexander Hilsberg, conductor. Concert Program, October 19, 1946. Courtesy Philadelphia Orchestra.

Following the premiere of *Tubby the Tuba* in 1946 with Herbert Wekselblatt and Dean Dixon's American Youth Orchestra, other live performances quickly followed. The first performance of *Tubby* with a professional orchestra was auspicious. In residence at the Worcester (Massachusetts) Music Festival, the Philadelphia Orchestra gave a Concert for Young People on October 19, 1946. Conducted by the orchestra's concertmaster and assistant conductor Alexander Hilsberg, the program concluded with *Tubby the Tuba*. The performance was narrated by Paul Tripp and the orchestra's tubist, Philip A. Donatelli—uncredited in the program—was soloist. The collaboration of the Philadelphia Orchestra with Paul Tripp and the pieces he created with George Kleinsinger became especially fruitful, and it resulted in many performances of *Tubby the Tuba* by the orchestra (in 1947 with Donatelli once again as soloist, 1949 with Clarence Carella, 1960 with Abe Torchinsky, and on multiple occasions with Paul Krzywicki), as well as *The Story of Celeste*, *The Further Adventure of Tubby the Tuba*, *Pee-Wee the Piccolo*, *The Little Star of Bethlehem*, *Pan the Piper*, and *Adventures of a Zoo*. [1]



Figure 3. Paul Tripp in rehearsal with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Academy of Music, Philadelphia, January 1947. Courtesy David Tripp and Suzanne Tripp Jurmain.

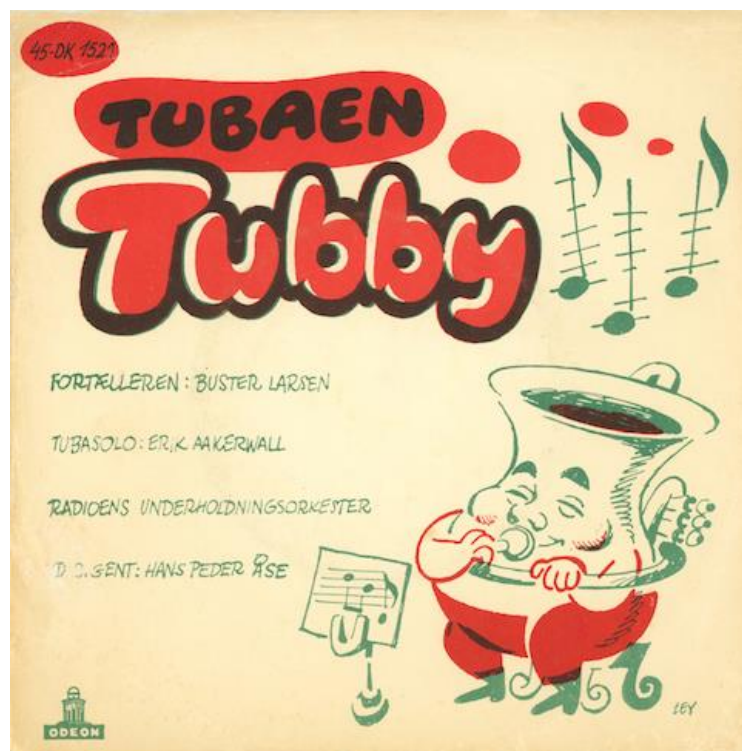


Figure 4. George Kleinsinger and Paul Tripp, Tubaen Tubby (© Odeon, 1951).

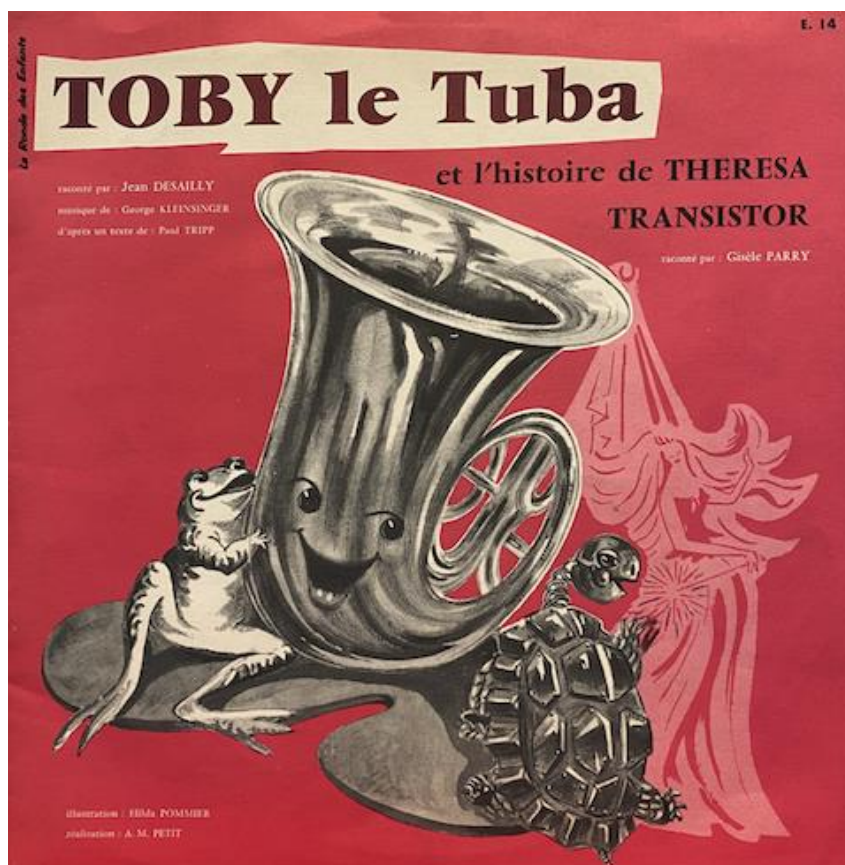


Figure 5. George Kleinsinger and Paul Tripp, *Toby le Tuba* (© *Le ronde des enfants*, 1959).

In 1951, Odeon records released the first documented recording of *Tubby the Tuba* in a language other than English. [2] *Tubaen Tubby* was recorded in Denmark with the Radioens Underholdingsorkester, Hans Peder Åse, conductor. Buster Larsen narrated (in Danish) and Erik Aakerwall was the tuba soloist-his name appeared both on the cover of the record and on the disc label. Odeon's release was also the first recording of *Tubby the Tuba* to appear as a 45-rpm (rather than 78-rpm) disc. Other international recordings followed, with *Toby le Tuba* in 1959 (a French release on *Le ronde des enfants* with an unnamed tuba player), and a later, undated Norwegian release on Lunde, *Tubaen Tobby* (paired with *Tubaen Tobby På Sirkus-Tubby the Tuba Goes to the Circus*), with Per Galborg, tuba soloist. The story was eventually translated into over 30 languages. [3]

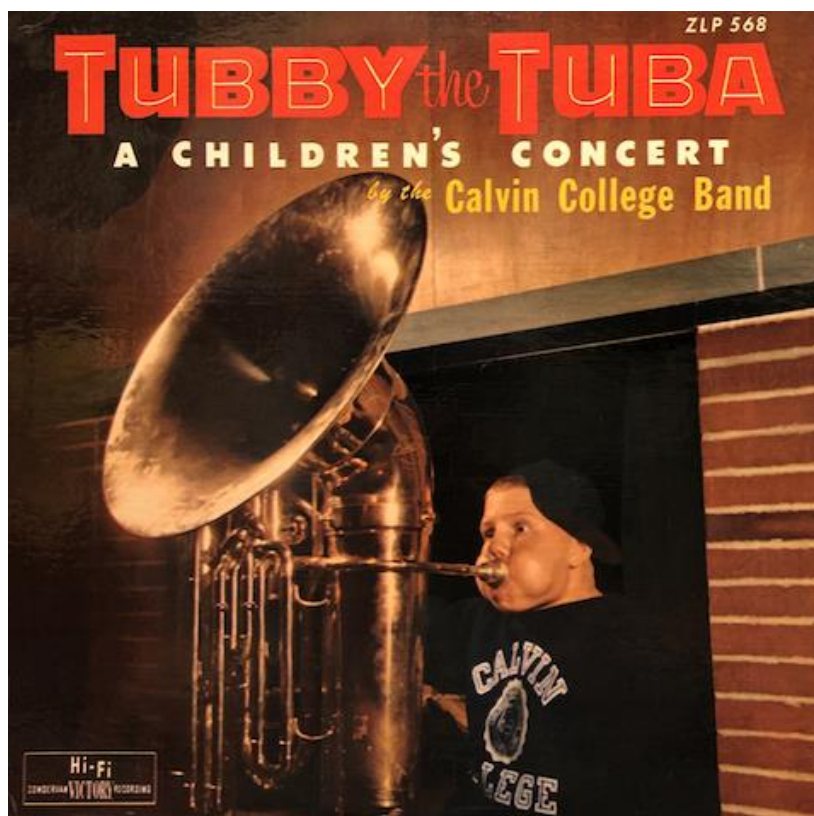


Figure 6. George Kleinsinger and Paul Tripp, *Tubby the Tuba* (© Zondervan, 1960).

While it was originally scored for a small symphony orchestra with narrator (who also was called upon to sing on two occasions) and tuba solo, Robert Rýker arranged *Tubby the Tuba* for full orchestra in 2002. [4] *Tubby* also found its way to other musical incarnations. In 1952, George F. Roach arranged the piece for concert band accompaniment. Published by G. Schirmer, Paul Tripp's libretto underwent several changes to accommodate the change of instrumentation. [5] For instance, the opening line was changed to, "Once upon a time, there was a band, that was all busy tuning up." The "lovely little tune" was no longer passed around to violins and cellos but rather to cornet and euphonium. And the great new conductor, Signor Pizzicato, became Signor Fortissimo. Most notably, the piece was transcribed down a step (the highest note for solo tuba in the band version is e-flat¹, not f¹) and beginning with the fifth measure of Tubby's melody, the solo part is marked "optional 8va bassa." Roach's arrangement was premiered by the Asbury Park (New Jersey) Municipal Band on August 26, 1952, with William "Bill" Bell as tuba soloist and narrator. [6] Recordings of this arrangement are few, and the earliest is probably one made around 1960 by the Calvin College Band conducted by Harold P. Geerdes on the Zondervan Victory Recording label. John Worst, then a student at Calvin College, was the tuba soloist. [7] Andrew Duncan's 1998 arrangement of *Tubby the Tuba* for British-style brass band-Duncan himself was soloist for the arrangement's premiere with the Whitburn Band in November 1998-also required adjustments to Tripp's libretto; Peepo the Piccolo became Sammy the Soprano Cornet.

6. Tubby's Melody

The image shows a page of musical notation for '6. Tubby's Melody'. The score is arranged for piano solo and includes parts for various instruments. The tempo is marked 'Allegro moderato'. The dynamics range from piano (p) to mezzo-forte (mf). The score is divided into three systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system includes parts for Strings, Tuba, and Brass. The second system includes parts for Brass and Tuba. The third system includes parts for Horns, Oboe, Clarinet, and Violins. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Figure 7. George Kleinsinger, music, and Paul Tripp, lyrics, arr. Eric Steiner. *Tubby the Tuba: Six Selections for Piano Solo* (© G. Schirmer, 1950; © assigned to RYTVOC, 1955).

Not to miss out on the home entertainment market, G. Schirmer published *Tubby the Tuba: Six Selections for Piano Solo* in 1950. Arranged by Eric Steiner, the publication did not have any narration, although among its selections were *Tubby's Song* and the *Song of the Bull Frog*, printed with lyrics. The music was arranged for young players, full of piano fingerings and simplifications. As we shall see later, 1950 was a big year for the Tubby enterprise and Steiner's publication paved the way for another Tubby piece to be introduced that year.

In 2006, tubist Eli Newberger organized the first of what to date have been about thirty performances of *Tubby the Tuba* for a small chamber ensemble. While many of these have featured Newberger playing tuba, others have involved Mike Roylance, tubist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, with Newberger on piano/synthesizer and narration by Paul Tripp's son, David. [8] Newberger named his chamber group "The Cupcake Philharmonic," and the original six-member group (tuba/valve trombone, flute/piccolo, trumpet, violin, cello, piano/synthesizer) was augmented to sixteen when it was performed at a Boston Symphony Orchestra Family Concert at Tanglewood in August 2008. Newberger's version continues to delight young audiences, and a review of a 2018 performance at Hoosac Valley Elementary School in Adams, Massachusetts praised *Tubby the Tuba* for its "universal themes of longing for acceptance and friendship." Students, the review went on to say, "were mesmerized." [9] While this arrangement was made with the permission of Tubby's copyright holder, RYTVOC, it is not yet available for performances outside of those organized by Eli Newberger. [10]

While performances and recordings of *Tubby the Tuba* are legion, several stand out as notable for increasing the piece's fame. Phillip Donatelli's previously mentioned

Bill Bell's first performance of *Tubby the Tuba* came as part of a New York Philharmonic Young People's Concert held in Carnegie Hall on March 12, 1949; the program was conducted by Leopold Stokowski. [11] The combination of the famed conductor, famed tubist, famed orchestra, and famed hall led *The New York Times* to send a critic to the concert. He was charmed, and the review's headline blared, "Tuba Player Star of Youth Concert: William Bell Takes Triple Role for Philharmonic to Delight of Cheering Throng." To navigate the piece's nearly three octave range, Bell used both a euphonium and his BB-flat King recording bass. The *Times* wrote,

Not only did [Mr. Bell] play two tubas during the piece, but he told the story and sang the incidental songs. It was the first time the big Iowa-born musician had taken the three roles, but he carried them off with such easy good humor that he seemed like an old-timer.

The applause was something to hear. And then Mr. Stokowski pulled a surprise on the children. Mr. Bell had another specialty. He was proficient in When Yuba Plays the Rhumba on the Tuba Down in Cuba . Would the children like to hear him do it? Of course they would. And singing with a robust baritone, the versatile Mr. Bell obliged. The orchestra played the rhumba rhythms like a dance band.

"Mr. Bell does another number," Mr. Stokowski said. "It's called When Veronica Played the Harmonica on the Pier in Santa Monica , but unfortunately we can't play it for you. We don't have the music." [12]



*Figure 9. Leopold Stokowski and William "Bill" Bell; performance of *Tubby the Tuba* (Carnegie Hall, March 12, 1949). Courtesy New York Philharmonic Archives.*

Fun stuff, and with *The New York Times* relating the musical hijinks, *Tubby the Tuba* was once again in the news. Bill Bell went on to perform *Tubby the Tuba* on numerous occasions although contrary to reports that have been repeated in various sources, he never recorded the piece. But he *did* record *The Tubby the Tuba Song*, something that is discussed in the next installment of this article (*ITEA Journal*, Spring 2021).

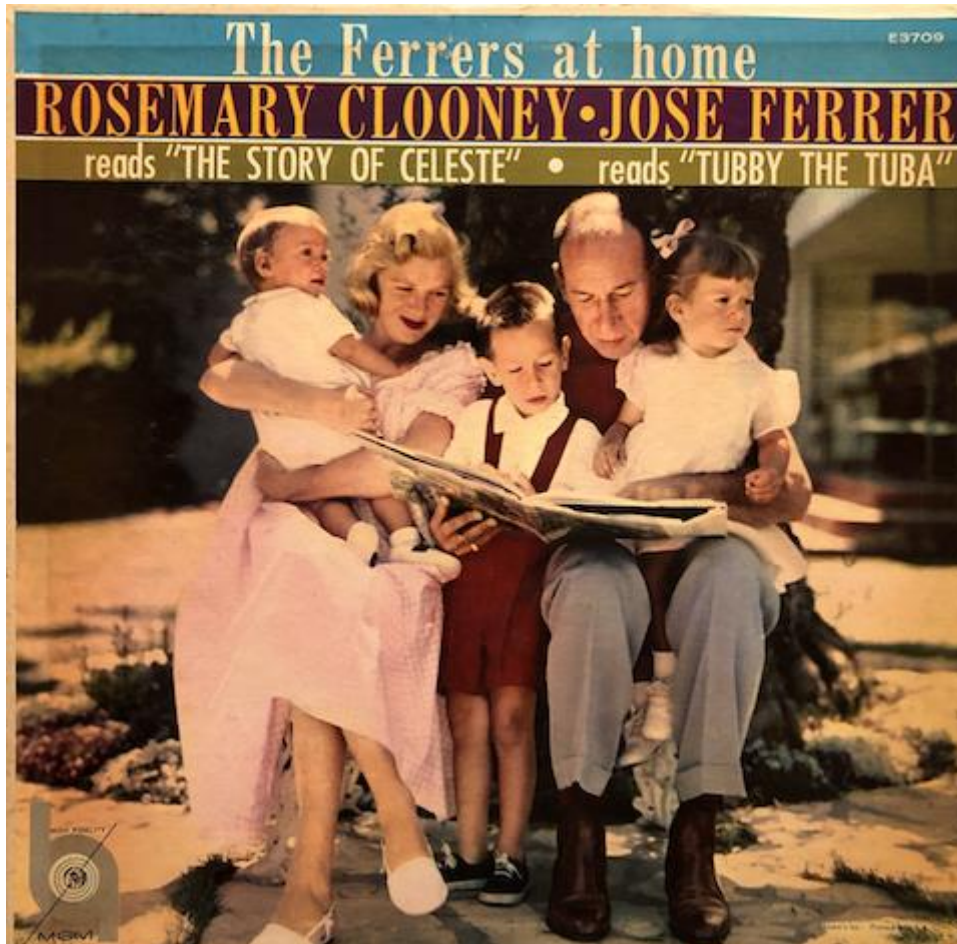


Figure 10. George Kleinsinger and Paul Tripp, *Tubby the Tuba* (© MGM, 1958).

Celebrity narrators were often major marketing and selling points for recordings of *Tubby the Tuba*. While the names of many of them are no longer household words, audiences of their time certainly recognized them. Film, television, and radio personalities were obvious choices, and among them was José Ferrer, who had won an academy award for best actor in 1950 for his performance in the title role of Stanley Kramer's film, *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Ferrer's 1958 recording of *Tubby* appeared on an album titled "The Ferrers at Home" that also featured his then wife, Rosemary Clooney, narrating Kleinsinger and Tripp's *The Story of Celeste*. [13] Ferrer's performance of *Tubby the Tuba* was nominated as Best Recording for Children at the first Grammy Awards in 1958 (the award ceremony was held on May 4, 1959) but it lost to Dave Seville (Ross Bagdasarian, Sr.) and the Chipmunks' *The Chipmunk Song (Christmas Don't Be Late)*. [14]

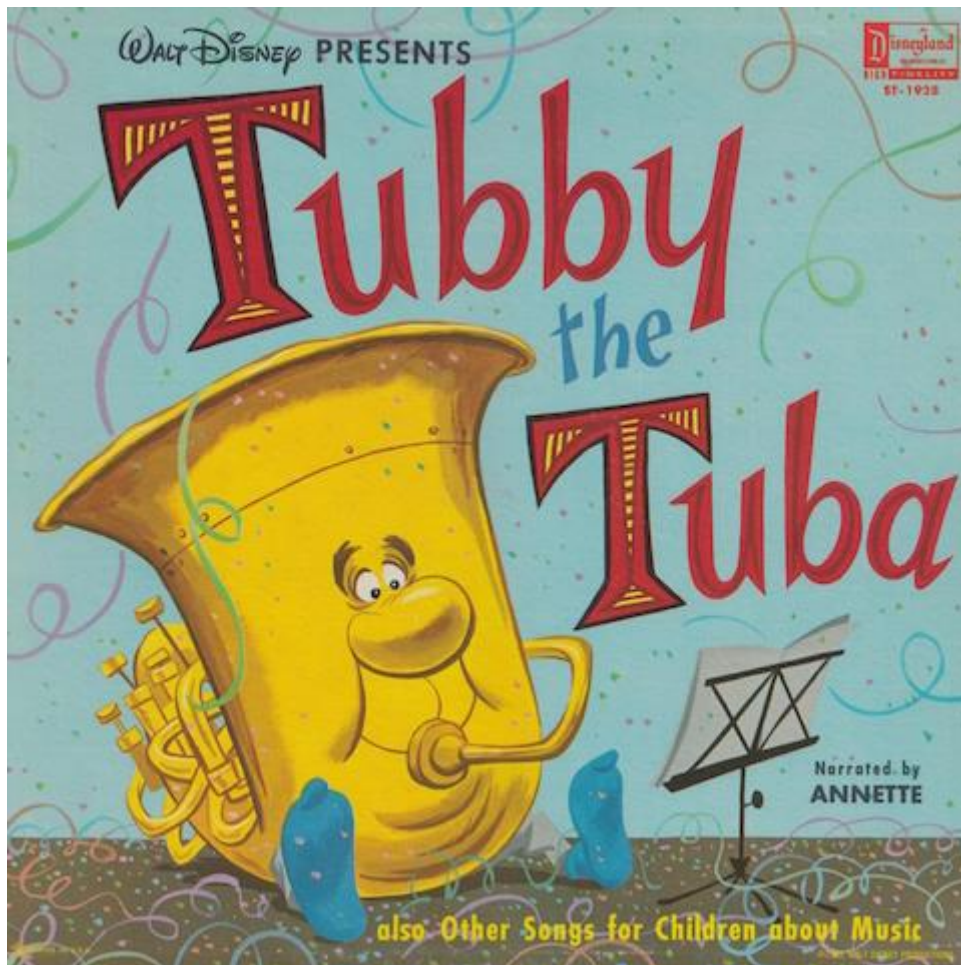


Figure 11. George Kleinsinger and Paul Tripp, *Tubby the Tuba* (© Disneyland Records, 1963).

Long before Prince, Beyoncé, and Madonna were recognized by single names, listeners didn't need to know the full name of "Annette" who narrated Disneyland Records' 1963 recording of *Tubby*. Annette Funicello had been arguably the most popular Mouseketeer on the television variety show, "The Mickey Mouse Club," which initially ran from 1955-1959. Funicello was twenty-one years old at the time she narrated Disney's recording of *Tubby the Tuba*, already a star of several Disney movies, and at the beginning of her appearances in "Beach Party" movies with Frankie Avalon. Twenty-eight-year-old John Thomas "Tommy" Johnson was tuba soloist on the recording. And in a twist that would have made Herbert Jenkel and George Boujje smile, Johnson's name was included on the back cover of the album—he was paid \$60 for his work on the session; about \$500 in today's dollars—but conductor Salvador "Tutti" Camarata's name was nowhere to be found. [15]

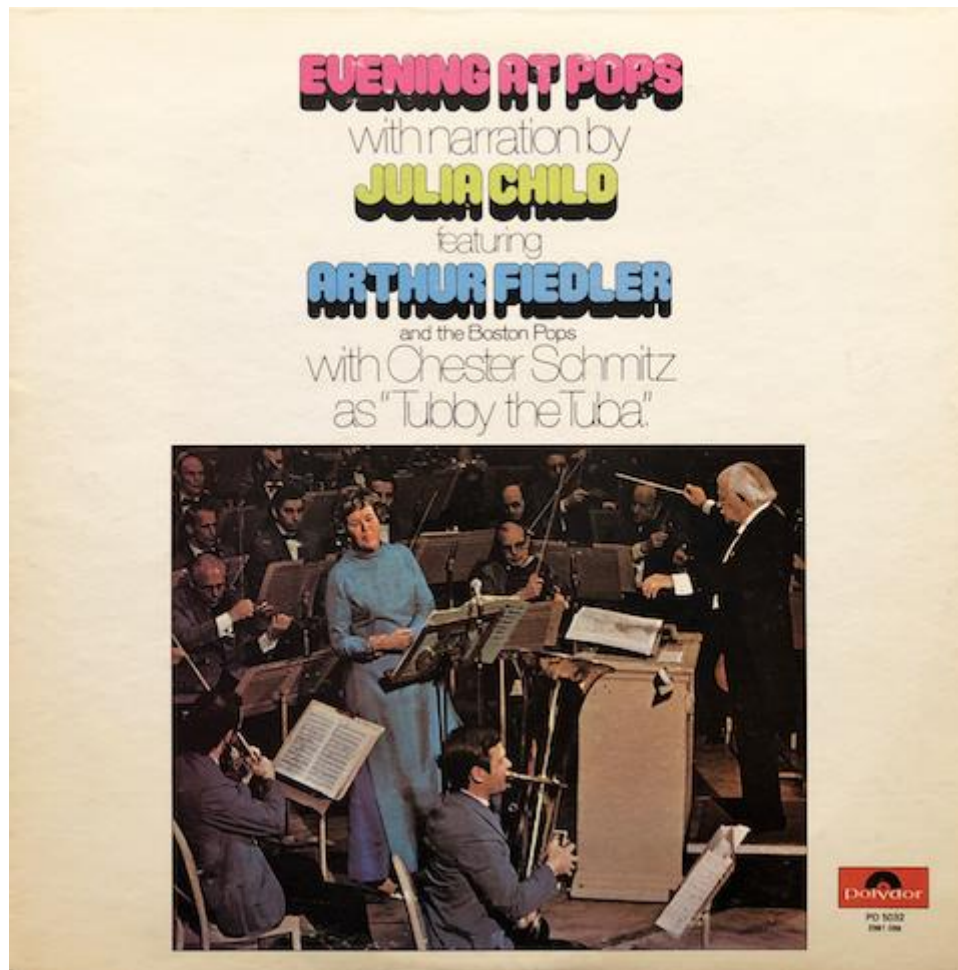


Figure 12. George Kleinsinger and Paul Tripp, *Tubby the Tuba* (© Polydor, 1972).

Of the thousands of performances and dozens of recordings of *Tubby the Tuba*, the one that arguably reached the most people was a 1972 performance with the Boston Pops Orchestra in Boston's Symphony Hall. "Evening at Pops" was, along with "Sesame Street," one of the earliest regularly produced television programs broadcast on PBS, the Public Broadcasting Service. PBS was established in 1969 and in 1970, "Evening at Pops" began its thirty-five-year uninterrupted run, bringing performances by the Boston Pops Orchestra into millions of homes. [16] The Pops—the orchestra was and is, today, the Boston Symphony Orchestra minus its first chair players who form the Boston Symphony Chamber Players—were broadcast with its conductors Arthur Fiedler, John Williams, and Keith Lockhart, and shows featured well-known musicians, actors, and entertainment personalities.

Certainly, one of the most unconventional guest artists to appear on "Evening at Pops" was Julia Child, recognized as one of the first celebrity chefs owing to her best-selling book, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* (published in 1961) and her television show on Boston's WGBH-TV, "The French Chef" that ran from 1963 to 1973. Child narrated *Tubby the Tuba* with Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops Orchestra on May 3 and 4, 1971; the performances were recorded and were broadcast on television later that year as part of "Evening at Pops." Julia Child did not sing either of the work's songs, and she changed the last line of the piece to, "And there was the bullfrog, sitting right beside him. 'Well, we did it, didn't we? And you see,

Tubby, it only goes to show, there's more to a frog than just frog's legs." The audience roared.

Chester Schmitz, who was tubist with the Boston Symphony from 1966-2001, was soloist in the performances. Playing his Alexander CC tuba, Schmitz did not suffer the anonymous fate of Jenkel and Boujje. Julia Child introduced him on air: "And here is Tubby himself. This is Chester Schmitz, the tuba for the Boston Pops." [17] When the performance was released in 1972 on a Polydor record album, a photo of Child, Schmitz, and conductor Arthur Fiedler appeared on the cover, and the album was titled, "Evening at Pops with Narration by Julia Child featuring Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops with Chester Schmitz as "Tubby the Tuba."



Figure 13. Julia Child, Chester Schmitz, and Arthur Fiedler; performance of Tubby the Tuba (May 3, 1971). Photo by Michael Peirce, courtesy Boston Symphony Orchestra Archives.

The "Evening at Pops" performance was seen by millions. It thrust Tubby and Chester Schmitz into the spotlight through the medium of television, and Schmitz related what it was like to be part of that memorable performance,

Bill Cosel [executive producer of "Evening at Pops" for WGBH-TV] told me that I would be playing Tubby with Julia narrating, and then confided to me that, "When we told the Maestro, Fiedler replied, 'What!? That kid out in front with me?'" Thus, I was thrust into the spotlight, playing under the baton of the man who first introduced me to classical music via recordings back in Dubuque, Iowa when I was in eighth grade, the most famous conductor in the world! Quite unexpectedly, I was to become the first Boston Pops member to be featured as soloist on national TV.

Julia was terrific, but somewhat unsettled and nervous doing this unusual thing, so alien to her normal appearances in the television kitchen. She was provided with a large book in which was her narration, with letters $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch high, so she could

easily see them, complete with cues to "look at conductor for next narrative." She did fabulously and delivered the humorous lines effectively. And Julia became my personal friend; whenever she visited the Pops in future years, she always stopped to shake my hand and say hello on her way towards the podium.

There were no retakes or splicing to be done on this performance. Whatever happened, it was in the can, ready for publication. That was appropriate for the Boston Pops, because no one in that orchestra made mistakes during performances. [18]



Figure 14. George Kleinsinger and Paul Tripp, *Tubby the Tuba* (© Contour, 1971).

As mentioned earlier, Julia Child was not the only narrator to change the text of *Tubby the Tuba*. The 1971 recording of *Tubby* conducted by Geoff Love—a British-made recording on Contour records—featured British actor and comedian Norman Wisdom narrating and Martin Fry as tuba soloist. While (whilst?) not so well-known to audiences in the United States, Fry was a star to his British audience, having been sousaphonist with The Temperance Seven, a novelty, "good time" band that made its mark in Britain in the 1960s. [19] In the original *Tubby the Tuba* story, the bullfrog's final line, addressed to Tubby, is, "We have our points, too, don't we?" Contour Records evidently felt the line was too obscure for its British audience, and Wisdom said, instead (with his best Cockney accent), "There, see? Jus' goes to show we got our advantages, ain't we, Tubby?"



Figure 15. George Kleinsinger and Paul Tripp, *Tubby the Tuba* (© Caedmon, 1979).

Tubby the Tuba has two songs, Tubby's soliloquy, "Alone am I," and the bullfrog's song, "Buggup, Lovely Evening," that need to be delivered one way or another. Kleinsinger notated the songs with pitches and the assumption was and is that they would be sung. Some narrators, like Meredith Vieira and Carol Channing bravely soldiered through the songs despite having voices that simply were not up to a professional standard. [20] Julia Child solved the singing challenge by not singing the songs at all, a strategy that leaves some holes in the story's narrative. However, some narrators, like Danny Kaye, gave superb vocal renditions. Paul Tripp's own narrations also featured character-full singing. And the Manhattan Transfer, well, their narrations on the 1996 recording of all four of the major *Tubby* works on Summit Records are of a completely different stripe, with added harmonization to the songs and various singers taking the voices of each character in the stories. [21] More than narrations with singing, their recording takes the *Tubby* stories into the realm of theatrical pieces.

[1] *Philadelphia Orchestra performance cards, courtesy the Philadelphia Orchestra Personnel Office.*

[2] *A recording of Tubby the Tuba narrated in Hebrew was announced as being recorded in Israel in 1949 but no copies have surfaced. Leonard Lyons, "The Lyons Den." Montgomery (Alabama) Advertiser, March 26, 1949, 4.*

- [3] Myrna Oliver, "Paul Tripp, 91: Father of Tubby the Tuba," *Los Angeles Times*, September 2, 2002, B-11.
- [4] The orchestration for the original version of Tubby the Tuba includes violin 1,2, viola, cello, bass, flute 1, 2 (2 doubling on piccolo), oboe, clarinet 1, 2, bassoon, horn 1, 2, trumpet 1, 2, trombone, celesta, and percussion, along with narrator and solo tuba. Rjker's arrangement adds another flute (a total of three players covering flute 1, 2 and piccolo), second oboe, bass clarinet, second bassoon, horns 3, 4, and trombones 2, 3.
- [5] George Kleinsinger, music, and Paul Tripp, words, Tubby the Tuba . Arranged for band by George F. Roach (New York: G. Schirmer, 1952; © assigned to RYTVOC, 1955).
- [6] "Bell to Perform Tubby the Tuba," Asbury Park Press, August 25, 1952, 11.
- [7] Tubby the Tuba: A Children's Concert by the Calvin College Band. Harold P. Geerdes, Director; Jim Muller, narrator; John Worst, tuba. Zondervan Victory Recordings ZLP 568, LP. c. 1960.
- [8] A video of a performance of Tubby the Tuba in Eli Newberger's "Cupcake Philharmonic" chamber orchestra version with Mike Roynance, tuba, Eli Newberger, piano and synthesizer, and David Tripp, narrator, is available on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=LbrlZOQuzJQ
- [9] Jenn Smith, "Decades later, 'Tubby the Tuba' still hits high note with kids." *Berkshire Eagle* , October 8, 2018. www.berkshireeagle.com/stories/decades-later-tubby-the-tuba-still-hits-high-note-with-kids,552593
- [10] Telephone conversation between Eli Newberger and Douglas Yeo, November 23, 2019.
- [11] The official, legal name of the New York Philharmonic is the Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York, Inc.
- [12] "Tuba Player Star of Youth Concert," *New York Times*, March 13, 1949, 69.
- [13] George Kleinsinger, music, and Paul Tripp, story, The Story of Celeste, Tubby the Tuba (*The Ferrers at Home*). MGM Orchestra, José Ferrer, narrator (for Tubby the Tuba), unnamed tuba soloist. MGM E3709, LP, 1958. Ferrer was married five times; Clooney was both his third (1953-1961) and fourth (1964-1967) wife.
- [14] 1958 Grammy Winners. Recording Academy Grammy Awards, www.grammy.com/grammys/awards/1st-annual-grammy-awards-1958.
- [15] Telephone conversation between John Van Houten, Jr. and Douglas Yeo, August 13, 2019. For the inflation calculator, see, www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/1963?amount=60.
- [16] A History of the Orchestra and the [Evening at Pops] Broadcast, 2004. www.pbs.org/wgbh/pops/about/index.html
- [17] Chester Schmitz attended University of Iowa before joining the United States Army Band "Pershing's Own" in Washington D.C. in 1963 where he played both tuba in the band and string bass in the White House "Strolling Strings." His tenure in the Army Band overlapped with that of James "Jim" Self and Daniel Perantoni. See Carole Nowicke, "Oral History Interview of Dr. James M. Self." International Tuba Euphonium Association Oral History Project., July 24, 2001, www.iteaonline.org/members/history/oral/oh_jamesself.php. Also, email from Chester Schmitz to Douglas Yeo, October 25, 2019. In 1985, John Williams composed his Concerto for Tuba on a commission from the Boston Symphony Orchestra to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Boston Pops. Williams dedicated the piece to Schmitz.
- [18] Email from Chester Schmitz to Douglas Yeo, July 23, 2019.

[19] *Martin Fry, whose Temperance Seven pseudonym was Franklyn D. Paverty, succeeded Clifford Bevan on tuba in the group when Bevan moved to piano. Bevan is well known to tubists as author of The Tuba Family (Winchester: Piccolo Press, 2000). For a brief history of the Temperance Seven, see Martin Hutchinson's notes to The Very Best of the Temperance Seven . EMI 7243 597533 2 4, compact disc, 2004.*

[20] *George Kleinsinger, music, and Paul Tripp, story, Tubby the Tuba, Tubby the Tuba Meets a Jazz Band , The Story of Celeste (Tubby the Tuba presents Play it Happy!). Symphony Orchestra of Bratislava, Stephen Gunzenhauser, conductor, jazz combo led by Marco Katz, Meredith Vieira, narrator, unnamed tuba soloist. KOCH KOC-CD 4179, 2006, compact disc. Tubby the Tuba . Cincinnati Pops Orchestra, Erich Kunzel, conductor, Carol Channing, narrator, Michael Thornton, tuba. Caedmon TC 1623, LP, 1979.*

[21] *George Kleinsinger, music, and Paul Tripp, story, Tubby the Tuba, Tubby at the Circus, Tubby Meets a Jazz Band, The Further Adventures of Tubby the Tuba . Naples (FL) Philharmonic, Timothy Russell, conductor, the Manhattan Transfer, vocals, John Thomas "Tommy" Johnson, tuba. Summit DCD 152, compact disc, 1994.*