

Growing Up at Symphony Hall

Peter Fiedler recalls a musical childhood, with a magical father



PHOTO COURTESY OF PETER FIEDLER

Peter (right) and Arthur Fiedler, with Clarabell, the clown from *Howdy Doody*. Fiedler doesn't remember why Clarabell was there, but does remember "being terrified being on top of that piano."

Peter Fiedler doesn't have any daddy issues. In fact, BU's vice president for administrative services proudly embraces his blood tie to inimitable conductor Arthur Fiedler (HON.'51), who presided over the Boston Pops Orchestra at Symphony Hall for almost fifty years.

"I always have a certain emotional welling up when I walk through the door of that building," says Fiedler, whose thick silver hair and moustache call to mind his famous father's mane. "I spent

many hours, days, weeks, months collectively through my childhood and teenage years in Symphony Hall, either attending concerts or joining my father there when he was in his office."

Arthur Fiedler brought orchestral music to the general public through the Pops's long spring seasons at Symphony Hall and his immensely popular Fourth of July concerts on the Esplanade. He applied a light touch to his performances, including orchestral treatments of popular music, and a brand of showmanship that sometimes veered toward self-mockery. "He was a ham,"

Peter Fiedler says.

Arthur Fiedler died in 1979, at age eighty-four, after suffering a heart attack the day

after a performance at his beloved Symphony Hall. BU's Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center holds Fiedler's archive of papers and memorabilia. This fall, many items — including hand-annotated scores, batons, and photos — will be on loan to the venerable hall for a yearlong display celebrating the orchestra's 125th anniversary. They're sure to be seen by Peter Fiedler, who attends performances several times a year, remembering his father's impact on music, and on his son.

"He wasn't a baseball-throwing kind of dad," Fiedler says. "He was a guy who tried to give you his knowledge and wisdom through being around you. He was always 'what you see is what you get.' There was never an agenda, and I really miss him." ■

WEB EXTRA Peter Fiedler leads a behind-the-scenes tour of Symphony Hall at www.bu.edu/bostonia.