



## **Nicolas Nabokov**

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## Nicolas Nabokov

'Mr Nicholas [sic] Nabokov' (obituary), *The Times*, 15 April 1978, 16g–h



THE RUSSIAN COMPOSER Nicolas Nabokov, who died in New York on 6 April in his seventy-fifth year, was a man of varied gifts, wide sympathies and overwhelming charm of personality. Musically, he developed in the shadow of Stravinsky, to whom he was all his life deeply devoted.

His best-known works are probably the ballets *Ode* (commissioned by Diaghilev), *Union Pacific* (with a scenario by Archibald MacLeish), *Don Quixote* (with choreography by Georges Balanchine) and the operas *Rasputin's Death* and *Love's Labours Lost*, with libretti by his friends Stephen Spender and Wystan Auden<sup>1</sup> respectively.

<sup>1</sup> [With Chester Kallman.]

NICOLAS NABOKOV

Driven from Russia, like his cousin – the novelist and poet the late Vladimir Nabokov – by the Revolution, he lived, an exile, in Berlin, Paris and New York. A marvellous talker and storyteller, he was also an inspiring, responsive, wildly imaginative teacher both of music and of the humanities in St John's College, Annapolis, and elsewhere.



*Nabokov and W. H. Auden, Headington House, February 1973*

After the war he successfully organised musical festivals and cultural symposia for the Congress of Cultural Freedom and under other auspices. He was a lifelong anglophile and a frequent visitor to London.

The story of his rich and variegated artistic life is recorded in his two autobiographical books. Large-hearted, affectionate, honourable, gifted with sharp moral and political insight and a well-developed sense of the ridiculous, an irresistible source of torrential wit and fancy, immensely social, he was one of the last and most attractive representatives of the pre-Revolutionary Russian intelligentsia, a civilisation the epitaph to which is yet to be composed.

NICOLAS NABOKOV

His last marriage gave him unclouded happiness. He is survived by his wife Dominique and three sons by early marriages. He will be deeply missed by his friends in every continent.

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