

## Henceforth, He's 'Sir'

# Chicago's Musical Knight

BY ARTHUR VEYSEY  
[Chief of London Bureau]

London

● "IT WAS a wonderful moment," said conductor Georg Solti.

The Throne Room at Buckingham Palace glittered all gold and white. In the small Minstrel Gallery, a scarlet-coated Guards band played. Everyone was most carefully groomed.

There, before the Queen, on a little stool with an armrest to steady the jittery, knelt the conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Queen Elizabeth gently reached out with a glistening sword and carefully rested the blade on one shoulder, then the other.

"Rise, Sir Georg, Knight Commander of the British Empire."

The Queen noticed the conductor's left hand was bandaged and swollen.

"How did that happen?" she asked.

"It was one of those silly things," said Sir Georg. "I was conducting a recording of 'Parsival' in Vienna last week. Somehow I drove the baton into my hand."

The Queen winced in sympathy with her newest knight, honored for his 10 years as musical director of Covent Garden Royal Opera House.

When the Queen awarded the knighthood last June, it was honorary because Hungarian-born Solti was then a citizen of Germany. Prime Minister Edward Heath presented the badge of the Order at Solti's farewell performance in Covent Garden. But last month Britain gave Solti its citizenship as well, allowing him to fully use the title.

At yesterday's investiture, Solti's wife Valerie, now Lady Solti, watched proudly. She had eyes, too, for the Queen who, she thought, looked radiant, gently tanned from six weeks in the Indian Ocean.

"The baton broke off in the hand," Lady Solti explained. "We had to dig out the wood. We thought we got all of it but after a while the hand began to swell. Somehow,



Sir Georg Solti

perhaps by jerking his hand backwards, he apparently banged the back of the hand on something. We went to a hospital in Vienna to have the hand X-rayed. Fortunately, nothing was broken. And fortunately, it was his left hand, so it won't stop his conducting when we go to Chicago next week."

Photographers snapped the pair as they left the palace. The Soltis rushed off to their home in St. John's Wood, where their daughter Gabrielle had just awakened from a midday nap.

Sir Georg swept her into his arms and told her all about the Queen. Gabrielle is not quite two, but she seemed to understand it all and beamed at Chicago's musical knight.

[Chicago Tribune Press Service]