



Leopold Anthony Stokowski (18 April 1882 – 13 September 1977) was a British conductor and one of the leading conductors of the early and mid-20th Century. He is best known for his long association with the Philadelphia Orchestra and for appearing in the film *Fantasia*. He was especially noted for his free-hand conducting style that spurned the traditional baton and for obtaining a characteristically sumptuous sound from the orchestras he directed.

Stokowski was the son of an English-born cabinet-maker of Polish heritage, Kopernik Joseph Boleslav Stokowski, and his Irish-born wife Annie-Marion Stokowski, née Moore. Stokowski was born **Leopold Anthony Stokowski**, though on occasion in later life he altered his middle name to **Antoni**, following the Polish spelling.

Stokowski was born in the parish of St Marylebone, All Souls, County of Middlesex on 18 April 1882, at 13 Upper Marylebone Street (now New Cavendish Street), in the Marylebone District of London. Stokowski was named after his Polish-born grandfather Leopold, who died in the English county of Surrey on 13 January 1879, at the age of 49.

Stokowski studied at the Royal College of Music, where he first enrolled in 1896 at the age of thirteen, making him one of the youngest students to do so. In his later life in America, Stokowski would perform six of the nine symphonies composed by his fellow organ student Ralph Vaughan Williams. Stokowski sang in the choir of the [St Marylebone Parish Church](#) and attended [The St Marylebone Church of England School](#). Later he became the Assistant Organist to Sir Walford Davies at The Temple Church.

Beginning in about 1896, Leopold Stokowski and his brother Percy sang in the choir of St Marylebone Church, as shown in the photograph, below.



The Choir of St. Marylebone Church circa 1898, Leopold Stokowski seated front row right.

At the age of 16, Stokowski was elected to a membership in the Royal College of Organists. In 1900, Stokowski formed the choir of St. Mary's Church, Charing Cross Road, where he trained the choirboys and

played the organ. In 1902, Stokowski was appointed the organist and choir director of St. James's Church, Piccadilly. He also attended The Queen's College, Oxford, where he earned a Bachelor of Music degree in 1903.

In America, Stokowski performed with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the NBC Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra, the Houston Symphony Orchestra, the Symphony of the Air and many others. He was also the founder of the All-American Youth Orchestra, the New York City Symphony, the Hollywood Bowl Symphony Orchestra and the American Symphony Orchestra. He conducted the music for and appeared in several Hollywood films, including Disney's *Fantasia*, and was a lifelong champion of contemporary composers, giving many premieres of new music during his 60-year conducting career. Stokowski, who made his official conducting debut in 1909, appeared in public for the last time in 1975 but continued making recordings until June 1977, a few months before his death at the age of 95. Stokowski is buried in [The St Marylebone Cemetery](#) in East Finchley.



Stokowski's memorial stone in The St. Marylebone Cemetery, East Finchley

www.stokowski.org