Arts & Humanities

Da Ponte, MacDowell, Moore, and Lang

Four biographical essays.

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A thousand years ago, more *and* less, music, together with its then-related subjects astronomy, arithmetic, and geometry, formed the quadrivium, that part of the medieval curriculum that led to the Master of Arts. Music has long since had no such honorable place in universities, and in the American university had no place at all until well into the nineteenth century. When it reappeared it had lost its connections with both astronomy and mathematics. In these interplanetary days the "music of the spheres" is but a poetic image; professors of music are more likely to visit departments of anthropology, computer science, history, and languages than mathematics. In fact, music departments lead somewhat sequestered lives, puzzles to administrators who try in vain to fit them into conventional patterns. Nevertheless, they are valuable public relations assets, for they train musicians who sometimes become successful performers and harbor composers who also become known to the larger public.

Lorenzo Da Ponte

That Columbia professor best known to music lovers the world over was not a musician at all, but its first professor of Italian, Lorenzo Da Ponte, Mozart's librettist for Le Nozze di Figaro (1786), Don Giovanni (1787), and Così Fan Tutti (1790). His "Mozart period" had been over by a third of a century when he was appointed professor in 1825––at the age of 76! He could have found no composer-collaborator

at Columbia, for there was to be no Columbia professor of music until 1896.

Knowing that he was always the rewriter of preexisting material––as two of his Mozart libretti attest––one tends to think that he was also the reviser of his own life story. But however much one may be forced to suspend belief, the bare facts are these:

He was born Emanuele Conegliano in a Jewish ghetto near Venice in 1749. When he was fourteen, his widowed father remarried, this time to a Catholic, requiring the family to convert to Catholicism, whereupon Emanuele took the name of the officiating bishop. He eventually entered a seminary, mastered Hebrew and the classical languages (in which he wrote poetry), and soon was promoted to professor, then vice rector-all the while carrying on several love affairs.

He was ordained at age 24 and assigned to a church in Venice, where he caroused with the likes of Casanova and Gozzi for six years. Though he arranged entertainment for a brothel and got a married woman twice pregnant, among other forgivable unclerical escapades, the authorities found some of his poetry unforgivably seditious. He was brought to trial-in absentia, for he had already fled to Vienna-and banished.

In Vienna he acquired such a reputation as a poet and librettist that he was named Poet to the Court Theater of the Hapsburg Emperor. It was Mozart's landlady who introduced him to Da Ponte, who was known as Abbate Da Ponte (one who has studied for the priesthood) and not as an ordained priest. Of their collaboration we know little, for there was no occasion for Mozart's usual chatty and informative correspondence. Their three happy marriages of text and music, on amatory subjects chosen jointly and quickly, suggest a collaboration like no other.

In 1791 Mozart died and Da Ponte was dismissed by the new emperor. He left for Trieste with a reigning soprano. After she had been reclaimed by her husband, Da Ponte proposed marriage to an Englishwoman whose Jewish parents were supposedly rich. Whether they actually married is not clear: he was still a priest, she had converted to the Church of England, and both were Jewish by birth. Nevertheless they were known as Mr.-later, Professor-and Mrs. Da Ponte, Anglicans.

On the advice of his chum Casanova, to whom he introduced Mrs. Da Ponte as his mistress for the sake of appearances, they moved to London, where for twelve years he wrote, play-doctored, libretto-doctored, translated, and ran a rare-book shop. Just

before he was to be arrested for debt, he escaped to the United States.

Their ship, The Columbia, was a harbinger. The twenty years Da Ponte spent in the United States before he joined the College faculty were his usual combination of high living and misadventure. A chance meeting in a bookstore with the recent Columbia College alumnus Clement Clarke Moore led to private teaching and to meeting Moore's father, Benjamin, who was Bishop of the Anglican Church. (Benjamin was also President of Columbia College, and his son was a Columbia Trustee.) But Da Ponte's distilleries and grocery stores failed. His cartage service between Sunbury, Pennsylvania, and Philadelphia was a success, but the former court poet found Sunbury dull.

At the suggestion of the younger Moore, he returned to New York City and opened a bookstore and a rooming house, both frequented by Columbia College students, who savored the sophisticated talk about the arts, the Mozart years, and the Italian cooking. It was not long before Moore, by that time the author of "'Twas the Night Before Christmas," suggested a professorship in Italian, and Da Ponte was forthwith appointed. The professorship added dignity to what he had already been doing since his move to New York City: teaching the Italian language and literature to private students (mostly young women) and in various schools. His continuing public lectures on Dante-and his efforts on behalf of other classic writers, such as Petrarch, Tasso, Ariosto, and Metastasio-made him the founder of Italian literature studies in the U.S. His teaching at Columbia also met with great enthusiasm, but within a couple of years registration dwindled: in those days the study of modern languages had to be paid for in addition to regular tuition. His highly idiosyncratic ideas for improving matters were not accepted by the Trustees––nor was his letter of resignation.

When he died, near the age of ninety, still professor of Italian, and last rites were administered, it was thought best not to mention the vows he had once taken. He was buried with pomp in the Roman Catholic Cemetery on East Eleventh Street. But before a headstone could be put in place, the cemetery's contents were removed to another site. And so it is that the whereabouts of the librettist's remains were long as unknown as those of his composer, Mozart. In 1998 Columbia commemorated the sesquicentennial of his death and also transformed McMillin into the Kathryn Bache Miller Theatre. During a University Lecture that was the first event in the nearly completed Miller Theatre, I offered the following thoughts:

"Da Ponte would certainly have applauded the University's rebuilding of its theater. He would have thought it a minor effort, though, for he, at the age of 85, raised the funds, helped design, supervised the building of, and then co-managed the first theater in New York City intended only for opera performances. . . . He may have been the first Jewish-born professor in the College; he may have been the first Catholic priest to have been a professor. He was surely the first to have been one or the other-or both-and to have been thought an Anglican."

Edward MacDowell

In the year of Da Ponte's death, 1838, Lowell Mason, noted hymnodist and publisher of hymns, introduced music into American public schools in Boston. Almost immediately music worked itself up the academic ladder, appearing in the curricula of midwestern and women's colleges, then in graduate schools. Joining in the trend, Yale appointed a German, Gustave Stoeckel, instructor of vocal music in 1855 and promoted him to professor in 1890. Harvard named John Knowles Paine instructor in 1862 and professor in 1875, but not without opposition: it was said that the establishment of music led the eminent historian Francis Parkman to cry out, parodying Cato the Elder, at each meeting of the Harvard Corporation, musica delenda est (music must be destroyed), and to vote against funding it. Both Stoeckel and Paine were composers, but it is probable that their fame as performers was more persuasive to their appointers than their compositions.

Columbia's President, Seth Low, was not to be outdone by Yale and Harvard. Spurred on by a promised gift of $150,000 (nearly three million in today's dollars) for instruction in music, he sought advice from the Episcopal bishop and John Burgess, professor of political science and law. They quickly agreed that composition and the philosophy and history of music should be the subject matter of the new department, not the technical training more suitable to conservatories: that choice would not preclude a glee club, perhaps a student orchestra, and token instrumental study. (This dichotomy between what was thought to be proper to a university on the one hand and professional study-applied music-on the other has bedeviled the study of music ever since, except in those universities that have added schools of music or have formed alliances with conservatories.)

Having seemingly so simply settled the matter of what should be taught, the committee incongruously asked two pianists, William Mason (son of Lowell) and Ignace Jan Paderewski, who should lead the department. They recommended MacDowell, who had been composing and concertizing in Boston for eight years, making his living chiefly as a piano teacher. Their recommendation was strengthened by there having been a recent New York concert by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, during which MacDowell played his First Concerto and his Indian Suite was premiered. The concert had been rapturously received by the press and public. Two days after the Morningside campus site was dedicated on May 2, 1896, MacDowell was appointed professor of music and the Department of Music was created, shortly thereafter empowered to offer undergraduate and graduate instruction. The news was received by the musical public and the University with enthusiasm, for MacDowell was thought to be the preeminent American composer and pianist.

A brief curriculum vitae outlines how MacDowell arrived at his preeminence. Born in New York to prosperous Scotch-Irish parents, he studied the piano from the age of eight. He progressed so rapidly that at the age of sixteen his mother removed him from school and took him to Paris for advanced study. Perhaps because of a misunderstanding about the age limit for entrance to the conservatory, at about this time his birth date was changed from 1860 to 1861. A memorial plaque at Columbia has the later date cast in bronze; the correct date was established 110 years later. (Draft-age men have discovered since how difficult it can be to reestablish a birth date.)

In Paris he began to compose and studied piano and theory assiduously. He had sketched for years, and a surreptitious caricature of one of his teachers so impressed the subject that he was offered three years of instruction in painting by an eminent école des Beaux-Arts faculty member. (MacDowell was later often to design the covers of his published works.) After a period of teenage indecision, inhibited by his weak spoken French and dissatisfaction with some of the instruction (shared by his classmate Debussy), mother and son left for Germany, the goal of almost every young composer of the time.

Settled down alone in Frankfort, MacDowell quickly made a strong impression as pianist and composer on the much sought-after Joachim Raff, who arranged for him to play his music for Franz Liszt. Liszt was so impressed by the young man's first piano concerto that he accepted its dedication and arranged for MacDowell's first

publications. With such support, his music soon became widely known in Europe and was often performed in the U.S. by the virtuosa Teresa Carreño. Edward Grieg, with whom and with whose music MacDowell had much in common, was later pleased to become the dedicatee of two piano sonatas. After this European sojourn, MacDowell and his wife-at 24 he had married one of his American students-left for Boston in 1888, where they were to remain for the eight years before he left for Columbia.

The correspondence between President Low and the new professor, before as well as after his appointment, is fascinating. MacDowell, in his middle thirties, was both ignorant of and unencumbered by university ways. He outlined courses for undergraduate and graduate study intended for music specialists. He also designed courses for the general liberal arts student and argued for similar courses in the fine arts: "Our doctors, lawyers, literary and scientific men know but little of the arts except what comes to them through . . . social intercourse." (Courses in music and fine arts became part of the Core Curriculum half a century later.) He and Low agreed that Columbia should establish a School of the Arts, to include music, painting, and sculpture––and Low added architecture. (A building to house these, and theater arts, was promised in 1954 and not built. Columbia's School of the Arts, with theater arts but not architecture, came into existence in 1965.) They agreed that Columbia should also establish a school of music or affiliate with one. (The College formed an attachment to the Juilliard School in 1989.)

Had MacDowell been any better acquainted with the universities of his time, he would not so wholly have committed his boundless energy, imagination, and teaching abilities to such ambitious plans. He had, indeed, accepted the appointment with qualms: he suspected- correctly-that his performing and composing career would be relegated to summers, spent on the large farm his wife had just purchased in Peterboro, New Hampshire. He could willingly give up the concert career: though he enjoyed performing his own works, he suffered from stage fright and disliked playing conventional recitals and concerti. He had earlier given up concertizing for composing, which he considered his reason for existing.

During his eight years at Columbia, he wrote (mostly in the first four years) two excellent piano sonatas and short piano pieces, some songs to his own texts, as well as numerous choruses for the glee club and commencement fanfares. Clearly there was not the time necessary to conceive and carry out any more substantial orchestra works.

It must be conceded that MacDowell, the good citizen, took the time peripherally to "center the arts" elsewhere, in Jacques Barzun's phrase of 1954. As befitted his reputation, he was the first composer nominated for membership in the National Institute of Arts and Letters (1898) and then was instrumental in organizing the interrelated American Academy of Arts and Letters. He justified his efforts on behalf of the fledgling American Academy in Rome: "For years it has been my dream that the arts of painting, sculpture, and music should come into such contact that each and all should gain from their mutual companionship. . . . "

With the advantage of hindsight we know that he had but four post-Columbia years to live, some of them clouded by mental illness. We cannot know what other important mature works he might have written at the height of his powers between the ages of 36 and 44 had he not accepted the professorship. Was it a "total mistake" as one of his early biographers wrote?

Having devised the curriculum, MacDowell proceeded for more than two years to teach all the classes. He was then given an assistant, and the faculty was later modestly increased as the curriculum enlarged and students flocked to his classes. Among them were Upton Sinclair and John Erskine, who wrote at length in reminiscences about the enduring impression their teacher had made as a person and musician.

It is painful to recount even briefly the dramatic falling out that took place in MacDowell's eighth and final year (1903–4). After President Low resigned to run for mayor of New York City, Nicholas Murray Butler was appointed. He had his own ideas about education in the arts, and when MacDowell returned from a sabbatical he found his music offerings-and those of fine arts-intermingled with the courses listed in the bulletin of Teachers College. Butler was unresponsive to his strong objections to this and other matters. MacDowell agreed to a frank "off-the-record" interview with Spectator reporters: within a few days six newspapers entered the fray. Both MacDowell and Butler published letters in The New York Times and elsewhere. MacDowell resigned. The Trustees, appalled, accepted his letter of resignation (as of June 30, 1904) with a rebuke for his offenses against propriety.

During this unpleasantness, MacDowell sometimes seemed to lack his usual vivacity and resilience. Then, over the next two years, he lost his robust health, and, finally, his mind. The death certificate stated "Paresis (Dementia Paralytica)." Had his physician dared to write what was very likely tertiary syphilis, Columbia would have

been spared the often-repeated accusation that it had been largely responsible for MacDowell's "depression," "nervous exhaustion," "brain fever," and death.

To aid the two MacDowells financially during his illness and to promote his music, at least three organizations were formed. The MacDowell Fund in New York included among its 400 members all the financial and artistic leaders of the city, among them Seth Low. MacDowell Clubs were established in 66 cities, and contributions were received from England and the continent.

Even in his late moments of lucidity MacDowell often spoke of centering the arts on the New Hampshire farm. With the aid of the accumulating funds, the Edward MacDowell Association was formed to administer the property as the MacDowell Colony, a haven for the undisturbed work of composers, writers, painters, and sculptors. Months before his death there were two colonists in residence. Since then residencies have been enjoyed by more than 4,500 individuals-an enduring legacy of a farsighted man.

Douglas Moore

The North Fork of Long Island resembles the upper tail fin of a fish whose head is Brooklyn and Queens. Flat, fertile, and embayed, to the north are Long Island Sound and Connecticut-to the east, Peconic Bay. For 250 years immigrants from New England and their descendants sailed across the sound rather than trekking overland to distant New York City. Even Walt Whitman's central Long Island was far "up-island" (that is, upwind), though he taught school for a while on the North Fork, living at a crossroads known thereafter as Sodom's Corner.

In the first 1640 boatload of settlers from New Haven was Thomas Moore. His descendants were farmers and tradesmen. Douglas Moore (1893–1969) '63HON relished repeating the comment of a local historian who claimed that the Moores never had amounted to much because they had been too addicted to music and sex. But Douglas's father amounted to a great deal: the first to leave North Fork for the city, he founded the Ladies' World magazine, lived in a Stanford White house in Brooklyn, and built a shingle-style villa on Peconic Bay.

The father went along with his son's early passion for music because there were two much older brothers whom he expected to take over his magazine (later sold to

Hearst). Given these comfortable circumstances, Douglas went off to prep school, Hotchkiss, where he made many friends, among them Archibald MacLeish ("Archie") '54HON, with whom he was later to collaborate, and who -- much later -- was to officiate at the Columbia memorial for his old friend in 1969.

Yale was proper after Hotchkiss in those days and there Moore earned two degrees, the second in music. Going to New Haven was also symbolic, for it was from there that Thomas Moore had left nearly three centuries earlier.

Douglas Stuart Moore is remembered today not only for his 36 years at Columbia-he shaped the music department as chairman from 1940 to 1962 into what it largely still is today-but also as the founder and tireless supporter of several organizations that aid composers. The wider musical public knows him as a composer of operas, particularly The Ballad of Baby Doe and The Devil and Daniel Webster. It is always written of Moore that his seven operas are based on American subjects. And so they are, as are his several other theater pieces, two films, and even much instrumental music. But they are more specifically engendered: the subject matter is intimately related to his birthplace, Cutchogue, and its surrounding farmland, and to a long life of summers spent in his father's villa, Quawk's Nest, then next door to his own smaller shingled house, Salt Meadow. Almost all his music was composed in a secluded studio overlooking a tidal inlet.

If it is true that since Beethoven composers usually have chosen subjects for their operas, whether consciously or unconsciously, that are close to their preoccupations, Moore is a prime example. Most of his opera libretti deal with strong, protective husbands, often close to the earth-in The Ballad of Baby Doe, the powerful Horace Tabor literally digs for silver-and loving, often ailing, wives. In the above-mentioned operas there are two strong wives: one is ailing in her last scene; the other, Baby Doe, is indomitable, even as she freezes to death. In The Devil and Daniel Webster, the husband, a farmer, tries to better his family's lot by making a pact with the devil; he is supported loyally by his wife. The farmer-lawyer, Daniel Webster, wins his client's case against the devil by converting a jury of the worst blackguards in American history. Giants in the Earth (Pulitzer Prize, 1951), and Carry Nation carry on this Moore-ish tradition, although in the latter the traits switch genders: Carry chops up bars with a hatchet and her husband succumbs to alcoholism. Moore's one transatlantic foray, based on James's The Wings of the Dove, differs from the above in its English setting, but the heroine is mortally ill; and Moore knew about Americans abroad, for he lived among them for three years in France during the

twenties.

Given the above relationships of life-as-opera and opera-as-life, it may be unnecessary to mention that Moore enjoyed tending a large vegetable garden near his studio and that his wife was beset with lingering, overlapping illnesses during their long marriage. But many singers who have impersonated the four gossips in Baby Doe would be surprised that the models for their roles-Sarah, Mary, Emily, and Effie-were Douglas's two daughters, wife, and sister-in-law. Moore's intimate collaborations with his librettists permitted these and other such semi-private references.

From his earliest years he had the ability to write catchy, humorous songs. At Yale-Harvard games his "Goodnight, Harvard" is still bellowed. John Kander, who once introduced himself as Moore's illegitimate son-and this writer as Moore's legitimate son-can be talked into performing "Naomi, My Restaurant Queen" and others of Moore's Yale and World War II navy songs.

His ability to write pop songs and later a dozen "art songs" had something, but not much, to do with composing operas and hardly anything to do with his writing a number of orchestral works and a decent amount of chamber music. That necessary craft, developed in a personal way, he was slow in developing.

He revered his main composition teacher at Yale, but later had to unlearn much else learned there. Mustered out of the navy in 1919 in Paris, he stayed on to join those of his contemporaries who were arriving to study with the already fabled Nadia Boulanger. She and Moore did not get on: she was becoming accustomed to Americans with limited craft, but she was not sympathetic to what he wanted to write and he was not enamored of the composers she favored. He decamped to the Schola Cantorum to study composition with Vincent D'Indy and organ with Tournemire. D'Indy was a profound influence, in part because he was a composer of operas and sometimes based instrumental works on popular and folk melodies. One sometimes catches whiffs of his harmonic progressions even in Moore's later works.

Leaving Paris for home, Moore accepted the position of curator of music and organist at the Cleveland Museum. He took advantage of the presence at the Cleveland Institute of the Swiss composer Ernest Bloch for further study. On the side he took several acting roles in the Cleveland Playhouse, then in its heyday. His passion for the theater had been thwarted at Yale, where that Hoosier upperclassman, Cole

Porter, was favored as lyricist and show-composer. (Later Moore was to provide incidental music for two Shakespearean plays on Broadway; later still he added a stage to the huge living room at Salt Meadow, suitable for charades and family theatricals, the first of which he had written and composed at about the age of seven.)

In 1926 he was offered a teaching post at Columbia, but through the back door of Barnard College, so to speak, a subterfuge used occasionally by Columbia to acquire composers. He became one of the five faculty members of the Barnard-Columbia music department. There were but two classrooms, a number of books, scores, and pianola rolls, and no librarian. It was said that the shorter professors used Bach Gesellschaft volumes as chair-heighteners. Moore climbed the academic ladder rapidly and succeeded Daniel Gregory Mason as chairman in 1940. (Mason, by the way, was the grandson and nephew respectively of the two Masons earlier mentioned.) In that year Yale tempted its by-then well-known alumnus with a deanship. President Butler countered by alerting Moore to an expected large legacy "for the aid and encouragement of musicians," composers particularly, not to be used for educational purposes. Moore turned down the Yale offer and then, after the will was probated, engineered the resignations of the self-interested members of the advisory committee of the Alice M. Ditson Fund and their replacement by others more likely to carry out the implications of the will.

In this maneuver, he showed two qualities that served him well both at Columbia and in the numerous other organizations he served and often led-and sometimes had helped to establish: great charm and velvet-gloved toughness. He sweet-talked Butler into dismissing a professor he thought poised to set up a rival music department. When John D. Rockefeller Jr. invited Butler and Moore to move the music department to Lincoln Center, then in the planning stage, Moore refused on the grounds that Music Humanities and other liberal arts students couldn't be expected to attend classes by subway. It is an action MacDowell would have approved. When William Schuman, president of the Juilliard School, learned that his school had been second choice, he was aghast. So was Rockefeller.

In addition to being charming and tough, Moore was also thoroughly knowledgeable about and in love with music. Accordingly he was a Great Teacher (the award of 1960), a fair-minded critic and music juror, and the author of two books intended for Music Humanities students and other laymen. In his day, chairmen were appointed "at the pleasure of the Trustees," and he pleased them for 22 years until his

retirement in 1962. By that time he had accomplished much of what MacDowell had envisaged in 1896.

Moore was a more fervent spokesman for the music of others than he was for his own because, I think, of a certain musical modesty that bordered on insecurity. His early interest in Americana was bolstered by the strong encouragement of Vachel Lindsay. Later he was to move amiably among sophisticated composers of all kinds, some of whom, as usual, looked askance at one who insisted on writing operas and may not have recognized in his conservative music the "modesty, grace, and sound construction" noted by Virgil Thomson '78HON.

He was also a better protector of other composers' rights than of his own. He neglected to ask formally for the operatic rights to his friend Philip Barry's play White Wings; heirs and lawyers held up its premiere for fifteen years. When his friend Stephen Vincent Benét suggested his short story The Devil and Daniel Webster as an opera subject, the two worked out the libretto together. The dramaturgy was chiefly the composer's. Foolishly, there was no written agreement. Benét published the almost unchanged libretto as a play that was to be performed hundreds of times and then filmed-starring Walter Huston and with a score by another composer-all without credit and royalties to Moore.

When such unpleasantness occurred or an unkind review was let into the house, Moore was never outwardly angry. He simply adopted, as his allusively literary family called it, his Eeyore manner.

Paul Henry Lang

Sometime in 1932 an acquaintance of Moore insisted that he meet Paul Henry Lang, a tall, dark, and handsome Hungarian in his early thirties then teaching at Wells College. Moore invited him to lunch at the Faculty Club. According to Moore's account it was a long, animated lunch hour. One can assume that these two good, digressive talkers covered their separate and common interests and that Moore was piecing together in his head the outlines of Lang's curriculum vitae: born in 1901; studied music at the Budapest Academy with Zoltán Kodály-with Béla Bartók '40HON as his adviser; orchestral bassoonist and vocal coach at the Opera (Moore would

have perked up at the mention of a coachee, Maria Jeritza, one of his favorite sopranos at the Metropolitan Opera); to Germany to study musicology, history, and literature; to Paris for more of the same; wrote a dissertation there, but could not meet the requirement of its publication because his father had lost money under the Horthy regime; emigrated to the U.S.; another dissertation at Cornell on the literary history of French opera (Moore would have enjoyed pointing out that Otto Kinkeldey, the musicologist at Cornell, had been a MacDowell student at Columbia); taught at Vassar and Wellesley; and-oh, yes!-while in Paris had been on an Olympic rowing team.

Then, according to Moore's recollection, the two walked toward Broadway until Moore arrived outside Journalism (which then housed Music) and they went their separate ways. On a sudden impulse he turned, shouted to Lang to wait, ran after him, and asked, "Would you like to teach at Columbia?" When he said, "Yes, of course," Moore went immediately to Mason (under his chairmanship, first names were not commonly used) and shared with him his plan to add a musicologist to the staff. Mason demurred: there was no need, for there was already a year of music history and music literature courses, symphony and chamber music; besides, there was no money for another salary. (The department had been somewhat somnolent since MacDowell had left; his successor had added little and subtracted some; his successor, Mason, occasionally requested no increase in the annual budget and refused to answer correspondence concerning summer session.)

Although Moore was too much the gentleman to tell me so, it may be that Mason was also put off by Lang's name (then spelled Láng, with an accent). His writings include encoded anti-Semitism. When I asked Lang toward the end of his life if he were Jewish, he answered, "Well, no, I'm a Catholic, though I don't often go to mass. In the thirties there was an influx of Central European refugee musicologists and I was naturally thought to be one of them, though I'd been here for a decade." That he was telling the truth-if anyone still cares-was already proved at his christening: Paul Maria Henry Ferdinand László Láng. Whatever the objections of Mason, Moore went to the Carnegie Foundation and arranged for a grant to cover the first two years of Lang's salary.

Lang's mentor at Cornell, Kinkeldey, was the first professor of musicology in the U.S. Lang immediately began to teach the subject at Columbia-he was among the first in the U.S. to do so-though he was not recognized with the same title until 1941.

Laymen see the word musicology most often in CD booklets. The discipline was a mid-nineteenth-century German and Austrian conflation of all studies in music except composition and performance. It made its way here by way of returning Americans who had done their graduate study abroad (as had Kinkeldey) or by way of immigrants (such as Lang). For a while, there were turf battles with the reigning composers. Once it was established, there were other turf battles as the all-too-encompassing discipline divided into specialties: historical musicology, ethnomusicology, the speculative aspects of theory and aesthetics, and (as of today) of whatnot. By the time these later battles were joined, Lang's position had become so impregnable that he rarely seemed embattled. In any case, he was tolerant, and when he had to give ground, he could take pleasure in his decided streak of masochism.

That high ground he achieved in part (with the eventual collaboration of at least three colleagues at a time) by training innumerable graduate students who were then to find important far-flung teaching positions.

In addition, the restless, energetic, and ambitious Lang became the editor of The Musical Quarterly in 1945 and remained so until 1973. He could not accomplish the impossible: make a profit from a learned journal for its publisher, G. Schirmer. But he was proud never to have run a budget deficit.

When Virgil Thomson unexpectedly gave up his post as chief music critic on the high-minded Herald Tribune, its owners realized that no second Virgil Thomson existed and turned to a professor who wrote fluently and interestingly and who was happily married with four children. For almost ten years (1954–63), Lang enjoyed covering concerts and opera and writing Sunday articles (both later the substance of published books). In those days, review copy had to be submitted for the next day's morning edition-and for Lang there was a long commute home.

These non-university activities-not to speak of service on behalf of musicological and learned societies and assembling a groundbreaking series of books on music for the publisher W.W. Norton-exacted a price that his students and colleagues were paying. He might have disregarded that debt with his usual insouciance, but he was deeply offended when the University's president at important functions introduced him as the chief critic of the Trib. When he decided to quit the post, the Trib's owners offered to add the whole of his Columbia salary to his critic's salary if he would remain. He resigned. He was not the only one of my seniors to say, ruefully,

that universities are insecure in judging the qualities of their professors: therefore, reputations within the university are made on the basis of outside accomplishments.

Lang once confided that he preferred cabinetmaking to practicing music history, "particularly now that steam-shovel musicology has become the thing." True, he was not always to be believed, but his favorite phrase, se non è vero, è ben trovato (if it's not true, it's nicely invented) was disarming. The Langs changed houses often and in each there was something to be improved. One of the more impressive was a converted early poured-concrete structure built by Horace Greeley. In it was a study that could be compared only to the library of an English country house. It was full of his handiwork, including double-height bookcases. In the basement of each house were innumerable bottles of identified hardware, like three-by-five cards awaiting some new scholarly undertaking.

My first acquaintance with Lang was by way of reading his Music in Western Civilization as a student at the Eastman School of Music shortly after its 1941 publication. I had never read anything like it, nor have I since. It read like a 1,000-page essay, placing music in the context of the other arts, philosophy, and history; it was at once magisterial and intimate. I was disturbed, though, by the regretful tone that suffused his discussion of the twentieth-century musical scene-which I was preparing to enter.

When I met Lang himself in the fall of 1944, he was delighted that I had come to New York City to study with his friend Bartók. In friendly fashion he cautioned, "Don't put any currency in Bartók's hand at the end of a lesson: some Hungarians are uncomfortable with money and he has no talent at all for making it." At that time Lang was feuding with Howard Hanson '46HON, the director of the Eastman School, about the Ph.D. in composition; in addition, the heads of theory in the two institutions were feuding about the proper way to teach the subject. Accordingly, when I was invited to join the Columbia department the following year, it was thought that I, fresh out of the enemy camp, should be indoctrinated in Columbia ways by attending Lang's Proseminar in Musicology. It was exhilarating to experience his book brought to life: he improvised brilliantly on themes from an overflowing mind. There were inventive speculations that could be followed by alert students. That he loved the sound of music was obvious when he played recordings, even when he fumbled at the keyboard. He had a habit of suddenly asking difficult questions. When nobody could answer, he would call on me (or on William Bergsma, an Eastman composer friend who occasionally audited for the fun of it). I remember

one such exchange: "What are the dates of Giovanni Pergolesi?" When nobody knew, he called on me. "1710–36," I answered. (What 24-year-old composer would not remember the dates of a composer who had written so well and so much in just 26 years?) There was then yet another opportunity to castigate his students for not spending enough time reading and listening and for not living up, even, to schools-of-music standards.

Late in life he was to write the impressive George Frederic Handel and to look forward to preparing a new edition of Music in Western Civilization. Much later, deteriorating eyesight permitted him only to add an occasional essay and many record reviews to the several hundred he had already amassed.

In 1997, six years after his death, his 1941 magnum opus was reprinted unaltered. The perspicacious foreword by Leon Botstein includes the following tribute: "The passage of time has not diminished its virtuosity and stature as a tour de force . . . [It] would be a good place to begin the debate that increasingly occupies scholars and listeners alike concerning the future of the classical and serious music tradition in the United States and Europe."

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