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Howard Mayer Brown: a Personal Remembrance

Mark Lindley

He was decidedly not the kind of teacher who would tell a musicology student to "leave your 'cello at home when you come to study here." The article about him in *New Grove* tells us that between his own undergraduate and graduate courses at Harvard, he studied singing and conducting in Vienna. Back at Harvard as a graduate student he founded the "Bach Society Chorus" (which was smaller than most groups of that name), and he always loved to play the flute. I came to Harvard before he left and remember seeing him in his lodgings studying for the Ph. D. qualifying exams—which he said he was worried about as they were to be administered by a young and notoriously "tough" professor—by working his way through *HAM* and *Die Geschichte der Musik in Beispielen*. The volume he had out was on a music rack, not a table.

At The University of Chicago, where he taught for most of his career, he conducted and played in the collegium musicum; and they recorded, in tandem with Wesley Morgan's group at Lexington, the music in Volume I of *HAM* so that it could become comparable to *L'Anthologie Sonore, Masterpieces of Music before 1750,* and *The History of Music in Sound.* He probably played, on the flute at least, all those embellished versions of Renaissance lines which he published in various articles, books, and editions. One of Howard's most original books was *Sixteenth-Century Instrumentation: the Music for the Florentine Intermedii*, which presents a vivid

counterpart to the 19th-century, Cecilian concept of unaccompanied and unembellished a-cappella singing as the essence of Renaissance music—reconstructing, as it were, a Botticelli "Primavera" to hang next to the traditional Raphael madonna. The book is a model of how imagination can be linked with various academic skills to promote the revival of a forgotten kind of music.

He wasn't afraid to risk making an error when necessary (though very good at defending himself when accused of having made one), and he was correspondingly generous in judging other people's work when it too had a touch of creativity. This generosity is exemplified by the support he lent to *Early Music* in its early days. He liked John Thomson's vision of a readership made up of dilettantes, would-be professional scholars or performers, and accomplished professionals. (How much better his judgment about *Early Music* was than that of the eminent scholar who told me in 1977 that it was just "a flash in the pan"!)

When chosen to succeed Thurston Dart in 1972 as Professor of Music at the University of London, Howard expected to spend the rest of his professional life there. But the academic reforms which he attempted were frustrated, so he returned to Chicago in 1974, after sending some letters to the *Times Literary Supplement* to the effect that most musical scholarship in England was not up to par. These letters caused some soul-searching which, it's fair to say, was as effective as Howard had hoped his own career there would be in promoting top-standard musicology. He learned a lot himself and by the time he left could convey as many nuances of meaning with a raised eyebrow—never both brows at once—as an Oxbridge don could with inflections of "really."

Howard felt that late 19th- and 20th-century performance practices should be studied as carefully as those of earlier times. He stood for breadth in various ways: a taste for many kinds of music, bibliographical thoroughness (most notably in his standard inventory of instrumental music published in the 16th century), respect for colleagues regardless of their academic status, and a kind of scholarship which embraces music-making.

*This and the previous photo provided through the kindness of James McDaniel. Mary Wyly, Associate Librarian, The Newberry Library, Chicago, considerately arranged to have copies made.