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In Memoriam: Frederick Neumann

Frederick Neumann (1907-1994), Multi-Faceted Musician and Scholar

Homer Rudolf

Frederick Neumann—or “Fritz” as he was called by all who knew him—was a man of many capacities and capabilities, and he pursued many careers: socio-economist, musicologist, violinist, conductor. It may be surprising to some that his first Ph. D. was not in music, but rather in political science and economics from the University of Berlin in 1934—his dissertation concerning the market crash of 1929! From 1934-37 he served as an export-market analyst in Prague. Not satisfied with that career, however, he returned to the study of the violin, the instrument he had played since his early childhood in Bielitz Austro-Hungary (now Bielsko Biala Poland). His violin studies eventually took him to Berlin, Basel, Paris, and New York (after he emigrated to the United States in 1939).

Fritz’s first music position was as head of the string department at the Cornish School in Seattle. But after becoming a U.S. citizen in 1943, he served in Army Intelligence for three years. Then it was back to school at Columbia University, where he received an M.A. (1948) and a Ph. D. (1952) in Music Education. At the same time he played professionally in New York,

and taught violin at the Manhattan School of Music as well as at the University of Miami, Coral Gables.

In 1955 he was appointed to the music faculty of the University of Richmond, where he continued to teach violin (he was still giving lessons until a few weeks before his death) and founded the University Symphony, serving as its conductor from 1955-76. He also functioned as concertmaster of the Richmond Symphony (1957-64) and frequently performed in chamber ensembles. This varied activity as violinist formed the background for his two-volume *Contemporary Violin Technique* (1966), co-authored with Ivan Galamian.

From about the mid-sixties and thereafter Fritz occupied himself principally with the research of authentic performance practice, particularly of the 17th and 18th centuries, a new career that was furthered by grants from the American Philosophical Society, the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. A singular recognition was accorded by the American Musicological Society in the form of the Otto Kinkeldey Award in 1987 for the volume *Ornamentation and Improvisation in Mozart*.

During Fritz's final year at the University of Richmond (1977-78) a series of lectures in his honor were presented by four of his scholar-friends: Howard Mayer Brown, George Buelow, Arthur Mendel, and William S. Newman. And during the late seventies he was invited to serve as guest professor at Yale, Princeton, and Indiana Universities (which proved to be a stimulating experience for him).

Following his retirement, Fritz regularly consulted the Music Library's collections, which gave me an opportunity to stay in close touch. After the initial handshake he came up with the inevitable query, "What's new?" He looked forward especially to the appearance of his own publications, and nothing stimulated him more than being able to respond to an article or review that expressed a view contrary to one in his own writings.

Fritz had planned a trip to Prague this past spring, his first since he left in 1939; but unfortunately it had to be canceled because of his health. Recently he had turned his attention to research on performance practices in Beethoven, and it is a significant loss that that project remained in its infancy at the time of his death.

**Frederick Neumann at Home with Violin and
Scholarly Writings, 1970**

Photo by courtesy of Bob Brown/ Richmond Times-Dispatch

