In Memoriam

ROSALIE SAVARINO EDWARDS

Rosalie Savarino Edwards, who graduated from the School of Music with a bachelor’s and master’s in music education, died on February 23, 2006, at her Ann Arbor home. She is survived by her husband of 46 years, Martin, four children, and ten grandchildren.

A native of Hillsdale, Michigan, Edwards directed the U-M Women’s Glee Club for nearly twenty years, starting in 1978, when then Dean Paul Boylan invited her to take on that role. The Women’s Glee Club, first formed in 1893, had disbanded in the 1950s. A student resurrected the group in 1976 and in 1978 Edwards took over as director. While under her leadership, the Women’s Glee Club grew in number from 18 to seventy-five and toured nationally, performing at the United Nations and on television. Edwards composed Women of Michigan for the Women’s Glee Club, which now boasts some 500 alumnae around the world.

Rosalie’s love of music started early on when, the story goes, her father presented her with a flute in the fourth grade with the clearly non-negotiable instruction: “This is your instrument.” Rosalie went on to play in the high school band and orchestra and sang in the chorus. After arriving at U-M, she continued her flute studies with Nelson Hauenstein and played in the Symphony Band under William Revelli. She also sang with the Michigan Singers under Maynard Klein, her teacher and mentor.

After finishing her bachelor’s, Rosalie taught in the Birmingham, MI schools, later returning to Ann Arbor for her master’s degree. While in graduate school, she met and married Martin Edwards. The couple raised four children together. Over the years, Rosalie has served on the board of the Ann Arbor Symphony and played associate principal flute. She was key in the development of a choral music department at Greenhills School and taught music at Slauson Elementary, both in Ann Arbor.

After stepping down as director of the Women’s Glee Club in 1990, Rosalie published the now familiar UM Songbook; all proceeds from the sales went to the Rosalie Edwards Scholarship at the School of Music, earmarked for female students in the SoM who are both gifted musicians and active in the community.

As board member of the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation from 1991-96, active in that group’s scholarship and development undertakings, Rosalie published Vibrant Ann Arbor, a full-color coffee table book that has now seen its third printing. Proceeds from the sale of that book went to the University Musical Society and the Ann Arbor Summer Festival. Edwards was also president of the Society for Musical Arts, a small group of women who present six concerts annually to underwrite a competition held at the School of Music each February.

At the fall 2004 School of Music Alumni Reunion, Rosalie was presented with a Citation of Merit Award, given out annually by the Alumni Society Board of Governors, to honor individuals who have made outstanding contributions in the realm of music. Rosalie served on the Alumni Society Board from January 2005 to the present.

During winter months, which Rosalie and Martin would spend in Florida, Edwards led the John’s Island Singers, a 70-voice group she founded that presents three sold-out concerts each spring. Without her leadership, the group may disband and donate their remaining proceeds to the Rosalie Edwards Scholarship.

Contributions in her memory may be made to the Rosalie Edwards Scholarship (checks made payable to the University of Michigan), care of the School of Music, Office of Development, 2005 Baits Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-2075.
Gyorgy Sandor, Professor of Music (piano) 1961-81, died at his home in New York City on December 9, 2005, at the age of ninety-three. His death came as a slight surprise to those who knew him well: while it seemed almost certain that he would succumb, the force of his personality was such that we were not quite sure that he would actually countenance death. His huge vitality as a musical mind, performer, traveler, and alert citizen of the world seemed virtually inextinguishable.

Born a twin in Budapest in 1912 (his brother became a London physician), he studied at the Liszt Academy of Music where he was, famously, a piano student of Béla Bartók. Their association continued to the end of Bartók’s life (Sandor was one of fewer than a dozen people at Bartók’s funeral in 1945) and Sandor’s championing of his teacher’s music was a major preoccupation throughout his own life. And yet, that association came about by chance: Sandor told me that Ernst von Dohnanyi was the piano teacher of choice at the Liszt Academy when he enrolled there, and he had intended to study with Dohnanyi, but there was no room in his class at the time. Sandor was placed with Bartók as a stopgap measure. When the opportunity to move to Dohnanyi’s class arose, Sandor declined, having become deeply impressed with Bartók’s many qualities. Sandor occasionally spoke of Bartók’s teaching ways—at least as he experienced them: Bartók would listen to entire compositions without interruption, make some highly cogent remarks, and then play the entire work himself, pausing occasionally to point out certain things. Bartók seems never to have discussed piano technique.

Those who knew Sandor’s puckish side will not doubt his confession that he was a bit of a rogue during his early student days. He was suspended from his high school for shenanigans that he left unspecified in the telling. From his bold but utterly lawless motoring style throughout life, one can infer what he might have been as a Budapest teenager.

The graduation recitals at the Liszt Academy were reviewed by the Budapest press. Sandor once confided to me that the review of his recital emphasized virtuosity, mentioned Horowitz, etc., and that this had come as a complete shock to him; he had previously never thought of himself as a firebrand pianist. Bartók’s teaching had addressed the heart of the music, and Sandor’s goal in performance had been to penetrate to that heart as well. But Sandor was, unquestionably, a virtuoso writ large, and the combination of superb musicality with “Rolls Royce technique” (as one critic exclaimed) served him richly for the next seven decades.

Following his studies, Sandor began concertizing in the 1930s, and enjoyed a formidable international performance career for the rest of his life. Just before the Second World War, he settled in the United States, making his Carnegie Hall debut in 1939 in a recital program featuring Bach, Schumann, and Brahms (soon after which Columbia Records released a splendid album of much of the same repertory). In his continuing career, while maintaining unswerving allegiance to the music of Bartók (in 1946, shortly after the composer’s death, Sandor was piano soloist in the world premiere of the Bartók Third Piano Concerto with the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy), he occasionally complained that “specialization” (in Bartok’s music) caused concert organizers to request Bartók performances from him so often that he yearned to play the Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, and other “standard” repertory.
more frequently. And anyone who heard his Emperor with the University Symphony Orchestra conducted by Yehudi Menuhin, or who owns his recording of the Chopin E minor Concerto with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Ormandy, or knows his fast-as-blazes account of the Rachmaninoff C minor Concerto recorded with the New York Philharmonic conducted by Artur Rodzinski, or has heard his recording of the Brahms B-flat Major Concerto that was issued from one “take” in a recording session that had a little time left over when he was making the complete Bartók concerto cycle with Rolf Reinhardt conducting the Southwest German Radio Orchestra—all of those listeners consider themselves privileged to be in the aural presence of a very great artist.

Naturally, his numerous performances and recordings of the complete solo and concerted works for piano by Bela Bartók received worldwide acclaim (in 1965 he received the Grand Prix du Disque for the Bartók cycle). He also recorded the complete solo piano music of Prokofiev and of Kodály (with the latter of whom he had studied composition in Budapest).

Sandor was working on a book on Bartók and his music at the time of his death. His previous book, On Piano Playing (1981), has been published in English, Italian, Chinese, and Polish.

For many years, Sandor combined a successful performance career with teaching. He was artist-in-residence at Southern Methodist University in Dallas from 1956-61, in which year he went to Ann Arbor to play the Bartók Second Piano Concerto with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Ormandy in the May Festival. He was almost immediately invited to join the School of Music faculty where he remained for twenty years as director of the doctoral program in piano performance. In 1981, much to his chagrin, he reached the University’s then-mandatory retirement age, and refused the title professor emeritus because he deemed it to sound “old”. The following year, he joined the piano faculty at The Juilliard School, with which he was associated for twenty-three years. He also gave many master classes, including those at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, the Paris Conservatoire, Holland Music Sessions, and in earlier years at the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara.

Sandor was an inspiring and demanding teacher. It always seemed important to his students that he was “out there” himself, playing in important international venues the very repertory they were studying with him. When we played for him, it felt consequential; we would never have dared to bring anything less than our best to a lesson for fear of disappointing him or wasting his time. In a long time of study with him, I never heard him raise his voice to a student; actually, the quieter he got the more unnerved his students became. Unlike his own student experience with Bartók, Sandor seldom performed extensively in lessons, but was eager to tackle technical problems when they arose. He liked big pieces, and he preferred that his students bite off huge chunks of the repertory. (During years in his studio, I do not recall any student ever bringing a Chopin Waltz to class.) We respected him, were awed by him, and, smugly, considered ourselves elite: the Sandor students.

We carry his mark on us for life.

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The Ann Arbor News, April 1981

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MURIAL COSTA-GREENSPON

Muriel Costa-Greenspon, BM ’59, MM ’60, mezzo-soprano, who sang for the New York City Opera for many years, died last December at the age of 68. Costa-Greenspon had a special association with composer Gian Carlo Menotti, making her opera debut singing his Old Maid and the Thief and later singing the title role in his Medium at the Festival of Two Worlds, which Menotti founded, in Spoleto, Italy. She also sang several Menotti roles with the NY City Opera. She made her City Opera debut as Olga Olsen in Kurt Weill’s Street Scene in 1963. Described as a “character mezzo”, Ms. Costa-Greenspon sang a wide variety of roles, always to critical acclaim, both for her singing and her acting. Muriel Greenspon was born in Detroit to deaf parents. After receiving her bachelor’s and master’s from Michigan, she started her career singing arias in restaurants. She married Giorgio Costa, a carpenter at the Metropolitan Opera and on various Broadway shows. In 1984, the two drew a different kind of attention when they won a $1.7 million New York lotto prize. Her husband survives her.

1930s
Virginia I. (Letts) Andreae, ’37, died January 4, 2006
Gwendolyn (Fossum) Bates, BM ’37, MM ’39, BM ’40, died February 19, 2006
Mary E. (Porter) Gwin, BM ’38 and MM ’39 in organ, died November 21, 1999
Kenneth D. Long, MM ’38 in music performance, died December 9, 2005
Marion (Seitz) Kolm, BM ’31, died February 23, 2006
Louis T. Nicholas, MM ’39 in voice, died December 28, 2005
Robert H. Zahnnow, BM ’38 in music education, died November 23, 2005

1940s
Ann H. (Gall) Barber, MM ’48 in music education, died February 6, 2006
John P. Bollinger, MM ’41 in music education, died March 10, 2003
Phyllis I. Clark, MM ’49 in piano, died January 10, 2006
Sally Lou M. (Hediger) Haigh, BM ’49 in music education, died December 30, 2005
Catherine J. (Morgan) Hove, BM ’46 and MM ’48 in voice, died December 21, 2005
Nathen Edwards Jones, BM ’49 and MM ’50 in music education, died December 2, 2005
Maynard A. Post, BM ’42 in music education, died March 22, 2002
Judith R. (Victor) Stulberg, BM ’41 in piano, died October 26, 2005
Carl G. Werner, MM ’45, died January 4, 2006

1950s
Marcia (Zwagerman) Houseman, BM ’50, died March 6, 2006
Richard J. Burgwin, MA ’51 and Ph.D ’60 in theatre, died September 26, 1998
Lois (Wordell) Hatmaker, BM ’54 in music education, died December 30, 2005

1960s
Sharon Holmes (McCreery) Foley, BM ’69 and MM ’71 in strings, died December 12, 2005

1970s
Jan Z. (Jackson) Burchman, BM ’71 in music education, died November 12, 2005
Robert S. Nichols, Ph.D ’71 in musicology, died January 20, 2006
Ann L. (Rogalla) Portenga, BM ’77 in music history, died November 18, 2005