

OBITUARY

ARNE BJÖRNDAL

Arne Björndal died on January 12th, 1965, at the age of 83.

He was one of the specialists on Norwegian Folk Music. As one of the most excellent players of the Harding fiddle he gave many performances in Norway and abroad. He began at a very early date to collect *slatter* (popular folk dances) and other melodies. From 1907 on he published several volumes of *slatter* for Harding fiddle, dances which, from a folklore point of view, were of very high quality and of great interest. His book on the traditions connected with the professional work of fiddlers will soon be available. As to further information on Björndal and his several activities, see the festival publication *Norsk Folkemusikk*, published in honour of his seventieth anniversary, 1952.

O. M. SANDVIK

HENRY DIXON COWELL

March 11th, 1897—December 10th, 1965

This seems to be a time for dying. Certainly, too many of our distinguished musical citizens have been leaving us. Among these Henry Dixon Cowell stands in the forefront.

It would be idle at this time and place to attempt a resumé of Henry Cowell's varied activities as composer, concert pianist, teacher, theorist, musicographer, scholar, americanist, ethnomusicologist. He led a very busy life, so busy in fact that no summary could ever hope to encompass the scope of his activities in any single area, let alone the endless variety of areas that attracted his attention.

Rather, it would appear more appropriate to sketch an important emphasis in the life of this archetypal pioneer in a field that held his lively interest for many years . . . comparative musicology or as it has more recently become known, ethnomusicology.

Sidney Cowell has transmitted to me several arresting features of Henry Cowell's early exposure to non-European music. In 1904, at the age of seven, he lived in San Francisco on the edge of the Oriental district. It was at this time that he heard performances of Chinese operas, and had many opportunities to participate in the singing games of Polynesian, Japanese and Chinese children as they played in the street. Also among his experiences during these formative years were *koto* performances, usually lasting through an entire day beginning with the youngest of pupils in the morning and terminating with virtuosi in the evening.

These experiences clearly had a lasting effect. One of his surviving youthful works from 1911-12 incorporates melodic elements of a clearly Japanese character. And at a comparatively early period he began his study of Oriental music theory. A prolonged study of Indian music began in earnest in 1927. His positive interest and demonstrated capabilities in non-European music were recognized in the award of a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1931-32 which enabled him to work intensively with Erich von Hornbostel in Berlin. A Rockefeller grant in 1956-57 made possible a prolonged stay in the Far East for the purposes of continuing his study of Asian music. In between and following these grants there were many trips undertaken voluntarily and on invitation for the purpose of studying first-hand various kinds of ethnic music and systems.

But Henry Cowell was also a teacher. He was well in the van of those who introduced to Americans instruction in non-European music. As early as 1928 he presented the New School for Social Research lectures and programmes of ethnic music. The first such formally announced lecture was given there in 1930 on "Newly Discovered Principles of Oriental Music." This was followed in 1931 by a similar lecture, "Modern Musical Ethnology." When, later, he taught at Columbia University where, in 1951, he was appointed to the rank of Adjunct Professor, one of his featured courses was "Music of the World's Peoples."

Henry Cowell was also among the founders in 1930 of the New York Musicological Society which, in 1934, became the American Musicological Society. It is not without point to note that the founders planned from the beginning to foster a national society which would place stress on Science, Criticism, History, Bibliography and Comparative Musicology. During its few years of existence as the NYMS, Henry Cowell delivered papers on "Some Aspects of Comparative Musicology" (1932), and "Hybrid Forms in Comparative Musicology" (1933). He was also active later in establishing the Society for Ethnomusicology.

Henry Cowell's prolific output as a distinguished composer will doubtless be the token of his life work by which he will be most widely remembered. Yet this celebrated activity of his incorporates much of his work in ethnic music, for as expressed by Sidney Cowell, he "always thought of his explorations of the music of the world's peoples as a voyage of discovery in a sea of unexpected, exciting and very beautiful new ideas for twentieth century music. Many of these he put to immediate use himself, and his introduction of the performers was always addressed to the composers in his audience."

It was my good fortune to know Henry Cowell over the years. I shall remember him as I miss him, not only for the work by which he will be known to all, but also for his rare buoyancy, never-failing wit, brilliant sparkle, and enduring courage in the face of years of adversity.

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BONIFACIO GIL GARCÍA

Bonifacio Gil García, aged 66, died on December 22nd, 1964, in Madrid.

Although he was by profession a conductor and trainer of military bands, Gil was attracted from an early age to the study of the popular and folk music of his country. So, no sooner was he appointed to a post in Extremadura than he started spending his spare time travelling the countryside looking for and collecting the local folksong. These sorties lasted for several years. Later, Gil took part in the general folksong collecting organized by the Spanish Musicological Institute since its inception. During these assignments he visited countless small towns and villages in provinces as different as Logroño, Toledo, Granada, Albacete, etc. The number of songs collected on these occasions which he delivered to the archives of the Institute ran into thousands. Gil also gave frequent lectures on many subjects related to Spanish folk music and followed these up with books and articles of great interest, perhaps the most important being the *Cancionero popular de Extremadura* and the *Cancionero taurino*. Unfortunately, the author was only able to see volume 1 of the latter through the press, having, however, delivered the further two volumes to the printers before his death.