

This greatest State recognition is given only to the most deserving and prominent Yugoslav scholars and artists.

Professor Vasiljević's death is a great loss for the Union of Folklorists of Serbia. He was one of its most active members. The Association of folklorists of Serbia was founded in 1953 on his initiative and he was its life-long president.

The private collection of this great scholar contains a great treasure of Yugoslav music folklore: several thousands of folk melodies. For quantity and quality this collection is one of the biggest and best in Yugoslavia.

VINKO ŽGANEC.

JOHN POWELL

John Powell died in Richmond, Virginia, August 15th, 1963. His last conscious moments were spent in happy anticipation of the forthcoming performance, by the National Symphony Orchestra, of a symphony based on folk music, which he considered the only fruitful source for composers of sophisticated music.

Mr. Powell was born in Richmond, Virginia, September 6th, 1882. His piano studies began with his sister. He graduated brilliantly from the University of Virginia in 1900 and then spent five years as a pupil of Leschetizky; his teacher of composition was Navratil. His debut (Berlin, 1907; London, 1908) opened a distinguished international career as a pianist. But as early as 1909 he was writing music which, however impressionistic, owed something to the character of the traditional ballad and fiddle tunes that he had known from childhood in Virginia. For many years he was the principal spokesman for those who believed that the musical tradition most important to our national culture in the United States was that of our Anglo-Saxon inheritance.

Folk music from Virginia has had a special position because of this emphasis, and because its collectors did not see themselves as ethnologists, but took pride in transmitting only music of the highest aesthetic quality. Not that folk music of other sorts did not exist in Virginia, nor that very beautiful tunes could not be found elsewhere, but one was always aware that a highly selective taste was influencing collectors of folk music there. This was the sophisticated musical taste of that fiery missionary for purity of tradition and for musical quality, John Powell. Quite apart from his professional reputation, his great natural musicality made him utterly convincing.

A principal point of radiation for this incandescent personality was the famous Folk Music Festival held on White Top Mountain near Marion, Virginia, where Powell played a powerful role as arbiter of tunes and styles for the programmes, and sometimes as pre-Festival lecturer during the Festival's most impressive years, in the 1930s. He occasionally took groups of authentic singers and instrumentalists to be heard in more sophisticated surroundings: about this time, the immense dignity and complete naturalness of several superb Virginia musicians gave guests of President and Mrs. Roosevelt a memorably spontaneous and exciting experience of traditional music at the White House.

Mr. Powell had little confidence that his own sense of awe before the beauties and perfections of purely melodic music would ever be widely shared. He believed that the feeling conveyed by delicate aspects of traditional performance would have to be translated into harmonic terms if folk music were ever to compete with the glamour of orchestral sound. The piece he himself considered his most important in this

regard is the suite called *Five Virginia Songs*, which appeared in 1938. (See review of a recording of this work by Dr. Karpeles in Vol. XIV, 1962, of this *Journal*. A detailed description of Mr. Powell's approach to the use of folk music in formal composition accompanies both the publication and the record.) The romanticism of his concert music suggests the symphonic treatment of folk music by Dvořák and the Russian nationalists, although he related his harmonies much more closely to the initial musical materials than these men did.

Mr. Powell's uncompromising devotion to the uncontaminated Anglo-Saxon tradition in Virginia influenced people far outside his own State precisely because he cultivated so thoroughly his garden at home. It was certainly John Powell's passionate and highly cultivated appreciation that first gave folk music in the United States the status of great art, and to its performers the pride of artists. Such single-minded devotion is not only contagious: it endures.

SIDNEY ROBERTSON COWELL