

WILLARD RHODES 1901-1992

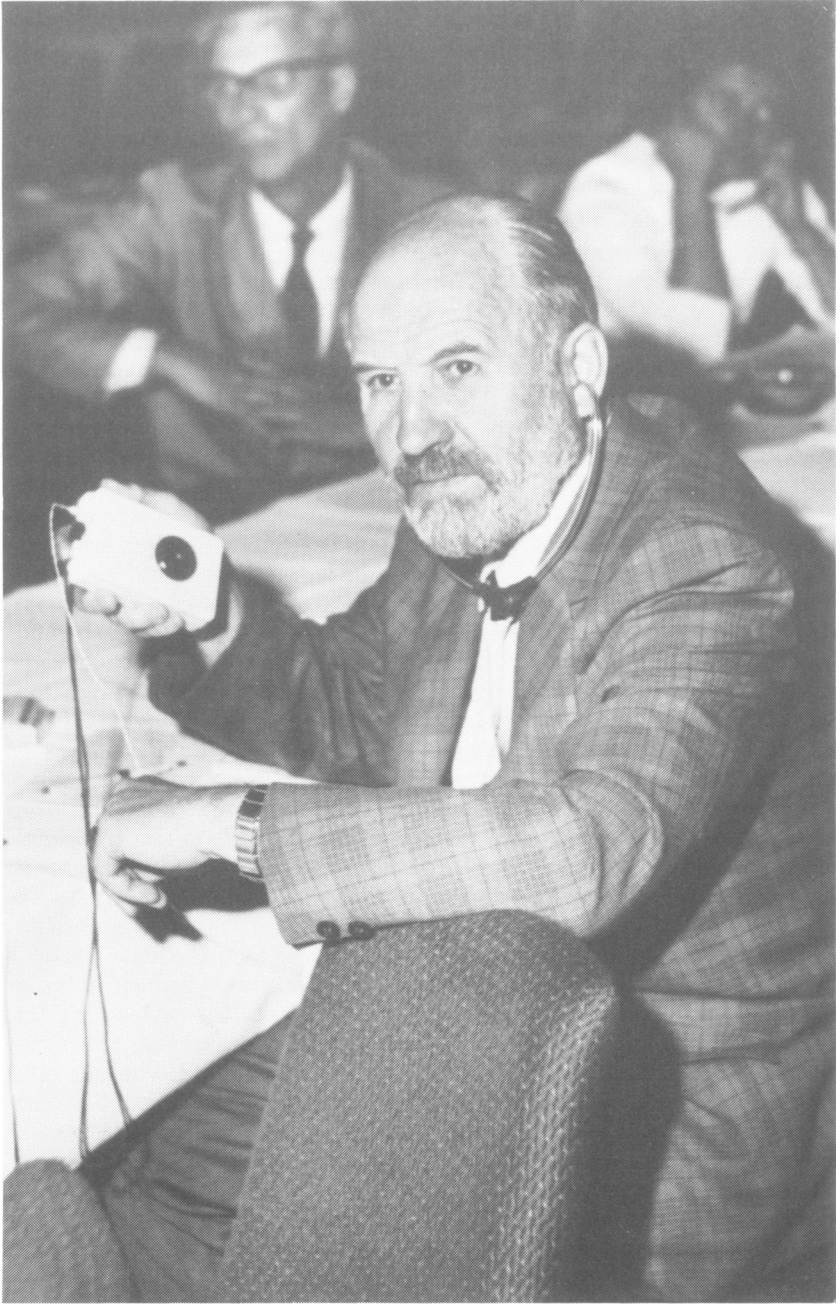
He conducted operas and recorded American Indian songs, edited record albums for the Library of Congress and studied Hausa children's games in Northern Nigeria; he was an early member and faithful, staunch supporter of our Council whose President he became in 1967. He was also co-founder and the first President of the Society for Ethnomusicology and, in 1965, the founder of the Graduate Program in Ethnomusicology at Columbia University where he taught from 1937 until his retirement in 1969. Willard Rhodes was a man of many talents, but his greatest gifts perhaps were his warmth, his patience, and his dignity. Willard Rhodes died after a long illness on May 15, 1992, in Sun City, Arizona, where he had spent the last years of his life.

After studies at Columbia University (M.A., 1925), the Mannes School of Music and the École Normale de Musique in Paris during the 1920's, Rhodes had given himself to conducting, to performing on the piano, to building his own small opera company, and to teaching—his life-long love. From 1935-37, he served as music director of the Bronxville Public Schools, then took up, together with his instructorship at Columbia University, an appointment as 'education specialist' with the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs. This led to his extensive and exemplary work between 1940 and 1952, of recording North American Indian music for the Bureau and the Library of Congress, his ten magnificent and well-documented albums, released by the Library of Congress in 1954, and to his role in the establishing of ethnomusicology—then a new word and unfamiliar concept—in American academia. His scholarly writings and recordings are listed in a *Special Bibliography: Willard Rhodes* that appeared in the journal *Ethnomusicology* (13, 1969: 305-308) upon his retirement.

Professor Rhodes was the first American colleague I was to meet on my first visit to America in 1965. He had invited me to lecture at Columbia, and took me afterwards to a student cafeteria—long since turned into a more profitable book store—to tell me, with a modesty that matched the setting, of his struggles for a Ph.D. program in ethnomusicology. Little did I know that six years later I was to succeed him in heading that program. Meanwhile he had assumed the presidency of the Council in its perhaps most difficult period. The moves of ICTM headquarters from London to Copenhagen and from there to Canada fell into Willard Rhodes' aegis, as did the Edinburgh Conference with its hot post-1968 turmoils in which Willard Rhodes, white bearded and with his burgundy coat, stood like a rock. The strength of his personality calmed the Council, as for so many years it had steadied all those he had touched.

This is how I shall always remember him.

DIETER CHRISTENSEN



Willard Rhodes at the IFMC Conference in Gottwaldov, July 18, 1962
(photo courtesy of Joy Rhodes Cooper)