

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION
PUTNAM CALDER ALDRICH
1904-1975

Putnam Aldrich was born in South Swansea, Massachusetts, July 14, 1904. He grew up in a large and happy family that included a celebrated music critic, Richard Aldrich of the New York Herald, his uncle. He was educated at the Moses Brown Preparatory School in Providence, Rhode Island, where a lifelong interest in musical ornamentation and embellishment was awakened by playing in the school jazz band. He was graduated from Yale College with a Bachelor of Arts in French literature in 1926, and also received a certificate from the Yale School of Music that year. He then went to England to continue his study of the piano with the noted pedagogue, Tobias Matthay, in 1926-27.

On the advice of Jose Iturbi, whose playing he admired, he began to study piano with Wanda Landowska in Paris in 1929, and soon gave up the piano in favor of the harpsichord, then considered a most obscure and obsolete instrument. His subsequent career as a performer was shaped by Madame Landowska who taught him his technique of performance and stimulated his curiosity about the fundamental basis of the music he performed. During his five years as her student he became her research assistant in order to help pay for his instruction. The readings he undertook, and the copies he made of music and treatises for Madame Landowska, which he then recopied for himself, became the foundation of his scholarship in the performance of early music. He also met and subsequently married Madelaine Momot, Madame Landowska's secretary.

He returned to the United States to take up a career as performer, journalist, and lecturer. He performed as soloist with the Boston Symphony, and later with the San Francisco Symphony, and as a recitalist and chamber music performer. He founded, with Alfred Zighera, the Boston Society of Ancient Instruments, and wrote music criticism for Boston newspapers and eventually for the Saturday Review. Although this activity might seem enough for a full life, he also became a student at Harvard University, receiving his M.A. in 1936 for *A Study of Vocal and Instrumental Ornamentation in the Music of the Middle Ages, with Particular Reference to the Relationship between the Two*. He received his Ph.D. from Harvard in 1942 with his dissertation *The Principal Agreements of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: A Study in Musical Ornamentation*. This monumental work, although never published, remains the greatest scholarly work on the ornamentation of French music of this period.

Putnam Aldrich held the post of visiting lecturer at Princeton University in 1939 and was lecturer and performer at the Berkshire Music Center from 1939 to 1942. Before coming to Stanford in 1950, he held professorial appointments at the University of Texas, Western Reserve University (Cleveland) and Mills College (Oakland). At Stanford, Professor Aldrich taught courses in the performance practices of early music, establishing the first union of the disciplines of musicology and performance technique. He replaced the mere analysis of scores with performances based on scholarship. His courses in the history of musical notation were a revelation of historical information and musical insight. He was a master of the subtle process of teaching, explaining just enough that his students could then taste the pleasure of discovery for themselves. He was always physically very active, and he brought his students to learn the dances of the renaissance and baroque periods as a means of understanding the rhythmic structure of the music.

His published works include *Ornamentation in J. S. Bach's Organ Works* (1950) and *Rhythm in Seventeenth-Century Italian Monody* (1966). He was working on a translation of Cesare Negri's *Nuove Inventioni di Balli (1604)* in his retirement, and he had continued to play harpsichord to the end of his life. He had received a Fulbright Fellowship and a Guggenheim Fellowship for research in Italy in 1958, and had been an exchange professor at Tokyo University of the Arts in 1964-65. He prepared for his year in Japan by studying the language, which he found so fascinating that he continued to study it daily throughout the rest of his life, solely for the intellectual discipline. Although he published a large number of articles, reviews and papers and contributed to dictionaries and encyclopedias, his publications are only a small representation of the vigor of his mind and quality of his insight.

He is survived by his wife Madelaine, his daughter Allegra (Mrs. Roland Tarentino) and by his four grandchildren. The warm friendship he developed with his friends and students may be even a better memorial than the record of his working life. The pleasure of the talk at his house, or while sunbathing at Lake Lagunita, emphasized the warmth and charm that he conveyed to everyone who knew him. His great professional accomplishments were matched by the completeness of his humanity.

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