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In Memoriam

GAIL BOYD de STWOLINSKI
(November 8, 1921 - July 15, 1996)

When Gail de Stwolinski retired in 1984 after 38 years of teaching theory at the University of Oklahoma, we searched for an appropriate way to both honor and continue her work. The *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* exists because Gail's students, colleagues, and friends, along with her husband and son, provided encouragement and financial resources for this unique publication through their gifts to the Gail Boyd de Stwolinski Center for Music Theory Pedagogy.

JMTP reflects Gail's insistence that excellence in teaching is expected, that learning how to teach is as important as knowing what to teach, and that critical thinking about teaching is essential to academia. Her classes in the University of Oklahoma School of Music were artistically sensitive performances in teaching. Each minute of each class was thoroughly prepared with exhaustive analyses supported by recorded or live musical examples and pounds of graphs and diagrams on overhead transparencies plus volumes of reserved materials in the music library. She also insisted that alternative student viewpoints were not only welcomed, but that they might be as appropriate as her own carefully crafted analyses. She approached each lecture from an aural standpoint; as far as Gail was concerned, musicians were meant to think through their ears. Her textbook, *Form and Content in Instrumental Music*, was a unique contribution to our field, demonstrating her convictions about the value and benefits of aural analysis as primary source material. She worked through each excerpt, each sentence, each process of that text until she was sure that any willing student could follow and comprehend what she had to say.

Gail set an example for students and colleagues alike by performing on cello and piano in ensembles and in class. She continued to be an active musician even after her retirement. She spent many hours playing cello in string quartets, and some of her most regular appointments were spent with friends exercising her key-

board skills in two-piano reading sessions. She was also an accomplished artist, exhibiting in a local gallery while continuing to study oil techniques.

As a campus role model, Gail was outstanding. She served as the first woman chair of the University of Oklahoma Faculty Senate, having won election to that position not only by countless hours of service on department, college, and university-wide committees and boards, but by the sound counsel she offered to each of the groups to which she was appointed or elected. Her advice was welcomed by a diverse group of colleagues from a wide range of departments and administrative offices. Her eclectic interests and expertise led to her selection as a founding faculty member of the University of Oklahoma College of Liberal Studies, an unusual degree program pioneered in the 1960's at what was then the Kellogg Center for Continuing Education. Her support of and advocacy for women's issues won her the admiration and respect of hundreds of women who came to the University of Oklahoma and found a mentor unlike any they had encountered before or afterwards. Her music students learned theory, they learned how to teach, and by observing Gail, they learned compassion for and acceptance of each student who entered their own classrooms or offices. To be a student of Gail's was to know that you were accepted, valued, and cherished as a human being.

Each time she served as a director or committee member for a thesis or dissertation, that student was assured of counsel, assistance, and the nurturing support so necessary to completion of a project of this magnitude, knowing that although she would willingly give large amounts of time, she would never compromise her standards or ethics. Faculty colleagues found that her breadth of knowledge was invaluable for this kind of stringent academic endeavor. The energy and enthusiasm she devoted to the appropriate completion of each of these documents were exceptional.

Gail was a consummate student throughout her lifetime; when she was curious about something, she went directly to the expert in that area, no matter who or where that person might be. She once made a quick trip to Los Angeles to talk with Halsey Stevens about a particularly knotty analytical detail in Bartók's string quartets.

She queried colleagues at national CMS meetings about unusual or new pedagogical techniques because she said she received such good ideas from colleagues who did not consider themselves “theorists.” Many of these college music faculty members reported that they gained more from talking with Gail than she could possibly have learned from them. She openly admired and praised faculty colleagues who put themselves in the place of the student when writing, lecturing, or performing; she had little, if any, patience with peers whose writing and teaching appeared to be done solely to impress their colleagues.

As a staunch and vocal advocate of faculty development, she and another theory teacher from a sister state college started the Oklahoma Music Theory Roundtable in the early 1950s to stimulate discussion and support among theory teachers at Oklahoma colleges and universities. This group developed into a strong, if somewhat loosely-organized, network of musicians who enjoyed teaching and learning about music theory and who enjoyed learning from each other. Over the years, nationally recognized theorists, educators, and researchers found themselves in the middle of the Oklahoma heartland presenting their ideas and then discussing theory pedagogy with an enthusiastic and dedicated group of college theory teachers. Gail and Louis often provided accommodations and relaxing downtime for these guests after the OMTR yearly meetings. On these occasions graduate students found themselves invited to dinner at Gail’s to meet and talk with some of the most outstanding scholars in the field of music theory.

Gail’s work will continue at the University of Oklahoma and throughout the nation as JMTP continues. Her deep interest in the study of aural perception will continue in the Gail Boyd de Stwolinski Center for Music Theory Pedagogy. And her personal influence will continue through all of us who were profoundly and positively affected by her disciplined intellect, unbridled curiosity, creative talents, and her joy in sharing interesting books, fine paintings, good music, and cherished friendships.

Alice Lanning,
for those who knew Gail.