

The Governing Board of the  
Society for Seventeenth-Century Music

is pleased to announce that

*Alfred Mann,*

Professor Emeritus,

Rutgers University and Eastman School of Music,

has been named

*Honorary Member of the Society,*

in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the study and presentation of  
seventeenth-century music.

April 6, 2002



**ALFRED MANN: A LIFE SKETCH**

By Michael Dodds

It is daunting to undertake a biography, however brief, of a person who has already recounted in eloquent if self-effacing terms the story of his uncommonly interesting life. Perhaps the greatest service I can therefore offer here is to point the reader to Alfred Mann's unforgettable autobiography, "A European at Home Abroad," found at the end of the Festschrift published in his honor in 1994. Here, I present the simplest of outlines; there, even those who know him well will form a more vivid impression by following the course of his life journey as seen through his own eyes.

I first formed my own impression of Alfred in 1989 when I began my graduate studies at the Eastman School of Music and was assigned to be his teaching assistant. Within a few weeks I summoned up the courage to invite him to lunch, but to my surprise, he insisted on inviting *me* to lunch, and there began a wonderful tradition: for the next eight years, whenever we were both in town, we shared a weekly meal. This arrangement involved a certain *quid pro quo*—I continued to assist him with his research, writing, and teaching long after my official assignment to him had ended—but the exchange was hardly an equal one, for what I gained from his mentoring, and what all those fine meals must have cost him, far outweighed the assistance I provided. This generosity, so thoroughly typical of Alfred, extended to all who came within the circle of his acquaintance; on any day of the week he could be found with students, colleagues, or friends at the Brasserie Restaurant across the street from Eastman. Kerala Snyder, his

successor at Eastman, recalls another instance of his generosity. To begin a new position while one's predecessor remains active as an *emeritus* at the same institution could be awkward, but from the first, Alfred welcomed her warmly and insisted she call on him if ever need arose. A day came when she awoke violently ill, unable to meet her morning class for a two-hour lecture on Lully. She called Alfred, who gladly filled in on only two hours' notice.

I find it remarkable that in spite of the tremendous adversity Alfred faced during his formative years and early adulthood, during one of the starkest manifestations of evil in human history, I have never heard him express bitterness or regret. For every path denied, new opportunities, discoveries, and friendships resulted, and he has never lost his wonderment and gratitude for these things. Alfred's warm humanity has endeared him to all who know him.



Alfred Mann was born into an artistic family in Hamburg on 28 April 1917. His mother, Edith Weiss-Mann (1885–1951), made a significant mark as a harpsichordist, leader of early music ensembles, and music journalist. Paintings by his father, the portrait artist Wilhelm Mann (1882–1957), remain in the collection of the Hamburg Kunsthalle. The marriage dissolved early in Mann's childhood, but both parents nurtured their son's artistic gifts, and his childhood was a happy one. Mann became accomplished first on the violin, then the viola, and then the string bass. Through early-music friends of his mother he acquired an interest in the recorder, an instrument he thoroughly mastered.

For nine years of his childhood and adolescence Mann attended the Johanneum, a Latin school dating from the time of the Reformation that counted Telemann and C.P.E. Bach among its music teachers. But when time came to advance to university, he found his way blocked because of his mother's Jewish ethnicity. Instead he matriculated at the Berlin Academy of Music, where his primary areas of study were the viola, composition, and conducting, but these he augmented with recorder lessons and his first grounding in musicology. It was in the library of the Berlin Academy of Music that he encountered a book that was to leave a definitive mark on his life's work: Johann Joseph Fux's 1725 music theory treatise, *Gradus ad Parnassum*. Recognizing that this important text had served generations of composers for instruction in counterpoint (including Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven), but that no translation from the Latin original had ever been published, Mann, grateful for his many years of Latin at the Johanneum, soon brought out his first scholarly publication.

By the time that Mann's translation began to draw international notice, however, he had already found it necessary to leave Germany. Just as his mother's ethnicity had barred him from university, his father's Silesian and Frisian ancestry qualified him to receive, on his twentieth birthday, a draft notice from the German army. After a single day of basic training he received a year's student deferment, and began to plan his emigration. Fascist Italy was one of the few countries open to him. He went to Milan, where his mother's sister had long been living, and there enrolled in the conservatory. Late in 1938, however, Mussolini mandated that all non-Aryans must leave the country within six months. Involvement in a Baroque chamber ensemble now proved his salvation: a contract for a performance in America provided justification for a very difficult-to-obtain visa.

Mann's plan was to enroll in the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. The composer Randall Thompson, then director of the Institute, provided not only admission to the Institute, but also an appointment to the faculty, much-needed for visa purposes. The years at Curtis were musically and personally rich. Numerous opportunities opened up before him, including concert appearances with his mother (who also had narrowly escaped Germany), the lutenist Suzanne Bloch, and other Curtis Institute friends. The Von Trapp family, themselves recent immigrants from Austria, engaged him as their recorder teacher and welcomed him into their home on many occasions. With the Curtis Institute orchestra he made the first American recording of Bach's fourth Brandenburg concerto using original instrumentation. Eugene Ormandy engaged him as soloist for the Philadelphia Orchestra's youth concerts.

Upon completion of his studies at Curtis, Mann accepted a music-teaching position at the Germantown Friends School in Germantown, Pennsylvania, near Philadelphia. Having applied for U.S. citizenship shortly after America formally entered World War II, he was soon drafted. In a remarkable twist of fate, he returned to Europe as a soldier with the U.S. Army, reaching Normandy a few months after the Allied invasion. Early on he played piccolo in his divisional band—an assignment that gave him a front-row seat when General Patton came to address his troops. As the Third Army moved into German territory, he was assigned to the Counter-Intelligence Corps, where he was responsible for discerning which persons among the civilian population remained loyal to the Nazis, and therefore potentially dangerous. Among the dramatic events of this time was his involvement in the arrest of the fleeing Hungarian prime minister, a Nazi collaborator. He also received a citation for bravery in the conduct of his duties under enemy shelling.

One of the most remarkable encounters of the war occurred when Mann's tank column made what was to be a ten-minute stop in Garmisch. There the news came that the war had ended, and the ten minutes grew into a year. Garmisch's most distinguished citizen was the eighty-year-old composer Richard Strauss. Mann's official duties and personal interests converged, enabling him to spend much time with this last of the great nineteenth-century Romantics. Allied victory in Europe soon restored some freedom to travel; seven years after leaving Hamburg, Mann returned to the city of his birth to find that amid the devastation of war his father had survived.

Upon returning to the United States, Mann undertook Ph.D. studies at Columbia University, where his primary mentor was Paul Henry Lang, whose views on music scholarship were important for shaping Mann's own. Mann's dissertation addressed the fugal teachings of Fux, Martini, and other eighteenth-century theorists. Published as *The Study of Fugue*, it quickly became a classic and remains in print to this day. Over the coming decades, Mann's research on compositional pedagogy was to extend beyond Fux to encompass the activities of many of the great composers as students or teachers, including Bach, Handel, Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert, and Tchaikovsky. (For several of these composers, he edited the relevant volumes of the critical editions.) In 1947 Mann was appointed to the faculty of Rutgers University, where he founded the music department and taught for more than thirty years. In 1948 he married Carolyn Owens, a talented playwright whose help as reader of his manuscripts Mann valued highly; their three sons, Adrian, John, and Timothy, have all been active as musicians.

One of the recurring themes of Mann's career has been a close relationship between scholarship and performance. In the late 1940s he worked closely with Arthur Mendel, conductor of the New York Cantata Singers, participating as a performer on recorder and contrabass in many concerts and recordings (including the earliest American Schütz recordings). When Mendel was appointed chair of music at Princeton University, Mann succeeded him as conductor of the Cantata Singers. In 1970 Mann began a ten-year stint as conductor of the Bethlehem Bach Choir, the oldest such choir in America. Recognizing from his vantage as a conductor the need for more and better editions of early music, Mann undertook editions of choral works by Gibbons, Schütz, and Purcell, as well as instrumental works by Salomone Rossi and later composers. Mann recognized a particularly acute need for an edition of Handel's *Messiah* that reflected more accurately the composer's own conducting score, but he also proved a strong advocate for Handel's lesser-known choral works. His deepening involvement with Handel studies led to serving on the boards of the international Händelgesellschaft and the *Hallische Händel-Ausgabe*, as well as to close and enduring friendships with Jens Peter Larsen and J. Merrill Knapp. Mann was also a founding member of the American chapter of the Neue Bachgesellschaft (now the American Bach Society) and served as its Secretary for some twenty years during the 1970s and 1980s; he remains on the board of that Society today. As editor of the *American Choral Review* from 1961 to 1999—a tenure of thirty-eight years—he reached tens of thousands of choral conductors with articles and reviews that are both accessible and musicologically sophisticated.

In 1980 Mann retired from Rutgers, only to begin a new chapter of his life as Professor of Musicology at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. He officially retired from Eastman in 1987, but this retirement, like his earlier one from Rutgers, proved to be in name only: he continued

teaching graduate seminars and maintained a busy schedule of out-of-town lectures. Among other writing projects, he edited a beautifully produced catalogue of manuscripts in the Library of Congress's Hans Moldenhauer archive—one of many instances in Mann's life of things coming "full circle," for it had been while teaching at the conservatory that Moldenhauer founded in Spokane, Washington, that Mann had first met his wife Carolyn. Involvement as composer and set painter with Carolyn's Front Porch Theater—so called because the front porch of their Penfield home served as the stage for productions by school children of plays by Shakespeare and by Carolyn herself—brought him particular enjoyment. A severe blow came with the loss of Carolyn to cancer in 1995, three years short of their golden wedding anniversary. In 1999, he moved to Fort Wayne, Indiana, to be near his oldest son, Adrian, much to the loss of the Eastman community. Since moving to Fort Wayne he has devoted his attention to various translation projects and to the writing of his reminiscences.

The course of Mann's publishing activities may be discerned in the selective bibliography that follows. That Mann should be so prolific a writer, and so eloquent a master of the English language, is all the more remarkable for the fact that English was the fifth of his many languages. The amount he has published is considerable, but for each publication that appeared under his own name, there are many more by his students and colleagues that owe their appearance to his editorship, translation, mentoring, or encouragement. His influence on seventeenth-century studies has been not so much direct—notwithstanding his numerous editions, performances, and recordings of seventeenth-century music—as indirect, through his direct and early role in the early music revival, his extending the boundaries of historically informed performance practices, his contributions to the history of music theory in the Baroque, and his encouragement of many younger scholars working in seventeenth-century music.

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