

a quality he deplored above all others, and fought no less steadfastly against pedantry, describing it as 'a malady that academics ought to fear like the Black Death.' As a scholar, as a library administrator, and as a man, Louis would have to be awarded the highest marks.

Philip A. Knachel

IRVING LOWENS

Irving Lowens—music critic, librarian, bibliographer, eminent historian of American music—died in Baltimore, Maryland, on November 14, 1983. A member of the Society since 1959, he was sixty-seven when he died. His career exemplifies the importance of the contributions of scholars outside academic circles to the study of American musical history.

Irving was born in New York City on August 19, 1916, and received his B.S. in music from Columbia University in 1939. After Pearl Harbor he began to work for the Civil Aeronautics Administration (later the Federal Aviation Agency) and by 1942 was employed as an air traffic controller, a profession he followed until the mid-1950s. He was assigned to the National Airport in Washington, D.C., by 1947 and soon began regular visits to the Music Division of the Library of Congress. There he carried on research in the field of American music before 1900, an area in which he had begun to publish about the time he moved to Washington. Curiosity soon led Irving to the corner of that field in which he was to make perhaps his strongest scholarly impact, American sacred music of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. He also discovered, through publications, notebooks, catalogue entries, and, less tangibly, general outlook, a scholarly model that was to inspire his own life deeply: the work of Oscar G. Sonneck (1873–

1928), first chief of the Music Division, and the most important historian of American music to that time.

Sonneck's work had been done between 1900 and 1915, a period when early American music was thought to be beneath serious scholarly attention. Believing that no accurate assessment of early American music was possible without a reconstruction of its historical record, Sonneck laid the foundation for such an effort with a series of works and monographs on eighteenth-century American concert life and opera, as well as with a bibliography of secular music printed in the United States before 1801. Based on exhaustive research into all available sources, including newspapers, periodical articles, and printed and manuscript music, Sonneck's published work set a standard for accuracy, thoroughness, and documentation in early American musical studies. That standard had essentially disappeared after Sonneck's death until Irving Lowens recognized and reintroduced it.

During the 1950s, Irving worked in early American sacred music along lines parallel to those Sonneck had followed in secular music. In a series of articles based on close documentary and bibliographical study, he illuminated several shadowy regions of the American musical past: the history of the Bay Psalm Book, the publication of John Tufts's *Introduction* (the first instructional tunebook in the colonies), the history of Little and Smith's *The Easy Instructor* (the first shape-note tunebook), the origins of the American fusing tune, the printed history of the American folk hymn, and the careers of psalmodists Daniel Bayley, Lewis Edson, Andrew Law, and Daniel Read. In these pieces, collected in his *Music and Musicians in Early America* (New York, 1964), Irving showed how scholarly work on seemingly obscure topics could be elegantly presented and full of human insight. ('Despise not the day of small things,' he counseled in one of his articles, borrowing a New England proverb to justify his own preoccupations.) At the same time, Irving also followed Sonneck's bibliographical lead.

In collaboration with Allen P. Britton, he worked to bring early American printed sacred music under bibliographical control—an effort that, with the added contributions of the present writer, the Society will soon publish. During the 1950s, he also did most of the work on his bibliography *Songsters Printed In America Before 1821*, published in 1976 by the Society.

A serious heart attack in December 1954, brought this phase of Irving's career to a close. Recuperation was slow and scholarly work halted for a time. Resigning from his position with the C.A.A., Irving started a short-lived business as an antiquarian music book dealer and enrolled in the American Civilization Program at the University of Maryland. He received his Master's degree in 1957 and later finished course work for a doctorate, although he never completed that degree. Soon after, his professional life blossomed. At the age of forty-four he won employment in the field of music for the first time: both as sound recordings librarian at the Library of Congress (1960–61) and as chief music critic of the *Washington Evening Star* (1961–78), a newspaper to which he had been contributing occasional music criticism since 1953.

During the rest of his life, Irving gained eminence in a wide range of musical and professional circles. In 1961, he was promoted to assistant head of the Music Division's Reference Section at the Library of Congress, a post he held until his resignation in 1966. During 1965–66, he served as president of the Music Library Association. Irving's scholarly achievements were recognized by his election to the board of directors of the American Musicological Society (1964–66), and in 1975–76 he served as senior research fellow of the Institute for Studies in American Music at Brooklyn College. He helped to found the Music Critics Association and served as its president from 1971 to 75. In 1978, he took his only full-time academic post—as dean and associate director of a music conservatory, the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University; he held this

position until 1981. At the time of his death, Irving was in charge of a program at the Peabody Institute to educate and train music critics. Perhaps, however, few things in his life gave him as much pleasure as his role as founding member and first president of the Sonneck Society (1975–81), an organization devoted to the study of American music and named after Irving's inspirational mentor.

Despite his seeming success at all he undertook, Irving's life was not without frustrations. Overwork and chronic coronary problems sapped his strength, and his literary talents were spent largely on writing criticism for the *Star*. The Society, whose meetings he had only occasionally been able to attend, seems to have taken on something of the aspect of a haven from the relentless treadmill of daily deadlines. 'I'd love to bury myself in something sensible like bibliography these days if I could,' he wrote John Hench at the Society in 1974, 'but the economic situation is a real mess.' Two years later, with the *Star* in deep financial difficulties and his own future hanging in the balance, Irving made a multifold proposal to Marcus McCorison: that the AAS become a center for American music bibliography, that bibliographic control in music be extended beyond Sonneck's and Richard J. Wolfe's work (through 1825), and that he come to Worcester to head up the project. Although this plan never materialized, the idea that he could make such a proposal at that stage of his life testifies both to his commitment to music bibliography and his affection and respect for the Society.

In addition to his appetite for informality and fun, Irving was generous with time and advice for young scholars interested in working in American music. His vast knowledge of the field enabled him to make specific suggestions that were always useful. When surrounded by friends, he could be an especially gracious and entertaining companion. He is survived by his wife, Margery Morgan, herself a scholar of American music, and a brother and a sister. After his death, and

following his wishes, his collection of printed songsters and of music manuscripts were given to the Society by Mrs. Lowens.

Although Irving had no children, his legacy to American musical scholarship is rich: a collection of seminal writings, a belief in the significance of American music-making, a spirit—perhaps best expressed in the quick growth and friendly ambience of the Sonneck Society—of welcome to others seeking to take up American musical studies, and a scholarly credo that, both in word and deed, he followed through his career: ‘bibliography is the backbone of history.’

Richard Crawford

Copyright of Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society is the property of American Antiquarian Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.