IN MEMORIAM

DALIES EHRHARDT FRANTZ
(1908-1965)

Dalies Frantz was born on January 9, 1908, in Lafayette, Colorado, a little mining town near Denver. While he was still a small child, his parents--William Henry Frantz and Amalia Lueck Frantz--moved to Denver, where he began studying piano when he was seven and was considered a prodigy by the time he was nine. The little boy and his mother, a fine lieder singer, appeared frequently together in recitals in and near Denver.

To provide larger opportunities for musical study, he later went with his mother to Boston, where, after he reached sixteen, he largely supported himself by giving recitals and by serving as organist and director of a church choir. To this end he had taught himself to play the organ, devising a technique of his own which enabled him to play the larger compositions of this literature when he later studied organ briefly at Ann Arbor with Professor Palmer Christian, University Organist.

His academic training went on at the Huntington Preparatory School, which awarded him an athletic scholarship for his championship swimming as captain of the team. This interest in athletics he never lost, though as a college student later he regretfully gave up competition to spend more time on piano practice. During his years in Austin he was frequently called on by the athletic department of the university to serve as judge at swimming meets. Skiing and basketball also were early skills he remembered with some enthusiasm, and spectator sports he followed all his life.

In 1926 he entered the University of Michigan School of Music to study piano with Guy Maier of the brilliantly successful Maier-Pattison two-piano team. Here, again, he supported himself by various extra-curricular activities, chiefly musical, and completed the work for a Bachelor of Music degree with highest honors by January, 1930. His academic work was of such high quality that in 1957 the University of Texas chapter of Phi Beta Kappa did him--and itself--the honor of electing him to honorary membership, a distinction he would have won for himself had students in the Michigan School of Music been eligible for Phi Beta Kappa at the time of his graduation.

During the years at Michigan also--largely under the influence of two gifted members of the English faculty, Peter Munro Jack and Howard Mumford Jones--he developed the passion for reading which became a dominant characteristic throughout his entire life. His tastes in reading were catholic, his library extensive. The musical development of his later life was based on a firm foundation of appreciation for literature and all the other arts.

A group of musical sponsors in Denver made it possible for him to study for a time with Artur Schnabel in Europe. This association eventually colored his musical thinking more than any other influence of his life; it grew more and more profound as years passed. Somewhat later he was able to return to Europe for further work with Schnabel and also with Vladimir Horowitz, to whom he was always grateful for help in the development of an impressive technique.

After winning three major piano competitions during 1932 and 1933, he made his debut in January, 1934, with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski in Philadelphia and New York. For this Schubert Memorial Award appearance he chose Beethoven's Concerto No. 1 in C Major, a work which had been surprisingly neglected in this country until he played it: (one Chicago critic even complained of it as a "musical curiosity" because it had been heard there only once before). Dalies Frantz always liked to think that he might have had some part in giving that concerto its present position of great popularity in the piano repertoire. In any case, he achieved great

personal success with it, was immediately signed by the management of Columbia Concerts Corporation, and launched on a brilliant career that took him again a again from coast to coast in recitals and in appearances with almost every maj orchestra in America. Reviews constantly commended his extraordinary virtuosi ("wrists of steel--fingers of velvet" as one critic said and many others quote his youth, his attractive stage presence. It was certainly the most substanti success enjoyed by any American Pianist of that decade. Also, he found time f teaching at the University of Washington at Seattle during two summer sessions, and for some further study in Ann Arbor, where he lived with his wife, formerl Martha King of Detroit, whom he married in 1934 and from whom he was separated 1939.

His eminence as a pianist attracted the attention of Hollywood, and he was pla under contract by MGM. He appeared in minor roles in several movies while wai ing for the chance to make a film that he hoped would star the piano as a rece Stokowski film had starred the orchestra. The chance came when he was schedul to play the sound-track for a movie devoted to the life of Chopin, but World War II intervened. (In 1946, when MGM finally made the film, he was offered t chance again, but he had grown disillusioned with Hollywood in all that pertai to the arts and was almost glad that illness prevented him from considering th offer.)

With the involvement of the United States in the war, he volunteered for servic and was attached to a fighter squadron on the west coast as an intelligence officer. Before the end of the war, however, he was given a medical discharge-- the beginning of the long series of physical calamities which would befall him the years to come. While recuperating and regaining concert form, he was invit in 1943 to join the faculty of the University of Texas Department of Music. It was for him the opening of a new career, although he did not know it at the tim

For the next two years he characteristically threw his major energies into teach- ing, while on the side he played war-bond concerts and undertook fairly extensi concert tours, climaxed by a Carnegie Hall recital in December, 1945. The cost was greater than he could have imagined. Two months later he suffered a complet collapse and was hospitalized for almost a year.

It was a year of great activity rather than mere dejection: revised plans for gifted students with whose future he was concerned; revised goals for his own musical development; revised plans for the piano division and the Music Depart- ment, whose future he came to accept as his own. And all this with no bitterne or very little--for what he was giving up, but only a much more profound under- standing of the value of what was left him to do. When he was again able to si at a piano and teach, or play for his own satisfaction, it was a totally new ex- perience--for him, for his students, and for those people who were privileged t hear the recitals he gave in Hogg Auditorium and Music Building Recital Hall during the later years. It was teaching of a sort and music of a kind not often to be heard.

But the misfortunes did not end. Each calamity, dealt with, was succeeded by another seemingly designed to put his spirit to the ultimate test. Life for hi became almost wholly unpredictable, yet he never ceased to plan, to take thought especially for his students. To those who knew him best, his gallantry was awesome. He was never an invalid at heart.

Had he been able to continue his concert career after his musical values had reached maturity, he would certainly be remembered as one of the very great performing artists of his day. Many who heard his performance in Hogg Auditoriu of the Schubert Sonata in A Major and the Beethoven, Opus 111, (November, 1955) were reminded of Artur Schnabel's superb musicianship. Fortunately there are tapes of that recital which may soon be available.

But it will surely be as a teacher that he will be most gratefully remembered. From the first he taught with verve and warmth and an incisive wit. His charm and gaiety at once enlisted the students' enthusiasm; his probing intelligence challenged their understanding. One of his most gifted students of those early days described the special quality of his teaching by saying that not only could he analyze the music profoundly, but he could also put his observations into words that the students could comprehend. The longer he taught, the more he set store by certain technical devices for gaining assurance and control: mental practice, a firm grasp of the principles of figuration or ornamentation, and other matters which he felt teachers needed to stress. To pass on some of his own experience and conviction to music teachers all over the country, he contri- buted a series of essays, some light, some serious, to a publication of Dr. Irl Allison's National Music Teachers' Guild which reaches thousands of readers every month. The writings contained so much of permanent value that many teachers in recent months have asked for reprints. Some of the best of the numbers he wrote while hospitalized!

Through the years his students continued to respond to his vivid personality and his intense devotion to the cultivation of excellence, in ways that brought substantial rewards to themselves, and deep respect to the University. They have played with symphonies in many of the larger cities. They have won contests far and wide: the regularity with which they won the Dealey award in Dallas became almost an embarrassment to the judges. James Dick, the most gifted of his students still studying here, among other recent successes was a finalist in the Tchaikovsky International Competition in Moscow in June and will return by invitation for a concert tour of Russia next spring. Too many to name have held Fulbright Awards in Switzerland, in Austria, and especially in London. Most influential of all, perhaps, are those who are now passing on to their own students what they learned here.

Dalies Frantz died in Austin, December 1, 1965, and is survived by one sister, Mrs. Aleonora Frantz Nielson of Chico, California.

One of his close and long-time friends, the young American pianist John Browning, who had often come to Austin for help while preparing works for concerts and recordings, recently returned to give a Dalies Frantz Memorial Concert at the Municipal Auditorium. In a deeply felt and perceptive tribute included in the program, he said:

> I often came to him for advice and musical help, and always left inspired, refreshed, renewed. He was incapable of giving less than everything he possessed.... In an age where so much is synthetic, slipshod, and pretentious, he was a man of incorruptible honesty, responsibility, and courage.

Kent Kennan, Chairman
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