

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

GEORGE HAROLD LIST (February 9, 1911- September 28, 2008)

George List was born George Harold Lisitsky in Tucson, a year before Arizona entered the Union. He legally changed his patronymic to List in 1941. He was the youngest of three children of Max Lisitsky (1866-1959) and Mollie Brouse Lisitsky (1876-1965). His father was born in Russia, emigrated to the United States at the age of fifteen, and had no education in this country. His mother was born in the state of New York and raised in Kansas by her immigrant parents. The eldest of eleven children, she left school after the eighth grade in order to take care of her siblings.

George List graduated from Tucson High School at age fifteen in 1926, the youngest member of a class of 155 and the tenth-ranked in scholarship. However, his higher education, dispersed and interrupted as it was among years of work experience, was not completed until he was forty-three years of age. He began to play the flute at age eleven, but he was primarily self-taught until he entered the Julliard School of Music at age seventeen. He earned the diploma in flute from Julliard in 1933. Delayed by the onset of the Depression, he did not earn a bachelor's degree in music education -- at Teachers College, Columbia University -- until 1941, when he was thirty years old. After earning a master's degree from Columbia in 1945, he began work towards his doctorate at Indiana University. He completed the PhD in music theory, with minors in composition and education, in 1954, twenty-eight years after his graduation from high school.

In 1934 George List married Eve Zipoura Ehrlichman, who had just earned the diploma in piano from the Juilliard School of Music. She later became interested in voice production and diction, studied voice, and became proficient as a vocal coach as well as a pianist. She was best known in Bloomington as the founder and director during its early years of the Community Chamber Music Association. She died at age eighty-seven; had she lived three weeks longer the Lists would have been married for sixty-seven years. Their son Michael was also well-known in Bloomington as both a capable veterinarian and, as a member of the Monroe County Board of Health and other public organizations, a defender of the environment. He died prematurely at age fifty-seven.

In 1934, with a grant he received from the Julliard Foundation, George List established and directed the music school of the Madison Square Boys Club, which served underprivileged boys and girls of the Kips Bay region of Manhattan. Here he also taught wind instruments and conducted rhythm bands, orchestra, and chorus. The children gave concerts at the Julliard School in 1936 and 1937; the second concert was given entirely to contemporary music for children. Being unable to find further financing, after three years List closed the school.

From 1939 through 1942 he conducted children's ensembles for the International Workers Order, a left-wing organization offering insurance, medical care, and cultural activities to various ethnic groups in New York City. In addition to rehearsing the orchestras, he taught fifteen-minute lessons on whatever instrument the child played. The ensembles consisted of two Jewish bands, a Hungarian band, a Croatian tamburitza orchestra, and a Lithuanian mandolin orchestra.

In 1942-43 George List taught instrumental music part-time in two public school systems, forty-five miles apart, in New York. In these schools he conducted orchestras and bands. The following year he secured a full-time position in a high school in Floral Park, New York, where he taught wind

instruments, conducted a band, and was acting head of the music department. After receiving his masters degree in 1945, he joined the faculty of Colorado College in Colorado Springs, where in addition to offering courses he conducted the chapel choir, the orchestra, and band. He then moved to his first permanent position as an assistant professor at Miami University in Ohio, where he taught flute, music theory, contemporary music, and conducted an acapella chorus during the academic year, and taught courses in music appreciation in the summer sessions. He advanced rapidly at Miami, being promoted to associate professor and receiving tenure after only two years. His wife, Eve, was also a member of the music faculty, teaching both piano and voice.

Before he came to study and eventually to join the faculty in Bloomington, List was for short periods active as a flutist, performing in the Brooklyn Chamber Symphony, the New York Civic Symphony, the Denver and Colorado Springs orchestras, and in several chamber music ensembles, in addition to performing in joint flute and piano recitals with his wife. He also published compositions for piano, flute and piano, voice and piano, mens voices, womens voices, mixed chorus, and band. In manuscript are works in those genres plus works for organ, wind quintet, string quartet, and orchestra. Of his larger works his symphonic satire, "Marche O'Malley," was first performed by the Eastman-Rochester Symphony under Howard Hansen at the Eastman School during its annual symposium of American orchestral music in 1947. It was later performed by the symphony orchestras of Cincinnati, Indianapolis, and Bloomington.

During his entire tenure at Indiana University (1954-76), List was director of the Archives of Traditional Music, a repository of recordings of folk, tribal, and Oriental art music. Beginning with a large collection of recordings previously brought to the University, List slowly developed it into a public research resource which gained national and international recognition. Because at that time it was the only archive of its kind in any university in the United States, List had to invent most of the procedures of collecting and cataloguing to be followed. These formed the basis of the development of later archives such as those at the University of California at Los Angeles and the University of New Zealand at Auckland.

Because List was now engaged in the relatively young field of ethnomusicology – the Society for Ethnomusicology was established in 1955 – he found it difficult to secure a position as a regular faculty member in the University. He therefore taught courses as a lecturer in folk music, anthropology, and the recording and transcription of traditional music. Finally in 1964 he was appointed as an associate professor in the newly established Department of Folklore. In 1966, with funds from the Ford Foundation, he established within that department the Inter-American Program in Ethnomusicology, which specialized in the traditional musics of the Americas and of Europe and Africa which shared in their development. This program was the third to be established in the United States which offered graduate degrees in folklore with an emphasis on musicology. In this program List taught seminars in the transcription and analysis of traditional music, in Latin American ethnomusicology, and in field work. Both of the organizations he developed at Indiana, the Archives and the ethnomusicology program, are still flourishing, the latter as the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology.

In his fieldwork List recorded the music and researched the folklore of the Hopi Indians of northern Arizona, the Costeños of the Caribbean costal region of Columbia, and the highland and Amazon Indians of Ecuador. He investigated methods of archiving recordings and documentary folklore in the capitols of eight European countries, and he researched the Spanish cognates of Colombian folksongs in archives and libraries of Madrid. Through the years he delivered over eighty lectures in the United States, Canada, Jamaica, Europe and Israel, and he lectured in Spanish in Mexico and South

America. He is the author of *Music and Poetry in a Colombian Village: A Tri-Cultural Heritage* (Indiana University Press: 1983), which was translated into Spanish and published in Bogota' in 1995; *Singing About It: Folksong in Southern Indiana* (Indiana Historical Society: 1991); and *Stability and Variation in Hopi Song* (American Philosophical Society: 1993). Most of his sixty scholarly articles were published in the United States, but he also contributed to journals in Canada, Europe, India, and (in Spanish) Mexico and South America. He founded and edited the periodical *The Folklore and Folkmusic Archivist* (Archives of Traditional Music, 1958-68), and he prepared a series of ethnomusicological disc albums issued through Folkways records. His contribution to this series was *Cantos Costeños, Folksongs of the Atlantic Coastal Region of Colombia* ((1973). He was also the creator and narrator of a series of half-hour television films, *Music in the Life of Man*, produced by the Indiana University Department of Radio and Television and supported and distributed nationally by the Education Radio and Television Center in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

George List was a member of a number of learned societies and was most active in the International Folk Music Council and the Society for Ethnomusicology. He served as a councilor in the latter society for a number of years, and as its secretary for one term. Among many fellowships and awards he received a faculty fellowship from the Fund for the Advancement of Education (Ford Foundation), a Fulbright-Hays fellowship, an NEH Senior Fellowship, and grants-in-aid from the Julliard Foundation, the American Philosophical Society, and the Indiana Historical Society.

Professor List's thorough training as an educator and his varied experience made him a very effective teacher. Shortly after his retirement in 1976, his students collaborated in a volume of essays, *Discourses in Ethnomusicology: Essays in Honor of George List*, published by the Ethnomusicology Publishing Group in 1978.

List suffered from glaucoma and for this reason was deferred from military service during the Second World War. In 1950 he had operations on both eyes, but his vision slowly continued to deteriorate. With blindness obviously imminent, he retired in December, 1976 and within a year was unable to read by any means. Nonetheless, he soon discovered that he could carry on his scholarly activities reasonably well with the help of competent graduate assistants. In his seventies and eighties he revised his book on Colombian folk music, and wrote his books on the songs of the Hopi Indians and the folksongs of Indiana. He continued to lecture, twice offering courses in the University and once participating in a three-week seminar in Mexico City, by recording what he wished to say onto a cassette. He also presented the "distinguished lecture" at a conference of the Society for Ethnomusicology, the first member to be so honored after each of the four founding members had taken his turn.

Throughout his life List was active in fields other than music and folklore. As an undergraduate at Julliard he choreographed a dance for a class show. In Bloomington he designed and prepared plans for the house in which he and his family lived once it was completed. He tried his hand at several genres of fiction, including the book for a comic-satiric operetta *Gadgets: A Commercial Opera*. He collected his fiction into an unpublished volume, *An Affair with a Ladybug, Novella and Short Stories*, and at age eighty-nine he began writing an autobiography, titled, at his wife's suggestion, *The Obstacle Course: A Musical Memoir*. The manuscript of his memoir, not fully completed, is available in the library of Archives of Traditional Music.

On the occasion of his eightieth birthday George List received messages of congratulation from colleagues in the United States and abroad. Ruth Stone, once his student and later head of the

ethnomusicology program at Indiana, wrote, “Your achievements as an ethnomusicologist and an archivist are wonderful monuments in the history of our field, and your example of active research and writing in your eightieth year challenges us all.” The challenges continued beyond his eightieth year, and still stand: George List’s last publication, “The Organization and Function of a Folklore Archive,” appeared in *Folklore Historian* during his ninety-first year.

George List

(with Donald Gray)

Professor of Folklore and Ethnomusicology Emeritus