

Paul Cienniwa

Howard Schott (1923–2005)

The international early music community lost one of its greatest advocates on 23 June 2005. Howard Schott died during a brief hospitalization just a few days after his beloved Boston Early Music Festival.

Born in New York on 17 June 1923 and raised in the suburb of White Plains, Howard received early encouragement in music from his parents, both non-musicians. Upon completion of high school at 16, he was accepted by both Harvard and Yale, but chose Yale because of an interest in the harpsichord. Yale, as well as his father, insisted that he wait a year, during which he studied piano with Hans Neumann in New York. While at Yale, Howard majored in French, although he also found the time to study harpsichord with Ralph Kirkpatrick.

Howard was drafted into the Second World War at 19, during his third year at Yale. At first he was stationed in Wisconsin in order to teach reading and writing to draftees from Appalachia, but he was later transferred to Ann Arbor for intensive study of German. At Ann Arbor, he sent for his typewriter, enabling him to complete his undergraduate thesis on Baudelaire and to graduate in 1944. He then went to Camp Ritchie in Maryland, where he met Henry Pleasants and worked for the US Army Military Intelligence Service. While abroad during the war, Howard was involved with translation and prisoner interrogation and co-authored a *Glossary of German administrative and political terminology*.

Following his war service (1943–6) Howard returned to New Haven to attend Yale Law School, where he also taught French to undergraduates and was able to resume study with Kirkpatrick. After graduating in 1948 he worked for a number of organizations, including the Bureau of Indian Affairs under Felix Cohen, the Atomic Energy Commission and Shering Pharmaceuticals, for which he travelled extensively. Howard passed the New York State bar examination with the highest points in the state, a distinction that won him a monetary award which he used to pay for piano lessons.

When preparing *Playing the harpsichord* in the late 1960s, he remarked that, if the manuscript were accepted by a publisher, he would pursue a doctorate in musicology. The book, eventually released in 1971, was accepted,



and Howard began study at Oxford in 1968. His dissertation, *A critical edition of the works of J. J. Froberger*, led to the DPhil in 1978. Like *Playing the harpsichord*, his edition of Froberger for Heugel remains in wide use today.

After a brief return to New York Howard moved to Boston to pursue a dual career in musicology and law. He lectured at a number of Boston schools, including New England Conservatory. Later, he worked for the National Association of Security Dealers and the American Arbitration Association, mediating and arbitrating over 100 cases for Prudential Insurance.

Throughout his Boston years Howard was intensely engaged in the world of music, particularly early music. He wrote for *New Grove*, co-authored the *Catalogue of musical instruments in the Victoria & Albert Museum: part I: Keyboard instruments*, and edited the monograph series, *The Historical Harpsichord*. An International Editorial Advisor for *Early music*, he was a frequent contributor, often documenting Boston's musical activities. He served on the boards of numerous organizations, including the Boston Early Music Festival, the Yale Collection of Musical Instruments, the Boston Clavichord Society and the American Recorder Society.

Howard had a remarkable memory, a knack for languages and an unforgettable way with words. His knowledge in all areas of music was extraordinary, especially in the field of opera, and he had a particular

fondness for Wagner. His retention of composers' themes, catalogue numbers and performance dates was daunting, and, as a lover of tests, he took pleasure in taunting me on the eve of my doctoral oral exams.

I first met Howard in December of 2004. I was visiting Boston, and Howard, on the phone with another harpsichordist, heard me playing in the background. That evening, I officially met him after a lecture given by Virginia Pleasants at Harvard University's Mather House, where Howard was a Fellow. At the time, I was looking to apply to graduate schools for harpsichord study, and Howard suggested that I apply to his *alma mater*. This fortuitous proposition led me in ways I never could have imagined. More importantly, this moment began a friendship that carried and sustained me through the time of Howard's death.

My story is probably not very different from those of others who grew up under Howard's mentorship. Significantly, he didn't just support the cause of early music; he also upheld its future by taking young performers and scholars under his wing. Indeed, Howard's love for music manifested itself in his concern for music's future. This legacy shall carry on through the countless people whose lives he touched.

The author would like to thank Howard's sister, Rhoda Ober, for providing detailed background information.

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