

## OBITUARY

### ARNE BJÖRNDAL

Arne Björndal died on January 12th, 1965, at the age of 83.

He was one of the specialists on Norwegian Folk Music. As one of the most excellent players of the Harding fiddle he gave many performances in Norway and abroad. He began at a very early date to collect *slatter* (popular folk dances) and other melodies. From 1907 on he published several volumes of *slatter* for Harding fiddle, dances which, from a folklore point of view, were of very high quality and of great interest. His book on the traditions connected with the professional work of fiddlers will soon be available. As to further information on Björndal and his several activities, see the festival publication *Norsk Folkemusikk*, published in honour of his seventieth anniversary, 1952.

O. M. SANDVIK

### HENRY DIXON COWELL

March 11th, 1897—December 10th, 1965

This seems to be a time for dying. Certainly, too many of our distinguished musical citizens have been leaving us. Among these Henry Dixon Cowell stands in the forefront.

It would be idle at this time and place to attempt a resumé of Henry Cowell's varied activities as composer, concert pianist, teacher, theorist, musicographer, scholar, americanist, ethnomusicologist. He led a very busy life, so busy in fact that no summary could ever hope to encompass the scope of his activities in any single area, let alone the endless variety of areas that attracted his attention.

Rather, it would appear more appropriate to sketch an important emphasis in the life of this archetypal pioneer in a field that held his lively interest for many years . . . comparative musicology or as it has more recently become known, ethnomusicology.

Sidney Cowell has transmitted to me several arresting features of Henry Cowell's early exposure to non-European music. In 1904, at the age of seven, he lived in San Francisco on the edge of the Oriental district. It was at this time that he heard performances of Chinese operas, and had many opportunities to participate in the singing games of Polynesian, Japanese and Chinese children as they played in the street. Also among his experiences during these formative years were *koto* performances, usually lasting through an entire day beginning with the youngest of pupils in the morning and terminating with virtuosi in the evening.

These experiences clearly had a lasting effect. One of his surviving youthful works from 1911-12 incorporates melodic elements of a clearly Japanese character. And at a comparatively early period he began his study of Oriental music theory. A prolonged study of Indian music began in earnest in 1927. His positive interest and demonstrated capabilities in non-European music were recognized in the award of a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1931-32 which enabled him to work intensively with Erich von Hornbostel in Berlin. A Rockefeller grant in 1956-57 made possible a prolonged stay in the Far East for the purposes of continuing his study of Asian music. In between and following these grants there were many trips undertaken voluntarily and on invitation for the purpose of studying first-hand various kinds of ethnic music and systems.