

Remembering Anne Crowden

Anne Crowden's Teaching

Press Release: Berkeley Musician Wins Distinguished National Prize

The Heidi Castleman Award

The Crowden School, Berkeley – January 20, 1997.

Chamber Music America announced at the weekend, at its annual National Conference held in New York City, that it had selected Anne Crowden of Berkeley as the winner of the Heidi Castleman Award in recognition of her outstanding achievements in chamber music teaching.

The Award, one of the most distinguished and coveted prizes in the field of musical education, is for excellence in chamber music teaching, and selects from candidates across the country who are leaders of school music programs of every kind, including public, private and community music schools, college-preparatory divisions, youth orchestras, fine arts centers and private studios. Chamber Music America is the national service association for the field of professional chamber music.

Anne Crowden, a faculty member of the Department of Music at the University of California, Berkeley, and a former faculty member of the Department of Music of Stanford University and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, is the Director and Founder of The Crowden School in Berkeley. The School was founded in 1983, and in just 13 years has established itself as one of the unique musical institutions in the country. Its Honorary President is the renowned violinist, The Right Hon. The Lord Menuhin (Yehudi Menuhin), and children from the School were recently selected to play to President Clinton on the President's last visit to California. John Adams, one of the leading modern composers in the country (and a Bay Area resident) recently described The Crowden School as "a treasure," and commented "this extraordinary school has no peer in American musical education."

Anne Crowden studied at Edinburgh University in Scotland and trained at the Royal Academy of Music in London. She became an internationally renowned instrumental player and performed as a violinist with the Edinburgh String Quartet, and the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra, as well as performing as a soloist for the British Broadcasting Association and the Arts Council of Great Britain. She has lived in the US since 1965. In 1980 she was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music for her distinguished service to music. Her pupils at The Crowden School have consistently won many of the top performing prizes and awards in the country and are regularly selected to go on to schools and conservatories such as the Juilliard School of Music. The Crowden School is a full academic day school, located in Berkeley, for children in grades four through eight. The School provides extensive musical training, in addition to its academic program, with an emphasis on chamber music and

choral music. The School also runs an extensive and very successful community program and summer programs, with classes in instrumental music, eurhythmics, choir, and opera.

Anne Crowden and The Crowden School

A Narrative by John Adams,

Composer

Member of The Crowden School Music Advisory Board

In 1983 Anne Crowden, a native of Edinburgh, Scotland now a naturalized American citizen, a single mother, and a woman with a passion for music, was deeply disturbed by the difficulties facing musically gifted American students. Long before the political and economic climate in California began to mandate serious reductions in public school arts education, she saw the handwriting on the wall and knew that the future for these children in the U.S. was darkening. In response she commenced to use her enormous energy and powers of persuasion to create a place where children from all economic backgrounds could immerse themselves in music while enjoying the highest levels of academic schooling.

In the basement of a local church Anne, with the help of a few parents and colleagues, began her school, starting out with eleven students of junior high school age, the age she felt was critical for musical training to have its maximum impact. With virtually no money and only a small group of idealistic supporters, she scrubbed floors, painted walls, begged people to donate their old upright pianos, encyclopedias, and computers, and gradually assembled a small but efficient staff to run the day to day business of the school. She says of these first years “We were regarded academically with great suspicion by all, and it took quite a few years to persuade parents-at-large that musical progress and academic progress go hand-in-hand.”

A “bottom line” corporate mentality that seems to dominate every corner of American life is having its effect on classical music education. Cutbacks in support to performing organizations at the NEA and even more drastic cutbacks in primary and secondary school music education threaten this cultural activity at its root. While most schools are forced to cut or abandon musical training as an integral part of their curriculum, Anne Crowden took a contrarian position. In the face of absolute indifference, with a few like-minded individuals in the community, she founded a school whose continued existence is a minor miracle. TCS serves as a model for how a middle school can succeed in every arena. While there are many aspects of life at TCS that contribute to this success, I believe that Anne’s commitment to excellence, that “the highest standards possible will be expected from each child according to individual abilities” is the key.

In the autumn of 1993 a fifth-grade student, then aged ten, walked past the church basement housing TCS on his way to and from school. Each afternoon he heard wonderful choral sounds coming out the open windows. He was

curious and intrigued. He wanted to be a part of that music-making, so he came inside and asked to be admitted, a wish that was granted in spite of his inability to pay tuition. Now, four years later, that young man has blossomed into a major musical talent. He has written numerous sophisticated musical compositions, conducts many of the School's ensembles, is a talented pianist, and is one of the youngest composers ever to be accepted into the Tanglewood Institute's summer program.

This story, while unusual due to the remarkable latent talent of the student, is typical of the way in which Anne Crowden responds to the musical needs of our children. The school she created has had success beyond what any of the founders might have expected. Over the years of its existence TCS has produced one class after another of exceptional young students, each with a deeply imbedded sense of generosity and community participation. Daily musical activities foster a sense of common purpose and cooperation, academic classes are small and live up to the challenge of seeking out each individual's abilities. Community music activities provide both introductory and advanced musical opportunities. Students, when they complete their final, eighth grade year, routinely place far ahead of their chronological ages in entrance exams and are actively sought after by the finest schools in the San Francisco Bay area.

In an ideal world, TCS would be a public school, tuition-free and available to all. Unfortunately, the climate in public education does not allow for the kind of idealism that would support such a school. Anne's solution to this dilemma is characteristic--if a child is musically-inclined but without the means to afford tuition, that child is nonetheless welcomed into the Crowden family. Anne is fully supported by the School's Board of Directors in this policy, so that no child wishing to have this education and having the requisite musical motivation and ability is ever turned away. In addition Anne, with the help of Hannah Zender, created a community music center, the Crowden Center for Music in the Community, or CCMC, to provide musical training for the community at-large, in direct response to the community's need in the face of cutbacks in school music programs.

The purpose of TCS continues to be "to provide a musical training in balance with a first-class academic education," and to reach the widest possible audience through the Extension programs. Throughout the thirteen years of the school's growth, Anne has given tirelessly and unselfishly of her knowledge and skills with virtually no thought of compensation or recognition other than the deep satisfaction of seeing TCS graduates go on to excel in high schools, colleges and conservatories throughout the country. Some of these former students have become, like Anne, performers and teachers themselves. Others, while not pursuing careers in music, have gone on to become teachers, professors, doctors, scientists, and professionals with lives incalculably enriched by their musical training. These are the future audiences, and more importantly, the donors and supporters, for classical music in America.

Anne Crowden was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music for her distinguished service to music in 1980. However, it is the achievements of her students that stand as testament to the gift Anne Crowden has given this community. Some of the honors earned in 1996 by TCS graduates include: Sharon Bogas '93 winner of SFYO Concerto Competition; Nicola Gruen '86 graduated from UCB where she won the Hertz Scholarship now studies in London with Emanuel Hurwitz; Nicole Joseph-Goteiner '93 and Nerina Mancini '91 will participate in the NY String Seminar; Alanna Wheatly '86 has won the \$15,000 Concert Artist Guild Fellowship.

This by no means an unusual year. TCS graduates can be found at such prestigious institutions as the Tanglewood Music Institute (where last summer, one-fourth of the composition students were from Crowden), the Juilliard School, the San Francisco Symphony and Opera Orchestras, the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, and more. Current students populate local youth orchestras and are regularly chosen as soloists in such festivals as Junior Bach.

The only goal Anne Crowden has sought in the past 21 years has been to help musically talented children find their way in an ever more indifferent climate. Her success in this is evident in the accomplishments of the students of The Crowden School. The happy surprise for us all is that this success is so complete, so wide-ranging. TCS is characterized by the highest levels of achievement in academics, the absolute lack of social problems that plague other schools such as drugs and violence, a sense of community, camaraderie, and joy among and between students and faculty, and unprecedented parental involvement at both the program and management levels of school operations. While she has never sought recognition for herself, many of us recognize the greatness of the gift she has given this community. We would like to spread the word, and begin to show our gratitude.

Letter from Bonnie Hampton

Cellist, The Francesco Trio

Artists' Faculty San Francisco Conservatory of Music

(now at The Juilliard School)

November 25, 1996

Dear Board,

The Crowden School is a bright spot on the horizon for the future of chamber music in the United States. As former president of Chamber Music America, and as a cellist, this issue is of great importance to me; therefore I am very happy to write this letter in support of The Crowden School's application for the Heidi Castleman Award.

Anne Crowden, violinist and founder of the school, is both an outstanding performer, with decades of chamber and solo experience behind her, and a music educator of the greatest energy and devotion. For the past 13 years she has dedicated herself to the establishment of The Crowden School.

The school fosters the skills necessary to carry a vital chamber music tradition forward into the twenty-first century. The young musicians in the program tackle structure, technique, detail and discipline; they learn to integrate these elements with flow, imagination, spontaneity, passion. A laboratory in the essential human science--and art--of collaboration, the school is truly a delightful place to be, filled with well-rounded young players.

Crowden students receive a comprehensive musical education that I have not seen offered in any other institution, worldwide, for the 10-13 year old age group. For those who go on to careers in music, the school is an ideal environment; for those who choose other careers, it furnishes a broad education in a shared creative activity which, hopefully, will remain a pleasure all their lives, as well as an excellent academic preparation.

For children from the wider community, the Crowden Center for Music in the Community (CCMC) provides the same offerings. It enables them to begin stringed instruments, and then, within just a year's time, to join the beginning string orchestra or play in small chamber groups. The after-school classes benefit from the school's excellent resources for the teaching of technique, sight-reading, ensemble and performance skills.

This autumn, I have become personally involved, teaching "Chamber Music for Advanced High School Students" in the CCMC. Working with young string players who have received their chamber music training at Crowden is a real joy. The depth and excellence of our work is quite remarkable for this age group.

The school is, in short, a lifeline for music, given the decline in funding for music and arts in California's public schools. Ideally, with support, the school and its community music center will be able to offer its riches to every child who wants to come and learn. This goal is worthy of the highest consideration.

Tributes to Anne Crowden

From Sallie Arens

Chair, Board of Directors

Crowden Music Center

Dear Friends and Families of Crowden,

I am writing with the very sad news that Anne Crowden died early this morning, Monday, March 15, in Edinburgh. Some of you may have heard that Anne had recently been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. She had just started

chemotherapy treatment when she was taken to the hospital over the weekend. She died very peacefully, in her sleep, with her daughter Deirdre by her side.

We will be planning a musical tribute to Anne in the near future, and will of course let you know as our plans develop. If you would like to be kept in touch by e-mail, please send e-mail to info@thecrowdenschool.org with Anne Crowden tribute in the subject header.

Although this is a time of terrible loss, it is an honor for those of us who knew and loved Anne to be able to carry her legacy forward.

From Robert Commanday

Senior Editor,

San Francisco Classical Voice

Trying to make a list of the musicians she taught is a hopeless task, because no one (except Anne herself, who never forgot a student) could possibly remember them all. It is hard to think of a Bay Area ensemble with any strings in it at all that doesn't owe something to her work and her love.

Excerpted from "[TRIBUTE](#)"

From Joshua Kosman

Chronicle Music Critic

For years, [the School's] combination of communal feeling and high standards was well embodied by Ms. Crowden herself, who combined the crisp rigor of a British schoolmistress with the nurturing warmth of a den mother.

Excerpted from "[Music Teacher, School Founder](#)"

Edinburgh Program

* But then there was a star danced,
And under that was I born*

Beatrice, Act 2, Scene 1
Much Ado About Nothing
William Shakespeare

Ceremony conducted by Ivan Middleton
Humanist Society of Scotland
(tel 07010 714790)

A MEMORIAL CEREMONY



To celebrate the life of
ANNE CROWDEN
23rd February 1928 - 14th March 2004



USIC is a moral law
It gives wings to the mind
A soul to the universe
Flight to the imagination
A charm to sadness
A life to everything

Plato

"Life Goes On"

If I should go before the rest of you,
Break not a flower nor inscribe a stone.
Nor when I am gone speak in a Sunday voice,
But be the usual selves that I have known.
Weep if you must,
Parting is hell,
But life goes on,
So sing as well.

Dorothy Parker

MOZART STRING QUARTET IN C "DISSONANCE" K465
Andante Cantabile

Words of Welcome

TRIBUTE TO ANNE

REMEMBERING ANNE

Graham Crowden
&
Piero Mancini

Reflection

J.S. BACH SONATA NO. 2 IN A MINOR
Andante • played by David McCarroll

Committal

Closing Words

BEETHOVEN STRING QUARTET OP. 18 NO. 1
Allegro con Brio