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Automatic Musical Instrument Collectors' Association

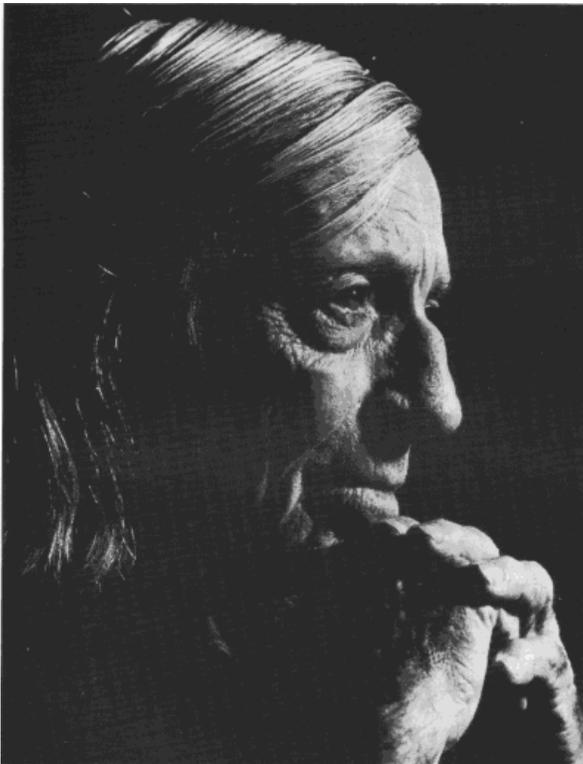
Honor Roll

GRAY PERRY

Honorary Member

By

Dorothy Bromage, from the AMICA Nov/Dec 1991



There are people in Florida who are very fortunate; they are the members of AMICA who can easily keep in touch with Honorary Member Gray Perry and visit with him at his home-studio in Bradenton, where he is still maintaining a teaching schedule.

From Gray I learned of the contact he had with John Duke, another Honorary Member, now deceased. It was when Gray lived and taught in Massachusetts. In his words:

I accepted a professorship at Smith College in Northampton in 1929 and at the same time also became director of Piano, Theory and Pedagogy of the Springfield Conservatory of Music.

Teaching at Smith involved assuming the work of Professor John Duke during his sabbatical, which he spent in Germany and France-in Germany studying with Schnabel and in France with Nadia Boulanger.

There was a full page AMICA BULLETIN obituary (December 1984) about John Duke It was from a Springfield newspaper, not aware of some background. John was an important editor at Ampico. It was he who supervised the publication of Schnabel's recordings for Ampico. John Duke was also a brilliant pianist, for years an artist student Franklin Cannon, who was the most comprehensive American pupil of Leschetizky. John and I were fellow students with Cannon. I studied with Marinus Sieveking and Ethel Leginska, both world-famous pupils of Leschetizky, but it was the work I had with Cannon that was the revelation.

Continuing in an autobiographical vein, Gray Perry returns to his start in life:

I was born in a northeast county in Arkansas. both sides of my family were planters, and we still grow crops which are now soy beans and rice. My father's business made us move to Little Rock. My maternal grandfather began going to spend winters in Florida.

He bought land in Manatee County on Terra Cria Bay and set out a citrus grove. Many of my early winters were enjoyed in Manatee County.

Leaving Connecticut and New York City, I established a permanent residence on Snead Island in Manatee County in November 1939. In 1959, I bought a house in Tampa which became my residence until 1984 when I moved into the house and studio in Bradenton which I built in 1982.

During these years my musical work continued, teaching privately and as Master Piano Teacher at Manatee Community College of Bradenton and at New College of Sarasota. One of my earliest students at Sarasota, Richard Fabre, has been a faculty member of the Juillard School of Music in New York for 26 years. My pupils have won several top scholarships and competitions.

*Gray, with good reason, takes pride in the successes of his students. Derek Wieland, Patricia Trice, Vina Bernden, Ingrid Scherer, and Holly Hutson are a few. They are evidence of the emphasis he has placed, since withdrawing from active concert work, in development of young pianists. One of his students, Patricia Trice, wrote her doctoral dissertation about him at Florida State University. A condensed version-complete with ibids-makes good reading in The Bulletin of Historical Research in Music Education, July 1989.**

Here is a quote from that Bulletin.

His professional life as an artist-teacher and interior designer was interrupted when, in 1942, he was invited to audition at the Army post in Boca Raton for an orchestra composed of outstanding musicians from the major U.S. orchestras who were selected by audition and invited to enlist. Perry's playing was so impressive that he was invited to become the piano soloist for the Third Army Air Force Symphony (called a Band for organ

izational purposes). He enlisted in 1942 at the age of forty-three. The Army disbanded the orchestra before Perry's tour of duty was finished. He was permitted to return to civilian life but was required to finish his obligation to the Army by accepting an assignment as an associate engineer with the Miller Trailer Company."

A brief biographical article about Gray appeared in the 1926 "Ampico Recordings bulletin".



Gray Perry

*Brilliant American Pianist to Record
Exclusively for the Ampico*

IT IS a pleasure to announce the name of Gray Perry as an exclusive Ampico artist whose first recording appears this month. Additional recordings will be issued in later bulletins.

Mr. Perry comes of a long line of southern aristocracy, and holds as a proud possession a reverence for the traditions of the old South. He is acquainted with the romance of the magnolias, the cane brakes, the bottom lands at overflow-time, the crooning of negro melodies—all have formed the background which has been to him the inspiration that only a true Southerner can know.

From early childhood he was marked for a musical career, and now definitely established as one of the most brilliant of American pianists, his forthcoming tour will insure a rare pleasure for music lovers in the cities in which he is to appear.

In addition to the development Of young pianists, another area Of commitment is raising the level of preparatory teaching. To this end, he has "taught the teachers" in college courses such as Piano Pedagogy, and Master Teacher in Piano.

Gray was a Red Seal recording artist for Ampico. Elaine Obenchain, in the 1977 AMPICO Catalog, lists these rolls:

ETUDE Op. 25, No. 3, F-major Chopin 65641 F FEUX FOLLET (Will-O-The-Wisp) Op. 24,

No. 3 G-minor Philipp 66291 G SEA PIECES O. 55, No. 1 To the Sea;

No. 5 Song 68903G

TO A WATER LILY "Woodland Sketches"; TH E JOY OF AUTU M N"New England Idyls"

MacDowell 67323G

According to Gray, "The Ampico Corporation was very much pleased with the public response to my recordings and had planned to have me make other romantic and Impressionistic works including remaking the recordings of MacDowell compositions already in their library. I studied with Isidor Philipp, the composer of "Feux Follet," for a number of years."

In 1925, when Gray returned from Europe, his manager met him in New York with the news that a contract with the Ampico Corporation was ready for him to sign. A feature of the contract was that Gray would record exclusively for Ampico. When in New York to record at Chickering Hall, he was given Josef Lhevinne's studio to use for the warm-up. Gray reports that he never had to repeat a recording. Although he never saw the recording mechanism, he was aware that all coding was done by means of the machine to which the piano was connected. Editing consisted of making sure the roll reflected Gray's original interpretation. The Ampico Corporation put one of two Concert Chickering Ampicos in his home, where they sent him rolls to listen to and check. The end of his recording career came with the 1929 stock market crash.

Gray Perry lives at 3411 16th Street East in Bradenton, Florida 34208-4633. Persons wishing to correspond with him may write to him at that address.



Gray Perry in a pedagogy class at Manatee Community College