



## **GORDON ATHOL ANDERSON**

### **1929-1981**

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Gordon Athol Anderson, Professor of Musicology at the University of New England, died on 30 June 1981. He was the most distinguished graduate in Musicology from the University of Adelaide and enjoyed a worldwide reputation as the most notable researcher of the Thirteenth Century motet and conductus repertoires among the numerous conductus active scholars in these fields during the last two decades.

Born in Melbourne in 1929, Anderson was active in music and the music industry before graduating as a Bachelor of Arts in 1958. Even in those early years his talent both as scholar in classical languages and philosophy was manifest in the invitations, he received at that time to an Honours course in each. Instead, Anderson joined the staff of Pulteney Grammar School as a Senior Master in music and languages, specialising in Latin. From Canon Ray, the Headmaster of Pulteney during Gordon's incumbency there, it would seem that his enthusiasm and dedication as a teacher were among the many factors which kindled his researcher enthusiasm for the philological problems entailed in the rigorous investigation of music and texts. When in 1967 he commenced work as an Honours student in Musicology, the enthusiasm for the challenges and frustrations of concordance research were already about to generate a series of major contributions to musical scholarship. His Honours thesis and essays of 1968-9 and the Masters thesis of 1970 were all subsequently published in *Acta Musicologica*, the *Journal of the American Musicological Society* and in *Musica Disciplina*.

In the course of these and later researches Anderson made many innovative and impressive contributions to our knowledge of Thirteenth Century music, identifying, for example, musical sources of many hitherto unclarified motet tenors, also literary sources of motet texts, at that time unknown to medievalists. Of even greater importance are his interpretations of medieval music theoretical writings, in particular issues raised in literary theory on scansion and versification.

From 1970 a series of research fellowships at Flinders University enabled Anderson to pursue his researches with accelerated energy, laying there the foundation of his monumental series of publications *Notre-Dame and Related Conductus: Opera Omnia* totalling, so far, ten volumes. Although active in a sister university and a holder of a higher degree, Anderson maintained his links with the Adelaide Faculty through his continued membership of the postgraduate seminar. His influence was reflected in the postgraduate and honours students of that time; and I would like to add here that what tradition it may today enjoy, this sector owes a debt of inestimable magnitude to his example.

It was inevitable that for a scholar of Anderson's stature, progression through the levels of academic recognition and promotion was to be rapid. Appointed as lecturer to the Department of Music at the University of New England in 1973, his promotions were to Senior Lecturer 1975, Associate Professor 1977 and to a personal chair in 1979. In May 1977 he became the first musicologist to receive a higher doctorate of the Faculty of Music at Adelaide, and two weeks later was elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. A year later he joined the Advisory Board of the Humanities Research Centre at the Australian National University. In the same period Anderson became the first National and Foundation President of the Musicological Society of Australia.

In 1979 Gordon enjoyed his first and, tragically, only, study leave sojourn in Europe, a fact which incidentally further underscores the remarkable quality and uniqueness of his previous achievement. There a peer group, whose acclamation of him had been too long delayed, accorded him an immediately spontaneous recognition. It was in the midst of this that Gordon, foreseeing the conclusion of his work in Thirteenth Century studies, could at last launch that project which placed the same accents on music, philology, philosophy and the history of ideas, the researching of music and poetry of the Eleventh and Twelfth Century sequence.

As teacher, he imparted both to his students and colleagues his inscrutably high standards of scholarly integrity and professionalism. He was generous in the sharing of his discoveries and original concepts, and he never failed to impart his enthusiasm for an interdisciplinary plenitude to those younger scholars and students with whom he had contact. Indeed, he was generous in the dispensation of his time, material, physical and spiritual resources. His radiantly hospitable home on the outskirts of Armidale became the traditional domicile, indeed the haven, of his senior research students.

Gordon Anderson thus leaves an example, a challenge and a standard by which present and future generations of Australian musical scholars will be measured.

The death of Gordon Anderson at the age of fifty-two, in the full flush of great scholarship and the promise of greater things to come is an overwhelming, almost backbreaking, reverse for Australian musical scholarship. For me personally it is the premature termination of a sixteen-year inspirational friendship. In mourning him, we also commemorate him and the example he leaves us—that of a brilliant researcher, an inspiring colleague and great teacher, as well as of an even greater man.

*Andrew McCredie*