

Memorial Minute for Lory Wallfisch
Read by Richard Sherr, Faculty Meeting December 14, 2011

Lory Wallfisch, Iva Dee Hiatt Professor Emerita of Music, passed away on September 18, 2011. Lory Feldstein Wallfisch was born in Ploiesti (Ployesht), Romania, on April 21, 1922. She attended the Royal Conservatory of Music in Bucharest, where she was a piano student of Florica Musicescu (teacher of Dinu Lipati and Radu Lupu, among others). It was at the Conservatory that she met Ernst Wallfisch, a brilliant violist who was to become her musical, professional, and life partner. The musical partnership came first and the Wallfisch Duo was formed in the early 1940s. Meanwhile, Romania became a fascist dictatorship allied with the Nazis during WW II. One day, Lory was informed that Jews were no longer allowed to be students at the Conservatory. Her teacher continued her lessons surreptitiously. Ernst and Lory spent the war years in Bucharest. This cannot have been easy (among other things Lory's home town of Ploiesti was heavily bombed, as was Bucharest). They married in 1944. It was also in 1944 that they met and played before the Romanian composer and violinist Georges Enescu, whose music Lory championed in myriad ways until the end of her life.

Immediately after the war, as Romania fell under communist domination, life for the Wallfisches became intolerable. With the help of the great violinist Yehudi Menuhin (who had been a student of Enescu's) they emigrated in 1946, eventually coming to the United States. Here, they had to make their living as working musicians. In 1947, they spent the summer as house musicians for Frank Lloyd Wright in Taliesin, Wisconsin. Ernst got jobs in various orchestras, including the Cleveland Orchestra and the Dallas Symphony. The Wallfisch Duo began making a name for itself. They became US citizens in 1953 while continuing their peripatetic life in the US and Europe.

Lory and Ernst came to Smith in 1964 in the serendipitous manner in which things happened in those ancient times. The Smith music department, because of a retirement and an unexpected death, found itself in need of a pianist and a violist. Philipp Naegele, who had just been hired to teach violin and who had known Ernst in the Cleveland Orchestra, suggested the perfect candidates, the Wallfisch Duo (pianist and violist). The chair of the department agreed, a letter was sent to Switzerland where the Wallfisches were staying with their infant son and teaching at L'École de l'Humanité, and lo, they were hired as Visiting Lecturers with one-year contracts. As I remember Lory herself pointedly remarking at the memorial for Philipp, there was no search and there were no interviews. I might add that the extant documentation preserves no record of meetings with multiple levels of administration and no desperate pleading with faculty committees to get permission to keep the positions in the department and to hire somebody sight unseen. How simple things were then! And, as also usually happened, the one year lecturer appointments were easily converted into tenure track appointments, followed eventually by tenure and promotion. Lory retired in 1992 as Iva Dee Hiatt Professor of Music.

Lory was a devoted teacher. Monica Jakuc Leverett recalls Lory's teaching as a true embodiment of her European tradition: "She guided her students with devotion, discipline, and detail: reverence for the composer and the music was paramount. Her success can be seen in the legions of students (some of whom became professional musicians), who proudly and gratefully recall her teaching. "As pianist and harpsichordist of the Wallfisch Duo, Lory toured in the U.S., Canada, South America, Europe, North Africa, and Israel. The duo made many radio and television appearances, and have a long list of recordings to their credit.

Memorial Minute for Lory Wallfisch

Read by Richard Sherr, Faculty Meeting November 30, 2011

After her husband's sudden and unexpected death in 1979, Lory threw herself into her teaching and professional career as a soloist and into honoring his memory. She established the Ernst Wallfisch Memorial Fund, now the Ernst and Lory Wallfisch Memorial Fund, to provide scholarships and prizes for performance students at Smith. I well remember a benefit concert for this fund at a very full John M. Green Hall with Yehudi Menuhin himself performing. A concert by Rudolph Serkin followed; that these towering artists were willing to donate their services to raise money for the fund is a testament to the high regard that the Wallfisches were held in the classical music world. Lory worked hard to increase the capital of the fund to bring it to its present state of producing a healthy income devoted to supporting performance at Smith.

Lory was not always an easy colleague. Her manner of utterance might be termed "Baroque." It was amazing how much shorter our department meetings became after she retired. But none of us ever doubted her intense musicality or her dedication to her students and to the cause of music (her pronunciation of that word was unforgettable). At her funeral her rabbi, Justin David, described her very well: "Whenever I spoke with Lory, I always felt as if I were being transported to another time and place: her accent, her intensity, the way in which she talked about music and art and culture as if nothing else mattered. This kind of sensibility, this kind of person, is from another era, and we know it is one that will not appear again."

After Lory's retirement, she continued her career, and was always off somewhere in Europe giving concerts and serving as a judge in competitions and mentoring young artists. She continued to perform at Smith. Her last performance here was at the Naegle memorial concert in 2010 where she played Robert Schumann's "In Memoriam Felix Mendelssohn" with her characteristic heartfelt grace and emotion. The CD *Lory Wallfisch Remembers: A Festival of Romanian Music* (EBS 6146) was issued in 2007. She recorded most of the tracks in 2004 when she was 82.

After the fall of the Ceaucescu regime in Romania, Lory began returning regularly to her native country. She was awarded an honorary doctorate by the National University of Music in Bucharest. The mayor of Ploiesti instituted the Lory Wallfisch International Piano Competition there, and she was made an honorary citizen of the city in 1997. The Romanian ambassador to the United States sent a tribute read at her funeral. She continued to promote the music of Enescu, as a founder and President of the Enescu Society, by organizing concerts and festivals, and also by translating a massive technical study of Enescu's music from Romanian into English, thereby making it available to most of the scholarly world (Pascal Bentoiu, *Masterworks of Georges Enescu: a Detailed Analysis*, Lory Wallfisch, trans., Lanham, Md., 2010). Translation does not get much respect these days, but Lory (who was fluent in five languages) didn't need to get tenure and she performed a heroic service in rendering what she told me was a very difficult text into idiomatic English. Lory enjoyed visiting her son Paul, now music director of the Stadt Theater in Dortmund, Germany, and his wife and son. Her active life continued until it was literally physically impossible for her to go on.

Every year, Lory arranged for a concert at Smith featuring an emerging artist, often European, occasionally Romanian. This year, it was to be the Swiss oboist Hans Martin Ulbrich. That concert had to be canceled, but it was arranged for Mr. Ulbrich to come here and perform for her and a few guests in her apartment. She died shortly afterward. It would be nice to think that the last thing she remembered was the sound of her beloved music. A memorial concert is planned for May 5, 2012.