

Editor's note: The following was read as a eulogy for Normand Lockwood at a memorial service in Whatley Chapel at the University of Denver on April 13, 2002.

Kay Norton

A Singular Composer's Life

Normand Lockwood was born in New York City on 19 March 1906 with a lot of music to compose. If each of us is born with a spark of divinity, Normand must certainly be among the most faithful stewards of that spark; he gave it expression daily from his young adulthood well into his ninety-fifth year. His oeuvre of more than 500 works in all genres is impossible to capsulize in a short summary. I'll instead remind you briefly of his career path, sprinkled with mentions of some of my favorite works. I apologize in advance that I won't be able to mention all of yours.

With a conductor/violinist as father, violinist/singer as mother, and an uncle who was a concert pianist, Normand's early interest in making music is far from remarkable. As early as his teens, however, the young Lockwood was required to justify his compositional ambition when, in the words of his father, Samuel Pierson Lockwood, Beethoven had "said it all." Still, the elder Lockwood secured his son's acceptance into the most celebrated Italian compositional studio of the time by persuading Chicago Symphony conductor Frederick Stock to write a letter on Normand's behalf. Young Lockwood studied with Ottorino Respighi in Rome during the academic year 1924-25, after which he joined the studio of Nadia Boulanger in Gargenville. At the latter location he discovered the essential element that had been missing in his earlier compositional study: self-discipline. At the conclusion of his studies with Boulanger in 1928, he submitted the orchestral suite entitled *Odysseus*, which secured a three-year fellowship at the American Academy in Rome.

While in Europe Lockwood married his first wife, Dorothy (Dolly) Sears Sanders (1903-77), a native of Traverse City, Michigan. Dolly studied in the Parisian theater school of stage designer Ladislav Medvsky during the early years of their marriage. The Lockwoods had three daughters: Deborah (1928-89), Angeline Rose (1935-80), and Hedwig Marie (Heidi, b. 1939).

Normand's eleven-year tenure at Oberlin College, begun in 1932, saw the completion of his *Symphony: A Year's Chronicle* (1934), which won the Chicago Symphony's Gustavus F. Swift Prize. Perhaps more importantly, Lockwood at this juncture had the opportunity to exercise his musical gifts fully in choral genres. Especially memorable are two a cappella

Whitman settings, *Dirge for Two Veterans* (1937) and *Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking* (1938), the latter of which won G. Schirmer's World's Fair prize. He studied sporadically with Stravinsky during 1940 and apparently made a favorable impression on the Russian composer, who in 1945 included Lockwood in a list of ten especially promising composers "of the younger generation."

Two successive Guggenheim fellowships (1943-45) relocated Lockwood to wartime New York City, where he supplemented the grant funds by composing for CBS radio's "Columbia Workshop" and "Studio One." In 1945, he received the first of Columbia University's Ditson Fund commissions, resulting in his first opera, *The Scarecrow*. By that time, Dorothy Lockwood had become a freelance writer; as deadlines encroached upon the composer, she became increasingly responsible for the opera's libretto. Despite a cast that Normand Lockwood later described to me as pretty "thin" on male talent, the opera was nonetheless commended for its "clarity, movement, and sense" by a *New Yorker* magazine reviewer.

Between 1945 and 1953, Lockwood combined adjunct positions at Columbia University's College of General Studies and the Union Theological Seminary, School of Sacred Music. Important compositions include the *Third String Quartet*, which won a 1946 award from the Society for the Publication of American Music. That year he also won his first music award from the National Institute of Arts and Letters for *Weekend Prelude* for symphonic winds (1944). In 1947, he won the Ernest Bloch award for *The Birth of Moses* (SSA chorus and piano). *Concerto for Organ and Brasses* (1951) was commissioned by CBS to honor E. Power Biggs, the soloist for the premiere.

Between 1948 and 1953, Lockwood added Westminster Choir College to his circuit of academic positions. In 1950 he taught a semester at Queens College, and during the academic year 1952-53 he served as his friend Quincy Porter's sabbatical replacement at Yale. More noteworthy choral compositions continued to appear: *Elegy for a Hero* (1951), commissioned by Indiana University and based on a Whitman text; and *Prairie* (1952), his large-scale secular work on a Carl Sandburg text, commissioned by the University of Michigan Musical Society.

I characterize Normand's move to Trinity University in San Antonio in 1953 as a personal and professional watershed in my book-length Lockwood biography. His marriage had begun to show obvious signs of disintegration. Although he and Dorothy would remain legally married until 1976, his relocation to Texas effectively ended his life with Dorothy Sanders Lockwood. Normand also suffered the loss of a lifelong mentor, Raymond Edmonds, in 1954. These setbacks notwithstanding, he continued to produce substantial choral works, both small and large, including his *Magnificat* of 1954. He took a break from university positions in 1955 by moving to Laramie, Wyoming. This hiatus facilitated the arrival of the mature Lockwood style in which his more progressive instrumental writing was fused with his largely consonant choral idiom. He remained active

as a commissioned composer and completed highly acclaimed oratorios for Berea College and the National Council of Churches (*Children of God*, 1956), and the Buffalo [New York] Philharmonic Society (*Light Out of Darkness*, 1957). Most importantly, he and Vona K. Swedell, found each other and began that partnership of love and respect in equal measure that has inspired us all.

Lockwood returned to university teaching by spending a year at the University of Oregon (1957-58), returning to Wyoming for two years, and again filling a one-year position at the University of Hawaii (1960-61). His most notable composition of that year was the opera *Early Dawn*, the product of long-distance collaboration with Russell Porter of the University of Denver. This liaison led to Lockwood's final academic appointment, an extremely fruitful joint position in the Music and Drama Departments in Denver. Along with two more operas and a long list of inspired non-operatic theater works, Lockwood wrote several important compositions including the twelve-tone *Sonata Fantasia* (1964) for accordion, *Choreographic Cantata* (1968, commissioned by the Reuter Organ Company and the American Guild of Organists), and the *Oboe Concerto* (1968). The Colorado Council on the Arts and Humanities bestowed on Lockwood its Governor's Award in 1971. The year 1974 saw his retirement as Professor Emeritus from the University of Denver and the granting of an honorary doctorate from Berea College.

Lockwood was married to Vona K. Swedell on 23 April 1976, but retirement brought about no significant change in Lockwood's life as a composer. His post-1974 orchestral works include two symphonies and several concertos. Choral compositions continued to be sought from him. His *Mass for Children and Orchestra* (1976-77) was commissioned by the Colorado Children's Chorale of Denver, the Colorado Council on the Arts and Humanities, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Also chamber music resurfaced as a medium of him; he returned to writing string quartets after nearly four decades.

In 1979, the University of Denver awarded him the Doctor of Humane Letters degree. In 1981, he was once again honored by the National Academy of Arts and Letters with their Marjorie Peabody Waite Award in music. In 1986, his eightieth birthday was marked by all-Lockwood concerts in Denver and Carlsbad, New Mexico. Throughout the last decade of his life, the "new" continued to fascinate Lockwood, as evidenced by his 1986 work for acoustic instruments and synthesizer entitled *Coming of the Spirits*. Maintaining his deep interest in academic life, he visited Southeast Missouri State University as composer-in-residence at the age of 83.

I first met Normand at the University of Colorado at Boulder in a 1986 seminar on the music of Charles Ives taught by William K. Kearns. Little did I know that the ensuing years would lead me to Normand's music and, eventually, to a dissertation and subsequent monograph on his life and works (Scarecrow Press, 1993). Two years after the Ives seminar, Normand, Vona, and I began the process of transforming the products of a long

musical career—the sizable archive of scores and papers, the memories both vivid and dim—into a history. To their credit, I was given free rein to interpret the facts, even though the re-opening of some chapters was clearly painful for one or both of them. Likewise after “the book” was complete, and although distance and circumstance necessarily changed the frequency of our conversations, the Lockwoods continued their steadfast belief in whatever projects I undertook.

Knowing Normand was an intensely enlightening, challenging, and rewarding experience. To honor his memory, I’ve chosen an e.e. cummings poem that was one of his favorites. It conveys the delicate, yet profound relationship creators have with their media and, especially, characterizes Normand’s approach to the creative spark that sustained his spirit for so long.

Five V

if i have made, my lady, intricate

imperfect various things chiefly which wrong
your eyes (frailer than most deep dreams are frail)
songs less firm than your body’s whitest song
upon my mind—if i have failed to snare
the glance too shy—if through my singing slips
the very skillful strangeness of your smile
the keen primeval silence of your hair

—let the world say “his most wise music stole
nothing from death”—

 you only will create

(who are so perfectly alive) my shame:
lady through whose profound and fragile lips
the sweet small clumsy feet of April came

into the ragged meadow of my soul.

e.e. cummings*

During the fourteen years I knew him, I was privileged to spend a substantial amount of time with Normand Lockwood and to observe his interactions with others. One constant I noticed was that communication with Normand rarely lacked the imprint of his singular sense of humor. His subtlety had a quality that ruled, even in his earthier limericks. It was never bitter or cutting, but always reflected his unflagging interest in people, a quality further demonstrated in the many works composed for—and sometimes in close collaboration with—a particular musician. His remarkable insight into the relationship between performer, medium, and

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music, something I tried to describe in my analysis of his works, also stemmed from a seemingly insatiable curiosity that characterized most of my conversations with him. Although I did not meet him until his eighty-third year, I suspect this curiosity had been with him since childhood. In summary, time spent with Normand was quite likely to be entertaining on the one hand, and intellectually engaging on the other, leaving one with a sense of being known and understood. Those qualities made him a cherished friend to many and a remarkably intuitive composer throughout his long career.