

RESOLUTION ON THE RETIREMENT OF ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR DANIEL ABBOTT

at a meeting of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences,
Tufts University

Mark DeVoto
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Daniel Abbott was born in Newton, Massachusetts, the youngest of three sons of an orthodontist. He began his studies on the violin as a boy of seven. Graduating from Newton High School, Dan spent a year at Oberlin College before transferring to Brown University. There he was expected to follow his father's career; but fortunately for us, and for music, Dan collided, like so many, with the stern intractabilities of organic chemistry and calculus, and sacrificed them cheerfully to the more demanding rigors of Bach's solo Partitas and the Beethoven Violin Concerto. In the small and informal music program at Brown, Dan was able to find many opportunities for broader study; as an undergraduate he conducted the Men's Glee Club from time to time. When he graduated from college in 1954, Dan went into the Army for two years, serving in the Third Infantry Regiment which, salutarily for Dan's practicing, was largely ceremonial. Dan developed his conducting skills further when he returned to Brown for his Master's degree in 1956. That same year he enrolled as an auditor and orchestra violinist at the Pierre Monteux School in Hancock, Maine. Two summers later he came back as a member of Monteux's master class, receiving Monteux's hearty praise for his conducting.

Dan completed his MA at Brown in 1958 with a thesis on word-painting in the madrigals of William Byrd. That same year, he was appointed Instructor in the small Music Department at Tufts, sharing the bright subterranean amenities of the newly-built Cohen Arts Center with Professors Kenneth McKillop and William King. It was a time when one learned rapidly, in a small but eternally busy department, to do everything. McKillop taught composition and directed the chorus; Bill King taught the basic musicianship and theory courses, the opera course, and directed the band; Dan taught the music history sequence, composer courses, and a course on the Beethoven Quartets, and directed the orchestra.

Dan began the Ph.D. program at Boston University, working with the Haydn scholar Karl Geiringer, and completed all his coursework and examinations but didn't do the dissertation. By 1964, when he considered switching to the DMA program, he had begun raising a family, had achieved tenure and promotion at Tufts, and was rehearsing two orchestras three nights a week and playing actively in no less than three different professional string quartets, as well as directing the choir of the Trinitarian Church in Wayland. With all the continuing

performing experience he could want or manage, there was little time for the purely research side of academic life, and fortunately for live music, Dan elected not to complete the doctorate.

Dan's leadership of the Tufts Symphony Orchestra made it into an institution of considerable size by involving musicians in the surrounding community as well as a loyal base of students. The Odikon Society, a club entirely organized and managed by the students, generated enough school musical spirit to support a formal black-tie dinner every year. The orchestra rehearsed in a space directly under the Cohen stage, in the space now occupied by the Music Library; the acoustics were occasional, but back then at least there was enough space to rehearse. At one point during the early 1960's, another black-tie event, a President's fundraiser in Cohen Auditorium right upstairs, met the rehearsal on collision course; the rehearsal had to yield, but, as Jean Mayer would later say, "a point has been made." Several important performances stand out from those years, as when Dan prepared the orchestra for Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, performed in Cohen with the principal vocal soloists from the original NBC television production. Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*, with narration by Peter Arnott, was a notable event, and Dan particularly remembers the poignancy of the performance he conducted in Goddard Chapel of Haydn's *Missa in tempore belli* during the darkest years of the Vietnam War.

Most students remember Dan Abbott for his exemplary teaching, which covered all historical periods, and for his conducting and performing; but his unstinting service in the Music Department included two years as Acting Chairman, and longtime colleagues in this body remember his years of dedication on the Honors Committee, several of them as Chairman.

In 1978 Dan was appointed Director of the Reading Symphony Orchestra, a position he held until stepping down this year. With all his performing activities on campus and off, Dan nevertheless found time to serve as a founding member and President of the Malden Anglers Association, dedicated to conserving local water resources for fly fishing and migratory waterfowl.

With both his sons now through college, Dan looks forward to more quartet playing from his base at the family manor in Bridgton, Maine, where he and Sharon have lived for the last twelve years. We of the Music Department wish a fond farewell, and many years of happy music, to our most senior colleague, but not without first issuing an invitation to everyone to share what we hope will not really be Dan's final performance at Tufts, on this coming May 8, Thursday night, when the Composers Quartet joins Dan in his capacity as second viola, for Mozart's String Quintet in G minor, K. 516.

Madam President, I ask that this body rise in appreciation of Daniel Abbott's 39 years of service at Tufts University, and

that these remarks be spread on the Minutes of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.