

Resolution Upon the Retirement of Professor of Music Mark DeVoto

Adopted by the faculty of Arts and Sciences of Tufts University

May 15, 2000

Presented by Associate Professor John McDonald

(in words by DeVoto filtered through McDonald, with some phrases by McDonald)

The members of the Music Department and the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Jackson College of Tufts University hereby record our most warm appreciation for our retiring colleague, Professor Mark Bernard DeVoto. Tufts University has benefited from his unique and varied contributions since 1981.

Mark DeVoto was born January 11, 1940, and grew up in Cambridge. The son of famous writer and historian Bernard DeVoto, he was educated at private schools and attended Harvard, where he eventually decided he loved music more than chemistry. He received a B.A. from Harvard College in 1961, where he studied with Walter Piston, the composer whose Harmony textbook he later revised twice, in 1978 and 1987 (fourth and fifth editions). He went on to Princeton, obtaining M.F.A. and Ph.D. degrees in composition, in 1963 and 1967 respectively. At Princeton he worked with Roger Sessions, Edward T. Cone, Earl Kim, Milton Babbitt, and Oliver Strunk; it was there that he began his long involvement with the music of Alban Berg and also there that his first daughter, Emily, Tufts '86, was born in 1964.

Professor DeVoto's first teaching job materialized at Reed College in Oregon, where he taught from 1964 to 1968 and where his second daughter, Marya, Tufts '89, was born in 1966. He received a second appointment at the University of New Hampshire, where he taught from 1968 to 1981 and "did such unlikely things as direct the orchestra, teach piano lessons, and give a course on the history of music in the Renaissance." Professor DeVoto's noticeable gift for parliamentary procedure is traceable to "one memorable year at UNH when, in the middle of a palace revolution," he "attended 140 90-minute meetings." The summer of 1972 saw Mark DeVoto serving as Lecturer in Music at the University of Michigan, and he was Visiting Professor of Music at Harvard in the Spring of 1988.

While at Tufts, Mark DeVoto has taught, written on music, performed, and composed widely. His responsibilities included several years of chairing the Music Department, several terms as Music Director of the Tufts Symphony Orchestra, and course responsibilities including Orchestration, elementary and intermediate Harmony, Counterpoint, Form and Analysis, Beethoven, Schubert, The Art Song, Opera, and Expository Writing, to name only a few. Among Professor DeVoto's many articles and books are *Mostly Short Pieces: An Anthology for Harmonic Analysis* (W. W. Norton, 1992), "Alban Berg and Creeping Chromaticism," in *Alban Berg: Historical and Analytical Perspectives* (Oxford University Press, 1991), and recent books and articles on composers as diverse as Claude Debussy, Carl Nielsen, and Melville Smith. DeVoto the composer has produced four piano concertos, two string quartets, songs and song cycles, piano and chamber compositions, and orchestral works such as *Interior Dialogue* (1991) and an in-progress Triple Concerto. A major work for chorus and orchestra based on texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls, *Hodayot*, Part I, was premiered by the Tufts Chorale and Orchestra under Professor DeVoto's direction; Part II was completed in 1999. Arrangements of significant works have also flowed from DeVoto's pen, not the least of which is his version of Schoenberg's *Five Orchestral Pieces*, Op. 16 for very large symphonic wind ensemble.

Professor DeVoto offers the following personal remarks:

Lois Grossman and I have been together since 1974. If I am rushing into retirement, we still do not wish to rush into ill- advised marriage, preferring to take our time.

At Tufts I have enjoyed many things, especially the good food, tuition benefits; and the ability to walk every day to my office, leaving the car at home. I expect to continue these pleasant activities in retirement.

Plans for the future include: more composing; completing my book on Melody and Musical texture; an edition of my father's letters; baking more bread; spending more time at my summer home in Eastport, Maine, where I would be delighted to welcome any Tufts faculty who venture that far.

I have had the distinct privilege of premiering several of Mark DeVoto's piano and chamber compositions. He writes terrific chords, and the forms are balanced, satisfying, and deeply felt. His second quartet, heard by many of you at Mark's Sixtieth Birthday Concert in January (2000), is profoundly moving. DeVoto the composer looms largest to me, yet he is humble to a fault about his music. He has contributed a voluminous catalogue of vastly intelligent writing ~bout music, has taught to great effect (tell the story about the textbook and the circular file), and has helped hold the Music Department together not

just with his generosity and flair, but with the expertise that allowed him to obtain his Master Electrician's license in New Hampshire (1977-85). I will always remember what Mark's website, under "Performance Skills," describes as "Voice (deep bass)," because it was that voice that interviewed me over the phone for my first part-time position in the department. I look forward to our two-piano concert in the near future, for which we both intend to compose new pieces,

I have composed a new work to honor Mark DeVoto on the occasion of his retirement today. Entitled "Tribute: Marker In Triplicate," it is an expansion of a sixtieth-birthday piano piece called "Marker" which I was not able to finish in time for the January concert. The new work is performed for you today by Claire McCarthy '00, oboe; Sarah Akerman '00, violin; and Philippa Thompson '01, violin.

Be it stated that this resolution be reproduced upon the minutes of the faculty of Arts and Sciences and that a copy be presented to Professor DeVoto. And let Professor DeVoto now be celebrated with music. ("Tribute: Marker In Triplicate" performed)

Respectfully submitted,

John McDonald
May 5, 2000