

Dr. Henry Grunebaum, Professor of Clinical Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, is a family therapist teaching at and running The Couples and Family Clinic at the Cambridge Hospital, which is associated with the Harvard Medical School. Dr. Grunebaum was a former student and long-time friend of George.

Remembrances of George R. Seaman, by Andrew Grunebaum

Spoken by Henry Grunebaum, M.D., at the memorial for George Seaman, March 31, 2003

Family, Friends, and fellow musicians,

I am speaking today as one of the many students George taught. He probably spent 30 hours every week teaching, perhaps more time than he engaged in any other activity. And yet his students are probably often unknown to each other and to his friends and family. But I can assure you he was devoted to us and we loved him.

I will begin my remarks in an odd place. I am a therapist and research has shown that therapists enjoy working with and are the most gratified by patients who are most like them - bright, relatively healthy, and many of whom eventually become therapists themselves. Perhaps, teachers of music are not dissimilar. They probably enjoy teaching musically gifted, skillful students who hopefully become musicians themselves. And doubtless many of these students are here today and could comment on the way George enabled them to perfect their skills and musicianship.

But I was not one of them. I began learning from George about twenty years ago having taken a years of lessons from a teacher who stopped teaching me when she joined the BSO. All we had played were exercises and scales. The first thing George said to me was what do you want to play. I said, 'Bach' and so we began on, of all things, the first movement of the first suite, but largo, a tempo I could manage.

Over the years that George taught me, I never left a lesson feeling badly about myself, not that I did not always wish I could play better.. He magically showed me how to improve but never by using criticism. I also remember how physical the lesson often were. George would take my hand and move it and the bow in the way he hoped I would learn to imitate. As I have often said, there are some things so worth doing that they are worth doing badly, But I must add that badly got steadily better, if slowly, over the years. Over the years, we shared many intimacies about our lives which brought us closer to each other, and I believe that I was perhaps helpful also to George

It was only a little over a year ago that my wife, Judy, invited George to play at my 75'th birthday. She remarked about how enthusiastic and kind he was about coming and that he contributed many ideas he had as to what he might do. She hardly met George although she knew how important a part of my life he was and she was very saddened by his death. The week before the party, George said to me that it was time we played some duets again as it was good practice. Little did I know that we were practicing to play at the party - and play we did, much to my surprise. And George was thoughtful and kind in other ways to my family. He was going with the Pops to Japan where our youngest son lives and is a journalist, and

it was George's idea to arrange for him to be able to interview Keith Lockhart in Tokyo. This was far beyond the call of duty, other than that of friendship.

Now to illustrate that George left an indelible impression on a student many years younger, I will quote Alan Jensen who is 17 years old. I happen to know about Alan because his mother, Chris, and I sit together at the Arlington Philharmonic and she has spoken about how important George was to her and to Alan. And Alan said, "George was so kind, the moment you met him you felt you had known him for a longtime. For him, music was more than notes on a page, it was an experience of oneself."

We all know that George was one in a million - he was a great musician, And he was a great human being. He had a large soul and a good soul. His students, and I know I am not alone, came to love George. And so today we must say goodbye much too soon to an old friend and wonderful teacher.

I will conclude by quoting Callimachus about 300BC

They told me, Heraclitus, they told me you were dead

They brought me bitter news to hear and bitter tears to shed

I wept as I remembered how often you and I

Had tired the sun with playing and sent him down the sky

And now that thou art lying, my dear old Cello friend

A handful of grey ashes long, long to be at rest

Still is thy pleasant music, thy Nightingale awake

For Death he taketh all away, but this he cannot take.