

IN MEMORIAM

FRANK N. SPELLER

Dr. Frank (“Hap”) N. Speller taught organ and harpsichord at The University of Texas at Austin for more than forty years, retiring as a Professor Emeritus in 2007. Professor Speller received his bachelor’s and doctoral degrees from the University of Colorado and his master’s degree and Performer’s Certificate from Indiana University. He pursued additional studies with Everett Hilty and Alexander McCurdy in the United States, and Jeanne Demessieux and Pierre Froidebise in France. An active and engaging performer, he concertized extensively in the United States, performing organ recitals for three regional conventions and one national convention of the American Guild of Organists. In Europe he presented more than twenty-five recitals in many major cathedrals, including Notre Dame de Paris, Chartres, Utrecht, Braunschweig and Westminster Abbey. In 1995, he appeared on the CBS television network’s *Good Morning America* demonstrating UT Austin’s Visser-Rowland pipe organ, which at that time was the largest tracker organ in the United States. This broadcast was seen by millions of viewers around the country. Other nationally broadcast performances include appearances on *Pipedreams* and on National Public Radio’s *Performance Today*.

In addition to his performance activities, Professor Speller was a prolific composer, producing many compositions for organ solo, chorus, and chorus with organ. His solo organ compositions feature compelling counterpoint, colorful and surprising harmonic organization, and intriguing reinterpretations of traditional forms. These characteristics are particularly present in his many chorale preludes, several of which are dedicated to his students. His original

compositions and editions of organ music are published by Belwin Mills, Concordia, Alexander Broude, Peer-Southern, and Morning Star Music Publishers.

Teaching was an integral part of Professor Speller's career. His students describe him as supportive, relaxed, encouraging, but indefatigable in helping every student to pursue and achieve the best results. His teaching was not confined to his studio. In the summer of 1983, he took his entire studio to Houston to meet the builders of the new Visser-Rowland organ then being created for Bates Recital Hall on The University of Texas at Austin campus. This trip provided his students the opportunity to observe the construction of the instrument on which they would be practicing and performing. His students also report that he never missed a lesson. When a student was unable to obtain babysitting for her lesson Professor Speller instructed her to bring her baby. He held the baby (and bottle-fed it) during the session.

Professor Speller was also an active church organist. He had long tenures at two of Austin's prominent churches: St. Louis Catholic Church and Good Shepherd Episcopal Church. He contributed original compositions to those institutions as well as his service as organist.

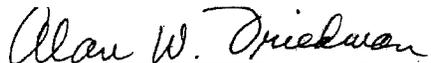
No account of Professor Speller's life and career would be complete without a mention of his unique, eccentric sense of humor. There were few situations when Frank couldn't find a bright side, and no one was safe from his light-hearted, but sometimes wicked, wit. One of his favorite annual events was his Halloween concert in Bates Auditorium on the UT Austin campus, an event that featured a showing of Lon Chaney's silent film "The Phantom of the Opera," accompanied by Frank in full, caped costume at the massive Visser-Rowland organ.

In his long career, Professor Speller had a profound influence on many students, and through them helped to promote the French School of organ playing in the United States. His

personality, sense of humor, and teaching style, which he passed down to a new generation of organists, serve as a lasting legacy to a life dedicated to music and to his instrument.



Gregory L. Fennes, President
The University of Texas at Austin



Alan W. Friedman, Secretary
The General Faculty

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Anton Nel (Chair) and Donald Grantham.