

Grosvenor William Cooper
Born: 8 Oct 1911, Palo Alto, CA

Died: 12 Jul 1979, Santa Cruz, CA



Source: AMS Newsletter/The American Musicological Society/Constituent Member of the American Council of Learned Societies, Vol. 10, No. 2, Aug., 1980. p. 16.

On 12 July 1979, at the age of sixty-eight, Grosvenor W. Cooper died in Santa Cruz, California. He had been my colleague and teacher, my collaborator and friend. Time had to pass before I could bring myself to write this memorial.

Grosvenor Cooper was what all of us profess to esteem, but few of us fully honor or richly reward. He was a superb and dedicated teacher — one who was as deeply devoted to helping the humblest undergraduate non-major learn to listen with sensitivity and acumen as he was to refining the musical intelligence and stretching the intellectual purview of a graduate student in musicology.

Grosvenor was quietly, almost privately, accomplished. He was a discerning scholar-critic whose knowledge of the repertory of Western music was both wide-ranging and available — literally at his finger-tips. For he was a fine pianist who specially delighted in playing chamber music with congenial colleagues. But he was more than an admirable musician. Grosvenor was a genuine humanist whose knowledge of Western culture was deep as well as broad. Because his learning extended from Plato and Homer (he was an accomplished classicist) to Whitehead and Joyce, it is not surprising that he found the three year-long humanities courses at the University of Chicago in accord with his protean talents.

During his twenty years at Chicago, he taught in all of the general humanities courses — those concerned with literature and philosophy as well as those that involved music. Always his abundant knowledge was admired by colleagues and his superior teaching was sought by students.

On the graduate level, too, Grosvenor's teaching steadily directed attention to the music itself, as any student privileged to take his courses on "Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*" or on "Wagner's *Tristan* and Debussy's *Pelléas* well knows. Basically a critic-analyst in the tradition of Donald Tovey, he tended to favor intuitive insight and revealing suggestion rather than theoretical rigor and systematization. Because his intelligence was incisive, his sense of style acute, and his knowledge of the repertory extensive, Grosvenor could brilliantly illuminate historical relationships through the inventive juxtaposition of different works. Much of what is best about *The Rhythmic Structure of Music*, which we wrote together, is a result of his insight and intelligence, knowledge and sensitivity.

Though steeped in the classics, both musical and literary, Grosvenor was receptive to, and thoroughly enjoyed, the arts of the twentieth century. Whether about the past or about the present, his aesthetic judgments were always perceptive and independent. Conventional cant was continuously called into question; not for the sake of iconoclastic shock or fashionable revisionism, but because the works of art that he loved literally forced original opinions upon him.

He cultivated music and, in return, it nourished him.
Source: Santa Cruz Sentinel 15 Jul 1979, 62:5

— *Leonard B. Meyer*

Dr. Grosvenor W. Cooper Dies

Dr. Grosvenor W. Cooper, a former professor of music at UCSC, died in Santa Cruz Thursday. He was 67.

Born in Stanford, he was a member of Alpha Kappa Lambda Fraternity while attending Stanford University. Following graduation from Stanford, he received his doctorate from Harvard. He later taught and also was on the faculty at Wellesley College, Queens College in New York, University of Chicago and UCSC. He was a recognized authority in musicology.

He is survived by his wife, Edith, and three sons; Benjamin Cooper of Minneapolis, Christopher Cooper of Santa Cruz and Thomas Cooper of Menlo Park.