



Dr. John Gunther Suess

August 4, 1929 - April 18, 2016

His soul was meant for music.

Dr. John Gunther Suess was a beloved husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and esteemed colleague. He dedicated his life to music and aesthetic education for the enrichment of all humankind.

Born of German immigrants on August 4, 1929, he grew up in Chicago. Despite the anguish of experiencing uncles fighting on opposite sides during WWII, he always found hope in humanity's ability to engage in beautiful cultural creations.

John completed his undergraduate degree at Northwestern University in Political and Economic Theory. Before being shipped overseas during the Korean conflict, he married Bettie Davenport of Itasca, Illinois in 1953. Upon discharge from the Navy, he knew that music would be his life. He proceeded to graduate studies in music at the University of Chicago and Northwestern University and completed his PhD in musicology at Yale in 1963. His dissertation was titled, "Giovanni Battista Vitali and the Sonata da chiesa."

He taught briefly in Athens, Ohio and Milwaukee, Wisconsin before he landed the position as Chair of the Department of Music at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) in Cleveland, OH in 1968. Upon his arrival, he developed

a unique Joint Music Program between the Cleveland Institute of Music and CWRU. Dr. Suess raised considerable funds for various projects, including the Historical Performance Practice Program and a Music Therapy program.

John was a pioneer in the study of 17th-century Italian music at a time when such work received scant attention from mainstream musicology. He published numerous editions of and articles about 17th-century instrumental music, the oratorio and cantata, and the Accademia Filarmonica of Bologna. His research interests also extended to 20th-century music. He co-edited a Festschrift in honor of Marcel Dick on the Schönbergian Movement in Vienna and the United States, and published articles about his friend and colleague, the composer Donald Erb. Upon retiring in 2002, he could be credited for guiding dozens of PhD students with generous counsel, abundant energy, keen intelligence, and ready humor.

John and Betsy were blessed with and raised five children before she preceded him in death in 1998. Shortly thereafter, he was fortunate to find an intelligent and kind spirit in Jennie Ray Olson. They married in Chagrin Falls, OH in 2000, and have spent much of their time in Sarasota, Florida enjoying the gifts of family, friends, orchestra, ballet, and travel.

He participated in the International Musicological Society, the International Repertory of Musical Iconography, the American Musicological Society, the College Music Society, the Cleveland Music School Settlement's Board of Trustees, the Society for Aesthetics and Art Criticism, the Society for Ethnomusicology, the Society for Music Theory, the Great Lakes Assembly as Director of the project on "The Future of The Performing Arts" and founded the Society for Seventeenth Century Music.

Social organizations he enjoyed were: Rowfant, Schlaraffia, Men of Boniface, Friends of Sarasota Orchestra and Ballet, the Yale Club, and the Ivy League

Club.

On Monday April 18, 2016, John succumbed to complications from congestive heart failure. He was preceded in death by his parents, John Baptist Suess and Helen Eichinger Suess, and wife Bettie Davenport Suess.

He is survived by his wife JR Suess, and his children: Leslie Purdy, Jessica Suess, Frederica Suess, Andrea Suess Taylor, Lyle Suess, eleven grandchildren (Kirstin, Benjamin, Daniel, Trenin, Lela, Simone, Katie, Noah, Jacob, Aidan, and Vanya), two great grandchildren (Graham and Gabriel), and JR's children: John Olson (deceased), Joy Olson, and Sarah Olson Liberman and four grandchildren (Alex and Mackenzie Olson, and Madeline and Andrew Liberman). One of the great joys of his recent life was a 2014 family reunion with most of them present for his eighty-fifth birthday.

A memorial service will be held on May 21, 2016 at 10:00 am, at St. Boniface Episcopal Church, 5615 Midnight Pass Road, Sarasota, FL.

Memorial gifts may be sent to the Hermitage Artist Retreat, 6660 Manasota Key Road, Englewood, FL 34223.