

IN MEMORIAM

In the early hours of June 30th 2010 Mr Sten Sandahl, after a heroic struggle with cancer, finally had to admit defeat and quietly passed on. How does one sum up a long life, what parting words best befits a sad farewell?

Sten spent most of his life in the service of music. For eight years he was a lecturer at the Department for Musicology at the University of Stockholm and then practised what he taught for twenty five years as producer at Concerts Sweden. He was also, from his early teens to his last months, an enthusiastic musician playing in a number of different constellations of Swedish jazz groups.

Throughout his years at Concerts Sweden his commitment to promoting traditional and world music will be remembered as the most dedicated effort to connect Sweden with the rest of the music world. He relentlessly worked at showcasing Swedish musicians in international arenas. He almost singlehandedly introduced, and eventually built, working networks of festival and concert promoters for world music in Sweden.

Sten was convinced that music is instrumental for man's ability to grow, develop and function as a social being and that we need to acknowledge, while embracing our global community, the values we can find in local traditions passed on from generation to generation. He thus had a particular concern that the emerging global society can result in an impoverishment of the traditional music in all cultures. He worried that old musicians die and disappear with generations of knowledge about their musical traditions without getting a chance to pass their music on to the young. And he noted that while we spend millions to save endangered species of animals, at the same time we allow amazing manifestations of culture to disappear for lack of documentation or reproduction. But Sten wasn't a man to harbour such thoughts without acting upon them. He spent a lot of time and energy on recording projects Vietnam, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Cap Verde, Ecuador, Honduras, Guatemala, Montenegro, and Macedonia, all released on the Caprice label under the humble title "Music from...", all resulting in national and international tours for the featured artists.

But academic and professional achievements are only part of what makes a man. Sten did, (as most of us try) his best at being a loving husband and caring father. By his family – and his vast international family of friends – he will be sadly missed.

He was the proverbial man of letters and generous in sharing his thoughts, experiences and personal networks with the rest of us. He was often at the heart of social gatherings, a natural entertainer with many thoughtful observations and, on occasion, a teller of terribly, terribly bad jokes. Now his deeds are done and he has, most regrettably, moved on, leaving behind a void in the lives of many. With whom can we now have the strangely mixed discussions about music, football, bullfighting and what the drunken old Scotsman actually said to the sheep?

He was a good man and a good friend. One I feel most privileged to call my own.

Hans Hjorth