

# Otto Kinkeldey

*November 27, 1878 — September 19, 1966*

Otto Kinkeldey was born in New York City. After attending public schools there, he received the A.B. degree from the College of the City of New York in 1898 and the M.A. in English literature and philosophy from New York University in 1900. For the next two years he did graduate work in music at Columbia University under Edward MacDowell. From 1898 to 1902, he was organist and choirmaster of the Episcopal Chapel of the Incarnation in New York City. In 1902, he went abroad to continue his musical, literary, and historical studies at the University of Berlin under Hermann Kretzschmar and at the Royal Academic Institute for Church Music in Berlin under Robert Radecke, serving at the same time as organist and musical director of the American Church in Berlin.

In 1906-07, he was sent by the Prussian government on a research trip through the ducal, church, and town libraries of the central German states for the purpose of cataloging and describing the musical scores and books on music in those libraries. Returning to the University of Berlin, he continued his studies and received the Ph.D. degree *summa cum laude* in 1909 for a thesis on “Orgel und Klavier in der Musik des 16. Jahrhunderts”—a path-breaking achievement at the time and a classic work in its field.

In 1909, Dr. Kinkeldey became instructor in organ and music theory at the University of Breslau and librarian of the Royal Academic Institute for Church Music connected with that university; a year later he was enrolled as Lecturer in Music History in the Faculty of Philosophy and received the honorary title of Professor. When war broke out in 1914, he returned to the United States to head the division of music in the New York Public Library, continuing there until 1923 except for two years of service (1917-19) in the army.

From 1923 to 1927, Dr. Kinkeldey was chairman of the Department of Music at Cornell; he also served as University Organist in his first year and directed the Sage Chapel Choir in the vesper services all four years. It was under his chairmanship that musicology became, for the first time at Cornell, a subject for graduate study; probably the first seminar in musicology in this country was given here by Dr. Kinkeldey in 1924-25.

After three more years at the New York Public Library, Dr. Kinkeldey returned to Cornell in 1930 as University Librarian and holder of the first professorship of musicology to be established in the United States, a double office which he filled with distinction until his retirement in 1946. His term as librarian coincided with difficult times: beset by lack of space, lack of properly trained staff, and inadequate budgets, he labored through the years of depression and war, constantly urging in his annual reports the needed expansions. “We are demonstrating,”

he declared in one report, "the theorem that two bodies, when they take the form of books or library workers, can occupy the same space." An honored guest at the formal dedication of Uris and Olin Libraries in October 1962, Dr. Kinkeldey was able to see accomplished what he had so long worked for. Meanwhile, he had performed many services to the academic community outside the round of his official duties, including the giving of informal seminars in bibliography for the benefit of graduate students. And despite the shortage of funds he had managed through his connections in Germany to acquire some of the basic sets which are the foundation of the present superb collection of the music library.

During all these years Dr. Kinkeldey was also active in library and musicological affairs on a national scale. He was one of the founders of both the Music Library Association and the American Musicological Society, serving as president of the former from 1931 to 1935 and of the latter from 1934 to 1936, and again in 1941-42. He took an active interest in both organizations up to the last year of his life. The American Musicological Society made him honorary president and devoted to him a special volume of its journal (1960) as a *Festschrift*. He was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters by Princeton University in 1947. After his official retirement from Cornell, he served as visiting professor at Harvard, Texas, Washington, Princeton, and other universities until 1958. In 1948, he gave a series of Messenger Lectures at Cornell on the subject, "Music and the Universe."

Dr. Kinkeldey's published musicological works were not extremely numerous, but every one bore the mark of authority and careful scholarship. He was himself an accomplished musician as well as a scholar. His influence on the development of musicology in the United States was fundamental and far-reaching. It was an influence exercised through his teaching and, of even greater consequence, through his example. One of his colleagues remarked in 1958, "I venture to say that there is no serious American musical scholar of this generation who does not consciously reflect some sort of contact with the ideal of scholarship which Dr. Kinkeldey embodies." He belonged to the last generation of musicologists in which it was still possible for one man to be at home in every area of the discipline; he was perhaps the last great "generalist" in that field. His grasp of the essentials of any problem was always sound and always expressed with clarity, force, and humor. For many years he ably defended the cause of musicological studies against the sneers of so-called "practical" musicians, thereby eventually making way for the introduction of musicology as an academic discipline in virtually every graduate school in this country. His eminent position as a living link between European and American musicology was dramatized in his address to the International Musicological Society on the occasion of its congress at New York in 1961, the first such congress to be held outside Europe.

Those of his friends who were also his professional colleagues will always recall with gratitude Dr. Kinkeldey's readiness to place at their disposal his immense knowledge and sound judgment in musicological matters. More than one of us never submitted a manuscript until after it had passed the scrutiny of that keen intelligence. In personal relationships Dr. Kinkeldey was a man of few words, externally not demonstrative but a friend on whose understanding and affection one could always rely. And his home will be remembered as a delightful center of social life in the Cornell community.

*Harry Caplan, G. F. Shepherd, Jr., Donald J. Grout*