

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

Benito V. Rivera

1936-2020

Dr. Benito V. Rivera, a beloved member of the Jacobs School of Music, passed away in Bloomington on November 2. He was 84.

A renowned scholar in both music theory and musicology, Rivera opened a window to one of the most critical episodes in the development of Western musical thought: the explicit recognition of the triad in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. He published numerous articles dealing with music theory from this period, including “Theory Ruled by Practice: Zarlino’s Reversal of the Classical System of Proportions” (*Indiana Theory Review*), “The Seventeenth-Century Theory of Triadic Generation and Invertibility and Its Application in Contemporaneous Rules of Composition” (*Music Theory Spectrum*), and “The ‘Isagoge’ (1581) of Johannes Anianius: An Early Formulation of Triadic Theory” (*Journal of Music Theory*). Prof. Rivera is perhaps best known for his translations, with commentary, of the *Synopsis of New Music* by Johannes Lippius, and—especially—Joachim Burmeister’s *Musical Poetics*, one of the most important treatises in the history of music theory and an essential part of history-of-theory curricula. Virtually every music theorist and student of music theory has had their work enriched in some way by Rivera’s thorough and careful scholarship.

Prof. Rivera earned his Ph.D. in musicology from Rutgers in 1974, and subsequently held teaching appointments at Baruch College, the University of Richmond, and the University of North Texas. In 1985, he joined the faculty of Indiana University’s Jacobs School of Music, where he remained until his retirement. (His association with Indiana University was preordained almost two decades before his birth in the Philippines: Benito’s father, Alfredo, came to America as a young man to study at IU and earned his Bachelor of Science and Doctor of Medicine degrees in 1919 and 1921, respectively.) His signature course at IU was the graduate History of Theory seminar, in which he was an expert: his work erased boundaries between music theory and music history, and he had a deep knowledge of five languages and great skill in counterpoint. He was equally beloved by undergraduates, who characterized him as a patient and stimulating professor. He was largely responsible for the historical focus of our sophomore-level courses, and students in those courses particularly valued the training they received in analytical writing. Given that these courses regularly enroll well over one hundred sophomores, Prof. Rivera’s students were also amazed that he made a point to know each of them by name.

The faculty at the Jacobs School of Music remember Prof. Rivera as wonderfully collegial. He avoided open controversy, and was committed to quietly working out compromise, always seeking the input of his colleagues. He brought this same attitude to bear in his service to the scholarly communities at large: he served on the council of the American Musicological Society, and was the national secretary for the Society for Music Theory. While at the University of

North Texas, Prof. Rivera was instrumental in the founding of *Theoria*, a journal devoted to the history of music theory. He served on the editorial boards of several journals, and belonged to the advisory committee of the *Thesaurus Musicarum Latinarum*, the flagship project of Indiana University's Center for the History of Music Theory and Literature. He was also a coeditor of *Festa Musicologica: Essays in honor of George J. Buelow*, a festschrift in honor of his own dissertation director from Rutgers, who later became a member of IU's musicology faculty.

As a young man, Rivera had initially aspired to a career as a pianist, but instead joined the Jesuit order in the seminary at Ateneo de Davao, where he earned B.A. and M.A. degrees. In 1964, the seminary sent him to Woodstock College in Maryland to further his study in theology. There, the American Jesuits allowed him to enroll at the nearby Peabody Conservatory, where he would earn bachelor's and master's degrees in piano. He ultimately obtained release from his Jesuit vows in order to study music full-time. Around the same time, he also fell in love with Diane Goodner, a fellow student in a piano seminar, who would become his wife of 50 years. After his retirement, Prof. Rivera returned to intensive study of the piano, and applied his usual discipline in honing his technical skills to fully articulate his interpretation of the score. In addition to his renewed piano studies, Prof. Rivera also became an avid golfer, runner, swimmer, and ice skater.

He is survived by his wife Diane G. Rivera; his sister Teresita Arcilla; his son David B. Rivera (Lily); his daughter Madeline Rivera-Gill (Kevin); his four grandchildren Elijah Gill, Maya Gill, Veronica Rivera and Xavier Rivera; and numerous extended family members, all of whom regarded him as a quiet observer, a self-deprecating humorist, a generous friend, and a loving husband, father, and Lolo.

Benito Rivera was a monumental figure in music theory and musicology, and his passing will be acutely felt by all who were influenced by him and his work.

Kyle Adams
Associate Professor, Jacobs School of Music
Indiana University Bloomington