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Editor's Note: The following story on the life of the late Franz J. Strahm, one of Western's most beloved professors, was written by last year's editor of the COLLEGE HEIGHTS HERALD. It was written at the special request of the HERALD.

In the east wing of Western's new Music Building there is an empty office this fall, and in her Hall of Fame a new name. For Professor Franz J. Strahm, virtuoso, composer, inspirer, the kindly, twinkling-eyed German - American artist whom eight generations of Hilltop pilgrimagers took to its heart, is gone.

A short, sharp illness, striking with all the speed and finally of his own dazzling fingers, cut short the Indian Summer of Western's nationally-famed, pioneering musician early one evening late last June and thus brought to an end the life of one who had been dedicated to the cause of music for seventy of his seventy-four years.

For a quarter-century head of Western's music department and composer of the official school song, "Normal March," Professor Strahm made contributions to the college to Kentucky to the South that one hardly dares attempt to evaluate. The scope of his work was so great, the individual nature of his genius so indefinable, the quality of his productions and compositions so absolute as to defy adequate summation.

Professor Strahm composed prodigiously, produced innumerable works, gave hundreds of concert performances, directed some of the most famed groups in Europe and in the South, including Tennessee's celebrated Monteagle Assembly for nine years. He was a pioneer in the field of orchestration and in glee club work, an indefatigable student of art in all its forms, a teacher who gave freely of his boundless energy burning zeal, and rich, thorough background, which included training under Liszt in his native Germany and fifty years of concert experience both in Europe and in the U. S.

Yet these accomplishments, as essential as they must be to any who would review his career, are only a few scattered pages as it were from the volume of his life. For the true worth of Professor Strahm to music, to the South lay in his role of inspirer and friend. Down through the years with each of the thousands who came in contact with him, who heard him play, he left a little of that magic fire that was his art and a little of the love, the passion he felt for music. And perhaps that after all, is the most profound test of his greatness.

Professor Strahm was far in advance of his time. While others were laboring still in the fields of mutation and integration, he was already deeply immersed in the intricacies of orchestration, voice blending and chorals. And while the vast majority of his Southern contemporaries lazed in lethargy, his pioneering spirit was carrying him further and further into the very soul of music so that the greatly cherished tribute once paid him long ago by Franz Liszt, "That Strahm boy is a musician," seemed fittingly and prophetically bestowed.

For a full fifty years, from the time he graduated from the Royal Conservatory at Sonderhausen at the age of 17 until he retired in 1935, the flood of life never left Professor Strahm in its wake. IN looking back over his list of accomplishments during the period one is reminded of nothing quite so much as a great river. Perhaps only in the analogy of a tremendous mass of flowing water, with its raging torrents, its quiet pools, its swirling eddies, and its broad, sweeping grandeur can one begin to understand and appreciate something of the depth, the power, the moving force, the genius of this man.

There were years filled to the brim with instruction and composition and the problems and possibilities of production. There was the annual May Music Festival which he inaugurated in

1910 and for which he was often forced to write or rearrange the script and orchestration. There was the Monteagle Assembly which filled nine summers. There was the Gargantuan task of transforming the handful of embryonic courses which he inherited when he came to Western in 1910, and which was standard equipment in those days, into the progressive, well-rounded schedule available to local students today. There were the duties of the teacher, the friend, the father. And there was the willing task he undertook of inspiring.

But occasionally the flood would slow, for he was a man after all, and then would course the quiet eddies and the deep, cool, shadowy pools. Though composition, direction, production, experimentation must fill his life, woven in now and-then were periods when he would once more sit at the piano to a once more sit at the piano to a hushed audience and touch the keys with the magic fire of his genius. It never dimmed, that fire and even as late as 1939 when he gave his last public performance his playing was still the rich, virile, interpretative thing Liszt had once called Music.

Professor Strahm's life was once termed by one who knew him very well "a symphony in deeds." It is not within the compass of this article to improve or to elaborate upon that statement. It lacks nothing. It is complete within itself even as the life was. For Professor Franz J. Strahm created something bigger than himself, bigger than Western, breathed life into a printed symbol, and made of music something in which uninitiated as well as the devotees could find the peace, the beauty the eloquent simplicity he did.

The pattern of Professor Strahm's life, whether inadvertently or not, closely followed and with amazing exactitude, though in no set sequence, the dynamics of his beloved compositions.

Born May 14, 1867, in Frelburg, Germany, the son of Joseph Franz and Louise Sedetsky Strahm, he entered into the pianissimo stage of his career while but a lad of 4. Both of his parents were talented musicians, his father having held the role of lead tenor in all Frelburg and South German festivals for more than sixty years and so it was only natural that his son, the third of three talented children, in a large family, should find in music, the outlet for all childish emotions. For two years he deeply immersed himself in the intricacies of the piano and at the age of six had already attracted the attention of Reisenaurer, celebrated pupil of Paris Mowskowsky.

Even at this early age he entered upon the mezzo-piano, a new phase upon the mezzo-piano, a new phase of what was to culminate in a glorious career. From the time he was six until he was 15 he studied at the Conservatory of Church Music under some of the most celebrated masters of Germany. Such was the aptitude of the young virtuoso that upon his graduation in 1882 from that institution he was granted a scholarship to the Royal Conservatory at Sonderhausen, which honor carried with it the privilege of each week receiving a lesson from Franz Liszt. It was then that the master remarked: "He needs a little more temperament and a little less mannerism."