

LYDIA V. SAVITZKAYA

1898 - 1967

The very mention of Mrs. Lydia Savitzkaya's name recalls to all who knew her a cheerful little lady hurrying along the campus. She always had a bright and warm smile for all she happened to meet on her way. Each person responded with affection to her enthusiastic greeting as she invariably remembered various details of peoples' lives. She never failed to inquire after their health or their relatives. Her interest in people was deep and genuine. This warm hearted lady was loved by students and colleagues alike.

The ever ready smile and greeting was somehow symbolic of the great courage and faith that saw Mrs. Savitzkaya through the ups and downs of life.

Born in Russia, Mrs. Savitzkaya was graduated with honors from the Smolny Institute in St. Petersburg. She specialized in music and literature and received a master's degree in music, the harp being her instrument.

With the coming of the Revolution Mrs. Savitzkaya escaped from Russia via Holland and France, bringing little with her except for personal belongings. Making a new start in Europe, she taught Russian to the British Officers in Holland besides teaching the piano and the harp. After arriving in the United States, she filled engagements with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and taught at the Mannes School of Music in New York. She was a member of ensembles doing sustaining programs for WOR and WABC radio. At the same time Mrs. Savitzkaya gave private lessons in Russian.

In 1945 Mrs. Savitzkaya began teaching Russian in New York in earnest. Subsequently she taught at Cornell and in 1946 gave the Army Intensive Russian Language course for officers at Columbia University. From 1946-1948 she taught at Smith College. In 1948 she joined the Vassar faculty and remained here until her retirement in 1964.

Mrs. Savitzkaya was devoted to her teaching and was constantly at work on improving materials for class work in as much as available textbooks were inadequate.

Mrs. Savitzkaya published a reader, *Asya* by Turgenev, for which she provided the notes and the vocabulary. She was - instrumental in putting on some very colorful plays at Vassar, performed by students of the Russian Department.

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Some of the costumes used in the plays were brought back with her from Russia. These plays, based for the most part on folklore were very successful. Among them were the dramatizations of Pushkin's *Tsar Saltan*; *The Golden Cockerel*, and Denisov's *The Snow Maiden*.

All those who knew her remember a sweet little lady, greeting all she came across with her inimitable enthusiasm and warmth. Some of us thought of her as of a little flitting

bird but she also had an air of undaunted determination about her. She firmly believed in her rights as a pedestrian, and lifting her hand imperiously to stop incoming traffic she marched victoriously across Raymond Avenue. No automobile was going to preempt her basic human right in traffic.

Mrs. Savitzkaya's death on March 27, 1967 came as a shock to her many friends. Small in stature, she nonetheless inspired confidence that she would continue indefinitely in her zest for living and enjoying an interesting life. Her kindness and energy will long be remembered. Her warmth and friendliness will be missed by her many, many friends and students.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Walker

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