

CONFIDENTIAL

*Never sent to  
Dr Evans*

*May 10, 1947*

TO Dr. Evans

For the first time I find it necessary to get your written approval before paying a bill, since the two of us constitute a majority of the committee of three operating the Coolidge Foundation.

As you know, I went to Cambridge, Massachusetts last week to attend the Harvard Symposium on Music Criticism and to confer with Mrs. Coolidge on our plans for next season. The week before I received from Mr. Duncan, Executive Secretary of the Martha Graham Dance School, an estimate of the cost of the performance which the Coolidge Foundation was supposedly sponsoring in part at the Symposium. As I told you in previous conversations, I at first opposed this performance because, as I explained to Mrs. Coolidge, these dance recitals are very difficult to manage and I feared that the thing might be poorly run by the Harvard authorities who were inexperienced in such matters. Mrs. Coolidge then consulted Martha Graham who said she would take full responsibility for the performance. I then still objected because of the cost of such performances but eventually had to agree to a \$2,500 allocation from the funds of the Coolidge Foundation. Mrs. Coolidge assured me that she would not expect us in Washington to supervise the performance since that would be impossible and that she would be in Cambridge herself to arrange things. I hasten to state at this point that to my surprise and pleasure the performance which I witnessed on May 3 was enormously successful, and with the acknowledgments to the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation and the Library of Congress both in the programs and given verbally by Professor Davison during the intermission, I was very pleased with the results. I shall report on this more fully in my ~~short~~ travel report which will be sent you later.

After these original conversations with Mrs. Coolidge I had nothing more to do with the performance at Harvard with the exception of commissioning a new work from William Schumann for the occasion. I heard from Mrs. Coolidge that Miss Graham, Mr. Hawkins, Professor Merritt and she had had a conference in Cambridge and had to assume that everything was in hand. I received several assurances that she would take care of all the expenses beyond the \$2,500 allocated from the Foundation's own funds. In February of this year she sent us a check for \$1,750 to cover the additional costs of this performance and thought that the total would therefore come to \$4,250. In various telephone conversations she assured me that everything was running fine and that she would meet any additional expenses that appeared.

I was therefore somewhat surprised to receive the estimate of almost \$6,500 for this performance but took it with me to Cambridge in order to show it to Mrs. Coolidge. When I arrived in Cambridge, however, I learned that Mrs. Coolidge had been taken to the hospital two days earlier and was seriously ill. I got in touch with her daughter-in-law at once and learned that she had become quite ill a week before and after a few days in the hotel, she took a turn for the worse and the Doctors ordered her to the Massachusetts General Hospital at once. I saw Professor Albert Sprague Coolidge and his wife frequently during my visit and learned that he had withheld from Mrs. Coolidge at her own request all correspondence for over a week and he returned to me all the letters I had written. I learned further that she could see any visitors for awhile and that her condition was such that it was highly inadvisable, if not actually dangerous, to discuss business matters with her. I assured them that if Mrs. Coolidge received me at the hospital I would certainly bear that in mind and had no intention of annoying her with business matters. I did, however, state briefly the situation.

On the second day of the Symposium I was informed by Mr. Merritt, Chairman of the Music Department, that he personally was forced to sign a contract with the Union for the orchestra that morning, and not being able to communicate with Miss Graham or Mrs. Coolidge he had done so in order to insure that the performance would take place. He stated that payment would have to be made within six days after the performance. He naturally was quite concerned but I assured him that we had sufficient funds for that bill and that he should send it to me as soon as he received it, so that he would not be embarrassed. This bill for \$1,099.70 has arrived and I have instructed Miss Rogers to send out a voucher by special delivery today.

On Sunday Mrs. Coolidge called for me and I visited her at the hospital at 4:30 p.m. (I had of course sent her flowers immediately upon my arrival and kept in touch with her maid and nurse as well as Sprague and Peggie Coolidge, so that I had indirect personal contact all the time I was there.) She seemed very glad to see me and in relatively good spirits. I told her of the success of the Symposium and scrupulously avoided at first any mention of business matters. I was surprised, therefore, when she told me that Sprague had told her that there was a deficit of at least \$2,000 on the estimated cost of the dance program, but that with her illness she was afraid she could not give us any more money at present. She said that of course if it would "bankrupt" the Foundation she could "sell her furniture in her apartment" and make it up that way. I tried to get her to stop talking about business matters and told her that she need not worry, we would take care of everything somehow and that if necessary we could always cancel at least one of the concerts scheduled for the Festival in October. She seemed surprised at this stating that they were definite commitments, but I think she was relieved when I told her that the letters I had written on Coolidge Foundation stationery used the word "tentative" or "proposal" wherever possible. I did everything I could to end these business discussions ~~because~~ because I noticed that she was not well and seemed to be suffering.

While in Cambridge I discussed the matter of cost both with Professor Merritt and Miss Graham but neither remembered an estimate of \$4,250 which is the total I expected from the \$2,500 allocation and Mrs. Coolidge's \$1,750

gift. When Mrs. Coolidge herself mentioned the deficit, I asked her about this figure but she was quite vague. She thought that it had come up at a conference with Miss Graham and Professor Merritt. I fear that costs were not adequately discussed at this conference and that this is simply another case of wishful thinking, if I may call it that, on the part of Mrs. Coolidge. We have had this experience on many occasions in the past.

Fortunately we do have sufficient money in the Foundation to cover the cost of this concert. The purpose of this memorandum is to get your approval to pay all outstanding bills as promptly as possible. I regret to say that in addition to the orchestra bill mentioned above there are three bills from Martha Graham which are attached totaling \$5,677.20. We must add to this, however, an unexpected item for copying the score and parts totaling \$396., and the commission fee for William Schumann of \$500. The total cost, therefore, for this performance on May 3 will come to over \$7,500. There is really no alternative in the matter and I do hope that Mrs. Coolidge will recover from her current illness and we may expect further gifts from her to restore the balance in cash in the Coolidge Foundation. I had hoped to have a balance of over \$4,500 on June 30 but after paying these bills it will be cut to about \$1,000.

Respectfully,

Harold Spivacke  
Chief, Music Division

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May 8, 1947