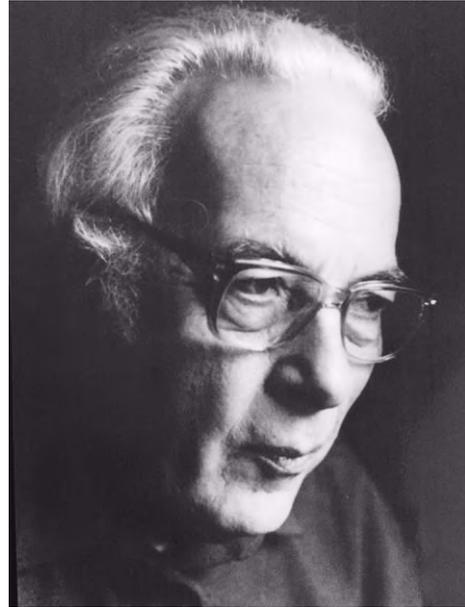


Peter Gammond (1925-2019)

Musical And Literary Jack-Of-All Trades And Stylish Master Of Them All

Able to combine rare insight with remarkable resilience, Peter Gammond, who died in May aged 93, was an urbane and avuncular figure whose long career embraced an extraordinarily diverse range of activities. Writer, critic, historian, broadcaster, reviewer, lexicographer, cartoonist, poet, bibliophile, musical arranger, composer, performer, but, above all, an undoubted enthusiast, while successfully documenting so many varied aspects of popular culture throughout the course of the second half of the last century, he undoubtedly helped preserve that era for posterity. In addition, his input and expertise proved no less pivotal in the successful development of the British recording industry.



Born in 1925 in the Cheshire town of Northwich, Peter Gammond was educated at Sir John Deane's Grammar School. Inheriting his love of music from his father, as both a talented pianist and trombonist, he was perhaps never happier than when making music. Initially winning a scholarship to Manchester College of Art, however like so many of his generation his seemingly effortless progress was interrupted by the outbreak of the Second World War. Joining up in 1942, he served for five years as a tank driver in the Royal Armoured Corps, seeing action throughout the Far East and the Indian subcontinent. Demobbed in 1947, he then read English at Wadham College, Oxford.

His professional career first began when he joined the Decca Record Company in 1952. Staying with them for eight years, he then became a freelance journalist and writer. Editing *Audio Record Review* from 1966 until 1970, he was then appointed Music Editor of *Hi-Fi News and Record Review*. While becoming a familiar voice on BBC Radio, he was soon also contributing a wide range of finely written critiques to many and varied periodicals, everything from *Musical Opinion* to *The Gramophone*. Alongside a regular column for *Jazz News*, his sleeve notes, always meticulously researched, witty, elegant and stylish, increasingly graced the catalogues of all the major record companies.

Writings on a more expansive canvas, almost fifty in number, range from *The Decca Book of Jazz* to biographical studies of Duke Ellington, Offenbach and Scott Joplin. In 1971 he created *One Man's Music*, a light-hearted encyclopaedic look at the musical scene, past and present, typically covering everything from the classics to jazz, sacred to pop. It was a theme he repeated some twenty years later when compiling what has become a seminal text, *The Oxford Companion to Popular Music*. Attracting great critical praise was his 1979 study of Mozart's *Magic Flute*. By then, proving hugely popular was his series of six humorous *Bluffer's Guides*, covering everything from golf to opera.

Proving an ideal working partner, Gammond's career was notable for an unusually high number of collaborative ventures. Together with his friend and former Decca colleague, Peter Clayton, they produced a *Guide To Popular Music*, *Fourteen Miles On A Clear Night*, *101 Things* and *The Bluffer's Guide to Jazz*. With Raymond Horricks came *The Music Goes Round*, alongside an indispensable guide to *Brass Bands*. In the interim, Gammond joined with Charles Fox, Alexis Korner and Alun Morgan to produce what became a definitive tome, *Jazz on Record*. In the company of Burnett James and Malcolm Rayment, they compiled four volumes of *Music on Record: A Critical Guide*.

Amid a brief cameo appearance playing the piano in the Milos Forman film *Ragtime*, Gammond could also be heard on a number of LP recordings that included *Classics of Musical Comedy* and *Musical*

Comedy's Golden Days. A keen student of nineteenth century culture, his study, *Your Own, Your Very Own*, helped reveal many of the lost glories of the British Music Hall. To supplement this he brought together some sixty classics of the genre within *The Good Old Days Songbook*, published by the BBC. A further volume, *The Music Hall Songbook*, followed. Sadly neglected are a number of his original compositions, including an early operetta, *Love and Learning*, completed while at Oxford.

As a poet himself, Gammond had long been an admirer of John Betjeman, serving as Chairman of the Betjeman Society from 1997 until 2002. From 1996 until 2000, he had edited the society's journal. In addition, Gammond both wrote and appeared in two films about the poet, *Betjeman's Britain*, released in 1994, and *Betjeman's London*, completed some six years later, each directed by his younger son, Stephen. Together with John Heald, in 1997 Gammond produced a *Bibliographical Companion to Betjeman*, following this with *A Little Book of Betjeman*. While not many people would be able to keep track of all these many and diverse activities, Peter Gammond certainly could.

He is survived by his wife Elizabeth and two sons, Jules and Stephen.

Kenneth Shenton