

Legislation Text

File #: 200444, **Version:** 0

Honoring the life of Eleanor Sokoloff and her legacy of service and promotion of musical education in Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, Eleanor Sokoloff taught at the Curtis Institute of Music for over eight decades and created an unparalleled legacy at the conservatory. She passed away in July of 2020 at the remarkable age of one hundred and six; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Sokoloff came to the Curtis Institute in 1931. She met her husband, Vladmir “Billy” Sokoloff at the school, and for decades they entertained as a two-piano team. Mr. Sokoloff was the lead pianist with the Philadelphia Orchestra for twelve years; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Sokoloff first taught supplementary piano (for non-piano majors) between 1936 and 1949 before becoming a fulltime faculty member in Piano. She took a special liking to working with younger students, focusing on perfecting the basics and advancing protégées to the next level; and

WHEREAS, During her long tenure, Mrs. Sokoloff worked with innumerable talented students and more than 75 of those musicians went on to perform with the Philadelphia Orchestra. Among Mrs. Sokoloff’s pupils were Craig Sheppard, Lambert Orkis, and wunderkind Susan Starr. Curtis resident pianist Meng-Chieh Liu studied with her, as did Leon McCawley, Charles Abramovic, Kit Armstrong, Daniel Hsu, and Randall Hodgkinson; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Sokoloff’s dedication to the Curtis Institute was profound, yet modern. She advocated for women who played piano and were frequently denied access to high level opportunities even when she did not herself receive proper recognition for her contributions to musical education in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Sokoloff cut a dynamic figure in Philadelphia’s Rittenhouse Square neighborhood. She was as much an institution as the school to which she was so devoted, often stopping for tea and dining in her trademark outfits; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Sokoloff is remembered with reverence by her colleagues, including the President of the Curtis Institute who said, “She was an institution within an institution. She just experienced it all, she knew it all, she remembered it all...She could talk about the school and its evolution with an authority that no one else could.”; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Sokoloff’s eight decades of work with Philadelphia’s classical musicians is incomparable. Her influence on her students and their works is a gift whose depth may never be fully known, but was

assuredly immense; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE CITY COUNCIL OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby honors the life of Eleanor Sokoloff and her legacy of service and promotion of musical education in Philadelphia.