Guiding CFA to New Heights
Norman Dello Joio hailed as prolific composer, talented leader

BY NATALIE JACOBSON MCCracken
College of Fine Arts and University Pro-
fessor Emeritus Norman Dello Joio, a
widely honored and prolific composer and
dean of the College of Fine Arts from 1972
to 1978, died on July 24. He was 95.

Taught by his father, an organist, sing-
er, and vocal coach, Dello Joio became an
organist and choir director at St. Mary
Star of the Sea Church on City Island, New
York, when he was fourteen.

He graduated from City University of
New York and turned to composing as
a graduate student at Juilliard. In 1937
he won the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge
Award for his piano trio, the first of a suc-
cession of honors, among them two Music
Critics’ Circle Awards, an Emmy, and in
1957 a Pulitzer Prize for Meditations on
Ecclesiastes. Religion was a dominant
theme of his work, particularly the life of
Joan of Arc, the subject of three operas
and a symphonic piece.

His massive oeuvre also includes
more than forty-five choral works, nearly
thirty pieces for orchestra, ten for band,
twenty-five for solo voice, ballets (two
commissioned by Martha Graham), nine
television scores, and other works for
piano (some for children), flute, clarinet,
harmonica, and organ.

He taught composition and choir at
Sarah Lawrence College from 1945 to
1950 and composition at the Mannes Col-
lege of Music from 1960 to 1972, when he
was appointed dean of CFA by President
Emeritus John Silber (Hon.’95). He also
was executive director of the Boston Uni-
versity Tanglewood Institute, which offers
music programs during the summer for
high school and college students in as-
association with Boston Symphony Orches-
tra’s Tanglewood Music Center in Lenox,
Massachusetts.

Silber says Dello Joio transformed
the college and “brought it to its highest met-
tle of artistic achievement in the recruit-
ment of many outstanding artists to the
faculty; the sculptors Harold Tovish and
Isabel McIlvain, the painter Philip Gus-
ton, the theater director Alan Schneider,
the pianist Anthony di Bonaventura, the
composer David Del Tredici, for master
classes at Tanglewood the soprano Phyllis
Curtin, and many others.”

Under Dello Joio’s deanship, Silber
adds, the BU Orchestra, conducted by
Joseph Silverstein, won the silver medal
at the Herbert von Karajan Festival of Stu-
dent Orchestras in Berlin.

“A dedicated artist himself, he devoted
mornings to composition and spent the
afternoons and evenings overseeing the
work of the college and its various pro-
grams,” Silber says.

Dello Joio’s works continued to be
performed throughout the United States
during his deanship; Silber and his wife,
Kathryn, attended premiere perfor-
mances of his compositions by the Phila-
delphia Orchestra, conducted by Eugene
Ormandy, and at the National Cathedral in
Washington, D.C.

“His presence and that of his wife, Bar-
bara, added new dimensions to our lives,”
Silber says.

Robert L. Treese (STH’53,
GRS’58), 88, School of
Theology professor emeritus
of practical theology, on
January 1.

Richard R. Towle

by Natalie Jacobson McCracken

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Treese, a BU faculty
member from 1956 to 1983,
also was associate direc-
tor of field education for
STH students. A passionate
crusader for social justice,
he espoused the role Chris-
tianity could play in foster-
ing equality for minorities,
women, gays, and underpaid
workers.

After working as a ma-
cinist in Chicago, Treese
moved to Boston in the
early 1950s to pursue a
career in the ministry. He
earned an STH degree in
1953 and joined the faculty
while earning a doctorate in
biblical studies. He taught
courses on parish adminis-
tration, pastoral leadership,
evangelism, and other prac-
tical ministerial matters.

He was known for taking
brave stands on controver-
sial issues. He marched for
civil rights in Selma in the
early 1960s and was jailed in
California for striking with
grape pickers. He hired the
first female faculty member
at the School of Theology
and fought for inclusiveness
in the workplace.

In 1965, Treese helped
found the Council on Reli-
gion and Homosexuality, an
interdenominational coal-
ition of liberal church leaders
and gay rights groups. The
council’s conference in San
Francisco led to Treese’s
1966 paper “Homosexual-
ity: A Contemporary View
of the Biblical Perspective,”
which is still cited in defense
of the Bible’s tolerance of
homosexuality.

While at BU, Treese also
served as minister of the All-
ston and Quincy Methodist
churches and as an elder in
the New England Confer-
ence of the United Method-
ist Church.

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