

## STANNARDUS: THE PRIVATE PRESS OF WARREN STANNARD

*Rollin Milroy*

**E**ARLIER THIS YEAR the small basement printing shop of Warren Stannard, who passed away in 1996, was disbursed among several Vancouver printers and artists by his widow, Helen. This act of generosity brought to light a private press little known beyond family and close friends, with a body of work reflecting Stannard's brief but enthusiastic study of the private press tradition.

Warren Stannard was perhaps best known as a long-time member of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, where he had been first oboe and, later, English horn. Although art and printing had been avocations all of his life, he became dedicated to printing books only in the few years before his death.

Born in Connecticut in 1923, Stannard entered Yale's music school after returning from the war, abandoning his previous plan to study journalism "on a whim" according to Helen. During that first year back he met his future wife, Helen. Completing his Master's in 1950, he left Yale with Helen for teaching positions at Oberlin College and Colorado College. In the mid-fifties Warren joined the Indianapolis orchestra



as first oboe, but that filled just five months of the year, and with a new family, he had to find other work. A neighbour got him work as an engineering draftsman, a skill he later turned to doing patent drafting. It was during this period that he began engraving linoleum blocks.

The Stannards moved to Vancouver in 1960, and during the next 26 years Warren performed with the symphony and the CBC Vancouver chamber orchestra, and taught oboe at the University of British Columbia. In 1986 he was forced to retire due to a hand operation that left him unable to play. Finding himself in need of a new challenge, his attention increasingly turned toward the press. He had acquired a Kelsey tabletop press - a larger version of the one he'd used to print cards and a newspaper as a child - in the early 1970s and used it to print Christmas cards and blocks. With the help of printer and typesetter Jim Rimmer, he built up his collection of type (predominantly Garamont and Goudy Old Style), and in 1994 made the jump to a full-size Vandercook proof press.

Warren's first book, *On Mill Pond - A Reminiscence* (34 copies) was printed in 1993. In a single narrative poem he recounts his youth playing along a stream, counterpointing the text with his own full-page linoleum cuts. The next year he printed Elizabeth Browning's *A Musical Instrument* (16 copies), a poem he'd first encountered 50 years earlier at Yale as part of a choral concert. His final book, *Three Wry Tales from the Brothers Grimm* (30 copies), was his first on the new Vandercook, and his most ambitious in scope. He translated the texts from a 19th century German edition, and cut a series of blocks to accompany them.



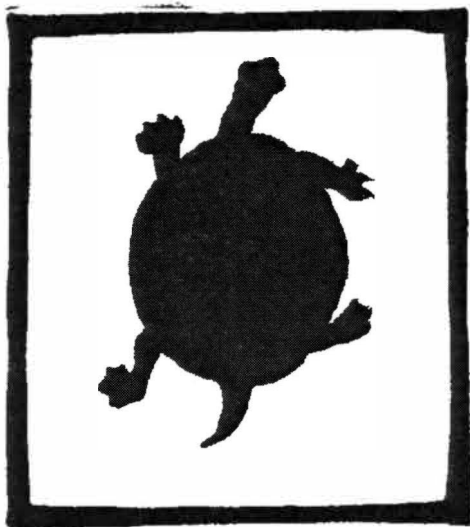
The three Stannardus volumes are the work of someone who was becoming schooled in the history of book design and letterpress printing, injecting his own talent into the tradition. The colophon in *Three*

*Wry Tales* reflects his enthusiasm for the world of type, papers and printing that he was beginning to explore: "*The text of this book was set in 14 pt. Garamont. It was designed by Frederic W. Goudy for Lanston Monotype. [Both spellings of the name were used in*

*Garamond's lifetime.] Titling and initials were set in Bradley Text. The paper is Nideggen, a German mouldmade paper which has a laid pattern with a wavy chain, ideal for letterpress printing."*

The presswork gets cleaner and more consistent with each book, and with the arrival of the Vandercook Warren's illustrations achieved their fullest potential. (Kelsey presses were never intended to print books, so kudos to Stannard for the two he did.) All three of the editions are printed in accordion-fold format (the pages printed one side only and tipped together, essentially forming one long sheet that opens and closes like an accordion) and pasted into cloth cases. From the printer's perspective, this approach has the dual advantage of eliminating the need to back-up while also adding bulk to the short texts.

Helen believes Warren, who died unexpectedly in the fall of 1996, was originally drawn to printing books by a desire to leave some physical legacy for his family. He never sold copies of his books, and as he'd hoped, they remain in the possession of his children and grandchildren.



*Thanks to the Stannard family for the loan of Warren's three books to prepare this article, and permission to reproduce some of his linoleum cuts.*