
Lloyd E. Rigler

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Lloyd Eugene Rigler, a California industrialist and investor whose arts philanthropy ranged from music in Los Angeles to ballet in his native Northern Plains to the New York City Opera to public television, died Dec. 7 at his home in Los Angeles. He was 88.

His death was announced by the Rigler-Deutsch Foundation in Hollywood, of which he was president, and the New York City Opera, of which he was vice chairman.

Mr. Rigler was the founder of Classic Arts Showcase, an eclectic television service that distributes performing arts films at no cost to public television stations, and of the American Association for Single People, which fights for the economic rights of the unmarried.

Mr. Rigler, who built a fortune with Adolph's Meat Tenderizer as its foundation, started as a salesman during the Depression. His connection with television also started early, with the 1939-40 New York World's Fair, at which he demonstrated RCA's new television technology to astonished audiences.

He and a partner, Lawrence E. Deutsch, who joined him in making Adolph's Meat Tenderizer a national brand, began their philanthropy modestly in the early 1950s, when they formed the Lloyd E.

Rigler-Lawrence E. Deutsch Foundation.

The foundation was an innovative venture that helped make the matching funds concept a powerful fund-raising tool. Their foundation contributed to the creation of the Los Angeles Music Center and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.

Deutsch died in 1977 and willed his holdings to the foundation. Until his own death, Mr. Rigler oversaw its allocations, many of them to arts groups in the United States, typically making its funds available to recipients who could raise funds to match the foundation ' s grants.

Beneficiaries also included medical research in HIV and hearing loss programs, Free Arts for Abused Children, Amnesty International, Greenpeace and the American Civil Liberties Union. Significant contributions went to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the American Ballet Theater, the Joffrey Ballet and the refurbishing of Carnegie Hall in New York.

His Classic Arts Showcase, started in 1994, shows archival and contemporary film clips from all over the world, made available via satellite to an estimated 50 million homes. With its scenes from opera, ballet and early television, it has been called MTV for classical music fans. The programming is made available without commercials around the clock.

Lloyd Rigler was born in Lehr, N.D., and grew up in his parents ' general store, which served a large farming community. By age 11 he ran his own counter selling gift items and greeting cards.

He moved in with relatives in Chicago and sold electric irons and shoes, saving enough money to go to the University of Illinois and graduate in 1939. That fall he headed for New York to try his luck in the theater. He was sidetracked by day jobs such as selling Waring blenders and then promoting television sets and records. He spent World War II in the Navy in the United States. After the war, he met Deutsch, then manager of a cleaners, when he rented warehouse space above the store. Deutsch had previously worked backstage at the New York City Opera.

The two men went into business as Rigler & Deutsch Food Brokers. At a restaurant in Santa Barbara, they met the chef and owner, Adolph Rempp, and learned about his meat tenderizer.

They represented Rempp as food brokers and in 1948 bought his recipe and the name. In 1950 they formed Adolph ' s Ltd. The brand had become known worldwide by the time they sold it in 1974 to Chesebrough-Ponds, later part of Lever Brothers and Unilever Best Foods.

The foundation took off after the sale of Adolph ' s. The partners helped the new Los Angeles Opera, of which Deutsch was president, bring the New York City Opera to the Los Angeles Music Center, where it performed regularly for 16 seasons.

They also began one of the most extensive collections and listings of voice recordings, going back to the first Edison cylinder. The result was the Rigler & Deutsch Index of Recorded Sound.

Their own fabled collection of rare music, including manuscripts signed by Beethoven, letters by Wagner and a first edition of a Mozart opera, was lost in 1992 in a fire that gutted the foundation ' s headquarters in Burbank.

Mr. Rigler was on the board of the Los Angeles Philharmonic for 20 years and was also on the board of the City Center of Music and Drama in New York. He was co-chairman of the City Opera board until the long cross-country commute prompted him to become vice chairman.

He supported the Spectrum Institute in the cause of domestic partnerships, then founded the American Association of Single People in 1999 to assist unmarried Americans facing unequal treatment in the marketplace or by the IRS.

Mr. Rigler ' s survivors include a sister, Audre Estrin of Portland, Ore.; his nephew James Rigler of Los Angeles, vice president of the foundation and producer of Classic Arts Showcase; and his friend Steven Davis of Manhattan and Los Angeles.

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