

Notes

International Adventist Musicians Association

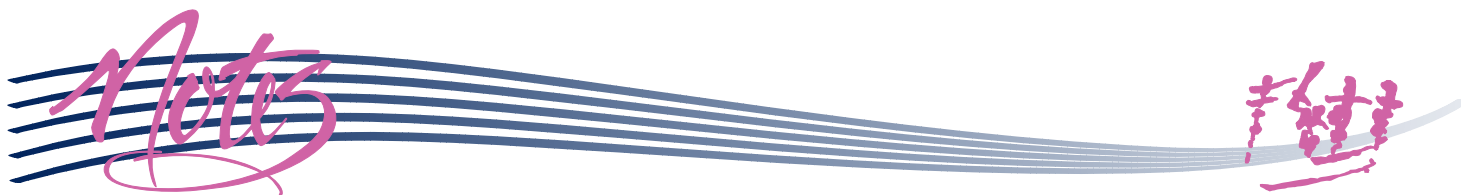
THE NEW ENGLAND YOUTH ENSEMBLE

IAMA CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

THE WEDGWOOD TRIO

THE LIBERTY SINGERS

WINTER/Spring 2009



Elsie Landon Buck

With this issue we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the International Adventist Musicians Association. For a quarter of a century IAMA has served as a voice for Adventist music, uniting our musicians around the world and sharing news, events, and the accomplishments of music groups and fellow members. In doing that we have also become better acquainted with each other and become more aware of what we are doing collectively as Adventist musicians.

It has been our privilege to meet music professors and students through the printed pages in our publications, **NOTES** being the most recent. During these years we have not only become acquainted with the work presently being done in our school music programs throughout our country and abroad but have also gained a perspective about how the music programs at our colleges and universities started and evolved to the present.

President's Message

It is my special privilege at this time to thank one amongst us who has worked untiringly for more than 25 years in making IAMA a reality. We stop to thank our editor, Professor Dan Shultz, for the outstanding contribution he has made in expanding the scope of IAMA throughout all this time. We owe him our deepest gratitude for bringing the Adventist world of music together through his work with **NOTES** and, more recently, with our website and online services.

As I end my tenure as president, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere respect and appreciation for others who have been involved in IAMA and to you as members for your support with dues and contributions. As you have learned from our publications, we have many wonderful men and women in music who teach, perform, and lead musical organizations around the world. I am grateful for the high standards they uphold and the influence they have had in presenting the very best in musical outreach.

In a very special way I want to congratulate the School of Music at Southern Adventist University as it becomes an all-Steinway school. It joins Canadian University College and Pacific Union College as the most recent of Adventist schools to upgrade its keyboard resources. These are expensive but necessary improvements to assure that our students have the very best in instruments on which to practice and present great music. As you will read in this issue of **NOTES**, Southern is hoping to accomplish this goal in two more years.

Many years ago when I was a student at what was then Southern Junior College, now

Southern Adventist University, I was totally committed to mastering the piano, studying under the inspiring and skilled direction of Professor Harold A. Miller. Because of his high standards and example, music was an integral and respected part of student life and church worship. The piano was the only keyboard instrument in church at that time, and Professor Miller's playing of hymns with great beauty and sensitivity was always a memorable experience. His hymn "Like Jesus" (492 in our hymnal) inspires and moves the heart.

In this issue of **NOTES** it is our privilege to become acquainted with dedicated musicians who came together to establish musical groups of differing sizes and types that have been a blessing and inspiration to many. Whether it be the instrumental music of the New England Youth Ensemble or the singing of the Wedgwood Trio, each has provided music that speaks to persons with varied backgrounds and life experiences.

Whether we perform or listen, the inspiration provided by voice or instrument can satisfy the heart and soul. For all of you who have given and continue to give us your best we offer our sincere and deep gratitude. My prayer is that God will continue to be with us all as we honor him with His gift of music.

Elsie L. Buck

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly . . . as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Colossians 3:16

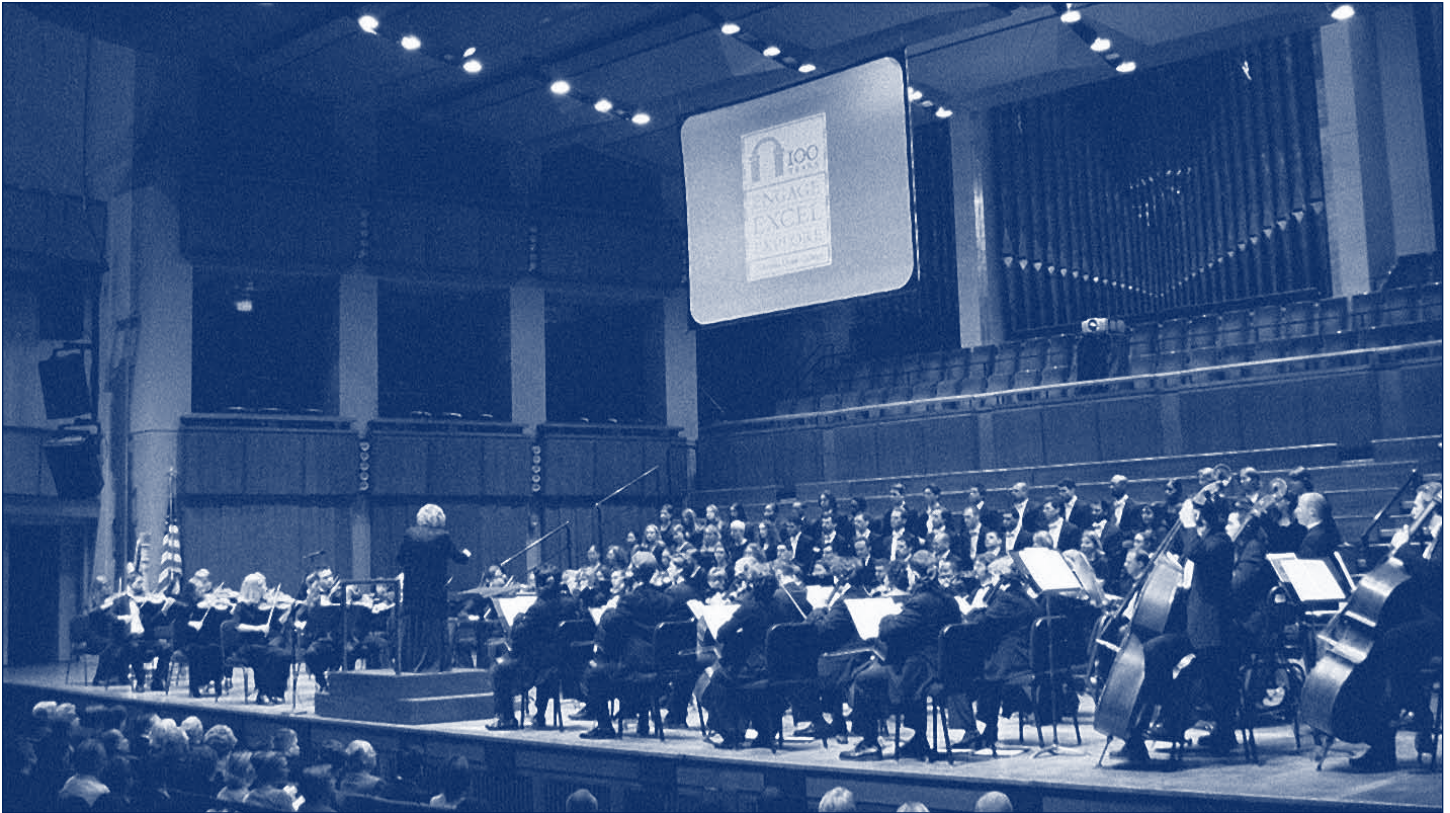
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IAMA LOGO



IAMA's logo, created in a few seconds with the quick movements of a writer's quill, is a cluster of notes from Beethoven's sketchings for his Ninth Symphony.



The New England Youth Ensemble and Columbia Union College Columbia Chorale perform under the direction of Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in a 2003 concert celebrating the college's centennial.

The New England Youth Ensemble

Since its founding forty years ago, the New England Youth Ensemble has become a household name in Adventist churches, an acclaimed ensemble both here and abroad. It has traveled more widely than any other Adventist music group, taking countless tours in the U.S. and throughout the world. Under its professional name, the New England Symphonic Ensemble, it is a resident orchestra at Carnegie Hall, where it has performed more frequently than any other orchestra in the country.

The ongoing story of the New England Youth Ensemble, now in existence for forty years, is a one of record-setting accomplishments and numerous

accolades. Its successes can be attributed to its director, Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse, accomplished violinist and pianist, an unstoppable woman with a dream and the determination to prevail, whatever the cost.

Hundreds of students have played

in the ensemble and sung in choirs assisting it, performing in dozens of countries around the world. Their work and that of Rittenhouse and the choirs' directors have inspired and uplifted numberless persons in enthusiastic and grateful audiences everywhere.

The NEYE began when Rittenhouse formed a small ensemble of her students in South Lancaster, Massachusetts, and started performing locally. Positive reactions to these appearances led to an expanded group and, in December 1969, participation in a Christmas program at the First Unitarian Church in nearby Northboro, Massachusetts. In that same month, they also played for a Kiwanis Luncheon in Worcester, at the request of that community's orchestra director. It was during this time that the group became known as the New England Youth Ensemble.

In 1970, they played at the General Conference Session in Atlantic City, New Jersey. This exposure led to an invitation for them to play at the All-European Youth Congress in Edinburgh, Scotland, in July 1973.

This was the first international trip for the ensemble, which now numbered 25 students, including the four children in the Taylor Family String quartet. After a five-day en-route stop in Iceland, where they played four concerts and did extensive sightseeing, they traveled on to Scotland.

The ensemble played an important role in the Congress, held in Edinburgh's famous Usher Hall. They opened the event with the *Trumpet Tune and Air*, a rousing prelude that was followed by the entry of Scottish bagpipers and flag-bearing delegates. They performed ten more times during the four-day event and closed it with a final concert.

The ensemble then had a brief two-day stop in London, where they played in the New Gallery Center, an Adventist

outreach center in that city, before crossing the channel into France.

They next traveled to the Ecoles d'Americaine de Fontainebleau outside Paris, where they gave a concert for world-famous composer and teacher Nadia Boulanger and other teachers and students at the music school. This discerning group's enthusiastic response during and after



The earliest known photograph of the NEYE (1970)

their performance was affirmation at the highest level, an exciting end to this first venture abroad.¹

Beginning in 1974, the ensemble enjoyed the sponsorship of Friendship Ambassadors², a cultural exchange program underwritten by the *Reader's Digest* and its former editor, Harry Morgan. Their first trip to Europe

quartered in a woefully inadequate hostel. During that time, their interpreter and tour guide, who had an antipathy towards Christians and a preference for jazz, prevented them from doing any performing.

At the end of the week, Rittenhouse courageously approached officials in what was at that time a communist country and requested a new tour guide.

Those associated with the program hastened to rectify the situation.

They arranged for vastly improved lodging and assigned two new interpreters and guides, who scheduled seventeen memorable concerts for the group in the remaining two weeks of the tour. By the time they left, they had had an enormous impact on thousands and were told that a request had already been lodged for them to return to Poland.

When they returned a year later, assisted by a choral group conducted by Francisco de Araujo, they were placed under the oversight of the two guides who had salvaged the previous year's trip. Midway through this tour, they spent four days in Vienna sightseeing and playing during the General Conference Session being held in that city.

They returned to Poland where, by coincidence, U.S. President Gerald Ford and his wife were visiting while attending the Helsinki Conference in Finland. Last minute arrangements were made for the ensemble and choir to perform following the



President Gerald Ford publicly thanks the NEYE and choir at the end of its 1975 performance in Poland at the Vilanow Palace.

in this program was a tour to Poland that year. It began inauspiciously when during their first week there they were

state dinner hosted by the president for the premier of Poland. The program was well received and as the final



number, *America the Beautiful* ended, the Americans, who had literally been moved to tears, and others in the audience responded with emotional and heartfelt applause.

Following the concert, President Ford on his own returned to the site of the performance, where breakdown of the setup was occurring, wanting to personally thank the members for their concert. Once the group had reassembled, he stood in its midst and praised them for their music and representation of America's youth, finally exiting with a farewell. They received a thank-you letter from him a few weeks later.

In the decade following these initial forays into Europe, the Ensemble returned in 1976, one of the first two groups chosen to enter Russia under the sponsorship of Friendship Ambassadors.

Following five days in the Warsaw, Poland, area, they entered Russia, where they performed for twelve days. They ended the tour with a concert in historic Leningrad and then had an impromptu visit at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music. The Associated Press spread the word about this groundbreaking trip and its successes; Radio Moscow released tapes of the group's concerts for broadcast across the country.

In those ten years, the ensemble toured to the Caribbean several times and to Canada, Austria, Romania, Israel, Hungary, France, and other countries in Europe, some of them multiple times.

On those tours they performed in world famous venues, including Notre Dame and Chartres cathedrals in France; the Dom in Salzburg and the Karlskirche in Vienna; San Marco in Venice; as well as St. Martin-in-the-Fields and cathedrals at York, Leeds, and St. Giles in Great Britain.

They also traveled extensively in the U.S., playing in such nationally noted places as the Riverside, St Patrick's, and St. Bartholomew's churches in New York City and the

countries in Europe including those in Scandinavia. They have also traveled to China and multiple times to South Africa and Australia and other islands in the Pacific.³ And the tradition of playing at the church's General Conference Sessions, begun in 1970, has continued without break to the present.

Rittenhouse, in an interview with Lincoln Steed in 2001, when asked about any incident that stood out in her memory after all her years of traveling, recalled a concert given in a stadium at St. Petersburg in 1997. The response of the crowd of 15,000 during and following the concert, which was given as part of an evangelistic series, moved her deeply. While there, she and the ensemble witnessed the baptisms of hundreds of persons.⁴

Beginning in 1975, when Araujo and the Takoma Chorale under his direction had joined the ensemble for its



A 1983 performance of the NEYE in St. Bartholomew's Church

Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, California. They have since performed numerous times in the latter's Sunday morning telecast of the Hour of Power.

The pace established in that first decade of travel that had started with the trip to Scotland in 1973 has continued now for over two more decades and into a new century. In that time, in addition to crisscrossing the U.S. numerous times and performing several times in Canada, the ensemble and assisting choirs have returned to the Middle East and Poland, Russia, England, and other

second tour to Poland, the NEYE began traveling with choirs on some of their tours. One of these in the 1970s included James Bingham's symphonic choir from Kingsway College. The directors enjoyed the many experiences of working together that followed in that decade, and in 1985, when Bingham became chair of the music program and choir director at Atlantic Union College, where Rittenhouse and the NEYE were based, they began performing and touring together on a regular basis.⁵

In 1988, when Bingham's Collegiate Choir was invited to perform in Carnegie Hall as part of the

Mid-America Productions program, Rittenhouse suggested they include the NEYE as the assisting orchestra. The reception for that concert in May 1988 led to an invitation for a return engagement in November.

The second concert featured violin soloist Lyndon Taylor and the choral music of noted English composer John Rutter, who prepared the choir and orchestra for the performance. The success of that venture led to an ongoing collaboration with the composer in subsequent concerts at Carnegie Hall and other venues as well as a concert tour in South Africa.⁶

In 1994, Rittenhouse and Bingham accepted positions at Columbia Union College in the Washington, D.C., area. Rittenhouse and the relocated NEYE now joined with Bingham's CUC choral groups to continue touring and performing concerts.⁷

In May 2003, they presented a gala concert at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts featuring Rutter and his music. In this program, which launched a two-year celebration of the school's centennial, Rittenhouse conducted Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte Overture* to open the concert and Bingham began the second half by conducting Vaughan William's *Serenade to Music*. Guest conductor Rutter conducted two of his well-known and popular works, the *Gloria* and *Requiem*, and closed the program with *Feel the Spirit*, a recently composed medley of African-American spirituals featuring the choir and orchestra and soloist mezzo-soprano Sylvia Twine. The concert ended with a three-minute standing ovation.⁸

The use of soloists with the NEYE is a longstanding tradition that started in its earliest concerts. Sylvia Twine is but one example of recent vocal soloists that included Alex Henderson, a tenor who appeared with the orchestra more than any other.

Instrumental soloists are most often students from within the group. Once they have demonstrated they are ready, they must be prepared to play on short notice at any time on a tour, called upon at random by Rittenhouse, sometimes even in the middle of a concert. Many well-known Adventist musicians have started or were given a boost in their career as soloists while associated with the ensemble.



Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse's The Vision of the Apocalypse, in its premier at Carnegie Hall in March 2004

Violinists Lyndon Taylor, Carla Trynchuk, Lynelle Smith, Dawn Harnes, Naomi Burns Delafield, and Preston Hawes have all served as both concertmaster and soloists. Other soloists have included violists Lucy Taylor and Laurie Redmer (Minner) and pianists Eileen Hutchins and Jacquie Schafer (Zuill), the latter also serving as principal player in the second violin section.⁹

It is a tradition in the Ensemble that members of the group support and affirm each other at all times,

especially when one of them is featured as a soloist. The constant touring and arduous schedules have led to rules and protocols of the road, one of which is that complaining is not an option.

There are worships on a regular basis, and prayer circles when they are faced with seemingly insurmountable challenges. Friday Night Prayer Fellowships, when possible, help create a spiritual and caring dynamic within the group.

Since some of the touring occurs in the school year and is in conflict with school schedules, study times are set aside on the bus as it travels between concerts. Members of the Ensemble have been able to do well in their studies in spite of absences from classes.

In March 2004, Bingham conducted the world premier of *The Vision of the Apocalypse*, an oratorio by Rittenhouse, in Carnegie Hall. She narrated the presentation, a dramatization of the Great Controversy between good and evil as portrayed in Adventist doctrine, assisted by the New England Symphonic Ensemble

(professional branch of the NEYE), the CUC Columbia Collegiate Chorale, conducted by Bingham, and the Atlantic Union College Pro-Arts International Choir, conducted by Araujo. The capacity audience responded with an enthusiastic and prolonged standing ovation at the end of this Mid-America Productions sponsored concert, the seventeenth to be given in Carnegie Hall that year by a CUC music group.¹⁰

Rittenhouse, born in Canada, spent her childhood in South Africa, where her father, George E.



Shankel, was president of Helderberg College. She was a performing and composing prodigy who, at age ten, debuted in a network broadcast, performing her own compositions. At age thirteen she won a scholarship for study at the University of South Africa on both piano and violin.

She started her career at Walla Walla College, now university, in the fall of 1945, a year after completing a music degree at the University of Washington. She taught for one year, before going to AUC, where she taught violin and piano until the early 1950s. During that time she completed an M.Mus. at Boston University and married Harvey Rittenhouse, a surgeon and musician. She completed a DMA at Peabody Conservatory in 1963.

The Rittenhouses then worked in Jamaica from 1954-56 and also in 1961, where he practiced medicine and she taught music. They returned to live in the community near AUC in 1964 and, five years later, she started the Ensemble.¹¹

The oratorio performed at Carnegie Hall was a refined and expanded version of a previous oratorio, *The Song of the Redeemed*, that she had premiered in 1946, at the end of her year at WWC. She had started writing portions of it at age twelve, inspired by reading the book of Revelation.¹² The destruction of the Twin Towers in New York on September 11, 2001, had inspired her to complete a final version of this evolving, lifelong work in progress.

The New England Symphonic Ensemble is now the official orchestra-in-residence at Carnegie Hall for

Mid-America Productions. Preston Hawes, who serves as concertmaster and associate conductor, assists Rittenhouse in her work with that group.¹³ The NEYE under Rittenhouse and the Columbia Collegiate Chorale continue to tour internationally and in the U.S., taking two trips a year, with Bingham serving as the primary conductor.



Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse

Now that the NEYE is in its fortieth year, the question, "How much longer will the NEYE continue?" is heard with increasing frequency. The answer lies with Rittenhouse, who seemingly unfazed by the passage of time, would probably respond

in amused wonderment with one of her own, "Why do you ask?"

Dan Shultz

¹ Factual information about the NEYE, its beginnings, travels in its first twenty years, and the dynamic and practices within the ensemble, is based on information provided in *Encore, The Story of the New England Youth Ensemble*, Dorothy Minchin-Comm and Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse, Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1988.

² This program, originally the Ambassadors for Friendship, now the Friendship Ambassadors Foundation, started in 1973. The NEYE was one of the first ensembles chosen to participate in a program, which in subsequent years has sent hundreds of ensembles overseas, including a number of SDA school groups.

³ Additional sources for this listing of countries include an article in *Dialogue* by Lincoln Steed, "Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse: Dialogue with a musician with an up-tempo vision for Adventist education," 14(3), 20, 21, 2002; Articles in 2003 and 2004 *IAMA Notes*, fully listed in endnotes 6 and 9.

⁴ Steed, article mentioned in endnote 3.

⁵ Dan Shultz, "Music at Atlantic Union College," *IAMA Notes*, Winter/Spring 2003, 16.

⁶ Steed, article mentioned in endnote 3; Music groups return from Carnegie Hall, CUC website, 19 April 2005; see also endnote 7.

⁷ Interviews: James Bingham and Virginia Gene Rittenhouse, September 2003 and an email exchange with Bingham in March 2009.

⁸ Dan Shultz, "Columbia Union College at Kennedy Center," *IAMA Notes*, Summer/Autumn 2003, 3-5.

⁹ Biographies for these persons available at www.iamonline.com

¹⁰ News note in *IAMA Notes*, Summer/Autumn 2004, 20.

¹¹ Rittenhouse biography is provided at www.iamonline.com.

¹² "Oratorio Choir, Orchestra, Premier *Song of the Redeemed*, *The Collegian*, Walla Walla campus newspaper, 2 May 1946; Billie Jean Fate, Musically Speaking column, *The Collegian*, 9 May 1945.

¹³ Email exchange with Preston Hawes in autumn 2008 and information in the resulting *IAMA* biography.

Columbia Union College Choral Program

James Bingham established the Columbia Collegiate Chorale, one of two choirs at Columbia Union College, when he became chair of the music department and director of choral activities at the school in 1994. Under his leadership, both the Chorale and Pro Musica, a choir founded in 1967 by the late Paul Hill, have gained national and international acclaim for the quality of their work. They have sung at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. and performed numerous times in Carnegie Hall and other notable venues across the country and around the world.

Both choirs have toured extensively in the U.S. and internationally on their own, as well as in partnership with the New England Youth Ensemble and its professional counterpart the New England Symphonic Ensemble. They have sung in famous concert halls and cathedrals in every region of the world, and on six continents, including Europe, Asia, Africa, North and South America, and Australia, Bingham's native country.

Among the many events they have been invited to participate in was the 1995 Jerash International Festival in Jordan, where the Chorale and the NESE performed under the sponsorship of Queen Noor, as well as numerous concerts featuring the music of and conducted by noted composer John Rutter.

Bingham began recording his choirs while at Atlantic Union College and has continued this project at CUC. Recent recordings include the Louis Vierne *Messe Solennelle in c minor* and Bingham's *Requiem*.

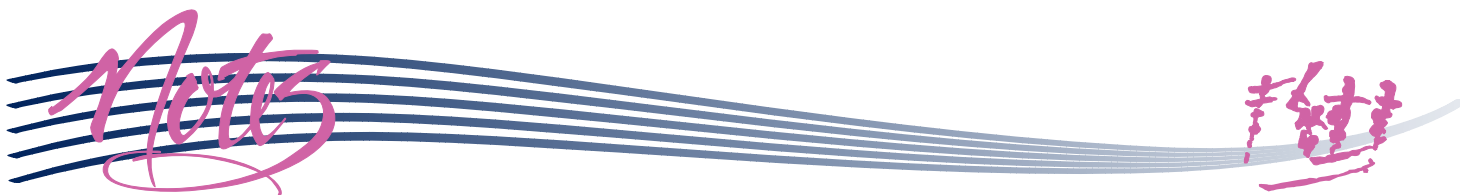
Biographies for the following persons associated with the NEYE can be found at www.iamonline.com

FRANCISCO J. de Araujo
JAMES BINGHAM
RACHELLE BERTHELSSEN DAVIS
NAOMI BURNS DELAFIELD
PRESTON HAWES

EILEEN HUICHINS
JAIME JORGE
EARL RANEY
LAURIE REDMER MINNER
VIRGINIA-GENE RITTENHOUSE

JACQUIE SCHAFER ZUILL
WIN OSBORN SHANKEL
ELAINE MYERS TAYLOR
LEONARD MORRIS TAYLOR
LYNDON JOHNSTON TAYLOR

LUCILLE TAYLOR
MORRIS TAYLOR
CARLA TRYNCHUK
JASON WELLS



IAMA Celebrates 25 Years!

For the past quarter-century, the International Adventist Musicians Association has worked to create a more unified and collective identity among Seventh-day Adventists musicians and an increased awareness of what we have been doing as a group at all levels and in all areas. As we celebrate this significant milestone, it is important to review how we have evolved, celebrate what our organization has accomplished, and talk about the future.

Twenty-five years ago, in the spring of 1984, IAMA officially was born with the election of its first officers. That summer they met at Andrews University, where they enthusiastically planned for IAMA's future and voted to produce its first magazines. Hans Jorgen Holman, an exacting and scholarly music history professor at AU, eagerly started to prepare a professional magazine, *The IAMA Journal*, while at the same time, another group began to prepare *Newsletters*, a magazine that would share news and ideas for specific areas of music endeavor.

The release of both magazines in the spring of 1985 became the first tangible evidence that IAMA had become a reality. A quarter century, 67 issues of magazines and newsletters, and nearly 300 articles later, its magazines have served as a place for dialogue on music issues during a time of rapid cultural changes, and a record of what has been happening

in Adventist music and with its musicians.

The idea for IAMA had developed during efforts by Dan Shultz to establish an SDA band directors' association in 1981 while he was serving as music chair at Walla Walla College, now University, and directing its concert bands. His secretary, Julianne Fisher, aware of this project, remarked, "You really should be doing this for all aspects of Adventist music."

That observation led to a shift in focus from the band to the larger challenge of creating an organization for all of Adventist music and musicians. Accordingly, in the fall of 1981, a proposal for a more inclusive Adventist music organization was presented at a meeting of SDA college and university music department chairs in Dallas, Texas.

They endorsed the idea and established themselves as a consulting group and steering committee. A constitution was written, General

Conference endorsement was obtained, potential members were contacted, and, in the fall of 1982, in Seattle, Washington, an action was taken by the music chairs to establish the International Adventist Musicians Association.

The need for such a group had been felt for years and had, in fact, led to the founding of the SDA Church Musicians Guild in 1970. Since most Adventist musicians are teachers in the church's schools and others are not affiliated with the church, the name was seen as being too narrow by definition and too focused on music of the church service. Most viewed themselves as educators or performers first, and second, in some instances, as church musicians.

The formation of the guild had increased interest, however, in creating an organization that would serve the broader needs of all Adventist musicians. For years there had been a felt need for an





organization that would help create a higher level of unity within Adventist musicians and an increased awareness about what was happening in Adventist music and with musicians not directly affiliated with the church. There was no way to share news about what was happening in Adventist musical circles and no neutral forum in which differing views about music issues could be discussed.

Although IAMA was started as an association organized into eight divisions for specialized areas of music such as choir, band, orchestra, piano, and others, each with its own set of officers, that model never really flourished. Splitting the members into small subgroups dependent on officers who, because of heavy teaching responsibilities, did not have the time to make their divisions function effectively proved to be unworkable and led to their being phased out in 1996.

A magazine seemed the best possible vehicle to accomplish the goals of the organization and hence the interest in publishing those first issues as quickly as possible. As the editors quickly discovered, however, creating a magazine from scratch can be a daunting undertaking.

Computer technology was in its infancy and not easy to use. Additionally, midway through preparation of the *IAMA Journal*, professor Holman had to withdraw because of serious health problems. Charles Hall, a teaching colleague at AU who had earlier that spring facilitated the printing of IAMA's *Newsletters*, completed production of the *Journal*. For the next six years, one professional magazine was produced annually, supplemented by a bi-monthly newsletter titled *Notes*, both produced by IAMA president Dan Shultz.

In the fall of 1991, Shultz presented a proposal for a more attractive, single publication that would combine the best features of the professional publication and the newsletters. He also asked that a new person be chosen as president of IAMA so that he would have more time to develop the new magazine. The board voted to endorse the changes.

Elsie Buck, music educator, was elected president the following summer. That fall, the first issue of a newly formatted, reader-friendly magazine, *Notes*, was released. This is the 42nd issue in that new format, one that has been modified and improved as preparation and printing technologies changed.

Today's two-color magazine with its varied content and photographs is the end result of twenty-five years of experiments in format and content. In that quarter century, revolutionary advances in computer technology have dramatically affected the quality of the magazine and how it is produced.

Over the years special issues have been devoted to a number of topics. As readers might expect, the most discussed subject has been the changes happening in worship music. Beginning in 1995, a special issue that gave equal time to both conservative and liberal sides of the argument was printed, launching an ongoing discussion that has continued to the present. Over 20 articles have since appeared on the subject, including a special issue of *Notes* devoted to a lively discussion of the music used at the 2000 General Conference session in Toronto.

Other special issues have focused on SDA Music in Brazil, hymnody in the SDA church, careers in music, the challenges of being a professional musician and keeping the Sabbath,





organs in the Adventist church, and music touring. In addition to the articles, the magazine has provided readers with information about SDA music and musicians around the world, news about significant happenings in Adventist music, and how-to articles for developing special programs.

Beginning in 2003, a series of articles on how music started and evolved in each of the Adventist colleges and universities in North America was started and has now been completed. Additionally, overviews for music at Avondale College in Australia and the University of Montemorelos in Mexico were also included in this series.

resource about Adventist musicians. Over 750 musicians and their biographies are now available at the site. The creation and preserving of a history of SDA music in the 20th century will likely be IAMA's most enduring legacy.

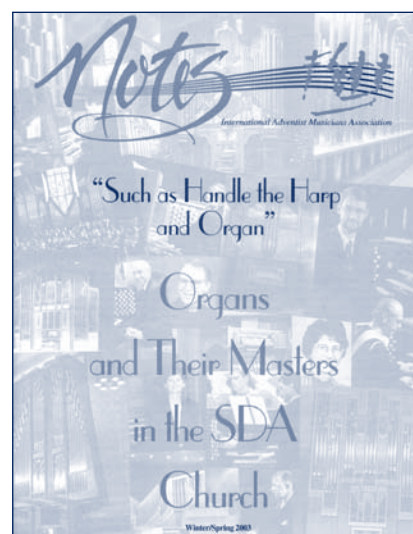
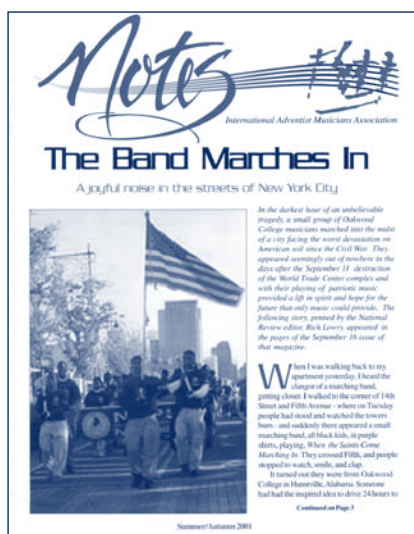
From the beginning, IAMA expenses required funds beyond the income provided by dues, even though its only costs have been the printing and mailing of its magazines. Editing and layout have been contributed, with the typical issue taking about 200 hours to prepare and special issues requiring additional time. Dues typically have covered about half of the expense and the remainder has been covered through contributions. In the past seventeen years, over \$76,000 has been contributed to IAMA, sixty percent of that by one person.

Because of the escalation in printing and mailing expenses, this issue of *Notes* will be the last magazine published by the association. While this will be the end of this defining aspect of IAMA activities, the association will continue as an online presence using its hotline as



In response to rapidly evolving technologies that developed in the 1990s, the board in 2000 voted to create a website, www.iamaonline.com, and endorsed the idea of maintaining a hotline for keeping IAMA members informed. Both have been successful ventures.

In addition to becoming a repository for articles published in its magazines, the website facilitated another SDA music history project, that of creating a biographical





the conduit for news and its website as a repository for its ongoing Adventist music history research.

Although IAMA's role in the future will admittedly be more limited, it will still continue as the only association devoted solely to

covering all aspects of music in the Adventist church. Hopefully, it can continue to foster a sense of community and unity among those who work to make music an effective avenue for ministry in the work of the Adventist church.

Elsie Landon Buck

International Adventist Musicians Association President

1982 - 2009

With the end of her term this autumn, President Elsie Buck will have given IAMA seventeen years of enthusiastic and effective leadership. In those years she has worked tirelessly on behalf of our association, informing church leaders about our work, promoting it at gatherings of musicians and non-musicians alike, and maintaining contact with the board. She and her husband, Edwin, have been very generous donors, providing funding for the operation of IAMA when normal sources of income were not adequate.

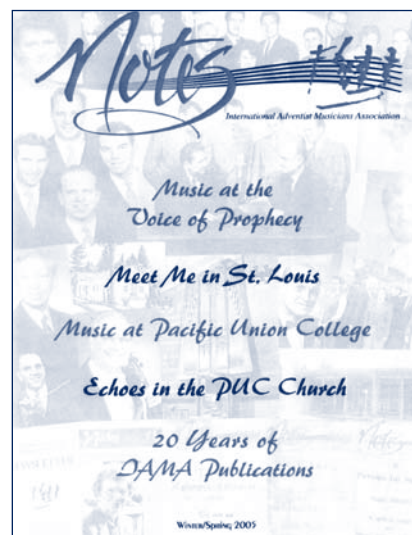
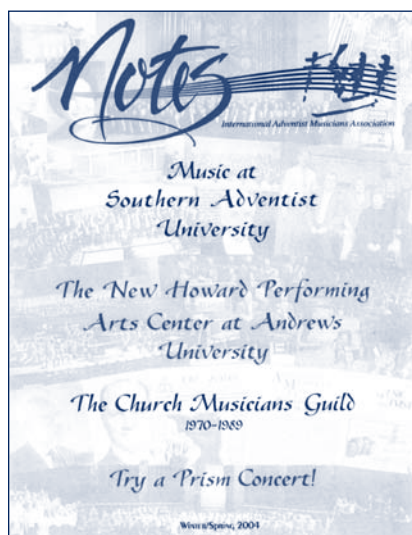
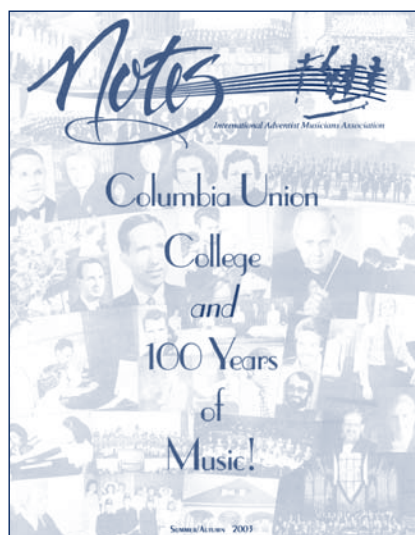
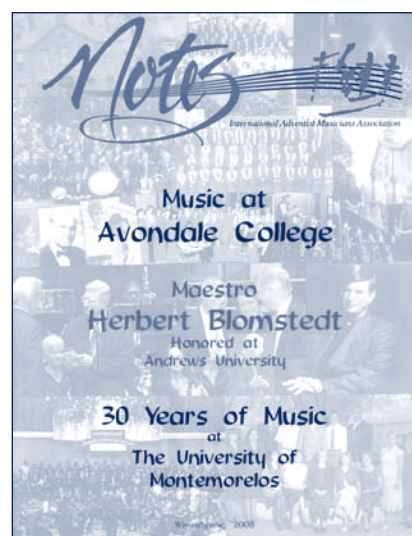
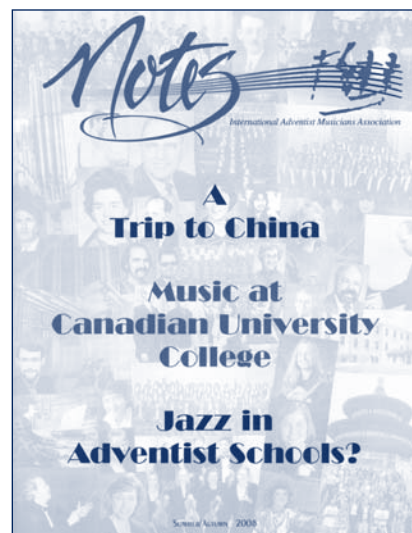
Elsie's concern about all things musical as they relate to the church has been evident in the over forty *President's Messages* she has penned

in *Notes* and in the articles she has contributed.

In my work as editor of IAMA publications, I have had countless encouraging and informative calls from her as I have prepared *Notes* and met with the board when she was unable to attend Annual Meetings. Along the way I have gotten to know her as a thoughtful and informed person as we have talked about not only music, but theology, world events, politics, and personal matters as well. She is a dear and trusted friend.

On behalf of all of the IAMA family, thank you, Elsie, for your outstanding leadership and work on our behalf. You will be missed!

Dan Shultz, *Editor*



The Wedgwood Trio



The Wedgwood Trio, gifted American folk singers from the South with their stringed instruments, experienced decidedly mixed reactions within the Seventh-day Adventist church when they began performing in the 1960s. For a church accustomed to congregational hymn singing and other traditional types of formal sacred music, the sound in the church sanctuary of a male trio singing mountain-style folk music accompanied on guitar, string bass, and banjo was jarring. While their music was viewed with alarm by many in the church, the youth, familiar with long-haired, poorly dressed performers doing rock music focused on the baser aspects of life and folk singers singing angry protest songs, embraced the well-dressed trio with its contemporary sound and wholesome music. From the perspective of nearly a half-century later, The Wedgwood Trio, with its upbeat sound and mix of folk music, creative arrangements of traditional Christian music, and original music, helped create a greater openness for newer forms of worship music in the Adventist church while providing an attractive alternative for a generation that otherwise might have left the church.

The Wedgwood Trio had its start when three young American students studying at Newbold College in England during the 1964-65 school year joined forces to sing folk music and play their instruments as a trio. While they all had Southern roots and were acquainted with one another, they had not previously performed together. All three had come from musical families and had inherited a generous amount of musical talent along with good singing voices.¹

Bob Summerour, an accomplished guitar and banjo player, had a paternal grandmother who had been one of

the first diploma graduates in music from Southern Training School, later Southern Missionary College and now Southern Adventist University. She returned to serve as its first teacher with a music degree she had earned at Washington Missionary College, now Columbia Union College.²

His father was a physician and a cellist and singer who loved classical music. Bob learned to play trumpet while young and made his initial foray into playing folk music with a banjo he purchased in a pawnshop near Mount Vernon Academy, where he was a student. He practiced incessantly and by the time he graduated had become an accomplished performer on the instrument and was playing in a folk trio called The Sons of Thunder.

Jerry Hoyle, singer and string bass player, had learned to play the instrument at a youth camp where he and Summerour sang and introduced music they had arranged to the campers at evening campfires. Although fascinated with bluegrass music from his earliest years, he was trained in more traditional music on piano and trumpet.

A shy child with a good singing voice, Jerry was a reluctant though popular soloist while very young. His experience as a scuba diver had led to an invitation to teach that skill at the youth camp where he met and worked with Summerour during their academy years, assisting camp director Bill Dopp. As Hoyle's voice matured, he was encouraged to use it in the ministry, and following



graduation from Mount Pisgah Academy in 1962, he enrolled as a theology major at SMC.

Don Vollmer, a gifted singer who would learn guitar after the trio was formed, had also come from a musical family where his father, a noted physician, and his mother were excellent musicians, who made music an important activity in their home. His voice was an inherited talent shared by others in his larger family, including an aunt, Dorothy Evans Ackerman, a well-known Adventist singer in the South and a voice teacher at SAU for over a quarter of a century.³

He was a classmate of Hoyle at Mount Pisgah Academy and was only a casual acquaintance with Summerour, having met him during visits to the youth camp. When Vollmer enrolled at Atlantic Union College following graduation from MPA in 1962, he and Hoyle kept in touch.

When Summerour and Hoyle sailed for England in 1964 for a year of study at Newbold College, they planned on continuing their musical collaboration as a duo, with Hoyle playing string bass and harmonica.⁴ Vollmer had learned about the trip from Hoyle and decided at the last minute to join them and other friends he knew, secretly gaining acceptance as a student, and traveling to the school. A week after classes started, he casually walked into the cafeteria one afternoon during mealtime, surprising all of his friends who greeted him enthusiastically.

The three men started to sing American folk music and arrangements of spirituals and other religious music to the delight of both students and faculty at the college. It was at this time that Vollmer, wanting to do more

than just sing, took a crash course in playing the guitar from Summerour, who, in addition to playing the banjo, was also a skilled guitarist.

By the end of the first semester, they had started to play off-campus, known as the Shady Grove Singers, taken from the name of their opening song at concerts. They began playing at the New Gallery Center, an Adventist evangelistic venue in London, on a regular basis. One of the goals of the center was to present religion in a variety of settings that would attract non-Adventists, a strategy facilitated by the trio with its folk music.

One of the programs presented by the center, a variety show called “The Best Saturday Night in Town,” became a showplace where the trio, which would engage in humorous repartee and Southern style kidding between numbers, became a highlight. When the semester and their stay in England ended, they were given the “New Gallery Personality Award,” an acknowledgement of the pivotal role they had played in the center’s programs.

Before the end of the end of the semester they traveled to France where they worked with Gisela Willy, a visiting professor at Newbold, and her French-singing choir, to record music for use by the French Educational Ministry and the French Voice of Prophecy broadcast. They recorded some Appalachian folk music and also accompanied the choir with their instruments on some of its numbers.

The return to the U.S. would mean an end to the trio unless Vollmer decided to transfer to SMC from AUC. Following a summer of extensive travel throughout Europe, all three enrolled at SMC.

At this time they changed their name to The Wedgwood Trio when it was discovered that another group in the South was using their first name. Having just come from England, they decided the name had a classy ring to it and would suggest high quality folk music.⁵

Word of their success in England preceded them to the SMC campus and when they played at the first college program of the year, a hootenanny, they were a hit with the students. Although many of the older generation were initially unsure about them and their music, Vollmer’s aunt, Dorothy Ackerman, and Marvin Robertson, chair of the music department, along with Jack Castle, academic dean, encouraged and supported them.

By the beginning of the second semester, they were frequently playing off campus at numerous church functions and at events in other Adventist schools, including Andrews University and AUC. When Hoyle graduated at the end of the year, he took a job at a school in nearby Chattanooga so that the trio could continue.

During the school year they had worked with Jim Hannum, a teacher at SMC, to record and produce their first record, *My Lord, What a Morning*. Hannum, who had considerable expertise in recording, worked tirelessly with them for weeks and late into the night, serving as both their sound engineer and producer in a makeshift studio with three microphones.

When the next school year started, the trio resumed singing, and began selling their record at concerts. The sales of the record and playing of it on religious music radio stations led to increased popularity and more requests to perform.

In November 1966, H.M.S. Richards, Jr., while visiting on campus heard them perform and approached them about singing at evangelistic meetings he was holding in Texas on behalf of the Voice of Prophecy. Richards had a special interest in trying to connect with the young people of the church and saw the trio, with its music and informal comments between numbers as a way to reach that group.

Their success in Texas led to another invitation from Richards to work with him at a second VOP evangelistic series in Hinsdale, Illinois, in the second semester. Richards noted their effectiveness in reaching young people and asked them to join with him and Del Delker that summer during their tours to camp meetings on behalf of the VOP.

By the end of August 1967, travel with the VOP, combined with other appointments, totaled eighty thousand miles. It had been an exhausting, yet exhilarating eight months.

When summer ended, The Wedgwood Trio was nationally known in Adventist circles and hugely popular with young people. The reception accorded the group by older Adventists, however, was somewhat mixed. Conservative church members and ministers were convinced the trio constituted an endorsement for current popular music that would lead the youth away from, not into, the church. The reaction was visceral, surfacing

more than any other time during their travels with Richards and Delker that summer. After one introductory performance in an evening meeting at a Mid-western camp meeting, Richards was angrily confronted by the conference official in charge of music for the meetings. At the end of a discussion that continued into the early morning hours, Richards was told the trio would not be allowed to perform



The Wedgwood Trio performing in 1967

at the youth meetings the next day.

This action, the most extreme that summer, was a blow to the trio as well as Delker and Richards. All during those travels they had to deal with objections over the music, the group's attire (matching double-breasted blue blazers with ties and gray slacks), Vollmer's naturally blond hair (thought to be bleached), and the "girls" who accompanied them (Hoyle's wife and Richards' wife and daughter).

In spite of the criticisms, both Richards and Delker later talked about how they had personally enjoyed working with the trio and the positive impact it had had on the young people that summer during their travels in thirteen states and two provinces in Canada.

The success of the trio's first record had led to the release of another, *Come, Follow Me*, recorded by Chapel Records in the spring of 1967, during their final semester at SMC. A third record was recorded with Del Delker in the VOP recording studio during that summer. Their records, which were selling well, led to their acceptance into mainstream Adventist music and bookings for

performances now had to be done six to nine months in advance. They were performing in sellout concerts to enthusiastic and appreciative audiences in large and well-known venues such as the Pasadena Civic Auditorium in California.

At the end of the summer, they returned to England for two weeks, where they

assisted in street evangelism in London during the day and performed in the New Gallery Center in the evenings.

That fall, the trio, now based in California, continued its busy schedule. The VOP and Bill Dopp, who was working with Adventist youth in Southern California, helped find jobs for Vollmer and Hoyle so that they could be in the area while Summerour pursued his medical studies at Loma Linda University.

Because of their work and studies, they limited performances to the weekends. Secular Saturday evening concerts were sellouts, large numbers of records were being sold at these events and in Adventist bookstores and income from concert fees and royalties was substantial.



By the summer of 1969, however, a decline in the size of audiences and a drop in record sales was noticeable. In mainstream music, edgier sounds in rock music and more sophisticated folk music were emerging as the new rage with young audiences.

With the approach of a new decade, Hoyle and Summerour felt the trio should experiment with and incorporate some of these newer trends into their performances. They believed this would revive waning interest in their group and broaden their appeal to young people both in and outside the church, creating expanded opportunities for evangelism.

They proposed including more rhythmic activity by adding percussion instruments, using electric keyboards and amplified string instruments, and singing songs with more thought-provoking lyrics about challenging issues developing in the church and society. Vollmer, however, became increasingly uneasy as these changes began to be implemented.

For him, the new approach was a departure from what they had wanted to do as a group when they had started five years earlier. The newer music conveyed a message of anger and rebellion that stood in sharp contrast with the music of hope and affirmation they had been singing.

He was troubled over what he felt would be a compromise of his principles if he continued with the group and, after discussing his concerns with the other two, withdrew. It was a troubling development for all of the

trio, the end of an experience that had created extremely close personal bonds and many satisfying memories.

Vollmer left the group three weeks before a major concert scheduled at La Sierra College, later University. A cancellation of the contract wasn't possible and since time was of the essence, the two men invited Gary Evans, a senior at Glendale Academy and an accomplished guitarist, to audition.

Although Evans' life experience of growing up in California and his age differed from that of the other two men, musical aspects meshed surprisingly well from the start.



A 1970 Wedgwood publicity photograph
John Waller, Jerry Hoyle, Gary Evans, Bob Summerour

Evans now became part of a new group called Wedgwood, one that began forging a new identity, a more contemporary sound.

Electric string instruments were added and Hoyle's acoustic string bass was replaced with an electric one. Electric keyboards were added, played by John Waller, a medical student who had attended MPA with Hoyle and Vollmer and been at SMC when the trio was there. When the transformed group played the concert at LSC previously

scheduled for the older trio, some in the audience did not like the changes and began leaving during the program.

Percussionists and other studio musicians joined the group for recording sessions. The first album released by Chapel Records under the Wedgwood name, *Country Church*, with its soft rock feel, drew decidedly mixed reviews.

In February 1970, five months after Evans and Waller joined the group, Wedgwood gave a Saturday night concert at Walla Walla College, later University, introducing their new sound, music, and appearance to that campus. The new look captured in a

publicity photo used to announce that concert featured various members with long hair, a beard, and moustaches, attired in modish clothes including paisley shirts, scarves, and leather jackets.

Although their concert created some controversy on that campus, it was a concert given at Pacific Union College a month later that became a turning point for them. At the time of the concert, the students responded as they had at WWC, with increasing

enthusiasm as the program progressed, and then gave them a rousing ovation at the end, a response the group viewed as an affirmation of what they were doing.

Shortly after their return home from PUC, however, they received a letter from F.O. Rittenhouse, president of the college. In it, he revealed that although the music department had unanimously urged a cancellation of the scheduled performance prior to their coming, the school had not done so, feeling it should honor its

agreement with them. Rittenhouse concluded his letter by stating the action of the school: that in light of its performance and standards, the group would not be invited back for another appearance on campus. Additionally, he noted that a copy of his letter was being sent to all of the other Adventist colleges and universities.

A few weeks later, they performed at Andrews University, where again the students greeted their performance with great enthusiasm. Older members of the church and school faculty and administrators, however, reacted angrily, deeply concerned over the influence Wedgwood was having on the younger generation. Rittenhouse's letter, distorted news about the group, and false rumors about supposed drug use resulted in fewer and fewer invitations for concerts.

Wedgwood felt it was speaking to cultural issues with thought-provoking lyrics and finely crafted music suitable for Adventist youth in the 1970s, an era characterized by rebellion against authority and the status quo. Increasing numbers of Adventists began, however, to see them as facilitating turmoil within the church's youth.

Apparently, the greatest concern about the group, other than its appearance, was the more contemporary rhythms and lyrics of their music. From an arranger's viewpoint, the quality of scoring and creative orchestrations using numerous instruments, such as recorder, electrified harpsichord, dobro, and other exotic instruments, was remarkable.

They began working on an album titled *Dove* that would present their best work. For a year, they rewrote and rescored some of the songs and

had multiple recording sessions, redoing numerous tracks in their quest for perfection.

In the midst of that year, they were invited to present a concert at the Loma Linda University Church in September 1972. They decided that the concert would be recorded and released as a live-concert album. A small orchestra was formed and orchestrations for a dozen of their numbers were prepared to complement other numbers that they would accompany with their usual string, keyboard, and percussion instruments.

The church was packed with an audience that had come with high expectations. From the start of the concert, the performers could sense the growing excitement in the crowd and responded with one of the best performances of their lives. A third of the way through the concert, the audience began applauding at the end of numbers, an unheard of reaction in Adventist church sanctuaries at that time.

The euphoria following the obvious success of the program vanished a few days later when the Loma Linda city newspaper panned the concert in a review headlined "Wedgwood: Shall We Dance?" When the album of that concert was released a few weeks later, the university church requested that its name not be mentioned in the liner of the jacket. Yet another blow followed when release of the *Dove* album was recalled from Adventist bookstores a month later.

In the earliest days of the formation of Wedgwood there had been talk of it becoming a full-time entity and possibly breaking into mainstream music outside the church. The realities of what it would take to pursue that course and now the loss of support from within the church that had been its base ended that

possibility. They now made moves to begin their post-Wedgwood lives.

Summerour did a residency in psychiatry at Loma Linda University and set up practice in nearby Riverside. Disillusioned by the university concert and what had happened to the *Dove* recording, a project he led out in, he put his guitar and banjo in a closet, rarely touching them and then only to try out a tune and lyric that had come to mind.

Hoyle, who had been teaching at Loma Linda Academy, went through a traumatic divorce about the time of the group's ending. He briefly worked as a medical social worker and then enrolled in a doctoral program in clinical psychology. After completing a Ph.D. in that area, he did a post-doctoral internship in the LLU department of psychiatry and eventually became a faculty member there, a position he still holds.

After leaving the trio in 1969, Vollmer continued to teach Bible. He completed an M.Div. in the seminary at Andrews University and then taught at Greater Miami Academy in Florida. In 1982, after serving as a pastor in North Carolina, he accepted an invitation to work as a pastor/evangelist in Galway, Ireland. Working in this enchanting part of that country proved to be a wonderful experience for him and his family. In 1987, they returned to San Diego, California, where he was senior pastor in the El Cajon church.

In 1990, twenty-one years after the original trio had disbanded, Hoyle called Vollmer with a suggestion that they get together with Summerour and play for the fun of it. Although Vollmer was hesitant, they and their families met at Hoyle's home where, following a meal together, they tuned their instruments and began to sing. It



was an emotional reunion that started with *Down in the Valley* and ended with *Shall We gather at the River*, the song they had used as the ending number at every concert they had given as a the Wedgwood Trio. Inspired by that informal reunion, they agreed that they would perform together again as the Wedgwood Trio, if invited to do so in the future.

Two years passed before they received an invitation to play at a reunion concert for a convention of baby boomers in Long Beach, California. After accepting the invitation, Vollmer began to worry that the other two might want to do some of the newer music that Wedgwood had done. His fear was allayed early on, though, when Summerour suggested they do only the “old music” associated with the trio.

As a warm-up for the convention appearance, they performed in Vollmer’s church two weeks before the concert. The positive reaction at the church proved to be a prelude to that afforded them at the convention, which ended in a standing ovation. It was a resounding affirmation of the role they had played in the lives of their audience in another age, when both the trio and those in attendance had been younger.

The reuniting of the three men also meant more than just making music. The comments and humorous interaction between numbers, which had

ended when the trio had disbanded, now resumed. Summerour recently observed:

Our music was one thing, but our stage style was what really made our group successful. We were able to put people at ease with religious issues. Don was really good at this type of interaction. We had this rhythm where I played the rebellious one, he was the innocent, and Jerry was the peacemaker. These usually secular exchanges, when combined with the music, enabled us to connect with our audiences and enhance our spiritual message.

Still unsure about whether to continue and, if so, at what level, they accepted an invitation to perform during alumni weekend at Southern Adventist University, their alma mater. Because of the enthusiastic reception the trio received at this appearance, they made personal and financial commitments to continue as a trio.



Numerous requests for concerts began coming in and by 1995, three years after that first reunion concert, they were giving up to 25 performances a year, many

ending in standing ovations. They bought back the rights to their earlier records and, in February 1993 released a CD with recordings done from 1964 to 1969. The success of that collection led to a second CD featuring music done from 1970 to 1973. They have since recorded additional CDs, with sales of the collections and new releases totaling over 50,000 copies.

After the concerts, countless persons from all age groups have surrounded the group, asking for autographs and telling them about the important role their music has played in their lives and spiritual journey. Although they received apologies from persons who had criticized the group years earlier, occasionally some older church leaders and members let them know they have not changed their minds, despite the sweeping changes that have happened in church music in the last forty years.

In 1995, Wedgwood traveled to Australia, where they sang in camp meetings and at Avondale College to enthusiastic audiences. Two of their more meaningful concerts abroad, however, were performed for at alumni weekend at Newbold College in England in the summer of 1995. They took their families along and

shared with them nostalgic visits to sites that had had meaning to them as young men in their early twenties. Both sacred and secular programs that weekend were highly successful.

A week before going to Newbold, they performed at the General Conference Session in Utrecht in the Netherlands. While three decades earlier they had been viewed with alarm by many in the Adventist church, they were now featured at the largest church gathering in history and greeted with applause, no less, after their numbers.

Two years later, in March 1997, the General Conference invited the trio to give a concert at GC headquarters. They played for an appreciative and applauding SRO audience that included the GC president. When they performed the following month at Leoni Meadows campground in Northern California, PUC president Malcolm Maxwell publicly invited them to return to the campus, reversing the stance taken by the college president nearly thirty years earlier.⁶

Beginning in 1995 and continuing for the next seven years, Dick Walker, a fiddler, joined them for some of their concerts. During those years, he played with them in concerts in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the U.S. He later wrote about that experience and the realities of life on the road:

During our concerts, Bob was the leader. It got to the point where he and I could read each other with eye contact and make adjustments as we were performing, a form of communication I really enjoyed. All of us had a good way of pulling together to make things work.

Live music is fraught with endless possibilities for disaster. Strings break, sound systems squawk or don't work at all, words to songs are forgotten at crucial moments, and the fiddle player forgets to make his entrance, just standing there with a goofy look on his face.

All these things can and did happen. And in the midst of them, Jerry was unflappable and kept on as if nothing had happened, even when he pulled one wrong harmonica after another out of his pocket. In the years I have known him I don't remember Jerry complaining about anything. He just kept writing wonderful songs and making his music.

I first heard Don sing the hymn Softly and Tenderly during one of my first concerts with them. To watch and hear him sing that hymn was for me a moment of great insight into the love of God, a moment I carry with me to this day.⁷



The trio with Dick Walker following a recording session in Nashville for their last CD, *Mountain Christmas*

The openness to new music that now exists in the Adventist church contrasts sharply with attitudes of the 1960s and 1970s. In the four decades since the trio started, changes in music have occurred at warp speed. What was considered radical then now seems bland and dated to the ears of many of today's youth

In an article by Reger Smith in the *Adventist Review* in 2005, Del Delker spoke about her work with the trio in the 1960s: "I was about as popular as a skunk at a picnic. They wouldn't let us sing at the adult camp meeting tent, only with the youth. Now, of course, when I join with the Wedgwood on their reunion tours, they won't let us sing with the youth . . . too old-fashioned."⁸

The passage of years and the changes around them in society and the church as well as those that have occurred in each member's life have forged friendships and a bond that will be with them for the rest of this life and into the next. Like the Voice of Prophecy broadcast and Faith for Today telecast, which pioneered new ways in which to do evangelism for those outside the church, the Wedgwood Trio was the first to show a way to reach and keep young people and members with differing tastes in the church.

Dan Shultz

¹ This article is based in part on interviews conducted by Marilyn Thomsen with members of the Wedgwood Trio, which were then edited and placed in context by her in *Wedgwood: Their music, their journey*, Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1996.

² From her biography at www.iamaonline.com

³ From her biography at www.iamaonline.com

⁴ Roy Scarr had been guest teaching at SMC during the previous year and invited them to come to Newbold and sing their music, offering to provide a string bass for their use. They sang in his choir and he featured the trio on choir tours.

⁵ There is a difference in recollection about the name change. Vollmer recalls it as stated here. Hoyle recalls it as happening when they realized the name they had chosen was puzzling to the English, who questioned the use of "shady" in the name for a group of clean-cut young men singing Christian music.

⁶ William G. Johnson, "The Sound of Wedgwood," *Adventist Review*, 17 July 1997, 13.

⁷ Dick Walker, "Dick's Forum - No.13," www.dickwalkermusic.com/forum13.html

⁸ Reger Smith, Jr., "In All Directions, A brief survey of Adventist musicians today," *Adventist Review*, May 2005, 32,33.

Conversations/Interviews/emails: Don Vollmer, 17, 23 March 2009; Bob Summerour, 19,22 March 2009; Jerry Hoyle, March 2009.

BIOGRAPHIES FOR JERRY HOYLE, BOB SUMMEROUR, DON VOLLMER, GARY EVANS, JOHN WALLER, AND DICK WALKER ARE PROVIDED AT WWW.IAMAONLINE.COM



THE LIBERTY SINGERS



WRETHA GRIFFIN LANG

For over two decades, The Liberty Singers, under the direction of Wretha Lang, thrilled residents in Charlotte County, Florida, with their concerts. Her leadership and insistence on high standards in performance created a sound rivaling that of professional groups and earned the support of a grateful community. The story of that ensemble and Lang's life provides an inspiring example of how professional fulfillment can be realized without support from the usual church entities, especially when one has a dream and then pursues it with an unflinching commitment.

The Liberty Singers, a Florida community choral group with a professional sound, began when a neighbor discovered that Wretha Lang, wife of the newly arrived physician in town, was a musician with an extensive musical background. The neighbor joined with local radio

station manager Jack Lotz in 1972 to extend an invitation to Lang to start a community chorus. Lotz offered to advertise auditions on his station and help underwrite the expense for purchasing music.

At the end of the auditions, they needed more men. In response to a contact by Lang, the personnel director

of Medical Center Hospital where her husband was a resident agreed to let participation in the choir be a perk for the hospital's employees. In its earliest beginnings, the Langs personally covered part of the expense for the music. When it appeared the group would survive, Wretha approached the hospital about underwriting music

expenses in return for naming the group The Liberty Singers of Medical Center.

From that beginning in 1972 to 1979, audiences grew to include nearly a thousand. Highlights in those years included performing Handel's *Messiah* in 1974, with members of the Fort Myers Symphony; providing choreography and chorus in support of professional soloists from New York City in a performance of the complete *Mikado* in 1975; and a patriotic salute to the country in 1976. They also presented a concert of excerpts from *Oklahoma* and the *Music Man*, including costumes, acting, and scenery, in 1977 and did highlights from the Easter portion of the *Messiah* with the West Coast Symphony, directed by its conductor Paul Wolf.

Beginning in 1979, Wretha took a four-year break. When she resumed conducting the group in 1983, she continued to provide effective and creative leadership for the next nineteen years. During that time they performed at Disney World, and gave eighteen performances of *Joy Comes in the Morning*, a religious musical drama. In addition to numerous seasonal programs and countless performances in the community, they presented *A Salute to Fred Waring* and a patriotic salute to those from Charlotte County who were serving in the first Gulf War.

The group, now known as the Liberty Singers, had assumed an independent identity apart from the hospital when it had earlier planned a trip to Europe. It received funding from the Arts and Humanities Council of Charlotte County and other area organizations, including the Medical Center Hospital, after its connection with the ensemble ended.

The Liberty Singers recorded two albums in 1995, titled *Slice of*

Americana and *Faith is Like a Child*. Both CDs evidence in a striking way a sound and quality of performance rivaling that of the best of professional choral ensembles.

In 1998, the group performed a fully staged version of *Oklahoma!* in the county Civic Auditorium, assisted by a sixteen piece orchestra. The following year, Linda Salisbury, in an editorial in the *Charlotte Herald-Tribune*, spoke of the reputation enjoyed by the ensemble and the contribution it had made to the community:

The Liberty Singers are remarkable for many reasons. The first is the group's vocal excellence and blend of voices. The choral group also enjoys a cohesiveness that comes from the longevity of many singers. Four members have been with it since the beginning Through the years the Liberty Singers have performed great sacred and secular music - sometimes up to twenty performances a year.

Sometimes they have turned their concerts into fund-raisers for good causes. One program featured the musical talents of local attorneys to help raise money to alleviate world hunger. Another featured area preachers, to bring into bring in funds for the United Way.

Wretha was born in North Carolina to an Adventist evangelist and moved frequently during her childhood. Her family was musical, her mother being an aunt of Wayne Hooper, and she began singing in a family quartet at age two.

She started academy at Glendale Academy in California and graduated from the academy at Southwestern Junior College in Texas in 1952 at age 15. That summer she attended a workshop at Westminster Choir College that made a deep impression on her. She recalls,

It was a two-week workshop conducted by John Finley Williamson. Merritt Schumann, choir director at Southwestern at the time and an inspiration to me, was also in attendance. After leaving the college, he arranged to have me travel to Campion Academy [in Colorado] to sing the Messiah solos with his choir. I had first performed those solos at age 15 and then continued doing them annually, singing as many as three performances of both the Christmas and the Easter portions, until I was 33.

She continued as a college student at SWJC for a year, before transferring to Union College. Following a year there, the family moved to California, where she started directing choral groups under Oliver Beltz, director of the music program for the Loma Linda University Church, and continued when Patrick Hicks succeeded him. When Hicks pursued graduate study in the summers in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Wretha directed the choir from June to September, an experience she would later recall as being invaluable.

She worked to pay off college bills before deciding to return to UC to resume her studies. In the year she returned, she met Robert D. Lang, who was planning on a career as a physical therapist. When he left for study at the medical school at Loma Linda, Wretha returned to her home in Loma Linda and continued her studies at La Sierra College, studying under John T. Hamilton and Harold Hannum. She found Hamilton's approach in presenting his choirs to be instructive, later observing, "I learned from him how to bring an audience to its feet."

She completed a B.A. degree with an emphasis on church music in 1959, the same year in which Robert completed his studies in physical therapy. They married that summer and stayed in the area.

Following the birth of their second child, Robert returned to college to



complete the prerequisites for entering medical school and then continued study towards a medical degree. While he continued his schooling, she taught piano and voice lessons in their home and was a frequent soloist at the LLU church and with the Vincent Mitzelfelt Chorale, singing the soprano solos in many performances of numerous major choral works. She also simultaneously held church music positions at the Azure Hills SDA Church and a San Bernardino Presbyterian church.

During that time she also worked with four other singers to produce a recording used to accompany a textbook on music appreciation for use in Adventist schools worldwide. Wayne Hooper invited her to sing with himself, tenor Bob Edwards, alto LuAnne Strachan, and soprano Bunny Phillips Thornburgh to complete this project.

In 1969, the Langs moved to Orlando, Florida, where Robert completed his internship. In their year in Orlando, their four children, ranging in age from four to nine, sang frequently as a family quartet in area SDA churches and won a talent show that year at the hospital singing songs from *Oliver*. She also started a girls' chorus, which continued for ten years after they left.

The Lang family then moved to Charlotte County in Southwest Florida, where Robert served at the Medical Center Hospital as the emergency room physician for a year. Before entering private practice. Wretha was contacted during this time to form the community choral group.

While it is true the community benefited from her leadership of the Liberty Singers, she herself found musical fulfillment and gained many friends from this experience. In 1999, when she attempted to retire as director of the ensemble, Lang, reflected on her

years with the group, observing:

Getting acquainted with people in this community has been a marvelous part of my life. I fell in love with this place. Outstanding people became participants in Liberty Singers "gigs" and supported our activities way beyond the "call of duty."

They are amazing people! Almost half of the existing group today has been in it for twenty years. It has given me the opportunity to develop a certain



choral sound with them and that is what has kept me going. They are not cliquish, however, and have welcomed new members enthusiastically.

When Lang finally retired, she received numerous tributes at her final concert in April. Naomi Donson, art critic at the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* noted that the most significant tribute was a memorable performance by the group that sent the "director out in style." Later that month, the University Club of Charlotte gave her its Genesis Award, a high honor in that community, for her leadership in enriching the cultural life of Charlotte County and the surrounding area.

Through the years, Lang also continued her work as a church musician, now having led the music program at the Port Charlotte

SDA church for thirty years. She was able to take a break in 1999 after serving in that capacity for 28 years, when Marvin Robertson, dean of the school of music and choir director at Southern Adventist University for 33 years, retired and moved to the area and assumed that responsibility. She returned to that post when he left the area in 2006.

Both the Liberty Singers and her church choir were known for the quality of their singing as well as for the blend of their voices. Those who have studied voice with her or listened to her students know firsthand the excellence of her work as a voice teacher.

Beginning in 1979, Lang developed a troubling speech problem that reduced her speaking to a whisper and ended her career as a singer. It has been a frustrating experience for one whose voice in earlier years enabled her to freely express her musical feelings in a way that inspired so many.

She recently wrote about another experience that helped her spiritually and allowed her to inspire others:

In 1998 God impressed me to develop a Bible reading plan which is topically and chronologically arranged as far as possible. It enabled me to read the Bible completely through in a very short time for the first time in my life. I thought God gave that plan just for me! But in 2003-4, Mark Bond produced a website for me so I could share my plan.

www.thisislifeeternal.org

Over 30 countries and seven universities have visited the site. It's an incredible and amazing journey I'm on! Now I pray that God will bring people to want to know Him better and read the scriptures and find the wonderful truths that I hold dear. I like to think that my life began in 1998, for God's Word has blessed my life abundantly!

Dan Shultz

News

IAMA's FUTURE

Because of rapidly increasing expenses associated with publishing *Notes* and the wish of editor Dan Shultz not to continue as editor, the board recently took action to suspend publication of the magazine, yet continue the organization with reduced services. Shultz has offered to serve as editor of IAMA's Hotline and maintain the website, which will be funded by contributions. The hotline will be expanded to include news and personal notes. Not on the hotline? Send your name and e-mail address to: iamaonline@charter.net.

IAMA BIOGRAPHY PROJECT

The biography project will continue. Notice of additions to the website biographical listings will be posted on the hotline as they are completed. At our website there are now biographies for over 750 musicians who are or have been associated with the SDA church. (www.iamaonline.com). If you do not see a biography for a favorite Adventist music teacher or musician friend, you can help us create one for him/her by forwarding the name and any information you might have. Don't be bashful! If you are not yet listed or even if you are, we invite you to send information, or an update, if needed, to: iamaonline@charter.net.



New Creation at the National Presbyterian Church

New Creation, an Atlanta, Georgia, based Adventist choir, participated in the inauguration of the 44th U.S. president, Barack Obama, in January. They opened the People's Inaugural Gala Prayer Breakfast on Saturday with *Holy is Thy Name* and sang the benediction for the event, introducing an original work by Patrick Tyson of Chicago titled *Change We Can Believe In*. At noon, they performed at the inaugural luncheon held in the Grand Hilton to celebrate Michele Obama's birthday, where they sang *Daniel Saw De Stone* to start the event. They closed the Sabbath by singing in the Metropolitan Adventist Church.

On Sunday, they sang *Lift up Every Voice and Sing* in the morning worship services at the National Presbyterian

Church. In a final appearance, they opened for a concert by Richard Smallwood & Vision. They brought the audience to its feet with *You Must Have That True Religion*, which featured soprano Lianna Wimberly.

The **Riverside, California, Mt. Rubidoux Seventh-day Adventist church choir** won three awards, including Best Overall Choir in the regional Verizon Wireless "How Sweet the Sound" choir competition held in Los Angeles in October 2008. In addition to winning \$15,000 in prize money, they won an all-expense paid trip to compete in the finals held in Atlanta, Georgia, in November. The Oakland performance can be seen at http://www.howsweetthesound.com/media/video_player/21.



Sacred Music Piano Festival, an annual event given under the auspices of the Children's Ministries program at the Loma Linda University Church, presented its 7th festival in November this past year. Lily Diehl, who started this program to stimulate young musicians to expand their studies in classical repertoire to include works with sacred themes, serves as coordinator and chair of the festival.

Participation is open for students from ages five to eighteen, who participate in four categories: solo, duet, composition, and improvisation. The one-day non-competitive event, which is held on a Sabbath from 1 to 5:30, offers master classes with outstanding clinicians who also choose the students who are showcased in a Grand Finale Concert. The Loma Linda Broadcast Network aired this year's concert on satellite TV. SMPF is an activity accredited by the Music Teachers' Association of California.

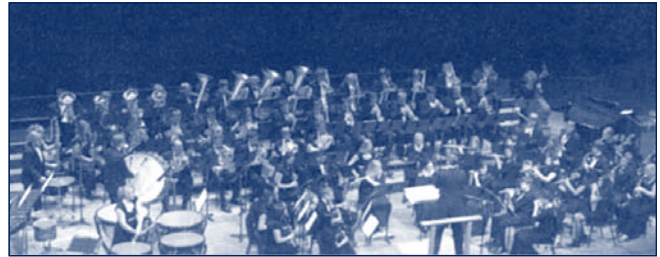
The **Southern Adventist University** school of music recently received the first in an initial shipment of 21 new Steinway pianos. These instruments are part of a piano replacement program which, when completed, will make SAU and



News

Canadian University College the first of the Adventist universities and colleges to be All-Steinway schools. SAU will be one of five in Tennessee and the 100th in the world to be able to claim that distinction. A total of thirty pianos will be purchased and placed in selected practice rooms, teaching studios, and Ackerman Auditorium, which will have a 9-foot grand.

The project was launched two years ago, following a survey of the school's pianos by music school dean Scott Ball, professor of piano Peter Cooper, and Ted Summitt, a retired local Steinway dealer and SAU alumnus. When SAU's corporate and foundations director Joy McKee was approached about the project, she responded positively to the idea, fundraising goals were determined, and Ruth Liu was chosen to chair the campaign. The total cost of the project will be in excess of a million dollars. Good progress has been made in raising the needed amount, and the goal is to complete the project in two more years.



Upper Columbia Academy in Spangle, Washington, had to give their annual Christmas Concert, *A Savior From on High*, on January 10 instead of December 20 because of a record snowfall at the time of the original scheduling. Even so, the program, which featured the concert band, full choir and the two elite choral groups, the Choraliers and Vocal Octet, as well as other ensembles, attracted more than 1,000 people. The concert, given in the historic and prestigious Fox Theatre in nearby Spokane, was presented as a gift to the community.



The Columbia Union College Concert Band, under the direction of Bruce Wilson, toured in Puerto Rico in March. The band performed five sacred and three secular concerts, the latter ending with encores and standing ovations. Wilson, now in his eleventh year as director of the CUC band program, has taken six international tours with the ensemble, four of them to Europe. In his 39-year career, he has commissioned nationally known composers to write twelve sacred compositions for band. The composers guest directed the premieres of those works with Wilson's groups. A graduate of Union College, he completed a master's degree at Shenandoah Conservatory of Music. He has written and arranged over sixty works for brass choir. His Shenandoah Valley Academy bands received numerous superior ratings and first place awards from 1985 to 1998. The CUC band is a yearly feature at the Pageant of Peace Christmas program at the White House.

Personal Notes



Florence Clarambeau, now retired and living in Las Vegas, Nevada, taught piano at four academies and four colleges and universities in a career spanning nearly five decades. From her first encounter with the piano as a young child, her goal was to be a music teacher, one she realized fully as she taught and enjoyed working with students of all ages. Her interest in music and piano started the day a new piano was delivered to their home. She was

unable to leave it alone and within a short while her mother made arrangements for her to study with a neighborhood girl. She was an apt student and by age eight was playing for church. She attended Enterprise Academy in Kansas, where she studied piano under Eleanor Krogstad and played clarinet in the band under Eleanor's husband, Norman. Following graduation from EA at age sixteen, she enrolled at Union College and studied piano under Adrian Lauritzen and Charles Watson. She was the primary accompanist for voice lessons and the choirs, assisting Lauritzen and then Harlan Abel.

In 1950, following completion of a degree at UC, she accepted a position at Walla Walla College, now University, where she taught for three years and married Lyle Clarambeau. In 1954, after teaching for one year at Gem State Academy, they accepted positions at Atlantic Union College, where they stayed for five years.

She subsequently taught at Sandia View Academy for a year, Highland View Academy in Maryland for two years, and then at Baltimore Junior Academy and Columbia Union College, teaching at the latter from the late 1960s until 1982. During those years, she also maintained a private studio and completed a master's degree at the University of Maryland in 1976. In 1983, the Clarambeaus accepted positions at Canadian Union College, now Canadian University College, where they taught until 1993. When they retired they moved to Creston, British Columbia, where she became the primary piano teacher in that community. She moved to Nevada in 2002, two years after her husband died.

John T. Dennison, director of choral activities at Walla Walla University for the past six years and conductor of its orchestra since 2006, is retiring at the end of this school year. Coming from the Los Angeles area, Dennison taught in schools in that region and directed the sanctuary choir in the Glendale City SDA Church. He also was Music Director of the Southeast Symphony Orchestra, a position he continued to hold until 2006.

A 1970 graduate in voice at the California State University, Los Angeles, he also completed a master's degree there in 1972. He completed a DMA in church music at the University of Southern California in 1985. He studied with Herbert Blomstedt in the International Institute of Orchestral Conducting held at



Loma Linda University from 1975 to 1983 and was one of twelve chosen to study personally in a master class with Blomstedt. In 1986, he was chosen through auditioning to participate in a conducting workshop at the University of West Virginia taught by Harold Faberman.

Dennison chaired the music department at Oakwood College, now University, and directed its Vocal Ensemble and Touring Choir from 1983 to 1987. In 1986, he directed a performance of Rossini's *Stabat Mater* with choir, orchestra and soloists from OC, as well as spirituals, at the

John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., to critical acclaim in the Washington Post. More recently, as a result of a choral workshop Dennison conducted in Penang, Malaysia, in 2006, he was invited back in the following year to conduct a performance of the *Messiah* in that city's primary concert hall.

William DeWitt is director of the Saipan Southern High School Manta Concert Band in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. He is also founder, conductor, and music director of the Saipan Pacific Winds Community Concert Band. In 2008, his award winning high school band and the SPWCCB were participants in activities associated with the 2008 XXIX Summer Olympic games in Beijing, China. They performed with other band musicians at the Olympic Stadium, the Great Wall of China, and in Tiananmen Square, the first foreign ensembles to play in that historic square.



The group was invited to participate as part of that large band, numbering 2008, following the winning of the prestigious Gold Award at the June 2008 Tumon Bay Music Festival in Guam. They were chosen as being among the best musicians from the Oceania "green zone," one of four different zones in that geographic region.

Dewitt started teaching in 1992. Since he accepted the position at SSHS in 2000, he has twice been nominated to Who's Who Among America's Teachers, in 2004-2005 and in 2005-2006. In 2006, he was selected as the Saipan Southern High School Teacher of the Year, an honor acknowledged in a



Personal Notes

February 2006 House Resolution by the Northern Marianas Commonwealth House of Representatives. DeWitt, who completed theology and music degrees at Pacific Union College in 1992 and 1993, and his wife, Lois, have three children.



Ivan E. Flores, a brass performer, is the new music teacher at Emerald Christian Academy in Pleasant Hill, Oregon. A 1983 graduate of Laurel Brook Academy in Tennessee, he returned to his native Mexico in 1995 to complete a B.Mus. with a major in trombone at the University of Montemorelos. He then taught at UM where he served as band director until 2000. Beginning in 2001, Flores attended Andrews University,

where he taught as a graduate assistant while completing an M.Mus. in conducting under Allan Mitchel. From 2001 to 2003, when he completed his degree, he was music director at the Niles, Michigan, Westside Elementary School.

From 2004 to 2007, he served as chair of the music program at Medellin, Colombia. A versatile performer, Flores frequently performs in brass ensembles on French horn, trombone, or tuba.

Jeremy Irland is director of the band and choir at Walla Walla Valley Academy and handbell choir at Milton Stateline SDA School. He is also an adjunct voice and Introduction to Music teacher at nearby Walla Walla University.

Born in Langley, British, Columbia, Canada, Irland grew up in a family where music was an important activity. Aside from singing publicly with his siblings, starting when he was in first grade, he started lessons on piano and guitar at an early age. Following graduation from WWVA in 1999, he enrolled at WWU where he completed B.Mus. Ed. with a vocal/choral emphasis in 2005. He continued study in voice at the University of Washington, completing an M.Mus. in voice in 2008.

Irland was a district winner in 2005 Metropolitan Opera competitions and a Seattle Opera Young Artist alternate in 2006. He is a frequent bass soloist and has played key roles in numerous opera and other vocal/choral productions. He spent two seasons with NOISE (Northwest Opera in Schools, Etcetera) where he sang roles in the *Barber of Seville* and *The Daughter of the Regiment*.



LeRoy Peterson, professor of music at Pacific Union College for the past 25 years and widely known violinist, retired at the end of this past school year. Peterson was born in Canada. The son of missionary parents, he grew up in Singapore.

Two years after giving his first violin recital at age 14, he went to Geneva, Switzerland, to study. At 17, LeRoy performed with the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C. After graduating from Columbia Union College, he completed his graduate studies at the

Peabody Conservatory of Johns Hopkins University. He taught for three years at Pioneer Valley Academy and Atlantic Union College and 15 years at Andrews University, before going to PUC.

His love of travel has taken him from the jungles of Borneo, where he climbed the highest mountain in SE Asia, Mt. Kinabalu, to the 1,000 year-old temples of Angkor Wat in Cambodia, from the Great Wall in China to the Garden of Gethsemane, from swimming in the Volga River to sailing on the Black Sea along the coast of Yalta, from Masada to Bali, to the land of the Midnight Sun. Peterson has visited 35 countries and performed in most of them. This past summer, he completed his ninth trip to Russia, working in evangelism with music and preaching.

Aside from performing in Carnegie Hall and Town Hall in N.Y. City, he has appeared on television and radio and as soloist with orchestras in Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Singapore, Michigan, N.Y. City, California, and the Ukraine. Chapel Records recorded him on six different albums, and he was been featured in the international *Strad* magazine. Highlights in his musical career include performing in the world premiere of Handel's *Messiah* in Bethlehem and as soloist in a memorial concert in Baltimore for John F. Kennedy. Peterson has been a contest winner in badminton and bodybuilding and has received several awards in violin performance and painting.

His wife, Carol, works as a nurse for a dermatologist at the St. Helena Hospital. His son, Todd, and daughter, Shelley, both graduated from P.U.C. and have also taught there. One of his great joys now is spending time with his 20-month-old grandson, Blake, and his 14-month-old grandson, Lachlan.

As Professor Emeritus at PUC, he continues to perform, to teach World Music and Culture, and to give string lessons.



More complete biographies for persons listed in Personal Notes can be found at www.iamaonline.com





MUSIC CALENDAR

December 15-19

Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic

Chicago

Segue

John Dennison

Retiring, choir and orchestra conductor, professor of music, Walla Walla University

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1992-2009

C. Warren Becker
Elsie and Edwin Buck
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Dan and Carolyn Shultz
Will Stuivenga
Karin Thompson
Bruce Toews
Lynn Wheeler

Total Contributions
\$76,500.00

Back Cover Photograph

The Wedgwood Trio

Left to right: Bob Summerour, Don Vollmer, Jerry Hoyle

Photo Gallery

(Opposite Page)

LeRoy Peterson,
noted Adventist
musician and
violinist

Photograph by
Dick Dower

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The IAMA Hotline! To register: iamahotline@charter.net

THE INTERNATIONAL ADVENTIST MUSICIANS ASSOCIATION

is a professional organization committed to facilitating
communication throughout the total spectrum of
Seventh-day Adventist musicians.

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The Wedgwood Trio

See pages 12-18 for the story of this popular and historic group in Adventist music

Notes

International Adventist Musicians Association

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