

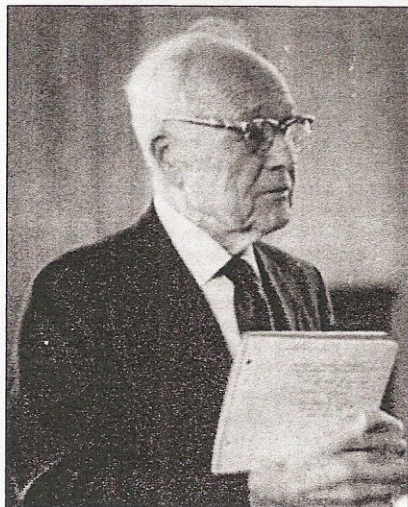
The SDA Church Musicians' Guild

1970-1989

Officially started in 1970, the SDA Church Musicians' Guild grew out of a choir camp for the Loma Linda and White Memorial church choirs, first held in California in 1957. Oliver S. Beltz and Albert E. Mayes, Jr., respective directors of those choirs and close friends, continued the camp for a number of years.

In 1970, when Beltz announced his retirement from this activity, attendees voted to establish a group that would continue the camp and expand its work of promoting the best in church music, and Mayes was elected president.

While Oliver S. Beltz, with his knowledge of and passion for promoting the best in sacred music, would subsequently be given credit for founding the CMG, the idea was really developed jointly with Mayes, whose vision for the group and efforts in realizing its potential led to its becoming a reality.



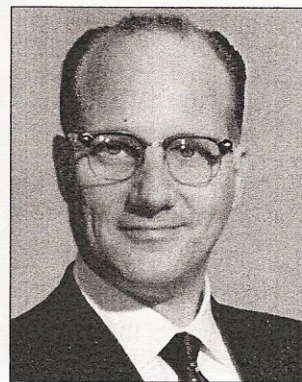
Oliver S. Beltz

For the next six years Mayes spent countless hours visiting with musicians and pastors, drawing up a constitution, soliciting funds and recruiting members. As the group expanded to include other like-minded musicians on the West Coast, the idea of becoming a national organization gained momentum.

Finally, in the summer of 1976, during a workshop for North American Division college and university teachers at Andrews University, the CMG was established as a national group and held its first meeting. It was an exciting time as those in attendance discussed the potential for this organization to create unity among Adventist church musicians and to improve the quality of music in worship. Mayes was elected first president of the national Guild.

Mayes was a perfect choice to lead the organization. A fine tenor and insightful conductor, he was also a diligent worker and an effective communicator, one who would listen carefully to those with differing viewpoints and then respond in a reasoned yet never condescending manner.

Although he immediately began to place the national guild on solid footing, Mayes was slowed by an illness that had been diagnosed three years earlier. In spite of a steady decline in health caused by the debilitating effect of progressive kidney failure, he battled on, exuding an enthusiasm that belied the sobering personal reality he was facing. Even after reluctantly stepping down as president in 1980, he continued to work on behalf of the organization until his untimely death in 1984.



Albert E. Mayes

Four persons would lead the Guild in the next ten years. Mayes' immediate successor, Gladys Benfield, had worked closely with him, was mindful of his vision, and led the organization with the same goals in mind. During her four years of service, she met with the board of a new organization, the International Adventist Musicians Association, in the fall of 1983.



Gladys Benfield

There was concern that IAMA would be in direct competition with the CMG. At that meeting reassurances were made that IAMA was for all Adventist musicians and that we would support the



Notes

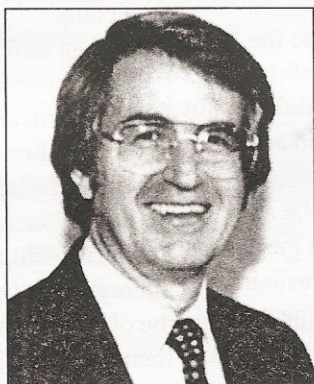
CMG in their work in church music. IAMA, which at that time consisted of subdivisions (keyboard, vocal/choral, band, orchestra, etc.), had purposely not created one for church music, wanting not to detract from the work of the Guild. IAMA would subsequently provide support for the Guild by buying and placing advertisements in its publication.

John Read, Benfield's successor, led the guild for two years. One of the few Adventists in a full-time SDA church music position, he brought with him an enthusiasm and a practical perspective about the realities of working with worship music issues in churches and with conference leaders. He represented the Guild when it attempted to establish a department of Church Music at the General Conference level.

Read was followed by Douglas Macomber, who proactively worked to place the Guild on a more solid basis during his two years as president. A centralized address was established, a bulk mailing permit obtained, and incorporation as a nonprofit organization was accomplished.

Additionally, the Guild, which had been organized around the idea of local chapters, sought to create new ones

across the nation. In spite of these changes, however, a decline in members continued.



John Read

A magazine for the Guild, **The Score**, first published in 1973, was written, edited, and produced by Carol Mayes until 1979. At first an inexpensive duplicated newsletter of 4 pages, it evolved into a printed 8-page magazine by the time Mayes left.

Her successor as editor, Douglas Macomber, changed the format two years later and increased the size of the magazine.

When it was renamed **Adventist**

Musician in 1984, it had twelve pages and a readership of 500. Two years later, when Macomber was elected CMG president, Joylin Campbell-Yukl became editor, and the magazine was renamed the **Journal of Music Ministry**.

A series of national conventions were held at intervals following the initial one at Andrews University. While these meetings proved to be rewarding experiences for attendees, they often left the guild in debt.

At the 1988 conven-

tion, held at Atlantic Union College, concerns were expressed over declining membership, spiraling costs, and financial losses. The board decided to publish a "Friendship Issue" of its magazine which would present ideas for worship music with broad appeal and could be sent to all Adventist pastors and Adventist musicians in the North American Division.

A 28-page issue was prepared that included articles on multiculturalism, pastors and musicians sharing in worship ministry, developing music programs in SDA churches in which musicians and pastors could work together to develop dynamic services,

and the need to develop an understanding of "minority" music.

Other articles described the new organ recently installed in the Central SDA church in San Francisco, reviewed the Companion to the New Church Hymnal, and presented a pastor's

experience in establishing and working with a church worship committee.

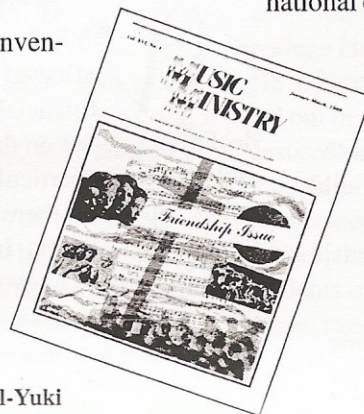
The mailing, which was subsidized by the General Conference, included a return membership and donation card, as well as a registration form for a national convention to be held in

Portland, Oregon, that summer. It was hoped that this convention, with its varied offerings, coupled with extensive promotion, would attract a large number of attendees and give a boost to the Guild.

The response was disappointing on all fronts. Following the convention,



Douglas Macomber



Carol Mayes, Dorothy Beltz, Douglas Macomber, and Joylin Campbell-Yukl edited and produced the Guild's magazines.



Guild president William Ness observed in the July-December issue of the Journal:

During this year, our statistics and financial health have not improved in membership and the necessary subsidies. Membership has been a lingering problem with this organization for more than several years now and is mournfully low as I write this message! . . .

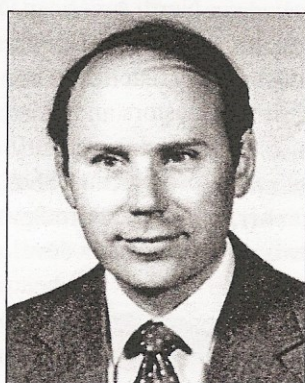
With the dedicated efforts of the board and the General Conference, we were able to present to the Adventist population of North America, a "Friendship Issue" of Music Ministry . . . The result in subscriptions, and response to the board was an underwhelming disappointment!

However, we came back from that disappointment with the news of a fine conference being planned in Portland. This conference, despite stressing variety, thorough planning and publicity, did not attract members from as wide a scope as we had envisioned either. . . . Our funds are entirely depleted from the[se] truly serious efforts to turn the Guild into a viable entity.

In that same issue, Campbell-Yukl announced her resignation as editor of the magazine. During her time in producing the Journal she had tried to broaden its appeal and that of the Guild by creating "a resource for creative ideas in 'worship,' not limited to music or musicians." She observed;

Although there has been some support for this concept, not

enough financial backing or membership increase came about to make the transition into an organization of this broader scope possible. Desiring to have more time to implement these ideas on a local level, I have submitted my resignation as editor of the Journal to be effective upon the completion of this issue.



William Ness

This would be the final issue of the magazine, and the effective end of Guild activities, except for one, a project that would prove to be an important legacy for the future of worship music in the Adventist church. The special "Friendship Issue" had also provided a progress report on a Chair of Sacred Music at the Seminary at AU. This endowed position, launched by a

significant donation by Oliver S. Beltz and his wife at the time of the first national convention of the Guild in 1976, had become a special project of the Guild, especially after the death of Beltz in 1978.

Over the years, Guild fundraising efforts increased the endowment, which was renamed the Oliver S. Beltz Chair of Sacred Music. Proceeds from the endowment, which now exceed \$273,000, help fund the salary of a person who teaches a required class in sacred music at the seminary.

While the Guild's work was affected by a lack of financial support and a declining interest on the part of pastors and musicians, particularly those in music education, there may have been larger issues at play. In the fifteen years since its demise, a revolution has taken place in church music that was already underway in the final years of the Guild.

While the Guild had started its

work dealing with worship music from the perspective of the classically trained musician, it had hoped to be heard by both musicians and pastors. The problem is that there wasn't a longstanding tradition in church-supported music ministry in the Adventist church, nor in musically informed ministers, and trained church musicians.

While initially its goal was appeal to both musicians and pastors, it at times did not and, consequently, it failed to create a broader base of support. By the time of Macomber's leadership and that of his successor, William Ness, and the "Friendship Issue," when valiant attempts were being made to broaden the organization's base by expanding its focus and mission, it was too late.

Many persons invested heavily of themselves and of their resources in the Guild during its existence. At times their efforts can only be described as heroic, for they wanted to make a difference in Adventist worship music. However, while the end of the organization was a huge disappointment, the Guild had made a contribution.

Through its efforts it had created a greater awareness in the lives of many musicians and pastors of the importance of music in worship and the need for dialogue between those who minister through music and through the spoken word. Additionally, through its work in helping fund the Oliver S. Beltz Chair in Sacred Music in the seminary at AU, all who now study there are made aware of the issues in, and the importance of, music in worship.

Dan Shultz

This article is based on information in SDA Church Musicians' Guild magazines and on conversations with Carol Mayes, Gladys Benfield, John Read, Douglas Macomber, and William Ness. A special thank-you to Carol Mayes for her assistance.