

Remembering Robert Page

Robert Page (April 27, 1927 – August 7, 2016) was Director of Choral Activities at Temple University Choral Activities from 1956 to 1975. During his time at Temple, he touched the lives of many of the Temple family. On Sunday, April 2, 2017, the Boyer College of Music and Dance presented a program remembering Mr. Page. Rosemarie Buonassisi LaFollette, BMus 1968, participated in this event and shares her thoughts.

Robert Page was Director of Choral Activities and conductor of the Temple University Choirs from 1956 to 1975. Almost immediately after his passing in August 2016, there arose a spontaneous movement to honor him with a musical tribute. “Remembering Robert Page” took place on April 2, 2017 at the Temple University Performing Arts Center, presented by the University Concert Choir, Graduate Conductors’ Chorus, and the “Remembering Robert Page Singers”—a group of former Page students and friends, in which I was a participant.

The celebration began on April 1 (no fooling!) with an afternoon-long rehearsal. We worked on two pieces, both *a capella*—*Silent Devotion and Response* from Ernst Bloch's *Sacred Service* and *There's a City Called Heaven* by Robert Page. Paul Hardin, current chair of Choral Music, shaped this impromptu group into a creditable ensemble. We then met with the Concert Choir members for a time, during which we shared our impressions, anecdotes, and memorable sayings of Mr. Page so as to give the current singers a sense of his personality and essence.

Next we combined forces to rehearse a piece commissioned for this event *In Paradisum* by Nancy Gallbraith, a former colleague of Page during his tenure at Carnegie Mellon University. The composer was present, sharing valuable insights and technical points concerning her works.

After an intermission for “sustenance and libation” (i.e. coffee, crackers, cheese, fruit, and “Philly pretzels”), Dr. Rollo Dilworth led the combined choirs in rehearsals of *Make our Garden Grow* from Bernstein's *Candide*, arranged by Page, and *The Promise* from Copeland's *The Tender Land*. The repertoire chosen reflected Page's comprehensive involvement in the Choral Arts as arranger and composer, as well as his championing of contemporary music.

The concert on Sunday, April 2, featured, in addition to these works, masterful performances by the Concert Choir and Graduate Conductors' Chorus. Both the repertoire and level of performance reflected the breadth and depth of Page's impact on Temple University Choral Arts, past and present.



Robert Page