

Jan Donald Harrington

Jan Harrington retires from the IU Jacobs School of Music only a year after having been inducted as a Chancellor's Professor for his peerless influence on other musicians through his creative activity as a choral conductor. He leaves behind a legacy of 34 years of devotion to the school and to the conducting art, carried out with utmost integrity and far-reaching vision.

The choral conductor represents the axis of musical activity in the greater proportion of colleges, churches, and community organizations in the United States. Singing is the first and most accessible form of musical expression for most persons, and choral singing specifically generates communal connections that give impetus to musical sponsorship in our country. It was through singing that Jan Harrington decided on a career in music. Born in Goodland, Kansas, in 1943, he was raised in Houston, Texas, where he began piano lessons at a very young age. After a stint as a trombonist in high school band, he was recruited to sing in the choir. Jan entered Southern Methodist University in Dallas as a pianist and singer to earn his bachelor's degree in music education. His voice teacher, Catherine Akos, was a good friend of Indiana University's eminent professor of conducting Tibor Kozma, and this fortunate connection brought Jan Harrington to Bloomington in 1965. He arrived just as the iconic Julius Herford was delivering a series of lectures on Baroque composer Heinrich Schütz. These were a revelation. Herford's synthesis of scholarship and interpretation resonated with Jan's artistic ideas, and he was soon assisting Herford's famous disciple Robert Shaw in a performance of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*. (David Jacobs, the generous donor of the Jacobs School of Music, sang in this concert as a student!) Along with his analytical studies with Herford, Jan also completed his doctoral conducting training with the pioneering Fiora Contino, a Toscanini protégé, and with Don Moses.

Jan's distinguished career began while still a doctoral student. He taught at the State University of New York at Fredonia (1969–1971) and at the University of Oklahoma at Normal (1971–1973). Indiana University called him to teach in 1973, and Jan balanced conducting and teaching with research, completing his Doctor of Music degree in 1980 with an imposing document on the masses of William Byrd. In 1998 he became chair of choral conducting.

Choral and choral-orchestral genres comprise some of the highest and most complex manifestations of musical genius in Western civilization, and Jan Harrington directed choral seasons of unsurpassed depth and diversity at Indiana University. He trained hundreds of conductors and singers from all continents, many of whom now enjoy international careers.

Jan has devoted extensive analytical attention to the works of Claudio Monteverdi, Heinrich Schütz, and Johann Sebastian Bach, and has conducted several monographic concerts dedicated to them. He has also included living composers of national and international caliber in his programs. He conducted the Pulitzer Prize-winning works of John Harbison and John Corigliano soon after the Pulitzer award announcement, connecting this cultural event with our students. At the same time, he paid exemplary attention to the work of our composition faculty, including John Eaton, Juan Orrego Salas, Harvey Sollberger, Bernard Heiden, Don Freund, and Sven-David Sandstrom. Jan Harrington also supported the work of many composition students, including their works in his recitals alongside those of the masters; and he often agreed to conduct in the students' own concerts.

As an orchestral conductor, Jan Harrington maintained an equally daring and thought-provoking profile. He conducted the Indiana University premieres of some of the most influential works of our time, many of which redefined music in the twentieth century. At the Musical Arts Center Jan conducted John Corigliano's Symphony "Of Rage and Remembrance" (the so-called AIDS Symphony); Olivier Messiaen's imposing *Turangalila* Symphony; Luciano Berio's *Sinfonia*; and John Adams' landmark opera *Nixon in China*, all to great acclaim. For the IU Opera Theater he also conducted Gluck's *Orfeo* and Gounod's *Faust*. In 1995 he was entrusted with Auer Hall's inaugural concert, conducting a performance of Monteverdi's *Vespers*, still remembered as one of the great musical events of recent times in Bloomington. Jan

also maintained long-standing professional relations with the opera theaters at Roanoke, Virginia, and Stockton, California, and with the Aspen and Dartmouth Conducting Institutes.

One of Jan Harrington's greatest legacies is the artful composition of the concert program. His concerts, often labeled with a suggestive title, articulated cross-references among musical works, or stylistic re-contextualizations across historical periods. It is a concept that can be achieved only by thorough scholarship and deep reflection. Harrington's style of programming has proven extremely influential. His former students—both conductors and singers—have pursued this approach to programming successfully in the United States and abroad, transforming the choral recital from a sequence of self-contained and unrelated musical moments into an artistic meditation on a specific subject that evolves over the course of the concert. The program concept becomes an artistic statement independent of the musical works presented.

Jan's influence extended substantially to many singers. He consistently selected repertoire to suit the specific vocal and artistic personality of the talented young singers under his care. Dozens of singers who sang the solo parts in his performances now fill the rosters of the opera houses and concert halls of the world and constantly acknowledge his mentorship. Jan Harrington also marked the profession by co-creating and leading the first and only chorus fully devoted to new music in the country. As such, the Contemporary Vocal Ensemble has presented countless American premieres and numerous commissions. It has been a laboratory for both composers and singers in the latest aesthetic and technical directions in the choral art.

Jan Harrington's conducting career has reflected his continued commitment to the musical concert as a space for critical engagement and cultural debate. This philosophy has been shared with his partner of 30 years, conductor Gerald Sousa, who has engaged the Bloomington community in parallel musical endeavors. Jan's admirers expect that, with Gerry, he will continue to tantalize us with his musical vision through exciting new projects beyond Indiana University's stages.

Carmen Helena Téllez