

This evening it is my great pleasure to present our Carrel Pray Music Educator of the Year award to a beloved mentor, wonderful colleague, and impactful teacher and conductor.

The award, named in honor of the founder of the Madison Boychoir, Carrel Pray, is presented annually to a teacher who has made a significant contribution to music education in our region or has been especially supportive of MYC and its programs.

This year's recipient, Beverly Taylor, was actually chosen in 2020 - and then a few things intervened. Beverly has certainly made a significant contribution to music education in our region as director of choral activities at UW-Madison since 1995 (now professor emerita) and as director of the Madison Symphony Chorus since 1996.

From a young age, Beverly was surrounded by music. Her family, especially her parents, loved to sing and did so around the piano during the holidays. Her father, an accomplished violinist, considered music as a career, but became a hospital administrator instead. Her mother came from a musical family and though she had no formal training, was a wonderful musician, even learning Beethoven's Fur Elise by ear!

Early on, Beverly was drawn to popular music and musical theater - and in junior high found her love of classical music through an incredibly robust choral program.

Her college education began at the University of Delaware. Joseph Huesty was her choral director and he talked about classical music - especially Mozart and Bach - in a way that really excited and opened Beverly's ears and heart.

After graduating and adding a masters degree, she spent several summers at the Tanglewood Institute, studying with leaders of American classical music like Aaron Copland and Leonard Bernstein, watching open rehearsals of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and focusing on conducting with Henry Charles Smith.

She continued learning and growing as a conductor and teacher through work with the amazing teachers like Gustav Meier, Helmut Rilling, and Paul Vermel.

From there, she stayed and worked in Boston - teaching at a private girls' school, and then conducting the Radcliffe Choral Society. Later she added positions with the Harvard/Radcliffe Chorus, Wellesley Chamber Singers, and the great community BackBay Chorale to growing career.

During her time in Boston, she also became the US manager for the King's Singers! She helped organize their US tour - and of course, met her future husband Tony here (they reconnected many years later and were married in 2019).

In 1995, she came to UW-Madison. Her time there, and as conductor of the Madison Symphony Chorus, connected her with hundreds of future music educators, conductors, music appreciators, and wonderful community members. She will always remember highlights including performing Britten's War Requiem (twice), wonderful tours with both MSO and UW groups, and the Christmas concerts at Luther Memorial.

On a personal note, I studied with Beverly when I returned to UW-Madison for my Masters degree. Singing with her, observing rehearsals, and especially learning from her in her conducting seminar were huge influences on me. I'm especially grateful for her supportive honesty - ask her about my choices of tempos!

In speaking with Beverly in anticipation of today, she said something that I think captures her ethos perfectly: "You don't know the effect that [learning to share our musical gifts] might have on an audience. It's wonderful - making music is magic - and I'm so glad I've made it my life's work."

And we are glad as well, Beverly. And we know about the impact she has made on so many - just listen to what a few have to say:

From Ali Bernards:

"I'm not sure if Professor Taylor knows this, but she rescued my belief in music. She welcomed me into the Concert Choir with open arms and rekindled my joy in music and my confidence in myself. Without Concert Choir and Professor Taylor's belief in me as a musician I never would have had the courage to audition again for the School of Music, to audition for my A Cappella group - and even today the musicianship I learned from Professor Taylor gave me the skills to be accepted into a semi professional choral group. I would not be who I am today without Professor Taylor. She rescued my belief in music and she rescued my belief in myself.

From Sarah Scallon and Peter Kleinschmidt:

"We met while singing next to each other in the front row of Concert Choir. 14 years and 2 kids later, and we are convinced that Professor Taylor may have been playing

matchmaker. In any case, her teaching inspired the lifelong love of music that has been the foundation of our life together."

From Teague Mawer (Current MYC board president):

"Professor Taylor's sense of humor, expertise, kindness, leadership and genuine passion for connecting people through music made these experiences so meaningful. I am grateful to her for helping spark a lifelong love of music in myself and so many others."

From Rose Heckenkamp:

"Because of the variety and richness in repertoire and travel experiences that came along with being part of her choruses, I made some of the best friendships and music of my life. I would not be who I am today without her!"

And from David Erb, former DMA conducting student with Beverly:

"While conductors each have their unique personalities and quirks, really good conductors all have certain things in common: a high level of musicianship, a tireless work ethic, a delight in and aptitude for teaching, a love for one's students, and a contagious zeal, fire, and passion which drives and imbues everything else. Beverly Taylor exudes all of these in her work."

It is my great pleasure to present the Carrel Pray Music Educator of the Year award to someone that calls me EVERY YEAR on my birthday and SINGS on my voicemail - Beverly Taylor.