

Tonight it is my great pleasure to present the Carrel Pray MYC Music Educator of the Year award to a colleague, a mentor, and a friend.

This award, re-named last year 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 unusually supportive of MYC and its programs.

Tonight's recipient, Dan Krunnfusz, or "Mr. K", as he is known to almost everyone, has certainly made a significant contribution to music education in our region over the past 37 years, and, as a past Artistic Director of the Madison Boychoir, undoubtedly has been supportive of MYC and its programs.

From a young age in Baraboo, WI, Dan's life was filled with music. His father was a choral director and organist. Dan sang in the church choir, took piano and guitar. His life was filled with singing....they had no car radio, so as his Dad, Gordon, put it, "If you want music, SING!"

Dan attended UW-Minnesota as an architecture major, but soon found himself spending most of his time writing and making music. He transferred to UW-Madison as a theory and composition major and soon added music education to his list. Dan knew early on that he had a special knack for understanding what should (and could) happen in a classroom--he was always good at "figuring out what the teacher wants". In other words, he was always thinking like a teacher...and finding ways to make lessons more successful.

After college he began work in Belmont, Wisconsin, then worked in Hortonville and River Falls. There he was connected with the St Croix Valley Boychoir, and started his long career working with boys' changing voices. He also started working with the early members of the VoiceCare Network (an incredible collective of educators focused on teaching healthy, expressive singing). After moving back home to Baraboo to teach grades 7-12 choral music, his time working with the Madison Boychoir began.

Of his time with the Madison Boychoir, Dan has too many memories to detail here. Some highlights for him include international tours, getting the chance to write his own music and have it performed by wonderful young musicians, the Stephen Paulu's incredible work *Brown Penny* with the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, and, in Dan's words "watching boys grow up and expand in front of your eyes over the course of just a few years".

Throughout those boychoir years, Dan wrote and arranged countless many pieces of music. He is an accomplished and widely-published composer, and continues to write music today (and in fact wrote two new pieces for our boychoirs a few years ago.)

Dan worked with the boychoir as assistant director and later as Artistic Director from 1991 to 2003. Through those many years, and his 25 years teaching in both the Baraboo and Madison public schools, Dan has influenced countless students and families.

And they appreciate him:

From Dan Sinclair, now president of the Madison Youth Choirs' board of directors (who, by the way, was quite a handful as a young singer): "I remember Mr. K being consistently kind but firm. He made us all better by expecting hard work and having fun with us, too."

From Jennifer McFarland, past executive director of the Madison Boychoir, who appreciates Dan's support of her early in her career as well as his compositional skills:

After a rehearsal I walked into the practice room and Dan was playing something lovely and haunting that I had not heard before. When I asked about it, he said he was writing a piece for the Boychoir. I said if he would commit to finishing it on a schedule, I would write a grant for it and the choir could perform it. We got the grant, and I like to think I helped hold his feet to the fire to get the piece fully birthed. It became the Mass in Times of Struggle."

From Anne Keller, past Madison Boychoir parent: *My favorite memory was when Mr. K had the choir sing the "Irish Blessing." It was at the end of a Spring concert. He introduced it, and then sat down and the boys began to sing. I cried through the whole beautiful song. Later we found out that Mr. K had told the choir to think of someone they loved very much and sing the song to that person. My son chose his younger sister. That melted my heart completely, and it's a favorite memory from those times.*

And finally, from his daughter, Andi: *When we were small, my brother and I would fall asleep beneath the piano bench as our father taught voice lessons. The quiet shifts of the pedals and the intake of his preparatory breath lulled us into dreams woven in four part harmonies. As I've grown older and moved away from home, I've begun to increasingly appreciate music for the ways in which it connects people: soloists to the orchestra, choirs to the audience, and my father to me. Dad's passion for music – for teaching and inspiring others to embody, rather than perform pieces – is palpable whether on stage, in rehearsal, or around the piano in the living room.*

Tonight's award ceremony is also especially personal for me. I began working as an accompanist with the Madison Boychoir in 1993 and Dan hired me to conduct Tallis, the training choir, just a year later. He has always been an amazing supporter and mentor to me.

So now, it is with great enthusiasm that I present the Carrel Pray MYC Music Educator of the Year award to Dan Krunnfusz.

My notes from Dan:

Dad choral director/organist. Dan sang in church choir, piano lessons, guitar. Lots of singing around the house (no radio in the car--"If you want music, SING!")

UMinnesota architecture major, then UW Madison theory/composition, added music ed

Always been good at figuring out what a teacher wants

Jobs in Belmont, WI, Hortonville, then River Falls (Junior High)

Led to boychoir connection: St Croix Valley Boychoir, VoiceCare Network

MBC (year off), then back.

Highlights; so many--tours, being able to write and have his music performed, "Brown Penny" and conducting the WCO, Germany tour concert, watching boys "grow up and expand in front of your eyes over the course of just a few years".

Now--woodworking, furniture building--extension of his interests, still artistic

Dan Sinclair: What I do remember, however, is that he was consistently both kind and firm. He made us all better by expecting hard work and having fun with us, too.

Anne Keller: *I enjoyed watching him work with you guys, and chaperoned at least one retreat weekend. He was firm and kind, tolerated a hundred attempts to quiet a group of young boys who wanted to sing!*

At one of those retreats you brought a tiny toy gun; my memory was it was metal, maybe two inches long? He made you throw it in the trash at dinner.

My favorite memory was when he first had the choir sing the "Irish Blessing." It was at the end of a Spring concert at FUM. He introduced it that you guys had something to close the concert. Then he sat down and you boys began to sing. I cried through the whole beautiful song. Liz was probably 5 or 6 at that time. Later you told us that Mr. K had told the choir to think of someone you loved very much and sing the song to that person. You said you thought of Liz. That melted my heart completely, and it's a favorite memory from those times.

One more thought about the remarks about Mr. K. The emphasis in that memory of his teaching the "Irish Blessing" is that he knew how to teach young singers the meaning of a piece, and could inspire them to convey it to their audience. That's a special talent in a director, especially with young singers!