



IN MEMORIAM

Donn Weiss
Senior Lecturer in Music, Emeritus
Los Angeles
1928 — 1998

That Donn Weiss was a well known, highly respected and beloved member of the UCLA community was confirmed by the capacity audience of UCLA faculty, staff and students who packed Royce Hall for his farewell concert at the time of his retirement in June 1993, and again for the memorial celebration of his life upon his death in August 1998. Full houses in Royce Hall were a regular part of Donn's musical presence on campus as he conducted the UCLA Choral Union with orchestra in a wide cross-section of the great choral masterworks. He will be long remembered for the popular holiday concerts which he presented each December for 25 years, featuring the various campus choral groups with the Royce Hall organ and instruments.

Following brief teaching appointments at Kansas State Teachers College in Emporia and Washington University in St. Louis, Donn moved in 1959 to Los Angeles where he pursued further graduate study at USC and was soon appointed to the UCLA music faculty. Taking over directorship of the select vocal chamber ensemble, Donn shaped the group into the UCLA Madrigal Singers, which remained the premier choral organization on campus throughout his tenure. Under his direction the Madrigal Singers toured widely in the United States as well as Australia and Russia. They produced several recordings and performed on television and motion picture sound tracks. Their annual caroling in Murphy Hall and their Twelfth Night concert in the Powell Library Rotunda were cherished campus traditions that expired with Donn's retirement.

Donn also founded the UCLA Men's Glee Club, which had the distinction of singing at a state dinner in the White House at the invitation of President Nixon. The Glee Club also recorded and toured widely, including a highly acclaimed tour of Japan. Among their many invitational performances as campus ambassadors, Donn was especially proud of their appearance under his direction at the first Super Bowl football game played at the Rose Bowl. Community service was an important role of both the UCLA Madrigal Singers and the Men's Glee Club. Donn further expressed his community service and his love of great sacred music by serving as a church music director with long tenures at both the Brentwood and Westwood Presbyterian churches.

Beyond his principal creative activity as a conductor, Donn was also a gifted choral and instrumental arranger. He produced numerous arrangements for his choral ensembles, many of which were published by Lawson-Gould Music Publishers of New York. Those closest to him were also treated occasionally at social gatherings to his rich baritone voice and professional skill as a popular vocalist.

Donn's faculty and staff colleagues admired him for his consummate musicianship, generosity and team spirit. He was always ready to perform a faculty or student composer's new choral work or a musicologist's rediscovered vocal treasure. For a number of years Donn served the department as director of the Frank Sinatra Awards concert in Royce Hall, featuring the winners of the annual Sinatra awards competition. His love for the American musical theater and gifts for both stage and musical direction shone brightly in these productions.

Devoted to his students, Donn particularly enjoyed the teaching of conducting. His choral ensembles always included a designated student conductor, usually a graduate teaching assistant, many of whom have attained

visibility as choral and instrumental conductors in their professional life. At his memorial service in Royce Hall, the touching words of some of his most distinguished and devoted students provided a strong testimony of his passionate commitment to the arts of music and teaching.

Thomas Harmon