

## **In Memoriam Dr. William Peter Mahrt**

(9 March 1939 – 1 January 2025)

A Gentleman, a Scholar, and a Friend

It is with great sorrow that I learned of the passing of Dr. William Mahrt on January 1, 2025, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. Born in 1939, Dr. Mahrt dedicated his life to the study and performance of medieval and Renaissance music, leaving an indelible mark on the field of musicology and the hearts of those who knew him.

Dr. Mahrt's academic journey began at the University of Washington, where he earned his B.A. in 1961 and his M.A. in 1963. Driven by an insatiable curiosity and a deep love for music, he continued his studies at Stanford University, where he completed his Ph.D. in 1969. Throughout his illustrious career, Dr. Mahrt held prestigious teaching positions at Case Western Reserve University, the Eastman School of Music, and Stanford University, where he inspired countless students as an Associate Professor.

William Mahrt was also the President of the Church Music Association of America and editor of its journal, *Sacred Music*, the oldest continuously-published music journal in the United States. A collection of his essays, *The Musical Shape of the Liturgy*, was published in 2012, and he continued to share his knowledge through lectures on music and liturgy for the Lumen Christi Institute of the University of Chicago.

Known for his profound expertise in Gregorian chant, medieval performance, and the works of composers such as Machaut, Dufay, and Lasso, Dr. Mahrt's scholarly contributions earned him numerous accolades, including the Albert Schweitzer Medal in 1991 and the Thomas Binkley Award in 2010. He served as President of the Northern California Chapter of the American Musicological Society and dedicated many years to editing the journal *Sacred Music*.

Dr. Mahrt's life's work was a beacon for scholars and church musicians alike. His deep understanding of Gregorian chant and the sacred liturgy brought new light to these ancient traditions, while his insights into the nature of beauty in Catholic sacred music, liturgical gestures, and architecture enriched the Church's appreciation for artistic beauty in worship. His dedication to the polyphonic masters of the Renaissance not only advanced scholarship but also inspired the performances of many choirs and students.

In addition to his scholarly achievements, Dr. Mahrt was a founding member of the St. Ann Choir in 1963 and served as its director for most years since 1964. His leadership of the St. Ann Choir and Stanford Early Music Singers was a testament to his unwavering commitment to sacred music, a true and deep bond of highest scholarship and the fervent love for his faith.

Dr. Mahrt's scholarship extended beyond academia. He wrote extensively on the relationship between music and liturgy, music and poetry in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and the works of composers like Guillaume de Machaut, Guillaume Dufay, William Byrd, Orlando di Lasso, and Johannes Brahms. His workshops on Gregorian chant and Renaissance music were treasured by participants, and his direction of the St. Ann Choir and Stanford Early Music Singers was a pillar of sacred music practice in the United States.

To celebrate his life and legacy, a conference entitled “The Musical Shape of the Liturgy: Celebrating the Life and Work of William P. Mahrt” was held in November of 2023 marking the 150th volume of *Sacred Music* and honoring the establishment of a new chair in sacred music at St. Patrick’s Seminary in Menlo Park.

Dr. William Mahrt's contributions to the field of musicology and his passionate dedication to sacred music will be remembered and cherished by his family, friends, students, colleagues, and the countless lives he touched through his work. His legacy will continue to inspire and guide future generations in the pursuit of beauty and excellence in music.

More than just being a scholar and a musician, Bill, as he liked to be called, was a gentleman, a colleague, and a dear friend. Highly respected by his students, singers, and all who knew him, he was a very modest man and always remained a humble worker in the vineyard of the Lord. - Bill, it was an honor to serve as your Vice-President for over 18 years. You have been a shining light for many of us, and you shall never be forgotten. Rest in Peace!

**NON NOBIS DOMINE SED NOMINI TUO DA GLORIAM**

*Horst Buchholz*

ARCHDIOCESE OF DETROIT  
The Director of Sacred Music  
Dr. Horst Buchholz