



Fred Orr Wygal Jr.

July 7, 1931 - November 8, 2022

Fred Orr Wygal, July 7, 1931 - November 8, 2022. Born in Bristol, Va. he was the only child of Fred Orr Wygal, Sr, and Willie Elizabeth Robinson. He graduated from Jefferson HS in Richmond, Va. After a year at Lynchburg College, convinced his father that music would be his chosen field and transferred to Cincinnati Conservatory. Upon graduation, he was offered the position of Choral Director at the opening of the new Annandale HS (1954) Three years later, he transferred to FairFax High School, where he remained as Choral Director, and Department Chair, until his retirement. The widely used choral room, which he helped design, was named in his honor when he retired, in 1983.

His contributions to Music, and the Arts, in Fairfax County, were numerous. He and his wife, Lois, were founding members of the fledgling Fairfax Symphony - she a trumpet player, and he, its first manager, and tympanist. Founding Director of the new Fairfax Choral Society, which he directed for 15 years, before being asked to become Artistic Director of the Reston Chorale, from which he retired in 2009, after 27 years.

He served as Minister of Music for several area churches, St Mark's Lutheran, Annandale Methodist, Manassas Baptist, First Baptist of Alexandria, and Memorial Baptist., in Arlington. An accomplished soloist, he performed with the Opera Society of Washington, as Bass/Baritone soloist with area choruses, and was privileged to selected to perform with Robert Shaw, in three of his Carnegie Hall Concerts. During the 60's, he could be found

singing at Mr Henry's, in Georgetown, with Roberta Flack accompanying, or singing a duet with him, which, at that time, was significant.

His choral groups at Fairfax experienced a wide range of musical experiences, from the classical repertoire, to jazz, (and a conductor who played bass to accompany them). He was in great demand as a clinician and adjudicator, both in Canada, and in the States. He is remembered fondly by many of his former students, many of whom have kept in touch with him, with gratitude for lessons learned under his tutelage, and the lifelong gift music brings.

After he 'retired', he recorded concerts, and produced CDs, for 20 years as 'Sounds, Reasonable', with the help of his 'roadie' (Ellen) and was the impressive voice of Fairfax (HS) football, for many years.

Fred has five children from his former marriage to Lois Sanford - sons - Thomas (Patty) of Millen, Georgia, and Donovan, of Fort Worth, Texas, three daughters - Barbara Lutz (Joseph), of Lewisburg, WV, Ruth Everhart (Bill) of Woodstock, Va, and Carol Kiser, of Elkview, WV. Nine beloved grandchildren, (listed alphabetically), Becca, Chris, Elizabeth, Heather, Josh, Kayla, Katie, Melly, and Zachary. And 7, and 7/9 great grandchildren.

He is survived by his wife of more than 46 years, Ellen, and two stepsons, J Michael McFarland, of Fairfax, and Jonathan Sanborn (Michelle) of North Kingstown, RI. Fred's brother-in-law, Dr. Frederick Fox, and wife Gail, live in Harrisonburg, nephews Benjamin (Emmy) Barnard, Vermont, and Jonathan, Rochester, Mn.

Cremation was handled by the Pierce Funeral Home, of Manassas. Future plans are pending. Anyone wishing to contribute in his memory may contribute to The Reston Chorale (restonchorale.org) or to a cause one prefers.

Last night, The Reston Chorale's beloved Artistic Director Emeritus Fred Wygal passed away. We extend our deepest, heartfelt condolences to Ellen, as well as Fred's entire family.

Fred Wygal made an indelible mark on the Northern Virginia music

community, as a music educator, co-founder of the Fairfax Choral Society, and as artistic director of The Reston Chorale.

Fred came to The Reston Chorale during a particularly difficult time in our history. In early 1983, just a few months after the death of Artistic Director Mary Gay Craig, Fred stepped in to guest conduct The Reston Chorale in Orff's *Carmina Burana*.

In the 1983-84 Season, Fred Wygal became the Chorale's fourth artistic director—a role he filled for 26 seasons—and a cherished friend.

Throughout the 1980s, '90s and into the new millennium, Fred expanded the Chorale's repertoire, adding jazz and opera choruses to the mix. This video, filmed in 2002 with the Bobs -- a "four-member jazz trio" -- will give you a glimpse of Fred's love of jazz. (Be sure to watch it all the way to the end!) Under his leadership, The Reston Chorale also frequently collaborated with the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra.

During the summer of 1991, he launched Reston Sings!—a community sing series that included Johannes Brahms' *Requiem* and Felix Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. The series earned the Arts Organization Award from Arts Council of Fairfax County (now ArtsFairfax).

Between 1998 and 2009, The Reston Chorale premiered 10 new choral works, including Scott Solak's beautiful This Music, which was commissioned to thank Fred for his 26 years of leadership with The Reston Chorale, and to thank him for the gift of music that he gave to so many throughout his career. It premiered on May 9, 2009, as Maestro Fred Wygal conducted his final concert with The Reston Chorale. This Music also expresses what is on our hearts today.

If we learn about funeral or memorial service plans, we will share them with you. In the meantime, I hope the video and music included here brings back sweet memories of Fred Wygal, and all that he means to his friends in The Reston Chorale.

Tribute Wall



“ I met Fred early in my career as a choral director. I had great respect and admiration for him and am better for having known him. Ellen, my deepest condolences to you and your family.

Michael Ehrlich

Michael Ehrlich - November 17, 2022 at 05:59 PM



This means so much - thank you.

Ellen F Wygal - November 22, 2022 at 07:54 AM



Wonderful years!

Ellen F Wygal - November 22, 2022 at 07:55 AM



“ I was honored to know Fred through working with Ellen and as a member of the Reston Chorale. Ellen, you are in my prayers.

Doris Page

Doris Page - November 17, 2022 at 07:18 AM



“ Yes, Jean I agree. Favorite teacher in high school and a talent beyond measure to mold such young musical students!!!

Chris Spori - November 13, 2022 at 03:51 PM

JO

“ By far my most favorite class and teacher throughout high school. He was a great man, working so patiently with all of us crazy kids 😊 rest easy Mr Wygal ❤️

Jean Shewbridge Ogleveee - November 13, 2022 at 03:36 PM

CA

“ Mr. Wygal was more than just my choral music teacher. He was my gentle encourager in all phases of music. He featured two different folk groups that I was in during FHS choir concerts. When FHS '63 wanted to do the first musical senior play, he was the music director and insisted that auditions be open to underclassmen, starting my interest in that genre, which continued both in college and summer theater. Finally, he appointed me as student director of the Madrigals, which led to me getting the similar position in a college a capella group. He really was an inspiration to me and many others at FHS. I owe him a lot for many wonderful moments in my life. RIP.

Charlie Appler - November 12, 2022 at 08:23 PM

EW

Good to have met you through all those amazing reunions..thanks, Charlie.

Ellen F Wygal - November 22, 2022 at 07:57 AM

L(

“ I started with Mr. Wygal in 8th grade (1958) at Fairfax High School where I gave up my lunch hour to be in the choir. He taught us many things, including Hindimuth (yikes) 6 Chansons, and movements from the Bach B Minor Mass. He sang opera with the Arlington company and some of us got to be in the chorus of Cosi and Tosca (the final scene is burned into my brain). At the end, 62-63, our Madrigal group was spot on and in wide demand.

Choral Music has been my avocation and sometimes paid jobs. I sang all the way through college with the men's glee club and Chapel Choir (Duke) and have always sung with my church choirs, and also was a member of Schola Cantorum of Texas (DFW area), and here in the DMV, I have sung with Paul Hill, the Oratorio Society and Washington Chorus (Bob Shafer), Choral Arts (Norman Scribner, Scott Tucker, and now Jace Saplan), and the City Choir (Bob Shafer and now Erin Freeman), St. Andrew's in Arlington, The Basilica in DC, Truro in Fairfax, St. John's in Centreville, and Emmanuel in Chestertown MD. I have performed with the NSO, NY Philharmonic, Philadelphia Symphony, London Symphony Orchestra, Lyon National Symphony, et al, and under Maestro/as Rostropovich, Hillis (!), Sir Neville Mariner, James Conlan, Yanick Nesson Sequin, Nosedo, Eschenbach, SLATKIN (!!!), Gergiev, Macal, Frubeck de Burgos (wow Carmina AND La Damnation) and have sung in 2 grammy winning recordings: Of Rage and Remembrance by Corigliano with Slatkin and the NSO, and the Britten War Requiem with Oratorio Society/Washington Chorus under Bob Shafer (they changed names along the way).

*All of this got started with my 5 year experience with Mr. Wygal.
RIP!*

Leroy Robert Barnes (Bob) - November 12, 2022 at 03:33 PM

EW

I appreciate hearing about all the successes and joys music has brought your life, Bob - with such a good start.

Ellen F Wygal - November 22, 2022 at 08:00 AM

MK

“ *I met Fred in the early 1980s and spent numerous days and evenings at his Fairfax home with him and Ellen. There I enjoyed some delicious meals and intriguing conversations. But by far the highlight of the evenings were the music that came from him. He was truly a musician of the highest order that was able to enrapture this old rocker with jazz, classical and chorale, all played with his aesthetic brilliance. Thanks Fred. And now the Heavenly Hell of a Band has one more member.*

mk

Michael Kiser - November 11, 2022 at 02:15 PM

CC

I loved singing under Mr. Wygal's direction in Senior Choir and Madrigals at Fairfax High. He was a great musician... and really had a great wit when you were just talking to him! For many of our Class Reunions, we were fortunate enough to have him and his fabulous wife Ellen join us, and he always had a spot in our program to address us and lead the class in singing the alma mater. He will be remembered forever! 🎵

Carolyn Grefe Chappell - November 13, 2022 at 09:24 AM

EB

Dear Ellen. So sorry to read about Fred. My thoughts are with you and your family.

Sincerely, Ed Broyles, Harrisonburg, Va

ED BROYLES - November 18, 2022 at 01:10 PM

BM

I moved to Fairfax in the summer between freshman and sophomore year. I signed up for Senior Choir, and Mr. Wygal sat down with me to get an idea as to my skills at that time. During the Christmas Concert I had a petit mal seizure, while we were on stage, in the middle of a piece. He just got my attention when I came out of it a few measures later, and no one else even knew.

It was a blessing to get to sing with Chorale and Madrigals the next two years. Senior year was a bit hard for Mr. Wygal, as that was the year that Fred Orr Wygal Sr. passed away. I am sorry that I missed the opportunity to sing with him again, several years ago.

Because of connections that Mr. Wygal made personally, I was able to sing with the Wolf Trap Orchestra, and the National Symphony. My appreciation of music and life in general was expanded because I had Fred Wygal as a teacher.

Bruce MacCullagh - November 21, 2022 at 08:33 PM

EW

You were always there for Fred - FHS and Chorale - one of his favorite students, Bruce...he cared a great deal about you, and your life - fondly, Mrs Fred (Ellen)

Ellen F Wygal - November 23, 2022 at 09:30 AM

NC

Fred & my husband Herb were great friends over the years of being choral directors. When my husband died suddenly in 1991, Fred honored Herb at a concert held 3 days after his death. It was a very meaningful concert for our whole family.

Nancy Cappel - December 10, 2022 at 12:12 PM

ML

I always thought that Fred Wygal was a totally cool educator who instilled in me a life long passion for music. Senior Choir and Chorale. Class of 77. Mike Lynch

Mike Lynch - October 21, 2023 at 06:57 AM