

The Reverend Dr. **Leonard (“Doc”) Ellinwood** was a prominent participant in the musical life of the Close for over half a century. Besides singing countertenor in the choir, he was an Assistant Minister at the Cathedral. As a musicologist, he contributed notes for the Choral Society programs and made resources from his job at the Library of Congress available to the music program.

His son, **Robert Ellinwood**, was a Cathedral choirboy in the late 40s and 50’s. and was treble or alto soloist for 6 years. He sang for Wayne in the Glee Clubs and was the soloist for the first performance of Dirksen’s oratorio **Jonah**.

He wrote the following in April, 2021:

Richard Wayne Dirksen was... and remains... absolutely one of the major influences in my life!! What a powerful, strong, guiding personality for many of us. He was the serious musical taskmaster who knew just how to command total devotion from his young singers. While musically he seemed without peer to me, he also was so incredibly supportive and full of wise advice. It takes real talent to be a tough taskmaster and fun at the same time!

I have small pictures of both him and Paul Callaway on my desk. Perhaps this overstates it but, to us wee lads, Callaway was somewhat feared, while Wayne Dirksen was loved. Unlike Callaway (often), he never slammed a hymnal down on the piano in anger when we did something wrong. It could be terrifying! Still, Callaway was also a great musical influence for all of us, if for no other reason than the vast array of truly great choral music we sang under him that surely resonates with each of us to this very day. However, he was not a “friend” the way Wayne Dirksen was.

Callaway influenced me greatly through the treble solo work and the solo countertenor work with orchestra into my college years (Bach’s **St John Passion** (twice), Honneger’s **King David**), but Dirksen gave me wings as a young, wet-behind-the-ears baritone with the many little solos he entrusted to me with the Glee Club, his fun musicals, and the larger concerts where the Glee Club got to sing with orchestra. “Chief” (one of several affectionate nicknames) repeatedly offered special opportunities for me to solo as a young baritone, not only while at STA, but throughout college also. Singing the role of Jonah for him, as well as his written comments in the **Jonah** program notes, remain special to me. Later, he graciously accompanied me when I applied for a Fulbright.

Now I can smile, but I shall never forget the summer Evensong when he suddenly asked me to sit where the Canon Precentor normally does and to chant the service. **What? Me? Now?** I’d never done that. I don’t know if someone had gotten sick, but I did my best to respond to his trust that I could do it. He didn’t suffer fools lightly and had that interesting balance of serious piercing eyes, alternating with playful bemused expressions. I was nervous, but thankfully had the superb model of Dean Sayre’s chanting, especially when he so wonderfully sang the Litany!

But my admiration goes waaaay beyond soloistic things. I’ve spent my whole career in music and I have never... ever... heard anyone who could improvise at the organ as he could! And he certainly did, to everyone’s delight, each time the ushers would march up the long center aisle of the cathedral to deliver the offering plates at the altar. By the time the ushers reached the minister, were we ever revved up to sing the Doxology! He made it exciting!

And, ah, the Glee Clubs! So many young voices, under his exacting, smiling direction, achieving such preciseness and blend! He made us all proud of our achievements as a group. Yes, in his own **The Flamingo Hat** and G&S's **Ruddigore...** what fun!...but also in concerts with members of the National Symphony! At that age, to be singing with orchestra! He led the Glee Clubs in concerts of Mozart's **Missa In Honorem Sanctissimae Trinitas** (at STA) and later Haydn's **Missa in Honorem Beatissimae Virginis Mariae** (at NCS), both orchestrally accompanied. He really gave us pride as young singers. To this day, I still find myself humming melodies from a short concert in the STA Refectory that the Glee Club gave. It was a fun mix of spirituals and Schubert songs in English that still float through my mind.

He asked some of us in the summer men's choir at the Cathedral to rehearse over in the College of Preachers Library for a performance of Haydn's Ten Commandments, in Canon form... and then later to rehearse and perform his own very challenging Canonic settings. Near that library, behind the choir room, he'd then join everyone in playing softball. I was there in the outfield and he was pitching when he caught a line drive with his right hand and broke a finger! He had to finesse that cast on his finger as he played the organ for a while.

But beyond the great musician and the smiling, encouraging leader was a caring, empathetic person. The last time I was privileged to see him was when he graciously stopped by to see my Dad ("Doc" Ellinwood) to share a final hello and chuckle at memories during my father's last days in July, 1994.

I know he had another whole career at the Cathedral after he stopped leading the choral groups and no longer played organ, but still composed. I've thought often of his description to me of his workmanlike approach to composing, not sitting there and waiting for illusive inspiration, but sticking to a schedule for "composing time," and forcing pen to paper. It struck me how it matches the approaches of other great composers who've said the same thing. His genius at improvising surely helped his creativity at those moments.

But it is that earlier part of his life at the Cathedral that has influenced me so positively all my musical career. Many decades later, I still feel and appreciate his influence, both personally and musically.

Fond memories all!
Bob Ellinwood