

IV - DIRECTORS AND CONDUCTORS

The positions of "Director" and "Conductor" of the Denton Bach Society have, for most of its history, been occupied by the same person. Indeed, it is common to regard them as two names for the same role, and the terms are sometimes used interchangeably. However, this is not accurate; the two are different, but intertwined and closely related.

In general, the role of the Conductor is subsumed under that of the Music Director. The nature of the Conductor's role is more precisely defined--and more obvious; his or her performance at concert, if not in rehearsals, can be observed, and he or she is expected to be in complete charge. The duties of the Musical Director are broader and more diffuse.

From the start, the Music Director has been given formal status as an officer of the Denton Bach Society in the organization's bylaws (the terms "Musical Director" and simply "Director" have also been employed). This person has also been designated as an ex officio member of the organization's governing body, called the Executive Committee in earlier program notes, and more recently referred to as the Board of Directors--although in the current bylaws Executive Board is the term of choice.

"The Director...shall be the musical and artistic leader of the Society's musical programs," say the bylaws. And that is basically all that they say. But these few words place a lot of responsibility, and trust, in the hands of the Director. (The term Conductor, by the way, is nowhere mentioned in the bylaws.)

During the first five years, Dr. Charles S. Brown served in the dual capacities of Director and Conductor. Although Dr. Brown was in charge of the programs, and conducted most of them, his co-founder and co-director, Dr. Hildegard Froehlich, as has been previously mentioned, shared these responsibilities with him in considerable measure. The bylaws of the organization in fact were tailored to reflect this relationship by including the office of Associate Director, who "shall aid the Director in the performance of all duties of the office, and shall act as Director in case of the latter's absence." The Associate Director was also a member of the Board of Directors. (Later versions of the bylaws do not include this office.)

Drs. Brown and Froehlich were very versatile in their contributions to the Society's programs. In addition to carrying out these leadership duties, they also performed with the ensemble from time to time. Either one might sing in the choir while the other directed. Froehlich occasionally sang solo passages in numbers performed and she played the alto recorder. Dr. Brown frequently appeared as organist and harpsichordist.

After five years, Dr. Brown submitted his resignation to the members. "The press of other personal and professional commitments has made it necessary for me to relinquish my duties as director of the Bach Society with this final program of the 1980-81 season," wrote Brown in the April, 1981, newsletter. Dr. Froehlich became Acting Music Director.

The following season, the Society's sixth, was a year of transition. Several musicians, in addition to Dr. Froehlich, served as conductors for rehearsals and performances. The previous season, in March of 1981, Dr. Susan Ferre, then conductor of the Texas Baroque Ensemble, in Dallas, Texas, had been guest conductor with the Denton Bach Society in a concert honoring the 300th anniversary of the birth of Georg Philipp Telemann. In September of that year, Dr. Ferre was asked to return, together with the Texas Baroque Ensemble, to conduct a collaborative concert with the Denton Bach Society for the Society's first concert of the sixth (1981-82) season. She agreed. Dr. Ferre was in fact auditioning for the Director's position, albeit, apparently, not under the most convenient conditions for her; Marsha Henderson, a member of the Bach Choir then, has recalled, "I remember Susan sitting on the organ bench (at St. Paul Lutheran Church) and conducting us in rehearsal while cradling her baby in her lap."

Hildegard Froehlich conducted the Christmas Concert that season, and Charles Brown returned to conduct a series of Bach Cantata numbers for the February, 1982, concert. By this time, Henry Gibbons had arrived on the musical scene in Denton.

In the summer of 1980, Henry Gibbons had moved to Denton from Stuttgart, Germany, with his wife Jacqueline, and their two sons, Jonathan and Henry Sanford. In Stuttgart, Mr. Gibbons had served as conductor of the Figuralchor of the Gedaechtniskirche since 1978, and he was assuming the position of director of choral activities at the North Texas State University School of Music.

Mr. Gibbons was invited by the Denton Bach Society to conduct Mozart's *Coronation Mass* in the last concert of this sixth season. He did so. Thus began a relationship between the Denton Bach Society and Henry Gibbons which continues to the present, one which has brought to the Denton community, and the members of the Denton Bach Society, fourteen years of glorious music.