

Garyth Nair



Professor Garyth Nair of Chatham, NJ, a faculty member in the Drew University Music Department and world-renowned expert in voice pedagogy and research, died on August 10, 2013 in Overlook Hospital, two weeks after suffering a major stroke. He was 69 and is survived by his wife, Angelika Nair, a mezzo-soprano who also teaches at Drew University and College of St. Elizabeth, and who has been his research collaborator.

Garyth was born in 1943 and raised in Latrobe, PA, where he showed early boyhood interests in the two subjects that matured into lifelong passions: music and physiology. As a young child, he listened again and again to his first record: Beethoven's First Symphony. He so impressed the residents of a local Benedictine monastery that they opened their doors to him, enabling him to practice the organ there, and to study biology in their well-equipped laboratory. Ultimately, they sponsored his attendance at summer enrichment programs in Princeton, NJ, where his talents came to the attention of Westminster Choir College. And so, he began his post-secondary studies there, majoring in voice. While still a student, he was appointed Assistant Conductor of the famed Westminster Choir, the first student in the college's history to be so honored. He later studied orchestral conducting with the late Sir Adrian Boult, and completed an M.A. in Musicology at New York University.

For 34 seasons, Garyth served as Music Director of the Summit Chorale, subsequently being named Music Director Emeritus. He led numerous other ensembles over the years, including the Lakeland Youth Symphony; the Chamber Symphony of New Jersey; Heritage Strings (St. Patrick's Cathedral); and was Assistant Conductor of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra directing their Spotlight concerts for young people and summer tour series.

Garyth made his formal concert debut with the NJSO in 1985 in a performance which "stamps him as an important new force in the New Jersey orchestral scene," according to critic Peter Edward Frank. Writing for *The Star-Ledger*, critic Michael Redmond described Garyth Nair as "one of the most brilliant and dynamic conductors on the scene ... a musician of extraordinary insight and sensitivity." His guest conducting has taken him as far as the Philippines, where he conducted the Manila Symphony Orchestra and the Metropolitan Opera Chorus of Manila.

Garyth has also been a professional singer in the NYC-area and sang in the most widely-respected professional choral organization in the United States, the prestigious Robert Shaw Chorale.

Appointed to the music faculty at Drew University in 1990, Garyth contributed in multiple dimensions. As a Professor of Music, he headed the vocal studies program, and was best known for his courses in Techniques of the Voice, and Style Analysis. He was the director and conductor of the Drew Chorale and the Drew Orchestra, bringing both ensembles to new levels of accomplishment. Perhaps his greatest achievement at Drew is the Concert Hall in the Dorothy

Young Center for the Arts. Garyth served as the University's representative on the project team and was a driving force in its design and construction. The hall's superb acoustics are a lasting testament to his vision, dedication and artistry.

In 1996, Garyth began conducting research in the use of computer analysis in feedback in vocal pedagogy, and established the Laboratory for Applied Spectrogram in the Study of Singing in the University's music department. Within 3 years, he published his first book: "*Voice Tradition and Technology*." That publication led to an invitation to teach and conduct workshops at the Kirov Conservatory in St. Petersburg, Russia. His national and international reputation as a leading expert in the science of voice and voice production grew rapidly. It was in 2006, when he was the keynote speaker at the Voice Symposium in Salzburg, Austria, that he met his future wife, Angelika, a native of Austria. In 2007 he published his second book, a tour-de-force titled "*The Craft of Singing*," which is being adopted as a text in conservatories and universities across the country.

Garyth and Angelika have conducted groundbreaking research together, collaborating also with the Medical University of Graz, Austria, her hometown. Their studies use MRI, ultrasound, and spectrographic techniques to investigate the physiology of the Low Mandible Maneuver (drop of the posterior mandible) and its ramification for resonance production, as well as the rehabilitation of tongue shapes required for all phonemes in high-ranking singers. In June of this year, they had an enormous success at The Voice Foundation's annual symposium in Philadelphia, where Garyth lectured and their poster won first prize. In consequence, they were invited to present their work at this fall's "*UltraFest 2013: International Conference on Ultrasound Imaging*" in Edinburg, Scotland; Angelika plans to attend and continue Garyth's work. Garyth was a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Voice*, which is widely regarded as the world's premiere journal for voice medicine and research; it publishes articles by international experts on all topics in voice science, voice medicine and surgery, and speech-language pathologists' management of voice-related problems.

Friends know that Garyth was an avid and expert sailor, whose sailboat – apply named "Sea Chanter" – is moored in Keyport, NJ. He also loved European travel, especially visiting places where composers had lived and musical history had been made.

Over the years, Garyth mentored and inspired countless numbers of students. They attest to the huge impact he had on their lives, as individuals and as artists. Even those who chose not to pursue music learned important life skills from him. Garyth took to heart the admonition of Sir Adrian Boult that it takes ten hours of administration to produce one hour of music. He engaged students in the administrative aspect of managing Drew University's Chorale and Orchestra, teaching organization and managerial skills. He guided students through emotional crises. He insisted that students comprehend underlying concepts, rather than parroting facts. He expected a lot, but he gave a lot. He was broadly knowledgeable and intellectually curious, and happy to answer students' questions on wide-ranging topics. Garyth had an almost larger-than-life personality, always in vigorous motion, with a huge smile and exuding positive energy. Perhaps most important, he was a true visionary: he could envision how great an ensemble or a concert hall could be, and he had the energy and practical skills to achieve the vision. He will be sorely missed.

Funeral arrangements are being made through the Bradley & Sons Funeral Home in Chatham, NJ, where a service will be held on Friday, Aug. 16th, gathering at 10:00am, service at 11:00am. A larger celebration of Garyth's life, to be held on the Drew campus, will be planned some months hence. In lieu of flowers, Angelika requests that contributions be directed to The Voice Foundation, 1721 Pine Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103, or on line at www.voicefoundation.org.

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