

A Special Grace:

Remembering Charles Dodsley Walker



March 16, 1920 — January 17, 2015

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THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE
Heavenly Rest



The Feast of John and Charles Wesley, 2015

To Our Community:

I wonder what that first phone call might have been like. Given how difficult a transatlantic phone call would have been in 1950, maybe the request arrived in a letter.

Our fifth rector, Dr. John Ellis Large, was searching for a new music director for Church of the Heavenly Rest. Charlie Walker was then at the American Cathedral in Paris and his ministry had already earned him an important reputation in a world-class city. Dr. Large was a new rector and clearly was shooting for the stars with the Parish's music program. In whatever form the invitation came, Charlie's answer has shaped us ever since.

With Charlie and Janet Walker, music became a celebrated part of our Parish life. The ambition of Charlie's musicianship is clear even half a century later. Not long after arriving, he formed the Canterbury Choral Society. He developed the boys choir—and added girls. He performed oratorios with orchestral support, at a time when that was unusual for a church. The choir performed on national television, at a time when there were only four channels. With Janet, he founded the York Theatre Company.

And Charlie and Janet created our Christmas Pageant. Through the pageant, thousands of children have learned the story of Christ's birth and shared it with the neighborhood and the City. It continues to be our biggest program.

His leadership inspired and formed three generations of choristers, choir members, and parishioners at Heavenly Rest. I meet so many people who tell stories about growing up in Charlie's choir. They describe singing in the chapel balcony for the early Sunday service in the 1950's or 1960's—or accompanying Charlie to Carnegie Hall not too long ago. His intelligence, his grace, and his kindness became the principal shaping force for those of all ages who sang for him.

There's something about my getting to know Charlie over the last two years that reminds me that I am the *tenth* rector of Heavenly Rest. We are all part of a longer story and we owe much to those who came before us. Charlie's time as music director ended more than a quarter century ago but he never left the hearts of our parishioners. I know that he knew that to be true; we discussed it before he died.

On behalf of the entire Parish community of Church of the Heavenly Rest, I want to express my gratitude for the life and ministry of Charles Dodsley Walker. We pray for his family, especially Lise Walker and Susan and Peter Walker, and all those who loved Charlie. His ministry will abide with us for years to come.

Grace and Peace,

Matthew Heyd
Tenth Rector

Charles Dodsley Walker

March 16, 1920 – January 17, 2015



CHARLES DODSLEY WALKER'S musical talent was clear early on: as a youngster in New York City, he sang in the boys choir at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine where he also studied organ. After his first performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* when he was ten, he decided to be a church musician. He never wavered from this decision.

At age seventeen, when a freshman at Trinity College in Connecticut, he secured his first job as a choir director in a nearby church. After serving with distinction in the U. S. Navy in World War II, Walker received his Master's degree in music from Harvard University in 1947. Soon thereafter, Walker was made organist at the American Cathedral in Paris where he met and married American soprano Janet Hayes.

Back in New York City by 1950, Walker became organist and choir master at the Church of the Heavenly Rest, remaining there until 1988. In 1952, Walker founded the Canterbury Choral Society, initially an offshoot of the Heavenly Rest music program; Canterbury's unprecedented purpose was to present sacred choral music as originally scored for orchestra with a full volunteer chorus, professional soloists and orchestra, and children's choruses. Over sixty-three years, Canterbury has performed major as well as less well known works by more than ninety composers from the fourteenth through the twentieth centuries; Canterbury established for New York audiences high standards of excellence in a new form of choral performance.

With his wife Janet, who founded the York Theatre Company in 1969, Walker was at the center of overlapping circles of American musical and cultural life. For thirty-five years, Walker was musical director of the Blue Hill Troupe, conducting all thirteen Gilbert and Sullivan operettas many times over. In addition, in 1982, Walker co-founded the Berkshire Choral Festival and remained associated with it for eighteen years.

An influential educator, Walker chaired the Music Department at The Chapin School for twenty-four years and served as Organist at the Lake Delaware Boys' Camp from 1940 to 1990. He taught organ and choral conducting at New York University, Manhattan School of Music, S.U.N.Y.-Queens College and Union Theological Seminary. In many leadership roles, including the presidency, in the American Guild of Organists, Walker significantly expanded the organization's national influence and effectiveness; he had been a member since 1937.

After Janet Walker's death in 1997, Walker married Elizabeth Phillips in 2001. Throughout, he continued his demanding work as a church musician, at Trinity Church in Southport, Connecticut and then at St. Luke's Parish in Darien, as well as his vigorous leadership of the Canterbury Choral Society.

Survived by his wife Lise Phillips Walker, daughter Susan Starr Walker, son Peter Hayes Walker and three grandchildren, Charles Dodsley Walker is remembered not just for his wide-ranging professional accomplishments but for his elegant energy, gracious optimism and generous intellect, his convivial, quick wit, and his capacity to enable us all to find the best within ourselves.



By Jean Ballard Terepka
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American Guild of Organists

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March 21, 2015

On this day, as we recognize the 330th birthday of J.S. Bach, the great cantor of Leipzig, we also and celebrate the lifetime achievements of Charles Dodsley Walker, FAGO, a great organist and choirmaster of the church and distinguished leader of the American Guild of Organists. He was elected and served with distinction as our President for two consecutive terms, 1971–1975. He assumed the prestigious seat as leader of the world's largest organization of organists and choral conductors just as the Guild was poised to celebrate its Diamond Anniversary.

Charles Dodsley Walker will be remembered for his staunch support of the AGO's professional certification exams and his unwavering commitment to strengthening membership in the Guild. He labored tirelessly to create the first national placement service for church musicians and model contracts to support them in employment. He was dedicated to welcoming musicians of all levels of training and ability into the Guild, and established a national committee on sharing skills and resources to encourage mentoring among our members with talents both great and small.

In the autumn of 1974, after having recently been elected dean of the San Jose (Calif.) Chapter, I mailed my first newsletter to chapter members and sent a copy to AGO National Headquarters. About one week later, I received a handwritten note from President Walker, commending me on the newsletter and, in recognition of our identical last name, bearing his signature as "Cousin Charlie." As a young member of the Guild, living thousands of miles from AGO Headquarters, I was tremendously moved by his personal attention and kindness. "Cousin Charlie's" thoughtful gesture greatly diminished the distance between New York City and San Jose! Throughout my life and career, Charles Dodsley Walker consistently exemplified a model of the perfect professional colleague.

The AGO is deeply grateful for all that Charles shared with our faithful community. On this day, we join with all his friends, colleagues, and loved ones in celebrating his distinguished life and multiple contributions to church, society, and the AGO.

Servant, well done!

With every good wish,

John Walker, FAGO, DMA
President



THE NEW YORK CITY CHAPTER
of the
American Guild of Organists

www.nycago.org



From the Executive Board of the New York City Chapter, American Guild of Organists:

We are saddened by the death of Charles Dodsley Walker. Through his many years at Heavenly Rest, his extensive and grand work with the Canterbury Choral Society, and his service to the Guild as President, Mr. Walker was a well-known, eminent, and much-beloved figure on the New York church music scene.

We wish to extend our condolences to Mr. Walker's family, to his former colleagues here assembled, and to all who mourn the loss of one of the great lights of organ and choral music in our city.

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In 1982, Charlie Walker helped to start the Berkshire Choral Institute, as it was then called, as its first Director of Music. For the next 10 years, he chose the repertoire, engaged conductors, faculty, and soloists and established the high quality of the summer Choral weeks for which BCI has become famous.

In each of those summers, as he has done throughout his career, Charlie touched the lives of thousands of individuals. To each of them, he gave the gift of his friendship. Known for his wit and his erudition, his talk on “How Dry I Am”—finding examples of the tune throughout the classical musical literature—and his annual launch of a paper balloon, impelled by the heat of a bonfire, became legendary. So did he.

Charlie always managed several jobs at once—playing the organ, conducting, and teaching. We can imagine that he took a few minutes to adjust to his new home, and then he got right back to work.

Godspeed, Charlie.

John Hoyt Stookey
Frank Nemhauser
for Berkshire Choral International



Blue Hill Troupe, Ltd.

P.O. Box 286800, Yorkville Station, New York, NY 10128

The Blue Hill Troupe is honored to be part of this remembrance of our longtime Music Director, Charles Dodsley Walker.

The Blue Hill Troupe, founded in 1924, brings high-quality theater performances to New York City audiences with a Broadway musical each fall and a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta each spring. “Troupers”—hailing from all walks of life and spanning several generations—donate their time and energy to creating sets, designing and making costumes, publishing a program, selling tickets and acting, singing and dancing. The Troupe employs only music and dramatic directors, rehearsal accompanist and the professional orchestra for our productions. The proceeds go to New York City charities, for which over four million dollars has been raised throughout 91 years of existence. Charles Dodsley Walker became our music director, a post he held for 35 years, in 1955.

Charlie conducted all 13 Gilbert and Sullivan operettas for the Troupe, many of them two and three times (*The Gondoliers*, four times), as well as our second production of *The Grand Duke* in 1972, as our only previous production had been mounted in 1937. He was actively involved in the Troupe's transition to the modern era, from the more static previous productions to the active performances we have today. He conducted singers on all manner of staircases. He survived a production with a passerelle—a show which placed the orchestra on a platform at the rear of the stage, with singers watching his beat on television monitors suspended in front of the Hunter Playhouse balcony—and numerous shows with a raked stage, which is quite common now. Charlie taught us the music for both shows and for private concerts, presided over auditions, and conducted concerts and additional out-of-town performances—including a famous one when the accompanist was suddenly unavailable and Charlie conducted and accompanied the entire performance from the piano.

A superb musician, Charlie is remembered for his elegant energy, gracious optimism, generous intellect, and his convivial quick wit. At his retirement in 1990, he was elected an honorary member of the Troupe, one of the first to be so honored.

Jeanne R. Dickinson



CANTERBURY CHORAL SOCIETY

JONATHAN DE VRIES, CONDUCTOR • CHARLES DODSLEY WALKER, FOUNDER
2 East 90th Street, New York, NY 10128

Charles Dodsley Walker

Founder and Conductor of the Canterbury Choral Society (1952–2015)

Established by Charles Dodsley Walker in 1952, the Canterbury Choral Society began as an experiment: Canterbury's mission to present sacred choral masterpieces in sacred spaces with their full, original orchestrations was audacious and untried. Walker led Canterbury brilliantly to the realization of its mission, and though time inexorably brought Charlie—as almost everyone called him—into middle and then old age, Canterbury's music-making under his direction remained always lively, fresh and exciting. Canterbury's remarkable success, from its beginnings at Heavenly Rest to its administrative independence as a non-profit organization, resulted not just from Charlie's musical vision but from his character.

Committing to a repertoire of six centuries and all sorts of sacred genres, from the smallest gems to the grandest, largest masterpieces, Charlie brought meticulous discipline, encyclopedic musical literacy and steady joy to his consideration of each work. Charlie exacted the highest musical standards of himself and the professionals he worked with; and because of the pedagogical precision and unerringly patient kindness of his musical leadership, he could consistently elicit the best possible performances from amateur singers, both young and old, enabling them to participate in creative excellence.

Charlie Walker's conviction that music of genius is accessible to all who seek it constituted a foundational element of his relationship with both professional and amateur musicians. Charlie directed weekly Canterbury rehearsals with charming wit and deft encouragement; he conducted dress rehearsals and concerts with focused, serenely even-keeled authority.

Charlie was serious and rigorous in his approach to the study and performance of sacred music; he was also unabashedly happy in sharing his own ebullient capacity for fun and expansive talent for friendship. Over time, Canterburians and Charlie acquired the habit of camaraderie, gathering for festive celebrations, after-concert parties, winter weekends and annual June “Frolics.” A rich and comfortable loyalty grew up between Charlie and Canterbury; after a well-performed piece of music, when Charlie was pleased, the sight of his satisfied smile was splendid, and singers were thrilled.

Charlie's passion for music ran so deep that it was his pulse; artistic integrity and superb musicianship informed his professional life. Underlying his capacity to create musical community was his unspoken but daily lived certainty that music is eloquent as a form of faith, a connection between humanity and God. It was Charlie's gift to make each concert an opportunity for musicians and audiences alike to experience music as a special grace, a moment of possible communion with God, and to participate in an act of creation. Even more remarkable, Charlie structured and nurtured Canterbury so effectively and so generously that the gorgeous gifts he built into it—those he knew of, as well as those he was too modest to imagine—now continue on.

—Jean Ballard Terepka

CHAPIN



Charlie Walker's long span of service from 1961-1985 at The Chapin School as a teacher of music has left an indelible mark. His impact may be reflected in the memories of Choral Club members who because of Charlie's outreach sang not only on our stage but sang with colleague schools in a venue such as Carnegie Hall. Perhaps it was a history of music course or a Gilbert and Sullivan production or just singing under his direction which the students remember. Commencement, holidays, or other celebrations were enhanced by Charlie's musical arrangements. We are grateful that he included us in his list of wide-ranging commitments. His generous spirit, dedication and loyalty always made us feel that he was his only responsibility.

Mildred Berendson
Headmistress Emerita

Lake Delaware Boys' Camp

P.O. Box 31, Delhi, New York 13753

www.lakedelawareboyscamp.com

Changing Lives Since 1909

The year was 1937. A young Charlie Walker was tipped off by his friend Channing Lefebvre, organist of Trinity Church, Wall Street, that there was an opening for an organist at a rustic camp in the Catskill Mountains. Charlie applied and was turned down on account of age—he was only 17, the age of the oldest campers. Determined to get the job, Charlie waited until he was 20, reapplied and was hired. Thus began, in 1940, a 50-year tenure as organist and choirmaster of Lake Delaware Boys' Camp, interrupted only by service in the U.S. Navy during WW II and a stay in Paris for a few years as organist at the American Cathedral. Returning to LDBC shortly after the war, Charlie, or Capt. Walker as he then became known (we are an Episcopal military camp after all!), made an indelible mark on the musical life of LDBC.

For three generations of campers in the choir, Charlie taught how hard work and discipline could build confidence-by creating first-rate choral music, from which the entire camp benefited. It was also Charlie's consummate artistry at the organ console that made us know we were in the presence of a truly great organist. During each Mass and Evensong he inspired us with brilliant improvisations. Of course, as young campers, it is fair to say we were not always aware of the special music we were hearing. This extended to Charlie's favorite postlude, J.S. Bach's *Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor*. While Bach and his music were initially foreign to the vast majority of campers by graduation time, all campers knew both Bach and that piece. Charlie also made the camp choir part of his larger musical universe when we joined with the Canterbury Choral Society, singing Mahler's 8th Symphony at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center.

Charlie's love of music was not confined to the Chapel. Saturday morning breakfasts in the Mess Hall were never the same with Charlie present. They became more like a campfire. The first thing he did on his arrival for the weekend was to lead the battalion in the singing of songs, familiar to camps and university glee clubs alike—"Old Man Noah," "My Mother was a Lady," and "The Pope He Leads a Jolly Life." These became staples of camp life—in fact, just this past summer Charlie could not resist leading the choral charge one last time.

Though Charlie retired in 1990 as organist emeritus we usually saw him each summer and his visits made us feel as if he had never left. Celebrating Camp's centennial, Charlie was interviewed on *Pipedreams*, extolling the virtues of our 1877 Hilborne Roosevelt organ. To play the organ, campers manually pump the bellows which led Charlie to often exclaim in a loud whisper, "Faster! Faster!" as he pounded away on the keys! His recent counsel was crucial in helping us restore the organ and we are thankful he heard the restored organ during his visit last summer. Both Charlie and our Roosevelt organ are musical treasures. They were a perfect match! That Charles Dodsley Walker will visit Camp no more brings us great sadness and the entire LDBC family extends its sympathy to Lise, Peter, Susan and his grandchildren. We miss Charlie and will remember him always, especially as we, in the words of one of his favorite hymns, "Rejoice, Give Thanks, and Sing."

Geoffrey E. Dunham
Camp Trustee
President of Lake Delaware Alumni Association

Fr. Ray Donahue
Camp Chaplain



Saint Luke's Parish

All of us at Saint Luke's mourn the death of Charles Dodsley Walker, and give thanks for his long life of devoted service to the church, and to the other organizations he led. It is not an exaggeration to say he influenced thousands who came under his direction and leadership.

In particular, we are thankful for Charlie's sharing his musical gifts with us as part of our music ministry team since 2007. Whether he was directing, playing, or teaching, he threw himself into his tasks with enthusiasm, devotion, and good humor. His gentle spirit, musical skill, and an eagerness to be helpful were always present and will be greatly missed.

We stand with Charlie's wife, Lise, and his son, Peter, and daughter, Susan, in mourning his death, and in remembering his life of service with thanksgiving. May his rest this day be in peace and his rising to life eternal be his glorious reward.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David R. Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

The Rev. David R. Anderson
Rector



THE ST. WILFRID CLUB
founded 1908



It is with deep sadness that we say goodbye to our colleague, friend, and extraordinary musician, Charles Dodsley Walker, “Charlie” as he was known by many of us.

Charlie was an active and loyal member of our organization for much of his professional life, both here in New York City and later in Connecticut. His joy for making music and bringing together singers and instrumentalists alike to create music was infectious. A true testament to his charisma and gifts as a musician is visible today in the many choral organizations he established and continued to sustain until his final years.

We extend our condolences to Mr. Walker’s family and friends. Charlie, you will be missed!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kyler Brown".

Kyler Brown, Chair; Daniel Kirk-Foster, Secretary; Keith S. Tóth, Treasurer
Executive committee: Dr. Judith Hancock and Daniel Brondel



Trinity School

Alumni & Alumnae Association

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Trinity School fondly remembers Charles Dodsley Walker—beloved classmate, parent, colleague, and friend. Charlie graduated from Trinity in 1936. He was a parent at the school, where his son Peter also graduated, and served as Trinity’s Director of Music from 1947–1949. Among the many achievements in his life, what Charlie will be remembered for—what students, colleagues, and friends here at Trinity will miss most—was his passion and enthusiasm for music, and the melodious sounds of the organ pipes at graduation, which Charlie continued to play every year right up until his passing.

From colleague and friend Mel Brown, Trinity Class of 1970 and Director of Music and Performing Arts from 1987-2012:

Charlie Walker and I first worked together when he invited Trinity School to send a group of young choristers to sing in Mahler’s Eighth Symphony at Carnegie Hall. This was a powerful experience for the students, and it cemented our relationship as fellow musical Trinity alums. Charlie returned frequently as organist for our commencement services and took great interest in hearing about the state of the school. When I asked him once if there was any secret to his long and productive life, such as diet or running, he replied, “Oh no, Mel, I eschew all forms of exercise.” Then he tore into a long, complex organ solo with his customary energy and brilliance!

The youngest member of his class, Charlie is also remembered by his three remaining classmates—Noel Gibbons, Gordon Spencer, and Steve Cobb—who, along with Charlie, were on hand in 2011 to celebrate the 75th Reunion of the Class of 1936.

At the 2013 graduation, Trinity School presented Charlie with the Lawrence T. Cole Award, given to an alumnus whose character and achievement reflect the highest traditions of Trinity School. A standing ovation from the entire graduating class, their parents, and faculty accompanied this fitting honor and tribute.

We at Trinity are deeply saddened by Charlie’s passing. His passion, his enthusiasm—and those melodious sounds—will always be missed.

Trinity School



Charlie Walker was an integral and essential part of the York Theatre Company family for its entire 45-year existence.

In a way, Charlie was the inspiration for York. His first wife, Janet, a Broadway actress and singer who also sang in his choir, saw Heavenly Rest's Parish Hall sitting empty and was encouraged to start a theater there. Canterbury was already running smoothly, and he and Janet named the theater after another English cathedral: York.

Charlie was incredibly involved and supportive. While Janet was the artistic spark plug, Charlie was involved as treasurer and bookkeeper—often staying long hours, after his work for the church and Canterbury was done, to carefully balance the books. Anyone present will always remember the look on the accountant's face when Charlie brought out the shoeboxes of receipts from their bedroom closet for the first tax-filing.

Among other things, Charlie offered transportation in his car “Manmandi” back and forth across town from Chapin to home to Heavenly Rest to home again tirelessly. He was the music director for our first musical, *She Loves Me*, in 1976. He accompanied the show on a portable organ—which bemused the show's creators, Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick. It was a great success. He accompanied Janet to many meetings with authors, designers, and funders whenever another perspective was useful.

Before York acquired its first proper sound and lighting systems, Charlie dealt with reel-to-reel tapes and created a lighting system using household dimmers. When Janet and various “Yorkies” were working at Woodstock, Charlie would drive up and take everyone to his house at Lake Delaware Boys' Camp. Charlie came up with the term “Musicals in Mufti” for York's acclaimed concert series in a meeting over their dining-room table—inspired, no doubt, by his Navy years. With Charlie, everything was possible, worth doing, and fun.

Charlie Walker was on York's Board of Directors from its inception. To the end of his life, he enthusiastically attended shows and other events with his second wife, Lise.

The York Theatre Company is deeply grateful for his involvement and inspiration, and his unparalleled friendship. As with so many organizations of which Charlie was a part, his passing is the end of an era.

James Morgan
Producing Artistic Director