

*In Memoriam:***J.D. Goddard, a tribute**

by Mario Buchanan



On Friday evening, February 14, we lost a great, Dr. J.D. Goddard. We have many teachers who influence our decisions, but there is always one who helps solidify what we want to do with our lives. J.D. was mine.

I first met J.D. when I was in high school. Nancy Ulrich, my voice teacher at the time, told me about a choir she sang in: Master Singers Inc., of which J.D. was the Founder and Artistic Director. Nancy and I recorded an audition tape to send to J.D. He accepted me and told Nancy to bring me along to rehearsals. My first meeting with J.D. was probably typical — I was intimidated by his tall stature, but immediately put at ease by his calm and caring nature.

The first concert I sang with the group was the Verdi *Requiem*. I was 14 years old. Throughout high school and the beginning of college, I got to sing some of the greatest pieces of choral literature: Brahms' and Mozart's *Requiems*, Vierne's and Widor's *Messe Solennelles*, Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*, Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*, Schumann's *Requiem*, Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, and the list goes on and on.

Master Singers was my musical outlet, since I wasn't able to sing these great works in high school. J.D. was also my first conducting teacher. He taught me at a young age how important a conductor is, but also how an ensemble doesn't need one to sing well. I can remember J.D. telling me in my lessons, "you don't need to do much up there. They will follow you even with the smallest gesture."

My senior year of high school, J.D. asked me to conduct a piece at the Christmas Concert. That was my first time conducting an ensemble, and from that moment on, I was hooked.

J.D. was a humble man. One can trace his influence all over Ohio. He taught at the University of Akron, Kent State, and conducted multiple choruses and orchestras, but he never boasted about any of it. My conversations with him were always genuine and filled with great advice. He believed in the beauty of great choral repertoire, not wavering in his vision no matter what others wanted to sing. It was also because of him that I learned the importance of performing new music, which he always programmed every year.

Because of J.D., I am a musician. He helped me become the choral nerd I am today. I learned so much from him, both as a musician and a person. Conversations with J.D. were always filled with laughter but also were mini-life lessons. He taught me the importance of respecting others, even if you didn't like them. I never saw J.D. angry or rude, but he always found a way to use laughter to defuse a difficult situation.

Most of all, he taught me that great classical choral music is for everyone and should be available for everyone to hear. Thank you, J.D., for allowing me to see the beauty in music. I will think of you every time I give a downbeat.

J.D. Goddard, 75, passed away on February 14 after a brief illness. Read an obituary [here](#). A memorial gathering will take place at Adams Mason Funeral Home in Akron on Thursday, February 20 from 4-7 pm. Interment will be private.

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