

## Reflections on *OUR TRIANGLE*

### Some History of Our Official Song

Did you know that over the century-plus of our fraternity's existence, the official song "Our Triangle" (not *The Triangle*!) has gone through several revisions? Not only that, but there has been some controversy about its exact origins.

For instance, the precise year the song was originally composed by Caliste Conant Walker (*Iota Alpha*) is difficult to pinpoint. It seems that when one text revision was published, somehow the original date of the composition was listed as 1962. This was clearly incorrect, and several alumni strongly disagreed with that date. One wrote that she had a book of Mu Phi songs dated 1923 which included "Our Triangle." Another member found mention of the song having been sung at a convention in 1912 or 1913.

An account of the 1914 convention in the June 1914 *Quarterly* (precursor to *The Triangle*) states that "Caliste's Mu Phi song" was sung, a historical note echoed in *A Centennial History of Mu Phi Epsilon* (2003). So we can say with confidence that the song was written between 1912 and 1914, approximately ten years after the fraternity's founding.

In 1958, Caliste Conant Walker was described by a member of the San Diego Alumni chapter, to which she belonged until her death in 1967, as "a feisty old gal with a great sense of humor and, of course, we always sang 'her song,' as we do to this day." The latest text revision, by the late Barbara Baker Harris Polomé (*Mu Chi, Austin Alumni*), was introduced at the 1995 convention in Greencastle, Indiana. The newly elected IEB at that time voted to adopt Polomé's revision as an alternate version and to use it at the 1998 convention in Tacoma.

A few years later, when Mu Phi Epsilon commissioned Crawford Gates to write a major work for chorus and orchestra for the 2003 Centennial Convention, it was suggested that he use *Our Triangle* as the basis for part of the work. He followed the suggestion, and the second movement of Symphony #7, *A Triumphant Trilogy* for soprano, chorus, and orchestra, used our fraternity song in its entirety – and with the original words, befitting our hundred years of history. The spectacular soprano soloist in *A Triumphant Trilogy* was Jeanine Wagner, *Epsilon Kappa*.

Barbara Polomé provided funds to print and distribute copies of her SATB arrangement, with accompaniment and the revised text, to attendees at the 2003 convention. Several versions, including Polomé's, are included in the 2011 Mu Phi Epsilon Songbook prepared for the convention in Rochester. ▲

The image shows a page of sheet music for the song "Our Triangle (SSA)". The title is at the top right, with "Arr. Holly Fike" below it. The composer is listed as "Words and Music by Caliste C. Walker, Iota Alpha". The tempo is "Moderato". The music is for Soprano 1, Soprano 2, and Alto. The lyrics are: "Oh tell us what this life would be, if it were not for song. For Mu - sic soothes the trou - bled heart, and makes our song. For Mu - sic soothes the trou - bled heart and makes our cour - age strong. But sad would all our Mu - sic be if we knew not a friend. Our lives would ver - ry lon - ly".

Information from  
*A Centennial History of Mu Phi Epsilon* (2003) and  
 Wynona Lipsett (*Mu Chi*, Past International President;  
 edited by Melissa Eddy, International Editor.

## Reflections From Our President

Dear Members and Friends,

This is my final message as International President. I cannot resist reflecting upon these years in office. It has been an experience given to only a few. How is it that the IEB consistently includes loving, caring, and talented people with such varied backgrounds? The answer is because they represent members of the fraternity who are also endowed with the same attributes.

Since I took office in 2003, thirteen new chapters have been installed (eight since 2008). Other chapters reactivated during this stretch of time. A reflection on the number 13 is significant: thirteen young women formed Mu Phi Epsilon on Friday, November 13, 1903. Each initiation, and each new chapter installation, is a time to reflect on the continuum of members past and going into the future. We always have, and will be, connected with Music, Friendship, and Harmony.

I would like to leave you with a song that has significance at this parting. It is a well-known and beloved song in Croatia. The English translation is mine:

### **FALA (Thank You)**

*For every kind word, Which to me you've said. For your every glance, For ev'ry smile, I thank you.  
There is so little good, In this world of ours. If the sun begins to shine, It hides behind a cloud again.  
Still you to my heart, Have given so much sunshine; So what more can be said, From all my heart, I Thank You.*

Frances Irwin, Ed.D.  
International President



## Final Notes by Wynona Wieting Lipsett

### **Marguerite Lane Bowden**

*Alpha Alpha*, May 15, 1966  
*Dayton Alumni*  
Died April 1, 2011  
Educator, choral director, church musician. Marguerite was a founder and percussionist in the Kettering Civic Band, and also played handbells. Active in Dayton Music Club, Dayton Choirmasters Club, and ACDA, she and her husband were honored as 1981 Dayton Citizens of the Year.

### **Marjorie Ann Mull Dunbar**

*Epsilon Lambda*, April 23, 1950  
*Detroit Alumni*  
Died November 9, 2010  
Vocalist, music educator. Marjorie was instrumental in the establishment of *Epsilon Lambda* of which she was a charter member. (More about Marjorie in a future *Triangle*.)

### **Alyce Crawford Perry**

*Phi Mu*, February 18, 1945  
*Fullerton Alumni*  
Died February 28, 2011  
Music educator, church musician. Alyce played piano and organ, sang with community groups, and was active in many community organizations.

### **Elisabeth (Elsbeth) Phyllis Gottel Ruffer**

*Phi Kappa*, May 23, 1943  
*Detroit and Pittsburgh Alumni*  
District Director 1972-74  
Died May 9, 2011  
Pianist, vocalist, music educator. Elsbeth taught music in public schools and had a private piano studio. Well known in Pittsburgh music circles, she was a member of the North Hills Music Club and the Tuesday Music Club.

### **Joan Kuhlman Southwick**

*Gamma*, January 23, 1944  
*San Diego Alumni*  
Died February 9, 2011  
Pianist, music educator. Joan studied in France, taught at the University of Texas in the 1940s, and toured Cuba and South America as soloist and accompanist. She was president of *Claremont Alumni* 1995-1998.

### **Ruth Halak Stasiak**

*Epsilon*, June 2, 1977  
*Toledo Alumni*  
Died January 9, 2011  
Pianist, church musician. Ruth accompanied for local community and school theatre productions, was a church organist, and volunteered as a music docent for the Toledo Museum of Art.



## Meet Maestro Marlon Daniel

### Passion, Vision, and Color

Conductor Marlon Daniel (*Mu Xi, New York Alumni*) is a busy guy. The founding music director of Ensemble du Monde, he also holds several other posts including principal conductor of the Festival of African and African American Music. In April he was artistic director of the Saint-Georges International Festival, celebrating the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Afro-French composer Joseph Boulogne, the Chevalier de Saint-Georges (often known simply as Saint-Georges), on the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe. In August he conducts music of Libby Larsen at the Mu Phi Epsilon convention in Rochester, New York. Here he shares a few thoughts about his recent work.

#### How did you become interested in Saint-Georges and the Festival?

I have a longtime interest in classical composers of color and an affinity for France and French music. My grandparents were from New Orleans and considered themselves Creole. I received some of my musical training in France and was a scholarship student at the famous Fontainebleau created by Nadia Boulanger, France's greatest pedagogue. Ensemble du Monde and I have been exponents of French music and music by composers of diverse backgrounds since our creation ten years ago.

Saint-Georges is France's link to the Classical period, an era of music dominated by Austria and Germany. He was admired by all the composers of his day and influenced Mozart, in addition to fighting racism and slavery. Ensemble du Monde is currently in contract negotiations to record the complete works of Saint-Georges, including the world premiere recording of his only surviving opera, *L'amant anonyme*.

#### What are your goals for the festival?

Our short-term goals are to give a fully staged performance of *L'amant anonyme*, have a positive effect on tourism, and continue giving high quality performances with both international and local Guadalupian artists. Over the next three years we will debut an international award for outstanding artistic and philanthropic achievement, an international music symposium, and an international music competition. Long-term, we hope to establish a music conservatory, symphony orchestra, and Saint-Georges museum in Guadeloupe.

#### Why classical music?

Classical music is a high art form that's everywhere, and people of color have been a part of every type of music for centuries. Saint-Georges is the iconic example of this



Photo credit: Bob Estremera

and he is a classical composer. For the first festival this year I brought in virtuoso musicians from over eleven countries, many of whom are of color and at the height of their careers. My vision for the festival is to not only have classical music but also explore jazz, beguine music, dance, and more. I hope the festival will also help break the stereotype of what people of color can do. We are more than jazz, pop, rap, and hip-hop; we have many virtuosi in the "serious" music arena. It is a constant question. Many times I have told people I am a conductor, and the response was "Which train?"

#### What are you most anticipating about the Mu Phi convention in Rochester?

I actually am looking forward to giving back (in such a small way) to an organization which has helped my career in so many ways. Getting to work with other talented Mu Phi members and Libby Larsen are just a welcome bonus. ▲

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## REFLECTIONS