

FOUR

Shaping the Sound 1

SETTING THE STANDARDS



Across the one hundred years of unbroken Glee Club history, more than two-thirds of those years took place under the leadership of just three men—Dean Pedtke (35 years), Daniel Stowe (22 and counting), and Joseph Casasanta (12). Others serving shorter stints did not necessarily have less impact on the choir, but the established culture of the Glee Club in many ways rests with these three directors. This chapter reviews the contributions of all of the conductors who took the podium from the group’s earliest days through the present era under Stowe, reflecting on how their respective tenures affected the Glee Club and sharing highlights of their biographies and anecdotes that reveal their distinct personalities.

GESTATIONAL YEARS

Liscombe, McLaughlin, Roche, Shea, Griffith, Webster, Petersen, and Bender. These names mean little or nothing to living Glee Club alumni, but they were mentioned, at one point or another, as leaders of—or strongly associated with—the all-male chorus that was notoriously “on-again, off-again” in the late nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century. Professors Frederick Liscombe and James McLaughlin are credited several times in the years leading up to 1900. Both directed the men’s chorus in concerts celebrating Washington’s birthday. In 1891, Liscombe’s club was commended for “exquisite” singing and “remarkable proficiency” in the program,

with repertoire that included John Liptrot Hatton's "Tar's Song."¹ McLaughlin's 1899 Glee Club sang its first concert of the year on Washington's birthday, which *Scholastic* deemed a "creditable performance."² That same year, McLaughlin was noted as both the director and the president of the Glee Club, an unusual dual role that reveals the flimsy nature of the enterprise.³ Considering the annual pleas for singers that have survived from that time, the Glee Club's inability to sustain itself during this era comes as no surprise.

It is unclear from surviving records whether 1905 graduate Rev. Michael Shea directed the university's glee club in academic year 1907–08, but he received mention for advocating a choral environment at Notre Dame that emphasized the hall glee club system as a ladder to the advanced men's ensemble.⁴ Shea's major achievement in the school's history, instead, was his setting of the words of the school's "Victory March" to music in 1908, the text having been written by his younger brother, Jack. In the first decade of the twentieth century, only Professor Carl Petersen's contribution to the Glee Club received attention in extant sources. Serving as director of the varsity orchestra and South Bend Symphony in addition to the Glee Club in 1909, Petersen conducted a group of between twenty-five and thirty members that rehearsed twice per week in Washington Hall and did not perform much in public. He was praised, however, for his work in preparing the Glee Club for spring vaudeville shows during the years 1909 to 1911.⁵ Although the Glee Club reportedly was established as a permanent organization in 1911, only "Professor Bender" is mentioned—and scarcely at that—as leading the chorus in the years leading up to 1915. Meantime, the group had regressed to one rehearsal per week.⁶ The organization was due for an upgrade in leadership, and this came with the arrival of a Harvard law student eager to reshape the Glee Club into a first-rate choral organization.



Samuel Ward Perrott

PERROTT, PARKER, AND A NEW PROTOTYPE

The century of uninterrupted continuity for the Notre Dame Glee Club began under the leadership of a student, Samuel Ward Perrott. Perrott was enrolled at the university for two years before transferring to Harvard Law School. In 1915, he returned to Notre Dame to complete his law degree.⁷ As described in chapter 2, his experience in the Harvard Glee Club under Archibald T. Davison proved valuable for the model he would introduce in South Bend. Known as "Ward," but also referred to in the campus press as "Sammy," "Mr. Director," and "The Hoosier Tenor" (because of his Indiana roots), Perrott established a prototype for Glee Club operations that have survived to this day, such as tuxedo dress, touring, balanced repertoire, and intensive daily rehearsals. Although the organization was forever changed, Perrott left the university before finishing his degree in 1916, taking a job in the legal department of the Tractional Terminal Company of Indianapolis.⁸ He had not, however, finished his work with the Glee Club.

Despite his day job, Perrott refused to let the momentum of the Club be stifled in the academic year 1916–17. He commuted weekly to South Bend for Saturday rehearsals and kept in close contact with Notre Dame

president John W. Cavanaugh. The nonresident director was concerned that the group continue under capable leadership, and, to that end, he suggested to Cavanaugh that seminarian and future president of Notre Dame J. Hugh O'Donnell ('16) conduct the Glee Club in the fall of 1916. Cavanaugh originally balked at Perrott's idea, writing "what you propose is almost as impossible as to arrange to have one of the brothers go to town to give dancing lessons every day."⁹ The president relented, however, and O'Donnell took the podium, continuing the daily noontime rehearsals for the opening semester. The new director was extolled in the season's fall concert; according to a review in *Scholastic*, the choir "responded beautifully to his chironomy [conducting gestures]." The same article noted that Perrott, the "real director," attended the performance.¹⁰

O'Donnell resigned his post by the beginning of 1917, and Glee Club accompanist Howard Parker assumed the conductorship, again with the approval of Perrott. Dubbed the "busiest man on campus," Parker edited *Scholastic* magazine and directed the Mandolin Club, which performed often with the Glee Club; he also led the university's orchestra.¹¹ Parker was spotted conducting at banquets for the Rotary Club and the Knights of Columbus that semester, but it was Perrott who directed the Glee Club's first tour concert on Easter Monday (April 9) to a full house at Orchestra Hall in Chicago.¹² Perrott returned to direct just a few weeks later when the fledgling club journeyed to Indianapolis and Logansport. He later joined the U.S. Army as World War I escalated in 1917, but he pleaded with Fr. Cavanaugh to maintain a commitment to the Glee Club.¹³ Though Perrott's model was established, leadership continuity was in short supply.



J. Hugh O'Donnell



Howard Parker



Mandolin Club, 1917

PROFESSIONALS AT THE HELM

For the next eight years, consummate professional musicians took center stage. Professor John J. Becker, head of a very small Department of Music at Notre Dame since the fall of 1917, took the reins of the male chorus in that same year. Trained at Cincinnati's Krueger Conservatory, Becker received a doctoral degree in composition from the Wisconsin Conservatory in 1923, while he was working in South Bend. He would continue in music

administration at the College of St. Mary of the Springs in Columbus, Ohio (1928–29); the College of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota (1929–33); and Barat College in Lake Forest, Illinois (1943–57). He was also the state director of the Work Projects Administration's Federal Music Project in Minnesota from 1935 to 1941.

In his ten years at Notre Dame, Becker sought to reconfigure the music department with programs of study in piano and violin, while developing the university's orchestral program.¹⁴ He further worked to attract talented artists who were performing in the Chicago area to South Bend to give concerts, including his former organ teacher Wilhelm Middelschulte and renowned Irish tenor John McCormack.¹⁵ Where Becker seems

to have made his mark with the Glee Club was in the realm of repertoire. He strongly pushed for the singers to perform the “masterworks” that he himself had studied and to not sell themselves short with lighter musical offerings. The overly fraternal nature of the group, though, became an obstacle to Becker's plans in the early 1920s, and he stated his misgivings about glee clubs in general after departing South Bend.¹⁶

Becker's term with the Glee Club ended in 1923, though he remained at Notre Dame until 1927. After he left the university, Becker's career as a composer began to take flight. Along with Charles Ives, Carl Ruggles, and Henry Cowell, Becker is considered to be one of the leading sources of avant-garde music in the United States in the second quarter of the twentieth century, though much of his work remains unpublished. He penned substantial stage works, as well as pieces for orchestra, chamber ensembles, chorus, and solo voice. In his first year with the Glee Club, Becker wrote the wartime commemoration “Rouge Bouquet” on a text by American poet Joyce Kilmer for the choir to sing with trumpet and piano. He believed his finest work, however, to be *A Marriage with Space* (1935), a ballet with speaking chorus developed in partnership with Chicago poet Mark Turbyfill.¹⁷

One of the talented performers that Becker brought to South Bend was his teacher, organist J. Lewis Browne. Browne would succeed Becker as Glee Club director in 1923, though the former left the university before his student.¹⁸ Born in London in 1864, Browne emigrated to the United States with his family in 1873. He played organ recitals around the country and directed music at a church in St. Paul, Minnesota, before relocating to Atlanta by 1903.¹⁹ In 1907, Browne was thrown in jail after shooting at a priest through the window of the rectory at Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church where he had just been asked to resign because of his “neglect of duty.”²⁰ Telling the press he had



John J. Becker

no memory of the event, he seems to have escaped the attention by moving to Philadelphia and working there between 1908 and 1910. He played more than five hundred recitals on the Austin organs in the Egyptian and Greek Halls, the main auditoriums at the Wanamaker's department store. Though John Wanamaker once called Browne "the premier organist of the world," the latter suffered from alcoholism and was let go before the installation of the enormous "Grand Court" organ, still in operation today.²¹ Browne left Philadelphia for Chicago to help design the Medinah Temple organ and to serve as music director at Old St. Patrick's Church there. He remained in the city for the rest of his life, maintaining an organ studio for students and also heading the theory department at the city's Fine Arts Conservatory of Music.²² Commuting weekly to Notre Dame after 1923, Browne directed not only the Glee Club but also the orchestra, the choir of St. Patrick Church in South Bend, and later the Moreau Seminary Choir.²³

Browne clearly was pulled in many directions when splitting his time between Chicago and Notre Dame. Fortunately, Joseph Casasanta, the accompanist and student director for the Glee Club, was being groomed to take the position when Browne's commute to Indiana and the directorships became too burdensome. Browne was confident in his assistant's ability to lead the Glee Club, orchestra, and the band, expressing as much to Notre Dame's president, Fr. Matthew Walsh, in a letter from 1926.²⁴ Although the torch was passed to a young man with nothing of the high-profile professional musical experience of his two most recent predecessors, the Notre Dame Glee Club had settled on a conductor who would vault the ensemble into the national spotlight.



J. Lewis Browne

MARCHING TOWARD NEW HORIZONS

If Perrott, Becker, and Browne gave the Glee Club roots, Joseph Casasanta gave it wings—and some marches to sing as well. As a Glee Club member and frequent conductor of the group during Browne's tenure, Casasanta was already entrenched in the culture of the ensemble when he took the podium. He was a known quantity on campus and already collegial with the singers. Casasanta also had led the university band since 1921 and reportedly received Notre Dame's first Bachelor of Music degree in 1923, and a master's degree the following year.²⁵ Though he would make great strides with enhancing the visibility of the Singing Irish, Casasanta was most loyal to the marching band, which garnered the lion's share of university funding as a musical organization.²⁶

Joseph Casasanta's lasting contribution to the university was the music he composed and the public face he put on the Glee Club and the band. Shortly after his graduation, he realized that the university needed a stable

In the fall of 1924, Notre Dame football coach Knute Rockne introduced a new backfield formation known as the “shift.” The motion at first drew penalties because it demanded precise timing from the players. Rockne encouraged his backfield to be patient in the formation and “Wait for the Hike!” The fervor and anticipation around the word “hike” spread to the student body more generally, and this seems to have inspired Casasanta to write a march in honor of the “hike.” Notre Dame fans continue to be thrilled by the energy of *Hike, Notre Dame* and the band’s special “hike step” that accompanies it.

—*Scholastic* (1955)



Joseph Casasanta

of pep songs that could supplement the popular but increasingly overexposed “Victory March.” In a seven-year stretch, Casasanta penned four school songs, not one of which has been retired from the Glee Club or band repertoire to this day. Any Notre Dame devotee will have encountered Casasanta’s compositions. In 1924, the director wrote “Hike, Notre Dame” with his brother-in-law and Notre Dame professor of architecture Vincent Fagan. It was a march that captured the campus-wide fervor around one of Coach Knute Rockne’s new formations on offense. “Hike, Notre Dame” became a staple of Glee Club concerts and often drew encores. Casasanta followed up this smash hit with another march, “(On) Down the Line,” in 1926.²⁷

Casasanta was not finished writing music. While on a train to the Notre Dame–Army football game in New York City in 1929, professor of English Fr. Eugene Burke asked the Glee Club director why he had not written more school songs, to which Casasanta replied, “I thought they didn’t want any more.” Burke offered to write words for a new school song if his colleague

could set them to music. Less than a week after their return from New York, the collaboration resulted in “When Irish Backs Go Marching By,” which was as eagerly absorbed by the Notre Dame public as the other marches.²⁸ Casasanta’s fourth and final song to enter the university’s musical canon was not a march, but rather its alma mater, “Notre Dame, Our Mother,” written in 1931, following Knute Rockne’s untimely death.²⁹ Casasanta composed and arranged other works as well. For instance, he was commissioned by St. Thomas Military Academy in St. Paul, Minnesota, to write an alma mater for the school in 1932. Above all, his arrangement of the “Victory March” is still in use by the marching band and glee club. It was lauded by the song’s composer Michael Shea as “good work admirably done for the best University in the land.”³⁰

Speaking about the Singing Irish under Casasanta, campus reporter James Carmody (himself a second tenor in the Glee Club) noted, “Under his guidance it has known a fame that is nationwide.”³¹ This was no exaggeration: the Glee Club had drawn the country’s attention with high-profile tours, widely distributed recordings, and a robust presence on radio airwaves. In his first full year as director, Casasanta and Glee Club business manager Andrew Mulreany staged an exhilarating two-week winter tour that included performances and radio appearances in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, capped by a visit to Washington, DC, where they met President Calvin Coolidge and performed a concert attended by three U.S. senators and Supreme Court Justice Pierce Butler.³² Meanwhile, Glee Club recordings from the Victor and Brunswick labels made in the late 1920s (to be discussed in chapter 9) impressed Americans with the group’s sound and further spread the pep songs composed by its director.

Just as J. Lewis Browne was pulled away from South Bend for musical endeavors in Chicago, Casasanta was pulled in many directions too, conducting several other musical activities on campus—the Jugglers, the Linnets, and the Collegians—that surely sapped any spare time he could find beyond his work with the Glee Club and band, to say nothing of his academic teaching load. The Jugglers were a popular on-campus orchestra organized in 1927 that recorded the “Victory March” and “(On) Down the Line” for Columbia in that same year.³³ The Linnets performed light musical revues under Casasanta’s direction beginning in 1933; meanwhile, the Collegians—in place since 1920 and originally directed by Glee Club accompanist Harry Denny (’20)—were a dance band that specialized in modern works. Both organizations collaborated regularly with the Glee Club in the 1930s, putting Casasanta’s fabled showmanship on full display.³⁴

Casasanta’s stock ostensibly was high by the mid-1930s. He had his finger on the pulse of most musical endeavors on campus and was one of the early members of the American Bandmasters Association.³⁵ If Casasanta had an Achilles’ heel, it was his relationship with the increasingly conservative university administration. Notre Dame president Fr. John O’Hara was concerned about the direction of the Glee Club in particular and had higher hopes for a student orchestra, which had only reached thirty-five members in 1935.³⁶ The serious repertoire that the previous directors cultivated had all but vanished from Glee Club programs; pressure from the administration signaled an imminent changing of the guard.

DEAN DELIVERS

Just as outside professional musicians Becker and Browne replaced Perrott and other directors of the Glee Club from the ranks of the student body, so too did the administration trade

During his tenure at Notre Dame, the university honored Joseph Casasanta at the 1932 Commencement exercises. Shortly after the ceremony, Casasanta wrote these words to university president Charles O’Donnell: “Whatever I have done, I owe all to Notre Dame. She has always been, and will always be, the source of all my inspiration, love, and joy.”

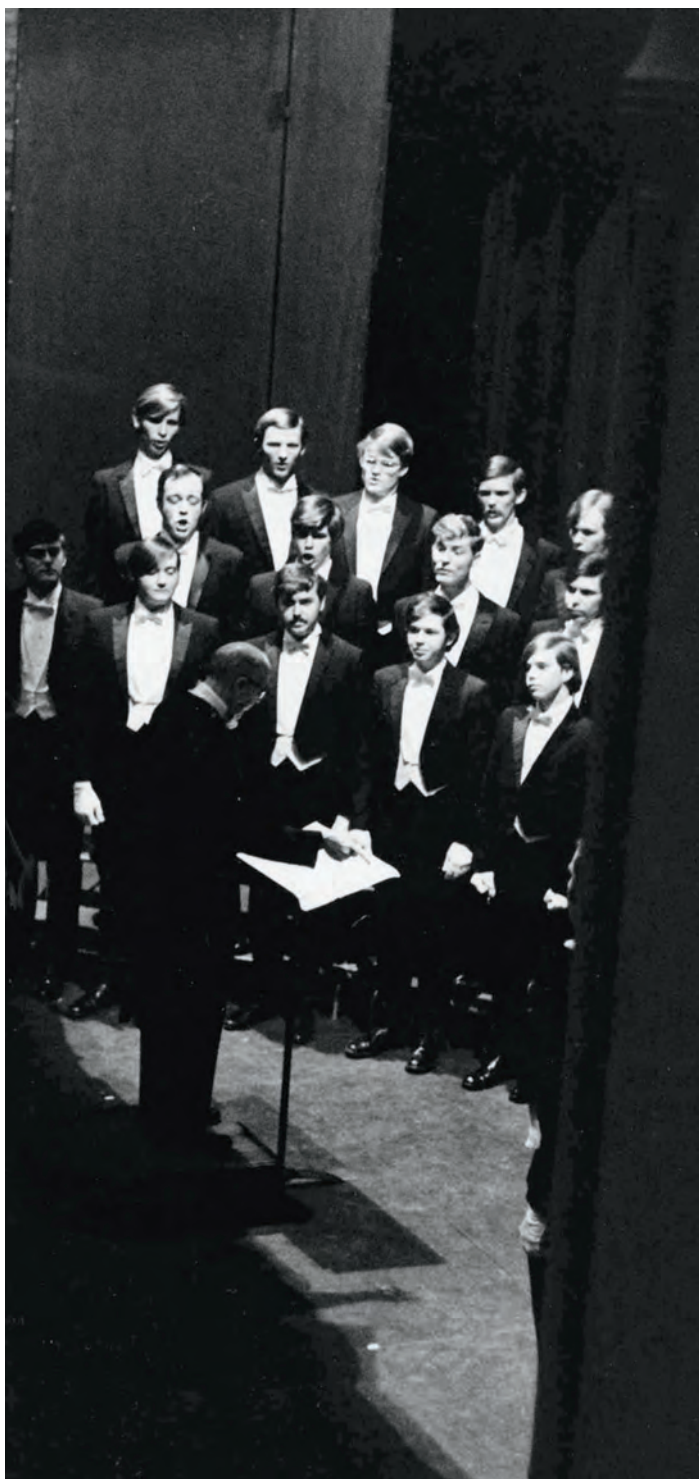


Daniel Pedtke

the years under the wonder-student Casasanta for a credentialed professional, the unflappable Daniel Pedtke. Pedtke was born in Chicago in 1906 and began his prodigious performing career as a pianist, counting acclaimed pianists Sergei Tarnowski and Alexander Raab among his teachers.³⁷ He also took up the organ in his teenage years and studied under Wilhelm Middelschulte (director Becker's teacher) and former Glee Club director J. Lewis Browne. After obtaining the Bachelor of Music from DePaul University, he passed the most stringent performance and written examinations of the American Guild of Organists and was elected a fellow in June 1936.³⁸ Pedtke played the organ at different Chicago-area churches in his early career (most notably at Our Lady of Mount Carmel) and also served at the Cathedral of St. Andrew in Grand Rapids, Michigan.³⁹







In 1932, Pedtke entered the academic world, becoming head of the music department at the all-women's College of St. Teresa in Winona, Minnesota, where his musical responsibilities were wide-ranging. He taught music theory courses, liturgical music, piano, and organ; he also directed two choirs and the orchestra. Pedtke further produced various musical events for each class: a Gilbert and Sullivan opera by the freshmen, a Lenten sacred cantata by the sophomores, and so forth.⁴⁰ Following his colleague and close friend from St. Teresa, Willis D. Nutting, who had just been hired at Notre Dame, Pedtke was set to become an organ instructor there, commencing his work in the summer of 1936. But in August, he received a generous offer for a faculty position at his alma mater, DePaul University, for the 1936–37 academic year. No doubt seeing the chance to advance the state of the music department at Notre Dame, president John O'Hara matched DePaul's offer, ensuring Pedtke the position of head of the music department, the same title he had held in Winona.⁴¹

Daniel Pedtke would chair the music department at Notre Dame for nearly two decades beginning in 1937, eventually coming to be known popularly as "Dean." His first order of business was the reorganization of the university's symphony orchestra, which had taken hiatus in 1936–37 after less than desirable results under Casasanta. Pedtke vowed to present the symphonic classics with this group and rehearse them twice per week in Washington Hall. In September 1937, he instituted a freshman-only choral ensemble, which would represent a breeding ground for future varsity Glee Club talent. First called the "Choral Club," this training ensemble of some forty voices practiced twice per week under Pedtke and three times per week the following year under graduate assistant Cletus Schommer.⁴²

Still, Dean had his eye, and ear, on Casasanta's Glee Club. An NBC recording of the April 1938 national broadcast of Universal Notre Dame Night activities reveals how the singing had deteriorated since the recordings of the late 1920s. Pedtke would not criticize Casasanta directly, but he observed many years later that Casasanta's group had two ways of singing—"loud and louder." The university's administration either had not permitted the Glee Club to tour or Casasanta had claimed to be too busy with the marching band to take on the task. The alma mater on another spring 1938 broadcast was musically appalling, and Pedtke must have begun plans at that time to take over the choir himself. His copy of the program from Casasanta's final concert in June 1938 is annotated with the names of the young men Pedtke thought worth keeping.

After Pedtke made a report of the needs of the music department—one consistent with the frugalities of the 1930s depression—Fr. O'Hara commissioned Moreau Choir

director Fr. James Connerton to review the situation. It is likely Fr. O'Hara, and not Pedtke, insisted on Casasanta's removal, which was announced during the summer of 1938. Paul DeLay ('42) recalls that the mortified Casasanta shunned Pedtke, even in passing in the halls, though the former retained the directorship of the marching band for another three years.

Pedtke took the reins of the Singing Irish in the fall of 1938. A review of his first concert noted that the director's initial offering was "an almost entirely different program from that so well known to concert-goers in the past."⁴³ The Casasanta programs that favored easy part-songs and rallying school marches were in the rearview mirror. Prefect of Discipline Fr. James Trahey promptly wrote to Pedtke, "I enjoyed every minute of what I heard. . . . There is a finess[e] about this year's Glee Club which bespeaks cultural background and which has been sadly lacking for a number of years. I believe a Glee Club can be, and should be, primarily a cultural influence and not just a 'Rah, Rah Chorus.'"⁴⁴ And after the Christmas concert in 1939, the prefect—who, in the days before a department of student affairs was created, had great influence over the Club—was even more effusive. His letter concludes with the words the singers had been longing to hear:

Please accept my hearty congratulations on a beautiful concert. I don't mind telling you that I was most agreeably surprised with the affair and can honestly say it was the finest glee club concert I have heard in many a year at Notre Dame. Incidentally, it was not Glee Clubbish—if you know what I mean. . . . Kindly convey to the members of the club my appreciation and tell them for me that they have my hearty support for any trip possible.⁴⁵

Within two years, Pedtke could proudly report to President O'Hara that "all of the organizations of the Music Department are now well established and in full rehearsal schedule, and we hope to improve the quality and quantity of programs on and off campus."⁴⁶ Dean had delivered, but his work had just begun.

In his thirty-seven years at Notre Dame, Dean Pedtke's contributions to the university and to the community are impossible to measure, extending far beyond his work with the Glee Club. Over the years, he led the orchestra and taught all the music theory courses (composition, keyboard harmony, counterpoint, and formal analysis), plus choral conducting and lessons in piano and organ. He also liked to teach the courses in music appreciation for non-majors. From 1938 through the early 1970s, he served as the organist and choir director at St. Patrick Church in South Bend. Pedtke kept up his performing career as pianist and organist. In 1941, he performed at the dedication of a new electronic organ at St. Joseph Catholic Church in South Bend. He also gave a series of lecture-recitals on Beethoven's violin sonatas in 1949, accompanying his faculty colleague, violinist Charles Biondo, as the latter pursued his doctoral degree.⁴⁷ Engagements took Pedtke beyond South Bend as well. In 1969, for example, he gave a post-Vespers organ recital at a prestigious series hosted by Washington National Cathedral. He continued his involvement with the American Guild of Organists, assisting with the examinations and serving as dean of the St. Joseph County chapter in 1958–59.

A glee club is a tradition here and it should be continued. It should develop from within the music department and be offered to students who are seeking something more than trips as their objective. If and when such a club should become good enough to represent the University on a university level it could be sent out to the public. It should aim at doing the best of music and especially should it explore the music treasure of the Church (Harvard Glee Club makes exclusive use of our own 16th-century music on its road trips). A Michigan State faculty group offer[s] to the public (full house present) a performance of Vespers. They have on their faculty several men well educated in Chant. In the second semester their organization Collegium Musicum offered a varied list of nine concerts of music possessing educational and historical importance.

—Fr. James Connerton to
Charles O'Hara, 1937



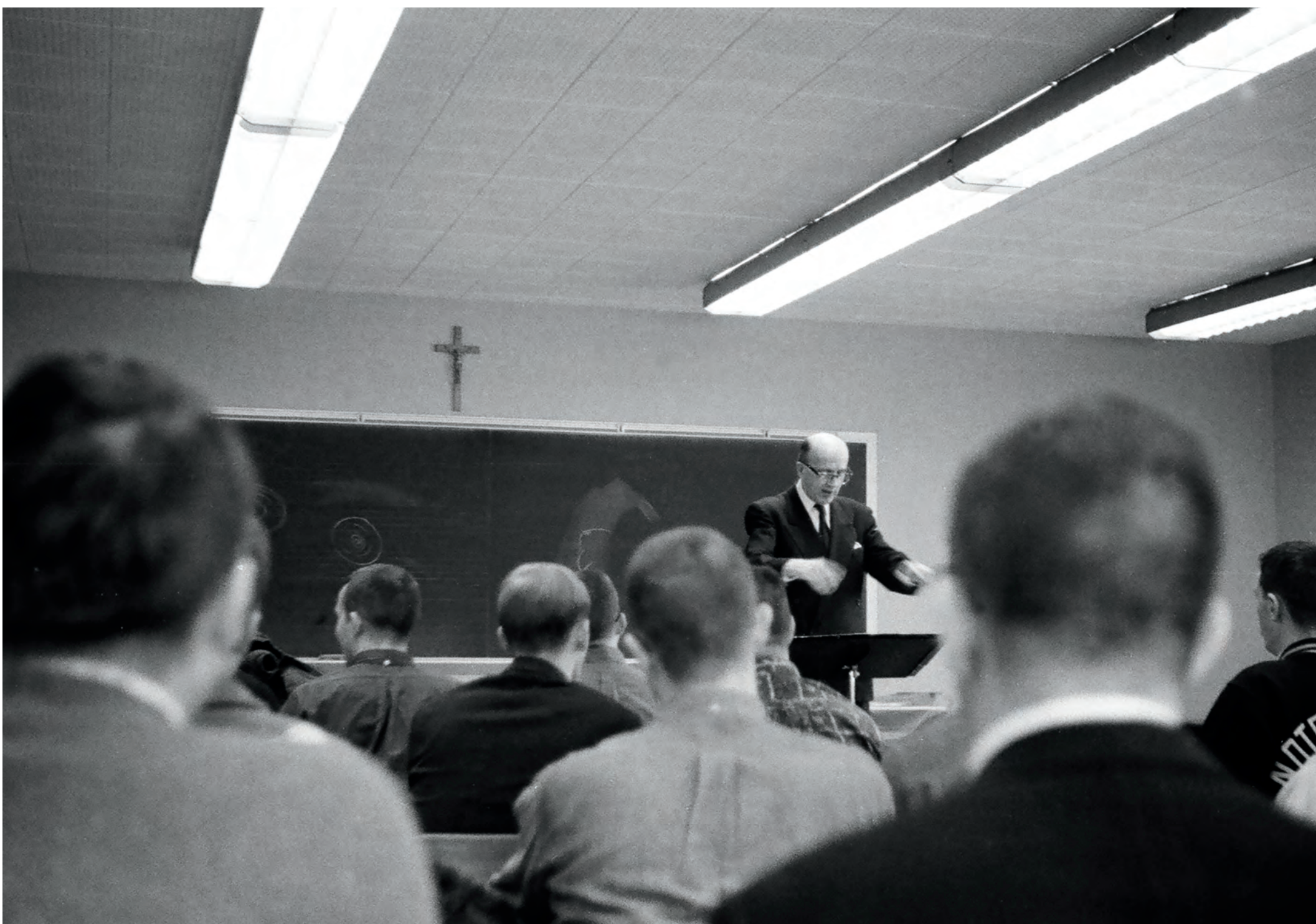
Beyond his impressive display of skill at the keyboard, Pedtke composed and orchestrated as needed for the school, often for celebratory occasions. The director wrote a piece for the Glee Club called *The Arena* for the university's centenary festivities in 1942, and he followed this up the next year with a symphonic choral work with narration titled *The Spirit of Notre Dame*. The text was written by student Kelly Cook, who was serving in the United States Army Air Corps.⁴⁸ Pedtke's most enduring musical contribution remains the Glee Club's alma mater "Notre Dame, We Hail Thee," with text by Fr. Eugene Burke, the same lyricist who partnered with Casasanta in the late 1920s. Today, at any formal concert on campus or on tour, "Notre Dame, We Hail Thee" precedes the singing of the university's alma mater "Notre Dame, Our Mother" and the "Victory March" as the final songs in the program. Pedtke recalled that the sentimental "Notre Dame, We Hail Thee" achieved a significant following among students, who lobbied (unsuccessfully) to have this piece replace Casasanta's alma mater in the early 1940s.⁴⁹

Pedtke welcomed opportunities to speak publicly about general issues related to music. In October 1944, the Glee Club director discussed the role of music in the church on a new local radio program *Sign of the Cross*, the theme song of which was sung by an octet of Glee Clubbers. Less than two years later, Pedtke spoke informally on music appreciation in an event sponsored by Catholic Action, which was designed to bring students and faculty closer together. He further gave a talk at the Lions Club called "The Educational Aspects of Music" in a series of lectures in 1949 on the topic of the university's contributions to the South Bend area.⁵⁰ One composition on a non-Notre Dame topic was his *Mass in Honor of Saint Jude* for mixed voices choir and organ, written in 1957,

though long out of print.⁵¹ The textbook that Pedtke wrote for piano students entitled *Keyboard Harmony* is also out of print, and no known copies are extant.

The Glee Club traveled extensively in Pedtke's tenure, and the seven consecutive annual appearances on Ed Sullivan's *Toast of the Town* were easily a highlight of the thirty-five years. The membership of the Glee Club soared during the early 1950s, reaching 160 men in the combined choirs of 1952–53. The Second World War, on the other hand, took a toll on campus musical life. The viability of the music department itself was in question, and Pedtke, as its head, reflected on the role of music at the university as the nation engaged in battle. Detailed minutes from a 1942 faculty meeting reveal that he spoke "inspiringlly of the future responsibility of the music department, with its resources for providing worthy entertainment on the campus of Notre Dame University during the coming months of Her war effort—and of the urgent need of music in the present emergency, and of its power to build and maintain patriotic morale."⁵²

Pedtke was a gentle man with a soft voice. His humility and faith were reassuring to more than three decades of Glee Clubbers, and the idea of family was a central concern to this beloved director. Pedtke once remarked





Willis Nutting (left) and Daniel Pedtke

that his daily interaction with the young men meant that he probably knew them as well as anyone did. He was keen on learning about the parents of his singers, or at least their names, which often were kept scrupulously in the file of the group's secretary.⁵³ When his former students returned to campus, he took as much pleasure hearing about their families as he did about their professional endeavors. Even today, countless former students return to campus for reunions, claiming that the director had a unique influence on their careers, their characters, and their lives. Pedtke's own family, foremost his wife, Helen (a former organ student at the College of St. Teresa), had a close relationship with the group, to be discussed in chapter 12.

Pedtke's retirement came two months earlier than expected after he suffered a disabling stroke in April 1973. From his recovery room, he had to settle for listening to a recording of "his" final Commencement concert, which was capably directed by student assistant Howard Bathon. Able to use only one arm, Pedtke continued to give "three-handed" duet performances on piano with Helen. He was intent on showing retirees that disability can be just a state of mind.

Glee club directors and composers around the country, like Yale's Marshall Bartholomew, had high regard for Dean Pedtke, but the longtime conductor of the Singing Irish never aspired to the national attention that the tours and television appearances brought. He was most concerned for the reputation of Notre Dame and for his singers. On his twenty-fifth anniversary as director in 1963, and as his announced retirement in 1973 approached, throngs of Glee Club alumni gathered to salute him. In the fall of 1974, a special banquet in the Monogram Room of the Athletic and Convocation Center was given to honor Pedtke's career of service. Brought in to the room in a wheelchair, Dean was presented with an extraordinary gift—a brand new 1973 Oldsmobile Cutlass! Although the gift was anonymous at the time, it was later revealed to come from Glee Club alumnus Eugene Fanning ('53), a four-year baritone soloist for Pedtke.⁵⁴ The Glee Club also gave Pedtke a trip to the Caribbean.

Other Glee Clubbers who remain anonymous subsequently financed another trip in August 1976 for Dean and Helen to visit their oldest daughter, Dorothy, then living in Turkey with her daughter, Robin. The travel plan included a week for the four of them to visit the Holy Land, where Pedtke could pray for a miraculous cure for his stroke. With determination, Dean walked the Way of the Cross with only his cane and prayed silently at Gethsemane. This trip was preceded by a journey to the Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal in Montreal with the same goal in mind. Here, Dean and Helen visited the site of a chapel built by Brother André Bessette, C.S.C., known for his miraculous healings. By the fall of 1976, Pedtke understood that alleviating his disability was not the Lord's will and humbly resigned himself to his incapacity.

Longtime Glee Club chaplain Fr. Robert Griffin tried to articulate Pedtke's impact on the young men whom he guided in song: "He is a unique man who could take the boys' singularity and make it into something much bigger than themselves—something of which they could be proud. . . . The group's continuity and ability to pass on to each other more than the tails they wear on stage will keep Dean's name part of the group."⁵⁵ Indeed, Pedtke's legacy is ever present.

