

The Story of the Back Bay Chorale

by Judy Foreman



Back Bay Chorale founder
Larry M. Hill (1936-1989)

Sometime way back in 1973 – his wife, Joan, now 90, can't remember the exact moment – an idea popped into the fertile brain of a Harvard University chaplain and social activist who also happened to be an accomplished musician.

This multi-talented man, of course, was Larry Hill, the bearded Brahms look-alike whose brainstorm that day led to the formation of the Back Bay Chorale, an audition-only singing group that today, more than 50 years later, is not only alive but thriving, as our *Carmina Burana* concert this May at Symphony Hall suggests.

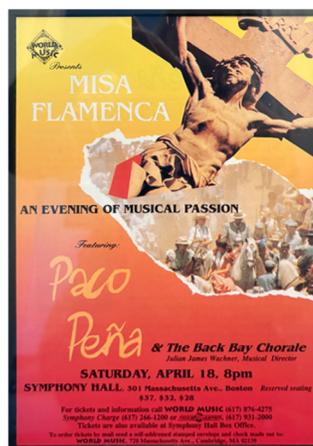
We sang our first concert under Larry's baton, the Mozart *Requiem*, at Church of the Covenant in 1974. Though he died in 1989, we who sang with him and with the five conductors we've had since – Beverly Taylor, Julian Wachner, James Olesen, Scott Allen Jarrett and Dr. Steven Spinelli – still share the kind of joy in making music together that Larry embodied.

Over the decades, we've sung our way through much of the western world's choral repertoire, often to glowing reviews. In 1999, the *Boston Globe* raved about our "commanding" performance of Brahms' *German Requiem*, which we sang for our 25th Anniversary.

We've ventured into more adventurous stuff, too, including Paul Winter's *Missa Gaia/Earth Mass*, Robert Kyr's *The Passion According to Four Evangelists*, to Pulitzer Prize-winner Caroline Shaw's *Seven Joys*.

And we've sung all over town – with the Boston Pops under John Williams on the Esplanade, at the Charles Street AME Church, at Symphony Hall for Paco Peña's *Missa Flamenco*.

All in all, we've sung over a hundred concerts, in the early days with the Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra, also founded by Larry, and more recently with other orchestras, including Greater Boston Youth Orchestra and the Boston Modern Orchestra Project. Along the way, we've recorded so



Poster for the Chorale's April
1998 performance of Paco Peña's
Missa Flamenco at Symphony Hall

