

Walter B. Denny Music Biographical Summary

Walter B. Denny retired from an active singing career in December of 2008. He performed as a tenor soloist and chorister with many different groups in Western New England and the Pioneer Valley since 1970. A graduate of Oberlin College, where he sang in the Oberlin College Choir and Musical Union under Robert Fountain for three years from 1962 to 1964, he completed his graduate work in Fine Arts at Harvard University, where he sang in the University Choir under John Ferris for three years, performed the title role in an Adams House production of the *Play of Daniel*, and performed with the Cambridge Society for Early Music under Iva Dee Hiatt.

After moving to Amherst in 1970, Walter Denny became a founding member of the Da Camera Singers, with which he sang as chorister and soloist since 1972. His solo work has included the Bach *Magnificat* with the Hampshire Choral Society, Orff's *Carmina Burana* twice and Haydn's *Creation* once with the Amherst High School Chorus and Valley Festival Orchestra under John Maggs, and Bach's *Magnificat* with the combined Mount Holyoke College and Harvard University Glee Clubs under Catherine Melhorn. He sang the Gilbert & Sullivan roles of Luis (*Gondoliers*), Hilarion (*Princess Ida*) and Nanki-Poo (*Mikado*) with the Valley Light Opera in the 1980s. As soloist he also performed in the 1970s with the Five College Early Music program under Thomas Kelly, and with University of Massachusetts choral director Wayne Abercrombie in a series of concerts of Bach cantatas produced in the 1980s. Walter also presented a solo recital at the University of Massachusetts' Bezanson Hall with Dorothy Ornest (keyboard), Walter Chesnut (trumpet) and János Scholtz (cello), and a duet recital in the same venue with soprano Diane Smith, along with Alice Robbins, 'cello, and Gregory Hayes, keyboard.

He sang ten seasons with the Blanche Moyse Chorale at the Marlboro Festival and the New England Bach Festival under Blanche Moyse, including the Bach St. John and St. Matthew *Passions*, the *Mass in B Minor*, and a wide range of cantatas. Walter has performed since its founding with Arcadia Players under directors Margaret Irwin-Brandon and Ian Watson as soloist and chorister in Handel's *Messiah*, the Monteverdi 1610 *Vespers*, the Mozart *Requiem* and many other works from the early and classical music repertoire. He has studied voice with Jon Humphrey, Rodney Gisick, and Dorothy Ornest.

Walter is married to Alice Robbins, Baroque cellist and gambist, is the father of Matthew Denny, born in 1988. In 2023, Walter retired as University Distinguished Professor of the history of art and architecture at the University of Massachusetts, where he had worked from 197 onward, specializing in the art and architecture of the Islamic world, museum studies, and east-west issues in at history. Since his retirement from singing, he has continued as an active supporter of many music organizations, and continues to serve as clerk (secretary) on the Board of Directors of Arcadia Players.