



*Photo courtesy of
Concordia Historical Institute.*

EDWARD W. KLAMMER (1919 – 1994)

. . . not only served as a congregational music director but also reached the church at large as the first Music Department Manager for Concordia Publishing House (CPH). It is safe to say that CPH is a working partner for virtually every Lutheran church musician in North America. Above all, the vision of Ed Klammer and the CPH Music Committee offered us all a chance to see and hear what the words “Lutheran heritage” meant as North American Lutherans struggled to rediscover their liturgical and musical identity during the middle of the 20th century.

Born as a middle child among nine other siblings, young Ed grew up as a son of the parsonage blessed with parents who assumed that any child should have piano lessons and who loved classical music. After serving a parish in Good Thunder, Minnesota, his father moved the family in accepting a call to St. Lorenz Lutheran Church and School in Frankenmuth, Michigan, distinguished as one of the oldest, largest, and most historically significant congregations of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. There young Ed became a friend and later college roommate of Paul Bunjes. They shared a passion for the Lutheran musical heritage throughout their careers. Bunjes became known as an authority on organ building, a choral composer, and an expert in liturgical chant.

Both men prepared themselves as Lutheran parochial teachers, in those days a frequent choice by gifted musicians intent on church service. Ed actually began his high school years at Concordia College, Milwaukee, to study for the ministry. After a year, however, he reconsidered and transferred to Concordia Teachers College (now Concordia University), River Forest, Illinois, to finish both high school (the “Concordia’s” in those years usually included both high and college “departments”) and college to certify as a parochial school teacher and church musician. He graduated in 1940. Subsequently he did some graduate work at Northwestern University, the University of Chicago, and Pius X School of Music (New York City), though he never actually completed a graduate degree program.

The merger of teaching and music continued during Klammer’s service to congregations in New York, Virginia, and the Chicago area. Then, in 1950, he was appointed by the Music Committee of CPH (which included his friend Paul Bunjes) to fill the new position of Music Department Manager. Klammer remained a practicing church musician, however, first at St. Peter’s Lutheran Church in St. Louis, and then for nearly a quarter century at Resurrection Church in Sappington, Missouri. Retirement from CPH came in 1984, a conclusion to three and a half decades in which the Music Department had developed into one of the better choral and church music publishers in the USA. Klammer died on 16 December 1994.

The development of the CPH Music Department can be understood within the context of the liturgical and church music renewal of the 20th century. In the early decades American Lutherans were struggling to recover authentic forms of worship, including music that had largely been lost and forgotten. Similar efforts were under way in European Lutheranism, and Americans learned much from European research. From today’s perspective this may seem

overly historical, even narrow; but it was a necessary step in renewing the sense of Lutheran identity and continuing the work of earlier reformers dating back to the 19th century.

Ed Klammer, therefore, was one of a generation filled with a sense of mission to overcome the liturgical deterioration of the previous two centuries and to provide the church with liturgical choral and organ literature of a high standard. CPH was also intent on making that music useful to church musicians of modest abilities. Although the benchmark for the Committee's music choices was the Lutheran repertoire roughly from the Reformation to the death of Bach, new composers were also encouraged to create music of integrity consistent with the Lutheran heritage. Carl Schalk, Paul Bunjes, Paul Manz, Ludwig Lenel, Jan Bender, S. Drummond Wolff, and Healey Willan — to name a few of the published composers — provided both fresh compositions and ecumenical contacts. These ideals were embodied in the first members of the CPH Music Committee: Paul Bunjes (music professor at Concordia College, River Forest, IL), Walter Buszin (noted musicologist at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis), and Theodore Hoelty-Nickel (music department chair at Valparaiso University). In fact, it was Walter Buszin who had first organized the CPH music department prior to Klammer's appointment with the firm support of O. A. Dorn, the "general manager" at the time.

Klammer contributed to the cause personally not only by managing the department but also through his own writing and editing, usually under the pseudonym of Paul Thomas. In addition to editing the works of many old Lutheran composers, he was responsible for the appearance of church music collections, including perennial favorites such as *Our Song of Praise* (a children's hymnal), *The Parish Choir Book*, *The SAB Chorale Book*, *The Morningstar Choir Book*, *The Psalms for the Church Year* (three series for the A, B, and C lectionary cycles), and *The Church Organist*. As an additional labor of love Klammer served as the American

representative for the International Heinrich Schütz Society (“Internationale Heinrich-Schütz Gesellschaft”). He also authored a number of articles. Most appeared in the journal *Church Music*, published jointly by CPH and Concordia Teachers College, River Forest.

Any view of Klammer’s life and work will necessarily include two women. The first is his wife Gwendolyn (“Gwen”), whom Ed met during his one year of teaching in Brooklyn, New York. Their 1943 wedding took place at Ed’s home congregation in Frankenmuth, Michigan. Their family eventually included two daughters. Gwen was a gracious hostess who joined Ed in providing hospitality to the many church musicians, composers, and colleagues who were invited to their home — as I can attest personally. One must also recognize Dorothy Rickterkessing, who spent roughly four decades as secretary in CPH’s Music Department, thirty-two of them working with Ed Klammer. Her hand was in much of the work that made CPH’s Music Department a first-rate publisher.

Church musicians in North America cannot take familiarity with their musical heritage for granted. The vision of Ed Klammer and his colleagues not only made great music available but also translated the classic heritage into new repertoire uniquely suited for North Americans.

Victor E. Gebauer

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Sources and Further References

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