

William D. Hall (1934-2023)



In Memoriam: Professor Emeritus William D. Hall, Founding Dean of the College of Performing Arts

October 9, 2023

It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of Professor Emeritus William D. Hall, founding dean of the College of Performing Arts (CoPA) and founding dean and artistic director of the Musco Center for the Arts, on Saturday, October 7, 2023.

Among his many legacies, Dr. Hall's vision and expertise in the design and opening of Chapman's Musco Center for the Arts in 2016 will reverberate for generations. "Bill was instrumental in working with Yasuhisa Toyota of Nagata Acoustics to provide the superior acoustics in the Musco Center," said Marybelle Musco, the art center's co-founding benefactor and member of the Chapman board. "His legacy as a musician, professor, dean of COPA, dean of the Musco Center, his former William Hall Chorale and Orchestra, and Dean of the Hall-Musco Conservatory of Music are hallmarks of an arts genius."

"Working closely with Bill Hall as he moved Musco Center from vision to reality was a privilege of a lifetime," said Richard T. Bryant, Musco Center's founding executive director. "Bill was brilliant and tireless, always advancing and inventing, always teaching and sharing his vast knowledge and love for music and life. We shall miss him greatly."

At the young age of 21, Bill established his eponymous group, The William Hall Chorale and Orchestra. He was under contract with the William Morris Agency, but soon began a three-decade relationship for his professional touring ensemble with Columbia Artists Management. His non-profit choir performed regularly throughout the U.S. and internationally.

Dr. Hall has been associated with the faculty at Chapman since 1963 and was the first distinguished professor to hold the Berteau Family Endowed Chair in Music. He was a highly successful teacher and inspiring mentor to generations of Chapman vocal and conducting students from 1963-2007. A committed educator, Dr. Hall resolutely oversaw enormous growth in student numbers and quality in the then School of Music with his dedication to the student body, a rapier wit and signature charisma. Annual Interterm tours in the Western United States and summer tours to Europe, Asia and Australia were a staple of the music program that he led with excellence and distinction.

In 1963 when he had joined Chapman, the college administration requested that Dr. Hall organize a Christmas music program that would benefit the city of Orange. That inaugural Wassail performance occurred in the immediate aftermath of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. To this day, Chapman's annual Wassail celebration remains one of Orange County's longest standing and most beloved holiday traditions. For many decades, Dr. Hall also conducted Chapman's annual revue showcase, Chapman Celebrates, which held its final performance in February and which brought in over \$40 million for Chapman students over its 40-year run. This represents one of many fundraising successes over Dr. Hall's career.

"Bill was a unique academic leader: a visionary with bold ideas," said Dean of CoPA and Berteau Family Chair in Music Giulio M. Ongaro. "What he envisioned and realized should have been unattainable — this was true both in the pursuit of academic and artistic excellence as well as in his ability to convince donors to contribute to his vision. He was a true force of nature in the service of the performing arts which he so loved."

Under Dean Hall's leadership, the Department of Music became the School of Music, then the [Hall-Musco Conservatory of Music](#), and it eventually merged with dance, theatre (and, briefly, with art) to become the College of Performing Arts. In his capacity as the inaugural dean of the new College of Performing Arts, Dr. Hall oversaw the successful accreditations of all the performing arts programs, as well as the hiring and tenuring of many of the current faculty, and in 2003, the opening of Oliphant Hall, which houses the music program to this day.

"William Hall was a giant among the larger-than-life personalities often found in the arts. His influence on music at Chapman was so great that it is fitting our music program bears his name: the Hall-Musco Conservatory of Music," said Amy Graziano, Ph.D., Chair and Professor of Music, Hall-Musco Conservatory of Music. "Bill Hall was a master teacher who made learning the greatest adventure and inspired generations of students with a love for and dedication to music. Those students went on to perform nationally and internationally and to be teachers themselves."

Dr. Hall retired from Chapman University in August 2021 after a vibrant career that spanned nearly sixty years.

He is survived by his children Christopher (Tiffany) Hall, Erin (John) Ellis, grandchildren Conner Ellis, Jessica Ellis, Rane Hall, Lily Hall, and Jett Hall. His husband and partner of 39 years, David Masone, and the entire Masone extended family, also grieve him greatly.

Portions of this article were written by the Associate Dean of the College of Performing Arts, Louise Thomas.

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