

A Life in Church Music: Donald P. Hustad (1918–2013)

By Elizabeth M. Naegele

Donald Paul Hustad, organist, choir director, radio musician, composer, arranger, scholar, educator, editor, and writer, died on June 22, 2013, at the age of 94. Active in church music for more than 85 years, he had become one of the most articulate scholars, chroniclers, and critics of the history and traditions of music in the evangelical and “free” (i.e., non-liturgical) church traditions. He wrote six books and over 100 articles, composed numerous hymns, hymn arrangements and choral octavos, edited a number of hymnals and authored hymnal companions, taught at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago and later the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and played organ for the Billy Graham crusades beginning in the 1960s. He held two graduate music degrees from Northwestern University, plus AAGO and FRCO certificates.

Though he retired from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1986, Hustad continued actively performing, writing, lecturing, and editing for the next two decades. Post-retirement activities included being the general editor for the hymnal, *The Worshiping Church*, which was first published in 1990, and revising his well-received textbook, *Jubilate! Church Music in the Evangelical Tradition*, first published in 1981, which was released in 1993 as *Jubilate II: Church Music in Worship*

and *Renewal*. In 1989, he became a Fellow of the Hymn Society in the U.S. and Canada, in recognition of his contributions to hymnody. In 1991, Hope Publishing Company, which published music, hymnals, and books by Hustad, named him their first emeritus editor. In 2006, he received an honorary doctorate from Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama, and in 2008, he was honored for his contributions to church music at the American Choral Director’s Association’s Southern Division Conference.

Hustad’s legacy in the Chicago area is manifold, especially through his work at Hope Publishing Company (located in Carol Stream, Illinois) and through his tenure at Moody Bible Institute, beginning in 1942 at the Institute’s flagship radio station, WMBI, and then as conductor of the Moody Chorale beginning in 1947, and additionally as Director of Moody’s Music Department, 1950–1963. Under Hustad’s leadership, the Moody Chorale was critically acclaimed and the Music Department’s current facilities were built, including the Doane Memorial Music Building and the 4-manual Möller organ (now being rebuilt by R. A. Colby) in Torrey-Gray Auditorium. Hustad’s long relationship with Moody led to the opportunity for the following edited interview which took place on October 11, 2011.

Hustad was born October 2, 1918, in Yellow Medicine County, Minnesota. Following the death of his father in a hunting accident the year after his birth, his mother moved with Donald and his younger brother Wesley to the Boone Biblical College in Boone, Iowa, a home for indigent families.¹ This is where Hustad’s musical life began.

Elizabeth M. Naegele: How did you first become interested in music?

Donald Hustad: At the age of four, I was taken under wing by a little lady at the Boone Biblical College where I grew up and where all of our music was from the “Holiness” tradition. She had me studying all the serious piano works of Beethoven, Liszt, Mendelssohn, etc., and in those days of limited entertainment, I ate it up. From my very first years, I improvised, but I never quit reading music that was serious.

You were doing church music alongside classical music?

Yes, I was in church music. In a very typically fundamentalist culture of church music where I improvised much of the time, I was also studying classical music. I grew up thinking of music schizophrenically because all the things that were ideal in classical music were taboo in the church music that we had, and all the things that we doted on in church music were just out-of-bounds in classical music. I had this love-hate relationship, understanding it, sensing it—from the very beginning—as being in two worlds . . . and I enjoyed them both!

Curiously, I was also in radio at that age. Little Boone Biblical College had a ten-watt radio station which they bought in 1926, so when I began working at Moody Bible Institute’s radio station later in life, I was simply doing what I had done as an eight-year-old boy. I accompanied my mother who was a singer of sorts, and I played trombone in the orchestra.

How did you begin your professional career?

Sacred music as a profession was a complete surprise to me. I didn’t realize that anyone could make a living with music, even though I studied it at the John Fletcher College in Oskaloosa, Iowa. The graduates from that school

went to theology school and became ministers or they went to a university and became a school teacher. I didn’t want to do either, so I had nothing to do. I came to Chicago looking for any kind of a job. I went to the Christian Businessmen’s Committee downtown Chicago, where they referred me to a Christian businessman, Reamer G. Loomis, who had a real estate office on the south side of Chicago. There I wound up answering the telephone or did surveys in the neighborhood . . . until I got busy doing music. Interestingly enough, my future wife’s family was friendly with the real estate office’s owner.

Where did you meet your wife?

I met Ruth at Lorimer Memorial Baptist Church on the south side of Chicago²—and the church had lost their musician, so I was hired to be their choir director and organist.³

When had you studied organ?

Prior to this time, I had only one year’s instruction, 1940–1941, during the time I was working at a church in Zion, Illinois. I studied with Francis Moore, who had been a student of Alexandre Guilmant. He taught the organ at Oak Park Methodist Church. I remember him well because he was the first to teach me that I should have fingering written in for Bach. Would you believe I began with Bach’s *Prelude and Fugue in E-flat Major*? Moore kept active in music and years later, while I was at Moody, I remember that he was doing things for Lyon and Healy in downtown Chicago.

So your professional career began at the church where you met your wife?

Yes, but . . . there was a member of the church named Theresa Worman, who was in charge of children’s programming at Moody Bible Institute’s radio station, WMBI. She came to me one day and said, “Don, why don’t you audition? Down at Moody they hire a lot of musicians.” I asked, “They do? To do what?” She answered, “To play music. To write music. To arrange music. To make music!” So I arrived at WMBI’s Studio D on a Saturday morning in May, 1942, and was met by George Beverley Shea⁴ and Cornelius W. Kerr. Corny Kerr was one of the so-called “gospel” organists at Moody—there was a whole bevy of them. And they hired



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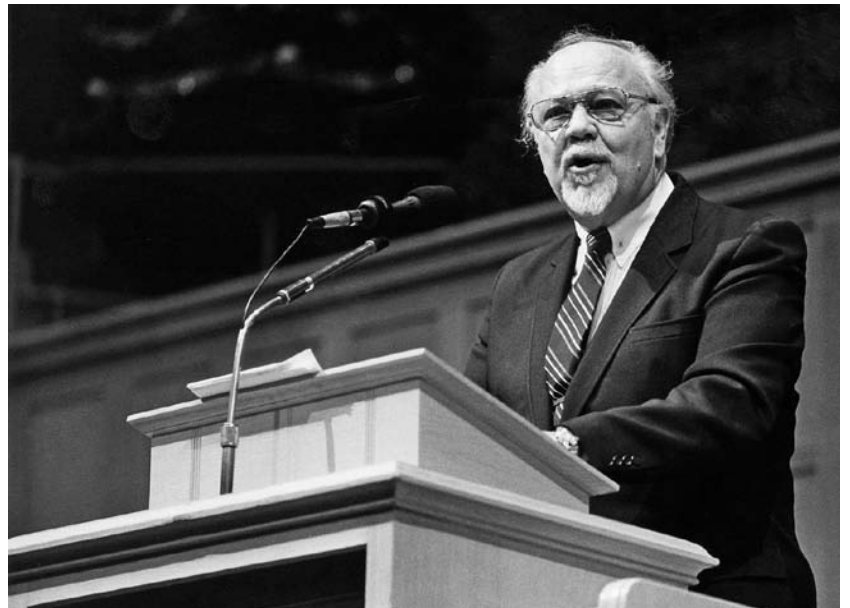
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Don Hustad, 1950, publicity picture used by Moody Bible Institute (courtesy Moody Bible Institute Archives)



Don Hustad, ca. 1974, publicity picture used by Moody Bible Institute (courtesy Moody Bible Institute Archives)



Don Hustad, December 3, 1984, Moody Bible Institute chapel service (courtesy Moody Bible Institute Archives)



Don Hustad (at the Hammond organ) with Club Time Sacred Singers (ABC radio network) (courtesy Moody Bible Institute Archives)

me . . . auditioned me on Saturday, and I showed up for work on Monday.

So you became a professional radio musician?

I played accompaniments for George Shea on Hammond organ, pipe organ, and piano. And I did solo organ programs, I did piano duet programs. I also very soon became an announcer, and then, like everyone else, I became a producer and sometimes an actor in a drama that the station had on for years, "Number Nine Elm Street."⁵

What music degrees did you earn?

I have a bachelor's degree in music from John Fletcher College, and completed a master's degree in piano from Northwestern University (Evanston, Illinois) in 1945, while I was working in radio. Later, I went back to Northwestern to do a Doctor of Music degree in church music, which combined organ, service playing, and conducting [completed in 1963]. I also have an Associate certificate from the American Guild of Organists and a Fellowship certificate from the Royal College of Organists in London.

Interestingly enough, I never completed a conducting course in my life. The first official conducting I ever did was for a tour of the "Twelve Singing Men" from John Fletcher College. I simply watched people conduct, saw the motions, and practiced them myself as I walked across campus.

When you were doing doctoral work in Northwestern, did you finally take some conducting courses?

Oddly enough, I didn't take any conducting classes. I took more classes in literature. I didn't even take any service playing . . . though I registered for thorough bass [figured bass/continuo playing], I opted out of it because I had played by ear all my life and could "bypass" the class.⁶

In what educational institutions have you taught?

I take great pride in them all. One of the first teaching duties I had was as a substitute for Frank W. Van Dusen at Wheaton College for one full year.⁷ I worked at Olivet Nazarene College, now Olivet Nazarene University, 1946–1950, teaching piano and music literature.

The lengthier stints: I taught at Moody Bible Institute, 1950–1963, and finally the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, beginning in 1966 and officially retiring in 1986.

What about your association with Billy Graham?

I joined the Graham team in 1961 and worked for them six years until 1967. At the beginning of my time with them, I was on a leave of absence from Moody but still chairman of the Music Department until 1963, one of those flitting chairmen who bounced off and on campus, helping make important faculty and catalog decisions, teaching assignments, and so forth.

You started teaching at the Southern Baptist Seminary in 1966 before you were done with Billy Graham?

I kept playing for the Billy Graham team off and on for 20 years and retired from them around the same time that I retired from the seminary.

What changed during your years of teaching church music?

When I began teaching people how to use music in the church, I knew only one kind of music, and that was what I had learned in the conservatory and colleges. As I understood it, musicians could take the same understanding, the same theory, same techniques, and work in, say, church or even nightclubs, just as well. They were trained for music, and they did music wherever they had to do it. Later, I began to realize the discipline of church music was separate from the ordinary discipline of music, and there were no books written about church music. Church music has different requirements, different objectives—so you should have different training for it. I learned the principal activity of the church was its worship, so I became intensely interested in worship, and I essentially began all over again to study worship and liturgies. My books *Jubilate!* and *Jubilate II* became journals on worship and church music and evangelism and Christian education . . . the whole activity of the church.

Finances have become one of the primary problems with church music in our day. It costs too much to train musicians, so Northwestern University throws out

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Current Moody Chorale director, Xiangtang Hong, and Don Hustad following a Chorale concert at Plymouth Place retirement community, April 29, 2012 (courtesy of Plymouth Place, La Grange Park, Illinois)

its organ department. Other schools throw out a whole music department because it costs so much more to train a musician than it does to train a philosopher or a theologian. I've often wondered if maybe our system should be different. I've watched the Europeans teach all beginning applied music in classes. Only artists are taught privately. When I was on sabbatical in France, my daughter took flute classes, not private lessons, at the local conservatory. Everybody heard everybody play. Everybody learned from what everybody else learned, and they spent hours in a studio listening to teaching as well as practicing. I've wondered if we shouldn't do more of that. I think we have the same problem in reverse when teaching conductors. Conductors need more private study than we give them.

What do you see when you look ahead in church music?

None of us really know! But it's very interesting for me to look at history, to see movements come and go. As I mentioned, I felt schizophrenic growing up, because I could see that church music and classical music were on two different tracks. For instance, my mother was an amateur singer, but she heard that Amelita Galli-Curci (1882–1963), a famous Italian opera soprano in the 1920s, was giving lessons for \$25 to anyone who showed up in Des Moines. And my mother wanted to travel to Des Moines for a lesson because that was a different kind of music than she knew. So she learned Bernard Hamlin's solo, "Beside Still Waters," and I accompanied her when she sang it for Galli-Curci. Why did she do this? Well, because there was that other world of art music out there.



Don Hustad conducting the Moody Chorale, Easter Sunrise Service, 1953, Hollywood Bowl (courtesy Moody Bible Institute Archives)

And it was not a sinful world, it was God's world. She didn't know that, but she thought it might be. She had a chance to toy with it, and she did!

On the other hand, George Beverley Shea was a gospel singer from his youth. He grew up in an educated family, all of whom were university people, most of them scholars, preachers, and professors of various sorts in the denomination in which he grew up. But he was a gospel singer, he was different . . . though not completely, because his idol was the concert baritone, John Charles Thomas (1891–1960). Shea worshipped Thomas's singing, because of his diction, which was the most accurate, most precise, most dramatic diction of any singer in the English language. Shea copied him. He went to Thomas's coaches, and as a result, Shea had the sharpest diction in English of any singer I know. He's the oldest singer whose words I can identify when the song is one I've never heard before.

Western music in the year 1000 had no place to operate except in the church. And for hundreds of years, serious composers were trying to imitate the "music of the spheres"—the music that the Book of Job writes about when God says to Job, "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation . . . while the morning stars sang together?" (see Job 38:1–7). This was the music of heaven's angels joined

with all of creation, which has together moved to earth only twice in history: once at the creation of the world, once at the birth of Jesus Christ. And did you ever notice this comes full circle in the *Book of Revelation*, where it says that we will sing in heaven an anthem to God who created, to God who redeemed? That's all. That's all there is. That's all! For eternity!

How does this fit with contemporary music in the church?

Evangelicals have always been plagued with the love of novelty. The gospel is the "good news"—the new good news. Got to have a different music for it. Can't have ordinary music that God blessed from eternity. Got to have a special music, so we'll throw out Watts, we'll throw out Wesley, we'll throw out Luther, and we'll have the gospel song. And in the late 19th century, evangelicals did it thoroughly, throwing out the tried and true, God-given music of Watts and Wesley and sang the gospel song. Had a lovely time, and founded Moody Bible Institute to perpetuate it, but knew all the time that they really shouldn't have let the other go—that they should have hung on to it. The conductors of the auditorium choir at Moody Bible Institute knew this in 1910. The teachers at Moody who played the organ knew this about the organ, and so they had serious organ study back in those days. They never let serious music go because they had a sneaking suspicion that somehow God had blessed it, and they should bless it and protect it and teach it forever. But evangelicals may not do it today. They've frittered around to the point now that many have let classical music go.

Who knows what will happen? The present movement has lasted so long there are few classical musicians left. A cousin in Minneapolis sent me a copy of a program from a Covenant church that had a prelude on the organ by Bach, anthems—true anthems, liturgy, and straightforward hymns, but I don't know many other evangelical churches that do that. To you that do, I say, "Hang on!"

What activities are you involved in now that you're really retired?

Years ago I started writing a memoir, and I've had so much fun just writing it, I'm on my 15th chapter.

Are you going to publish it?

No—somebody else can! The title of the 15th chapter is the name of the retirement community where we live now, Plymouth Place. And that's the end. Plymouth Place has been ideal—it has so many people with all kinds of ideas and interesting backgrounds. There are a lot of Congregationalists, a lot of Catholics, a lot of Lutherans. I wake up remembering that my first memory of Billy Graham was in Western Springs, Illinois, and he was considered too conservative by most of the people in this place.

You know, for me, I'm back where I started. I grew up in a communal living center and now, though we never thought we'd go to a retirement home, it's a perfect situation. Our needs are cared for and we can use our energy to do what we want to do.

What do you think music will be like in heaven?

On earth, we're preparing to worship in eternity—why don't we do it the biblical way? Thank goodness, the biblical way is happening in some places, and I have faith that God will not let it die.

At this point in the interview, Mrs. Hustad interjected and asked if she and her husband could share the prayer by John Donne which they said every night. Dr. Hustad agreed and—together—they recited:

Since I am coming to that holy room
Where, with Thy choir of saints
forevermore,
I shall be made Thy music, as I come
I tune the instrument here at the door,
And what I must do then, think now
before.
—from *Hymn to God my God, in my
Sickness*, by John Donne (1572–1631)⁸

On January 14, 2013, Dr. Hustad addressed the music faculty and students at Moody Bible Institute for what turned out to be his final time. He distributed a handout, which included his personal credo (see sidebar) and an outline of his lecture titled "Creation, Culture and Musica Mundana."⁹ The lecture covered the biblical story of music from creation to the music of heaven, the history of church music from Greek culture through 19th-century Romanticism, and the history of Moody



A Personal Credo

I believe that the created world declares the glory and the goodness of God, our Creator and Redeemer.

I believe that human culture (including God's gifts of theology, philosophy, science, and art) declares the glory and the goodness of God. Johann Sebastian Bach recognized that glory in his own music, and inscribed his manuscripts *Soli Deo Gloria*, "to God alone be glory."

I believe that Western culture's music has declared the glory and goodness of God in our culture for at least 1000 years, despite the sinfulness of the culture, including the sin in the practice of that music.

I believe that the Christian Church was instrumental in the birth of Western music, and, throughout its history, has helped to develop it and at the same time has received great benefit from it. At the present time, partly because of serious decline in Western culture, the art of music is in trouble, especially in its relationship to the Church.

I believe that all Christian believers are commissioned to care for God's creation, including human culture. Christians are called to share their understanding and experience of God's glory and goodness with all persons. Therefore, I call on those who recognize the revelation of God in such music to join in protecting, developing, and sharing it, in the home, the school, the Church, and the community.

— Donald P. Hustad



Disembarking the S.S. Columbia, Southampton, England, 1954 (Moody Chorale tour) (courtesy Moody Bible Institute Archives)

from the music promulgated by Moody's founder, evangelist Dwight Lyman Moody (1837–1899) through the history of contemporary Christian music. He challenged the students (1) to use the hymnal, even in personal devotions; (2) to use all kinds of music; and (3) to use their education in music. He also reminded them that we are not called to be successful; rather we are called to be faithful. Finally, he left the following exhortations ringing in our ears:

Worship God!
Teach what God taught!
Live out truth!
Sing to the glory of God!

Ruth Hustad died less than one month after her husband, on July 18, 2013. Their daughter Marcia reported that as her mother was saying goodbye to her father, she said, "Don't walk too fast, darling... I'll be right behind you."¹⁰ The memorial service Mrs. Hustad had planned for Dr. Hustad was revised and became a double ceremony, celebrating both their lives. The service was held July 27, 2013, at Western Springs Baptist Church, the church where Billy Graham was pastor when he first became famous.¹¹ Current members and alumni of the Moody Chorale sang at the service under the direction of longtime former conductor and faculty member emeritus Gerald H. Edmonds. Their repertoire included an excerpt from Brahms's *Requiem* and an original anthem with both words and music by Hustad, "Prayer Before Singing," which was published in the 1950's (copyright 1959, Hope Publishing) and recorded by the Chorale. ■

Notes

1. Hustad's life and contributions to church music have been well documented by Rhonda S. (Rogers) Furr, especially (1) in her dissertation, Rhonda S. Rogers, "The Life and Work of Donald Paul Hustad," DMA dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1988; (2) in her article "Jubilate!—Shout for Joy! 70 Years in Church Music: Donald Hustad," *The Hymn*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (April 1996); and (3) in her contributions to *Jubilate, Amen! A Festschrift in Honor of Donald Paul Hustad*, Timothy W. Sharp & Paul Richardson, editors, Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2010 (see "Biography," pages 23–55, and "Bibliography," pages 57–103).

Another good resource for information about Hustad is the Donald Paul Hustad Collection (SC 5585), Special Collection, Harwell G. Davis Library, Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama.

2. Hustad met Ruth McKeag on February 12, 1942, and they were married on November 28, 1942. They had three daughters and were married for over 70 years. Lorimer Memorial Baptist Church was at 73rd St. and St. Lawrence Avenue on Chicago's south side. It later moved to Dolton, Illinois, and today is called New Community Church and includes two locations in Chicago's suburbs, one in Dolton and the other in Park Forest.

3. During his last year at John Fletcher College, Hustad's keyboard talent earned him his first church job at the First Methodist Church in Oskaloosa, Iowa, where he taught himself basic organ technique. Following graduation in 1940, he continued playing organ for another year when he worked at two churches in the Chicago area, filling in for the organist who was on leave at Ravenswood Methodist Church on Sunday mornings and assisting at the Christian Catholic Church (now Christ Community Church) in Zion, Illinois, on Sunday afternoons.

4. George Beverley Shea (1909–2013) was best known as a soloist who sang with Billy Graham's Crusades, beginning in 1947. Shea died on April 16, 2013, at the age of 104, only a few months before Hustad died.

5. Hustad was also associated with other radio programs that originated in the Chicago area, most notably the American Broadcasting Radio network's *Club Time*, a 15-minute

weekly program of hymns, and the longtime popular radio series, *Songs in the Night*, for which Hustad played organ for two decades beginning in 1943 and since 1968 has been produced and broadcast by the Moody Church, an organization separate from Moody Bible Institute (though named after the same 19th-century evangelist Dwight Lyman Moody) and also located in downtown Chicago.

6. It may be assumed that Hustad's conducting of a nationally known choir, the Moody Chorale, and his outstanding improvisation skills made it possible for him to "bypass" course work in conducting and service playing, leaving his remaining studies in various areas of music literature, primarily choral and organ. His two doctoral research projects, both completed in 1963, were "A Study of Sacred Choral Music by Ralph Vaughan Williams" and "The Organ Music of Paul Hindemith." Hindemith died in 1963, making Hustad's project the first major document that covered the complete organ works of the composer.

7. Frank W. Van Dusen began teaching at Wheaton College in 1935; he also taught at the American Conservatory in Chicago.

8. This is the first strophe of six in Donne's *Hymn to God my God, in my Sickness*. Some scholars suggest Donne wrote it when he was on his deathbed, 1630–1631. Others suggest it was written during a life-threatening illness in 1623.

9. *Musica mundana* means the "music of the spheres" or universal music, the music

that occurred in God's creation as differentiated from the music of heaven and its angels.

10. E-mail from Marcia Hustad, July 19, 2013.

11. Billy Graham returned to lead Western Springs Baptist Church's 50th anniversary celebration in 1962. Don Hustad participated in organ dedications at this church in 1962 and again in 1980.

Elizabeth Naegele graduated from Moody Bible Institute with a diploma in Church Music and Organ in 1972, and remembers that the first organ hymn setting she ever played was by Don Hustad. Naegele has taught at Moody since 1976, where she is Professor of Music and Coordinator of Organ Instruction and Ethnomusicology. In addition to her Moody diploma, Naegele holds an AAGO certificate, and Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees in Organ Performance from Michigan State University, and a Doctor of Music degree in Organ Performance from Northwestern University. Her organ teachers have included Lillian Robinson, Corliss Arnold, and Wolfgang Rübsan. She is grateful to her Teaching Assistant Steven Thomson and to Moody's Music Department Chair Cynthia Uitermarkt and Moody librarians Amy Koehler and Allana Pierce for their essential help in completing this article.

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