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Boston Celebrates David Hoose Day

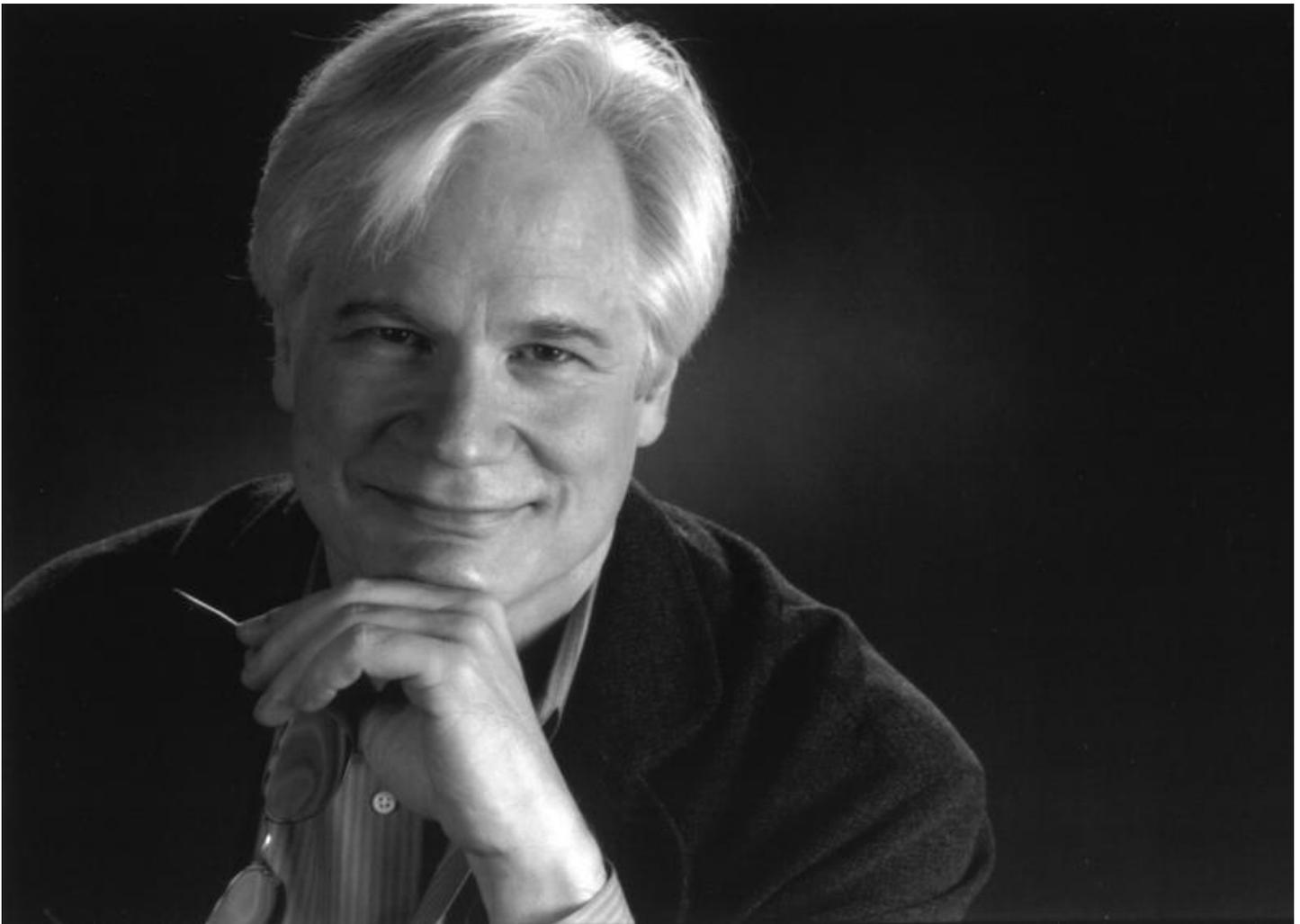
By [ALAN MCLELLAN \(/PEOPLE/ALAN-MCLELLAN/\)](/PEOPLE/ALAN-MCLELLAN/) • 35 MINUTES AGO

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(http://classicalwcrb.org/sites/wcrb/files/styles/x_large/public/201710/DavidHoose_landscape300.jpg)

Mayor Walsh has declared Nov. 3 to be David Hoose Day in the City of Boston. WCRB's Alan McLellan, who sings in Hoose's ensemble, the Cantata Singers, explains what makes this conductor such an essential part of Boston's cultural fabric.

When I moved to Boston several years ago, one of the challenges I faced, as a long-time choral singer, was finding a new chorus to sing with. I asked the director of my childrens' church choir, and she had one emphatic suggestion: "Audition for the Cantata Singers. David Hoose is second to none." So that's what I did, and 19 years later, I'm still singing with the Cantata Singers and still enjoying working with one of the most admired conductors in Boston.

When I joined the group, I quickly learned that David Hoose is not like other conductors. He doesn't always conduct the same music the same way, so you have to come prepared, and you have to be on your game. At a rehearsal early on in my time with the Singers, I naively piped up to ask whether David was going to give a cue at a crucial entry. He smiled, looked me in the eye, and said, "I might. I might not." He sees his role as much more than a beater-of-time and a giver-of-cues.

David expects singers and players to know the music as well as he does, and to enjoy its breadth and depth as much as he does. And that's no small challenge. Whether it's new music or old, his approach is the same – to develop a complete understanding of the score as the artistic expression of its creator.

That approach might be traced back to David's mentors. He studied composition at Brandeis with the influential American composer Arthur Berger. Later, he spent several summers studying conducting at Tanglewood with the esteemed Swiss-born conductor Gustav Meier, absorbing the creative atmosphere of that remarkable place.

But it was during his undergrad years at Oberlin Conservatory that he had a pivotal encounter with music by Bach. In an interview a few years ago (<http://artsfuse.org/23687/fuse-classical-music-interview-cantata-singers-david-hoose-on-j-s-bachs-mass-in-b-minor/>), David recalled a "moment in sophomore music theory at Oberlin when the teacher played a recording of the *Magnificat*, and my hair stood on end at the 'Omnes! Omnes!' interruption of the wistful soprano and oboe d'amore duet... So that's probably when I began to see Bach as a living composer." And that recognition of a transcendent, "living" quality became essential not just to his approach to Bach, but to everything he conducts.

When the Cantata Singers were founded back in 1964, Bach was seldom-heard music, and the group had a mission to make it known. In the 1970's, under John Harbison's direction, Cantata Singers began to include other composers' works: John's own music and that of other living composers, alongside some of the icons of the traditional choral repertoire. And when David Hoose became the Music Director in 1982, he embraced all of that, adding his own passion for under-appreciated gems.

A perfect example of this wide-ranging musical palette is this current 2017-2018 season (<http://www.cantatasingers.org/17-18-season>), in which the Cantata Singers perform

- Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*,
- Bach's *Cantata BWV 21*,
- Arvo Pärt's *Berliner Messe*,
- Arnold Schoenberg's setting of *Psalm 130*, and
- a newly-commissioned work by Peter Child, *Lamentations*.

In his direction of all of these pieces, David inspires the musicians to see the music as a living, breathing thing, just as he does.

Through all of it, David brings the ensemble along with an irreplaceable charm. A colleague of mine in the bass section, James Liu, has compiled a list of what he calls "Hoose-isms," things David has said in rehearsals that capture not just his sense of humor and his love for the enigmatic phrase, but also his desire to share this deep musical understanding with musicians. Here are a few:

"Too many leaves, not enough forest!"

"This will be fun ... eventually."

"Every note is essential. Not every note is important. "

"(On held notes) Don't forget to renew your love of the pitch you are singing."

"It's less like a stage play and more like a conversation with your psychiatrist. ... An anguished leap of a sixth, and the next twelve bars trying to work it out."

Here's to many more years of "Hoose-isms," and congratulations to David Hoose on this honor from the City of Boston!

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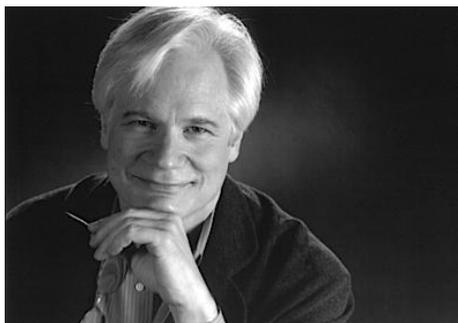
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