

Letters from Readers

Death of Vogt deprives town of a man of vision

To the editor:

The untimely death of Richard Vogt deprives our town of one of its truly unique figures.

Richard was completely dedicated to fulfilling the role he had chosen for himself — bringing music into our lives, not simply for its own sake but in ways that enriched our lives. His perception of what this meant was very personal. But he was a veritable fountain of ideas, and he had the vision and the energy to make his ideas happen.

Richard's happenings touched many, most of all those of us who were privileged to sing with him. As music director of the Greenwich Choral Society, Richard was the consummate perfectionist. He insisted on singers whose voices met his criteria for ensemble singing, passing up many whose musicianship might have made them easier to direct. Nonetheless, he demanded very high standards from the chorus. He got them despite a frequently irascible manner.

Indeed, Richard violated virtually every maxim of effective leadership. He was always the most casually dressed person at any rehearsal. Often he looked as though he had been in the same clothes for the last several days. It didn't matter. The disorderly appearance failed to mask an orderly mind. Richard knew what he wanted to achieve. He knew the music and how it should be sung. He cared deeply about it. He knew how to convey all this to his singers and to instill in us a desire to do better, always better.

Richard also had a sense of style that was his alone. He enjoyed putting programs together that were unusual, even quirky. The most recent Greenwich Choral Society season was vintage Vogt. The Christmas program included the highly unseasonal closing scene from Gounod's *Faust*. The March program combined two masterpieces of Jewish sacred music with Negro spirituals. The final concert joined Brahms' sublime but melancholy *Alto Rhapsodie* with jazzy music by Joplin and Gershwin. Somehow it all worked.

He was not content to construct interesting programs. He frequently engineered singing by the audience, or some limited staging, or participation

by children, if at all possible.

He has been called an "unassuming showman." He was an effective one, and much more. He will be missed.

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