

CONCERTS ON CARTER CREEK—THE BEGINNING

When Dr. Robert Leslie was called by the congregation of Bryan's First Presbyterian Church to become its pastor in 1981, word spread that he was not only a pastor and theologian but also a musician and musicologist who gave both piano and organ recitals. A short time after moving to Bryan he was asked to play an organ recital at the church. Within the congregation and on the music staff were classically trained musicians who were eager to share their musical talents with the congregation and the larger community. Notable were Karen Gartner, the director of music and choir director, and Hildur Satre, the church's organist.

Four members of the Brazos Valley Symphony Orchestra had formed a string ensemble, called the "Kitchen Quartet" because their rehearsal venue was the kitchen of Dr. Manuela Roller, one of quartet's violinists. They and Leslie gave a concert in 1982 in the parlor of the First Presbyterian Church. The program consisted of Haydn's "Emperor" Quartet and the piano quintet by Robert Schumann. It was from this program that Concerts on Carter Creek began to emerge.

John Calvin, the 16th century father of the Presbyterian church, had declared in many of his writings that music was one of God's greatest gifts to humankind. In 1982, when Leslie presented to the church's governing body the possibility of establishing a music series, he emphasized that well-trained local musicians, many of whom were members of the symphony and the vocal chorale, wished to share their music with others. For the first decades of its existence, Concerts on Carter Creek sought out gifted local musicians to be the mainstays of the program series, musicians such as flutist Linda Wiley, oboist Dr. Philip Alexander, mezzo-soprano Patricia Peters, violinists Robert Kenefick and Mary Leland, cellist Arch Baker, and flutist Penny Zent. From time to time performers came from nearby schools of music such as Baylor University and Sam Houston State University. Occasionally others came from farther afield, such as clarinetist Steve Matthes from Corvallis, Oregon, and tenor Barry Craft from Dallas.

Graduate organ students from Baylor, some of whom later became concert organists, performed in the series. Emily Pulley, College Station native and noted opera star, performed while she was a graduate student at the University of North Texas. The church's chancel choir, its men's and brass ensembles highlighted many of the Carter Creek concerts. The chancel choir presented numerous choral works, such as ELIJAH by Mendelssohn, REQUIEM by Faure, and Mozart's TE DEUM on the series.

First Presbyterian Church's sanctuary acoustics, its two pipe organs, the 19th century Mason and Hamlin grand piano, and its harpsichord, made it a place that cried out for music. Dr. Joyce Jones, Professor Emeritus of organ at Baylor University who has also performed on the series, has deemed the church's three-manual Möller organ to be one of the finest in Texas.

Concerts on Carter Creek, named for the location of the church on Carter Creek Parkway in Bryan, was also created to introduce people to this church and its ministries. The series was to be a gift without charge to all who would attend. Funding, most of which was used for advertising, initially came from a less than \$3,000 grant from the church's endowment fund - subsequently enhanced in 2004 by a \$50,000 endowment from the John Otts family. Occasional private gifts to Concerts on Carter Creek made possible the programs that came from outside the local area. One could never express enough thanks for the support of Penny Zent and KAMU, the local public broadcasting station, and Robert Borden and The Eagle newspaper for their features and reviews.

Above all, the musicians gave so much of themselves and their God-given talents. They shared what they loved. Since 1983, Concerts on Carter Creek has continued and has evolved.

SOLI DEO GLORIA-GLORY TO GOD ALONE.

—Robert Leslie at the request of Creighton Miller, 2017