

SPRING 2021 MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Anna Tendy, retired Church Organist and Choir Director
and Dr. Sue Tendy (her daughter), Professor, Retired, U.S.M.A., West Point, NY
Shining a light on our friends and fellow singers

OSQ is indeed fortunate to have among its membership numerous diverse and dedicated individuals. It was my good fortune to speak with two of those members recently – Anna Tendy, Alto 2 (97 years young!), and her daughter, Sue Tendy, Alto 2. Learning their stories illustrated the range and depth of the appeal that OSQ has for so many people.

Sue Tendy generously provided some wonderful background regarding her mother, Anna, from their documented family history. According to this record, Anna Appignani was born on November 6, 1923 in Staten Island, NY to Pinardi Appignani of Spoltore, Italy and Themis Nomicou of Athens, Greece. In 1947, Anna married William M. Tendy, Sr. He later became the Chief Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York. During the 39 years of their marriage, Anna and Bill welcomed seven children into their home. Today Anna has 14 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren.

Anna's education included earning a degree in Music from Hunter College, as well as a Master's Degree in Education from St. John's University, the latter while her seven children were still living at home and without her husband realizing she was going to graduate school! When Anna became church organist and choir director for the Men's Choir of Holy Rosary Church in Harlem, NY, the group was often referred to as "100 Men and a Girl".

The family moved from Harlem to Queens, NY in 1957 where Anna continued her career as a church organist, choir director, and music teacher for many churches in the Queens area until her retirement in 2004. Anna was also an accomplished opera singer who performed with the Amato Opera Company. In 1951 she gave a solo performance at Times Hall in New York City, receiving favorable reviews from the New York Times. As dedicated as Anna has always been to her children and extended family, she was equally passionate about her work as a church organist and as a singer with many church choirs, including the Oratorio Society of Queens.

Even with the outstanding background material that Sue presented in her family's history, I still had a few questions of my own.

Q. When and how did you get started with music? Who was your greatest influence?

A. Anna said that there was always music in her house when she was a child. She was influenced by her father who played the mandolin, her sister who played piano, and her great aunt who was a professional opera singer. She herself began to sing in church choirs as she was growing up, and soon she was playing piano and organ in church as well as giving lessons. Her mother was a businesswoman. Many of the following generation of seven brothers and sisters, of which Sue is a part, as well as Anna's 14 grandchildren, are either singers, musicians, or involved in the film and entertainment industry. Sue said her greatest musical influence was her mother, who was her piano teacher, and her father, who encouraged all the kids to sing TV jingles, and old-timey sing-along songs by Burl Ives and Mitch Miller. The whole family has



been surrounded by music all their lives. (At Sue's wedding someone asked Anna if you had to audition to become a member of the family. Sure enough, Sue's husband plays guitar daily!)

Q. What motivated you to join OSQ at this particular time?

A. After viewing the OSQ Holiday 2020 video performance of "Let There Be Peace on Earth", Anna and Sue decided to become OSQ members for the Spring 2021 semester, principally because the "Zoom" format made it possible for Anna to attend rehearsals. As the story unfolded it turned out that Anna's membership this semester is actually an "encore" because she had been an OSQ member in the past. The first time around she found her way to OSQ after attending a concert and also because, as a fellow church organist, she knew and admired our Artistic Director and Conductor, David Close. For Sue, joining OSQ at this time presented an opportunity to spend additional quality time with her mother as well as providing important social contact for Anna.

Q. In addition to OSQ, what things bring you joy during this challenging time? How have you faced the feeling of isolation, as well as changes to your life and routine?

A. "My family and my music have brought me solace and joy during this difficult time", said Anna. Frequent small family gatherings and FaceTime visits lifted her spirits and made her feel less isolated. Music is often a component of these gatherings. Sue is currently taking fiddle lessons, adding another string instrument to her lengthy repertoire of guitar, banjo, mandolin, autoharp, and ukulele. Both women shared that they have pets who also bring them joy, confiding that at one time Anna had a dog that would sing with her!

Q. You have a theory regarding musicians and longevity, please be kind enough to talk about your point of view.

A. "Many conductors and performers have lived and performed well into their eighties and even nineties", Anna stated, citing Toscanini, Kurt Masur, and Tony Bennett as proof of her theory that music may add years to your life. According to Anna, by using your mind and your memory, music helps to keep your body working. Singing especially requires the use of memory, breathing (good for oxygenating the blood), and upper body strength. All of which add to wellness and longevity.

Q. Do you have any advice or insights you would like to share with your fellow singers?

A. Both Anna and Sue agree that David is doing a great job. By continuing to function in a new form during the lockdown and the past year of COVID-19, OSQ has created a wonderful connection for so many people and continued its community outreach. The advice both women offer to all OSQ singers is "Practice!" Anna said, "The voice is a muscle, use it or lose it!"