

Honoring Richard Aslanian

Music Director, Lake Shore Baptist Church, 1990-2007



Richard has been a wonderful colleague for all of my time at Lake Shore. From his thorough knowledge of sacred music to his incredible keyboard skills to his commitment to offer his best for worship to his patience with our wild ideas(!), he has enriched us with his ministry. His presence will be greatly missed. — Dorisanne Cooper

I will never hear *Amahl and the Night Visitors* without thinking of Richard or “Gesù Bambino” without thinking of Judith — or “Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silent” without thinking of the time “young Richard” got locked in the choir robing room just before the service, escaped through the window, slid down the pole, raced up the back steps and into the sanctuary to sing. At the back of the church his father appeared calm, despite the unpredictable moment. Richard’s calmness and timing help keep the rest of us on track. I’ve watched him practice with student musicians at church, and he is at one with their songs, just as his hands and a piano keyboard seem like one living, beautiful instrument of praise. Thank you for so many years of ministry together. — *Sharlande Sledge*

Richard taught me to appreciate singing in Latin. It was a joke among choir members that “Bobbee does not like the Latin pieces”, but the truth was that I learned to appreciate the beauty in them, thanks be to Richard Aslanian. — *Bobbee Watts*

Our choir is a small one, and we haven’t many trained voices. Sitting in the bass section of that choir, I’ve been surprised time and again with how very much Richard can get out of us. It’s not just the regular comments that we should “shape your vowels more; drop your jaw” that improve us; it’s perhaps the almost-subvocal grunt that Richard delivers just as he launches into a musical moment on Sunday, a moment that he intends for us to hit just right. Richard leads us to do better than our best. — Tom Hanks

Richard and Judith brought the kind of church music I was taught to appreciate from my earliest childhood, when I sat on the bench of the pipe organ every Saturday as my mother prepared for the Sunday service. This was in Illinois, and continued at various churches in Cincinnati, Ohio, and even to here to Waco. I took 8 years of piano—all classical, so grew to appreciate the great composers. My music education continued singing this kind of music in Choral groups at Denison University in Ohio, and in the choral groups at The University of Cincinnati, and here at the choir of Lake Shore. Richard has brought to us this kind of glorious church music, so my love and continued education of this glorious music has continued in my life for 78 years. I will sorely miss their contribution to the beauty of the church services at Lake Shore. My fondest wishes for happiness go with them as they continue to enrich those around them with their marvelous talent, joy and love for great music. Richard and Judith, I will miss you both, and what you have brought to us these many years.

Grace and Peace. — *Carol Spain*

Richard, with his humble manner, has brought big, beautiful music to Lake Shore. I appreciate his musicality at the piano and will greatly miss his music. — Rachel Sciretti

Richard is the only Minister of Music with whom I’ve never had an argument because whenever we disagreed I figured he must be right. When you play tennis with players better than you are it elevates your own game. With Richard, I was always hoping the sermon would keep up with the music. Getting to serve with Richard was a joy and privilege. His commitment to worship and the music of faith are an amazing gift. — *Brett Younger*

Dear Richard and Judith: It is with very sincere regret that we have to bid both of you "adieu". Your musical talents and vast knowledge of music literature have benefitted our program immensely. Your close association with the musical talent being fostered at Baylor has made possible recruitment of other wonderful additions to the program even if only on a temporary basis. We have enjoyed the performances of outstanding vocalists and instrumentalists. We were particularly delighted about the spontaneous outbreak of applause by the congregation after Kiri's phenomenal vocal presentation. Hallelujah!!!!!! I [Sam] was a member of the search committee that hired Richard, and I have not for a moment regretted my "aye" vote! We wish you the best in your new position in Houston. They are very lucky folks. — *Sam and Helen Hastings*

It was my privilege to be pastor when we hired Richard many years ago. I like his style. I like his commitment to excellence. I liked his patience with tenors like me. His devotion to Lake Shore and all things musical were a source of continual inspiration for me. I liked him when we hired him. Over the years I have come to love him. A huge loss for Lake Shore and somebody else's big gain. May a cloud of love and deep satisfaction follow you wherever you go, Richard. — Nathan Stone

Richard and Judith, I did not have the advantage of "growing up" on classical music like Carol. Until I was in elementary school, I didn't know there was any other kind of music except hillbilly, popular, big band, and good old gospel songs. My introduction to classical music began when we first-graders were taken to the auditorium once a week to listen to Walter Damrosch and his music for school children. I remember how different and how appealing his music sounded. That was the beginning of my musical education, but I have a long way to go. You two have been invaluable in furthering my appreciation and enjoyment of sacred music. And, I might add, you have contributed significantly in raising the quality of music for all of us at Lake Shore. Thanks for your hard and faithful and rewarding service to Lake Shore. We shall miss you terribly, but we will give thanks for your time with us and wish you God Speed. — *Most sincerely, Rufus Spain*

There are only two special things about our otherwise very common church choir. The first is the character of its members. The second was Richard's expertise, which he applied with the greatest humility, patience, and good-humor. He made us much more special than we are. — Jeannette Denton

Richard could elicit the most moving and astonishing musical response from twelve or twenty members of the choir on Sunday morning than anyone I could imagine. — *Coke Held.*

Richard has been the consummate professional and has given the church a consistently rich variety of high quality music. — Karrin Ford

After working and worshiping with Richard for nearly seventeen years, I have so many memories. For example, I remember the night when I dragged him out to my car, because he had never heard "Bohemian Rhapsody," a rock song with operatic themes, by the group Queen. After listening to the long recording, Richard smiled and said, "Well, that's clever!" . . . To understand Richard's real talent, you would need to attend a few of his rehearsals. That's when you learn about his uncanny ability to identify, among 50-odd unruly musicians, the particular singer(s) or instrumentalist(s) who need to adjust their pitch, tempo, volume, intonation, pronunciation, bow work, or other technique to produce the best final performance. When Richard joined us at Lake Shore, he took the title, "Music Director" because I don't think he was inclined to describe himself as a "minister." What I have appreciated during these seventeen years, and particularly during his recent struggle with a challenge to his health, has been Richard's development from a mere musical virtuoso to a deeply reflective minister of music. I wish him all the best in his continuing music and ministry. — *Steve Gardner*

Without Mr. Aslanian and his Job-like patience, I would never be able to follow a conductor. — Aaron Garcia.

When you sit in the choir facing the congregation every Sunday, you get a unique perspective on what Richard has meant to Lake Shore. I've seen people sitting rock still, absolutely transfixed by his piano playing. I've seen people deeply touched by an anthem. I've seen people smiling broadly, feeling real joy, in response to a soloist that he's brought to us. What Richard has given Lake Shore, and Judith, too, is their wonderful ability to move us through music. I'm not sure there's a better expression of God's love. — *Mike Raymond*