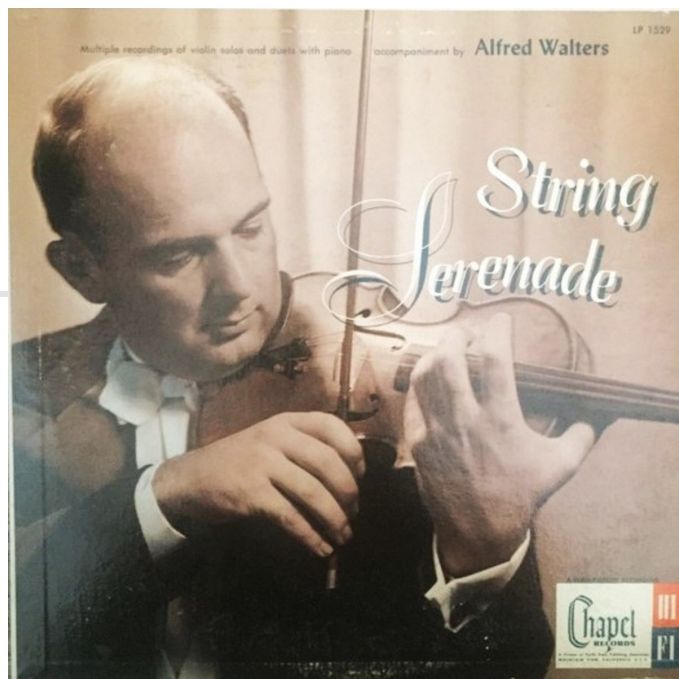


Walters, Alfred

(1915–1972)

DAN SHULTZ

Dan Shultz, emeritus professor of music, Walla Walla University, has researched and written extensively about Seventh-day Adventist music history and musicians. His publications include *A Great Tradition*—a history of music at Walla Walla University, and the *Adventist Musicians Biographical Resource*—an encyclopedia with biographies of over 1100 Adventist musicians. He founded the International Adventist Musicians Association, serving as its president for ten years and editing its publications and website for over thirty years. Shultz and his wife, Carolyn (nee Stevens), live in College Place, Washington.



Chapel Records album cover.

Credit: Discogs.com

Alfred Walters was a concert violinist, highly-regarded music educator and orchestral conductor at Atlantic Union College and La Sierra College (now University).

Early Years

Alfred was born in Tonawanda, New York, on May 31, 1915, the second oldest of seven children of Harvey C. Walters, a piano teacher, and Maria F. Montoro Walters, a native of Italy.¹ Music was a central activity in the family. An older brother, Peter Louis, a pianist, graduated from the New England Conservatory and played as a soloist with the Boston Symphony in 1935,² and a younger brother, Robert W. (Bob), played in a popular dance band in the 1940s.³

When he was six years old, Alfred and his brother, Peter, played piano solos at evangelistic meetings conducted by R. S. Fries in 1922 at the Schubert-Teck Theater in Buffalo.⁴ Alfred switched to violin after attending a concert by Fritz Kreisler and, backstage after the concert, meeting the famed violinist, who told him he would become a great musician.⁵ He received his first violin on Christmas Day, 1924, at age nine. Following graduation from the high school in Tonawanda at age 17, the school, seeking to build up its orchestra, arranged for Alfred to give free lessons to interested students.⁶

Atlantic Union College Years

Walters received a bachelor of science degree in music and psychology at State Teachers College in Fredonia, New York, in 1940 and married Margaret Louise Schulz on July 13, 1940.⁷ They would have a daughter, Denise; and three sons, Robert, David, and John.⁸

In 1942, after serving for a year as director of instrumental music at a school in Kenmore, New York, and a year as band director at Griffith Institute in Springville, New York, Walters joined the faculty of Atlantic Union College in South Lancaster, Massachusetts. He chaired the music program, directed the choir, band, and orchestra, and taught violin, piano, and wind instruments. While on leave for the last of his five years at AUC (1946-1947), Walters completed an M.Mus. at Boston University and soloed with the Boston Pops Orchestra conducted by Arthur Fiedler.⁹

La Sierra Years

Walters accepted an invitation to teach at La Sierra College (now University) in southern California beginning in the fall of 1947. Assigned to teach violin and direct the school's orchestra, he also assumed leadership of the band at the end of his first year when its director left. Even though he quickly gained popularity as band director, it would prove to be an interim appointment that ended five years later because of the string programs rapid growth.¹⁰

For the remainder of his career, Walters taught violin, played frequently as a violin soloist, directed the orchestra, and performed often, giving countless recitals and concerts in the United States, Canada, Mexico, and Europe. He produced five solo records and several orchestra albums. His last record, *Midnight Bells*, released in 1972, was a memorial to violinist Fritz Kreisler, who had inspired him as a young boy to pursue a career in music.¹¹

In 1968, Walters soloed with the Los Angeles Pops Orchestra and, in 1969 and in 1970, with the Riverside Symphony. He was concertmaster of the San Bernardino Orchestra and served as concertmaster with the Riverside Symphony from 1965 until near the end of his life. At the General Conference sessions of 1966 (Detroit) and 1970 (Atlantic City), he served as music coordinator and conducted the session orchestra.¹²

At the time of his death, Walters was developing string programs in the Southern California Conference's elementary schools and academies and was director of the Loma Linda University Orchestra (La Sierra College and LLU had merged five years earlier, a union that continued until 1990).¹³

Through the years at La Sierra, Walters became known for his artistry on the violin and the polished musical performances of his orchestras. His students knew him affectionately as "Prof Walters" and dedicated the 1957 *Meteor* yearbook to him, describing him as a Christian gentleman, a rare artist, inspiring teacher, and friend. They also praised his courage, unselfishness, devotion to duty, understanding, and kind heart.¹⁴

In the spring of 1970 Walters left his treasured 1916 Francesco Guadanini violin and case on the rear of his car while talking with friends as he was preparing to leave after a performance. It flew off the back of his car on the freeway and was destroyed by another car. He was devastated by this loss and unable to play for several weeks. That summer and fall, his colleagues and students campaigned to raise money to replace the loss with a valuable 1730 violin by Carlos Testore of Milan. Walters was so overwhelmed by this generosity that he immediately scheduled an "Appreciation Concert" in November.¹⁵

In the summer of 1972, Walters accompanied the Loma Linda University Chamber singers on a tour of Northern Europe and the Scandinavian countries. However, his participation in the tour ended abruptly with the recurrence of cancer, which had first been diagnosed in 1955. Shortly after he arrived back in the United States his right leg was amputated in an attempt to contain the disease.¹⁶

Despite this setback, he continued to make a few appearances until shortly before his death on December 11, 1972, at age 57.¹⁷ An Alfred Walters Scholarship is now awarded to La Sierra students who plan to teach music in Adventist schools.

SOURCES

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NOTES

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