

# Dr. Charlene Archibeque

(b. 1935)

Born in Mt. Sterling, Ohio, USA

## Education

B.A. – University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI

M.M. – San Diego State University, San Diego, CA

D.M.A. – University of Colorado, Boulder, CO

## 2025 Robert Shaw Choral Award recipient (ACDA)

Born in a small town south of Columbus, Ohio, Charlene Archibeque took interest in music from a young age. Her father—the owner and manager of a Ford Agency—grew up in a musical family, where many either played violin or piano. Her mother was a homemaker and played the piano.

Young Charlene attended a school with one full-time music teacher for all 12 grades. She began piano lessons in 2nd grade (not long after the Pearl Harbor was attacked at the start of U.S. involvement in WWII), violin in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, cymbals in 6<sup>th</sup> grade (so as to play in marching band), then switched to field drum. By the age of 15 she was practicing piano 3 hours a day and played violin in the high school orchestra. Her high school marching band was the only all-girl high school marching band in the state of Ohio (she stated, the guys all played football); those girls marched in parades and played half time shows at every Friday night football game. During 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades Archibeque was the pianist for the high school choir, started a girls' sextet that entertained local community organizations using arrangements of the *Chordettes*, all while she sang in church choir, played the pipe organ for summer services, and entertained community groups playing her six-foot Deagan Marimba.

Archibeque's piano teacher suggested she attend Juilliard however she had no desire to become a concert pianist. Archibeque chose Oberlin Conservatory for its reputation and closeness to home, however Oberlin was not a good fit. After freshman year, Archibeque happily transferred to the University of Michigan where she was able to learn about conducting from Elizabeth Green and play percussion in the Symphonic Band under the instruction of George Cavendar.

Archibeque noted that her assigned voice instructors at both Oberlin and the University of Michigan, were not versed in vocal technique, therefore she chose to study voice privately after graduation. She enjoyed singing in large oratorio choirs at both schools and anticipated teaching both instrumental and choral music in the future. However, when hired by San Diego Public Schools in 1957, she was assigned to teach Junior High music classes and 2 speech classes. Note that in 1957, the tradition was maintained where men taught instrumental (band and orchestra) music and women taught choral music.

While at O'Farrell Junior High School (1957-1963) Archibeque led, coordinated, and collaborated in team teaching. During this period, she earned her master's degree, began teaching choirs at Claremont High School in San Diego (1964), then Crawford High School where her choirs earned Superior ratings, and founded the All-City Honor Choir for San Diego school system. She joined the faculty for the ISOMATA (Idyllwild Summer Organization for Music and the Arts) and left high school teaching for a faculty position at Mesa Junior College in San Diego. With drive to earn a doctorate, she completed her D.M.A. in 1969 at the University of Colorado (the first woman to complete a doctorate in choral conducting in the United States) where she worked with Lynn Whitten and Warner Imig. After that, she secured the position Director of Choral Activities at San Jose State University in 1970.

At San Jose State Archibeque created the SJSU Choraliers, and over her time there completed sixteen concert tours to Australia, Mexico and throughout Europe, as well as conducted at Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, Royal Albert Hall in London, and at the Berliner Philharmonie. She first conducted an All-State Choir—New Mexico All-State Treble Choir—in the 1970s and continued with 3-4 honor choirs every year since then, including recent All-State Choirs in 25 states, as well as at conferences for the National Association of Church Musicians, Episcopal Conference Center Oakhurst, and Music Educators of Texas, Missouri, and Arizona. Her choirs were invited to perform at Chapman University Invitational Festivals when she became colleagues and friends with William Hall. Through the Southern California Vocal Association (which later merged with ACDA), she also became close associates with Charles Hirt, Weston Noble, Jane Hardester, Roger Wagner, Paul Salomunovich, and others.

Dr. Archibeque is the recipient of the 'Howard Swan Award' (2008) presented by California ACDA, as well as the University of Colorado's 'Excellence in Choral Music Award' (2013), 'Outstanding Alumna' (2019) and ACDA's *Robert Shaw Choral Award* (2025). She has served as Visiting Professor and guest choral clinician at the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, University of Delaware, University of Colorado, Seattle University, and Westminster Choir College. As guest conductor, she has appeared with the California Bach Society, Santa Clara Chorale in their period Baroque Christmas concert series, and the French Academy in Aix-en-Provence. Archibeque was one of three women conductors asked to conduct the Legacy Choir at the ACDA National Conference in Kansas City (2019). She was awarded an Honorary Life Membership of the National Collegiate Organization.

Following 35 years as Director of Choral Activities at San José State University, Charlene Archibeque returned to the SJSU campus as Acting Director of Choral Activities for the academic year 2010-11. She has served on the Board of the American Beethoven Society, past President of the Silicon Valley League of the San Francisco Symphony and is Editor of the Charlene Archibeque Choral Series with Santa Barbara Music Publishers. Archibeque produced a DVD published by GIA entitled "How to Make a Good Choir Sound Great" which highlights placement of singers for rehearsals and concerts.