



I Hear Adventism Singing | BY BONNIE DWYER



It was October 22, a Sabbath in 2011, so we were gathered for Sabbath School at the Roseville SDA Church. The program was to be a celebration of Adventist music. The first guest to be introduced was Wayne Hooper, who charmed the audience with a quick song to help them remember their Memory Verse. Poet and hymn writer Annie Smith came next. She recited her “Proofreader’s Lament” and talked about how the Great Disappointment drove her out of the Advent movement for a time. The coincidence of having the same dream as Joseph Bates about one of his meetings convinced her to return, she said. Then James White came in from the back of the room, singing as he walked down the aisle.

We sang old Adventist hymns and heard about the time James and Ellen White sang a duet at General Conference. Annie Smith downplayed the stories of early pioneers sometimes associated with the verses in her song “I Saw One Weary.” She emphasized the aspect of hope when she introduced her hymn. Wayne Hooper told us that his inspiration in writing that great Adventist hymn “We Have This Hope” came from Brahms. So we listened to Brahms and then sang our hearts out with the all-time favorite General Conference theme song.

It was Wayne Hooper’s son Jim who was re-enacting his father for us. Wayne Judd played James White, and Robin Franzke acted the part of Annie Smith. Skipping across time with these historical figures highlighted the continued power and importance of Adventist music. Re-enactment of historical figures gave their words new life and portent as stories were told. As a congregation, I felt that we bonded with each other in new ways, as well as bonding with our musical heritage.

As noted in the Introduction to *The SDA Hymnal* (that Hooper helped to produce), “From their beginning, Seventh-day Adventists have been a singing people. The very

first book they published was the 1849 collection of *Hymns for God’s Peculiar People That Keep the Commandments of God and the Faith of Jesus*. James White published five hymnals and four supplements even before the church was formally organized in 1863.”

In this issue of *Spectrum*, it is a pleasure to hear from two of Adventism’s finest musicians: Herbert Blomstedt and Lilian Doukhan. The internationally famous symphony conductor Blomstedt gives us his personal “Credo.” What beliefs does a life in music develop? In a review of Doukhan’s book *In Tune with God*, reviewer Ken Parsons lauds her efforts to restore music’s good name.

And just who are the people who are currently singing in Adventist churches? Ron Osborn analyzes two surveys of Adventists that come to very different conclusions about just who the people in the pew are. Can both be right? Acknowledging that even trained statisticians read data differently, it is fascinating to think about what a difference the numbers make. Obviously, the latest reports from the Annual Council session show that the denomination is paying increased attention to what the numbers say. Pastor Marvin Wray gives us another view of the local church based on his journey across the United States via motorcycle, visiting Adventist churches along the way.

Whoever the people, in whatever church, in whichever form of praise they choose to worship, my musical wish is for the power in Adventist singing to again be felt as in the days of James White and that, like the psalmist, we will sing praises to God with all our being. ■

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