

## 44. Dr. Al G. Wright

(London, England, June 23, 1916)

President 1981, Honorary Life member 2000, Honorary Life President 2007



**Director of Bands  
Purdue University**

Al G. Wright was born on June 23, 1916, in London, England. When he was very young his family came to the United States. They settled in Pontiac, Michigan, where he attended school. While in high school, Wright played the french horn in the bands and orchestras directed by Dale Harris. He received both his bachelor's (1937) and his master's degrees (1947) from the University of Miami, Florida. While attending the university Wright performed with the symphony band, symphony orchestra, and was also a member of the Miami Opera Orchestra for a number of years.

From 1938 until 1954 Wright was the director of the Miami Senior High School Bands, orchestra and marching band. During his tenure these organizations received national recognition with consistently superior ratings at state and national contests. The Miami Senior High School Band made frequent appearances at FMEA conferences, Orange Bowl parades and pageants, and at a special performance for the American Bandmasters Association. Additional travel took them to the southeast part of the United States and to Cuba.

In 1954 Wright accepted the position of director of bands at Purdue University, where his responsibilities were to

conduct the symphony band and the "All-American" marching band. He initiated an orchestra program, serving as its conductor for several years, and a Renaissance ensemble that performed for many campus functions. His Purdue ensembles made numerous international tours: two to Colombia, South America; seven to Venezuela; a three-week tour of Japan; a two-week featured appearance at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto, Canada; and a three-week tour of Europe. Units of the Purdue Band conducted by Dr. Wright appeared in four separate productions on the stage of Radio City Music Hall in New York City for a total of 664 performances.

In 1954 Wright was one of the founding members of the American School Band Directors Association (ASBDA), and in 1961 he founded the National Band Association (NBA), serving as its founding president, secretary-treasurer, and then (2000) honorary life president. His creative efforts helped MENC's president establish the MENC high school honors band, which appeared at several MENC conventions and at the Kennedy Center. Further association with the MENC president and with Chicago's supervisor of music, Nelmatilda Woodard, led to the organization of a large parade for the Chicago MENC convention, celebrating the return of music to the Chicago City School System. In 1978 Wright assisted Colonel George Howard in the development of the John Philip Sousa Foundation and has served this organization as its President, CEO, and Chairman of the Board.

Wright has been president of numerous band organizations: Florida Bandmasters Association (1948-49); Florida Orchestra Association (1941-42, 1949-50); Florida Music Educators Association (1946); North American Band Conductors Coordinating Commission (1975-76); National Interscholastic Music Activities Commission (1958); Big Ten Band Directors National Association (1977). He holds memberships in CBDNA, the International Music Festivals, and is a member of the Jury for World Music Festivals in Kerkrade, Holland. Wright was elected to membership in ABA in 1949 and served as its president in 1981.

Numerous fraternal organizations have honored Wright with honorary membership: Kappa Kappa Psi, Phi Beta Mu, and Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia. He has been elected to the Academy of Wind and Percussive Arts National Hall of Fame of Distinguished Conductors, and has received the Star of the Order of Merit from the Sousa Foundation. Kappa Kappa Psi presented him with their Distinguished

Service Medal, and in 1982 Purdue University awarded him the Distinguished Alumnus Award. In addition, he was the recipient of an honorary LLD degree from Troy State University in 1981.

Wright has served as guest conductor, lecturer or adjudicator in most of the 50 states, in five Canadian provinces, in Japan, Europe and England. He is listed in Marquis' *Who's Who in America*, and *Who's Who in the World*.

Wright is married to ABA member Gladys Stone Wright, herself a conductor, composer and clinician. She is also the founding president of the Women Band Directors International Association, and president of International Music Tours, Inc.

Dr. Wright's papers are in the ABA Research Center, University of Maryland.  
Biography courtesy of Al G. Wright.