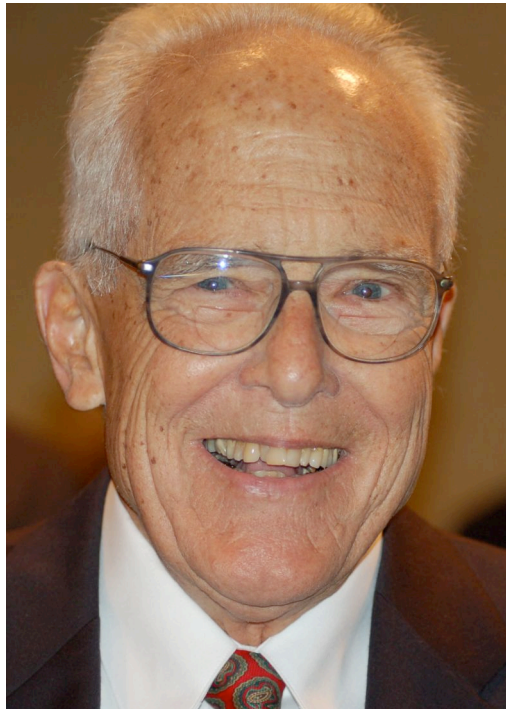


# Westfield

E-NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTFIELD CENTER

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Fenner Douglass

Fenner Douglass, distinguished organist, scholar and teacher, died peacefully on Saturday morning, April 5, 2008 in Naples, Florida at Moorings Park.

Douglass went to Oberlin College where he studied organ with Arthur Poister. It was the beginning of a long relationship with the school—after earning a B.A. in 1942 and B. Mus. and M.M. in 1949, he joined the Oberlin faculty. He remained there until 1974, when he became university organist and professor at Duke University, where he had been consultant for the installation of a large Flentrop organ in the Gothic chapel. Trained as a performer and teacher, Douglass pursued a parallel career as a scholar. As a pioneer in the historical performance movement, he pursued scholarly interests that focused on the organ traditions of France. His first book, *The Language of the Classical French Organ*, (Yale University Press, 1969), has become the standard reference work for organ music of the French baroque period; a revised edition was issued in paperback in

1995.

Subsequently, Douglass' major research efforts centered on the work of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, the French organ master who took organ building into new directions and standards of excellence in the second half of the 19th century. Fenner Douglass was successful in obtaining most of the personal documents, correspondence, and contracts of Cavaillé-Coll, which became the basis for a two-volume work of 1,534 pages, *Cavaillé-Coll and the Musicians* (Sunbury Press, 1980). Its value as a reference work was confirmed when in 1999 Yale University Press produced a condensed and revised edition of the work, titled *Cavaillé-Coll and the French Romantic Tradition*. Douglass was also the editor of a two-volume work published by the Westfield Center honoring the organ builder Charles Fisk. In recognition of Fenner Douglass' scholarly contributions, William Peterson and Lawrence Archbold dedicated to him their book, *French Organ Music from the Revolution to Franck and Widor* (University of Rochester Press, 1995). Douglass was a long-time member and supporter of Westfield, and delivered entertaining and scholarly papers at numerous Westfield conferences. In 2001, Oberlin College awarded him with an honorary doctorate.

Throughout his career, Douglass was an effective proponent of organ building based on historical traditions. His close friendship with Dirk Flentrop and Charles Fisk found him frequently working as a consultant with one or the other on organ projects throughout the country. He charted the course for Oberlin's remarkable collection of period instruments with the installation of the Flentrop organ in Warner Concert Hall together with plans for the Brombaugh organ in Fairchild Chapel and ultimately the Fisk organ in Finney Chapel. He was also consultant to Moorings Park as they chose the organ for Bower Chapel. In November 2006, Moorings Park named the Taylor and Boody organ in his honor.

*Dates and details for a Memorial Service in late April or early May, will be announced in due course.*

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