



2018
Inductee



Sterling "Stu" Ainsworth
Benefactor

Fox Valley Arts Hall of Fame Nominee

Sterling "Stu" Ainsworth

2 Stonewood Drive

Saint Charles, Illinois

630:513.9350

Born June 30, 1932 in Fort Dodge, Iowa

Category: Arts Benefactor in the Performing Arts

*"But music was his life, it was not his livelihood,
and it made him feel so happy and it made him feel so good.
And he sang from his heart and he sang from his soul.
He did not know how well he sang; it just made him whole."*

Mr. Tanner by Harry Chapin

A. Eligibility

Sterling "Stu" Ainsworth is truly a *Man for All Seasons*. His arts advocacy, support, appreciation, enthusiasm, kindness and interest has inspired thousands in the Fox Valley over many years. For the arts organizations that have benefited from his consistent and significant leadership and support, he has made a crucial difference in their existence.

Sterling Ainsworth has lived in the Fox Valley since 1978, first in Elgin and in St. Charles since 1994, and has been an arts benefactor in this area for approximately 39 years. Mr. Ainsworth was recognized for his contributions to the arts in 2017 when he was named **Volunteer of the Year** by the *Illinois Council of Orchestras*. Mr. Ainsworth is well-known in the music community - locally, nationally and internationally. He spent years traveling with *Berkshire Choral International* in Santa Fe, New Mexico; Sheffield, Massachusetts; Canterbury, England; Salzburg, Austria; Montreal and Vancouver, Canada.

B. Required Information

1. Education and Degrees Earned

Bachelor of Science, Iowa State University, 1954

Fort Dodge Senior High School, Fort Dodge, Iowa, 1950

2. Professional

Mr. Ainsworth was born in Fort Dodge, Iowa, on June 30, 1932. He enjoyed music as a young student and played the piano and clarinet when he was young. Mr. Ainsworth matriculated at Iowa State University. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture. His professional career was devoted to commercial agriculture with emphasis on increasing yield efficiencies and control of pests and weeds. Prior to his retirement from Abbott Laboratories in 1990, Mr. Ainsworth served as manager of Global Agricultural Projects. He held positions in field sales, marketing, product management and sales management for other large chemical companies including Dow Chemical, CIBA-Geigy and International Minerals and Chemicals.

While managing and excelling at his chosen career, in his free time Mr. Ainsworth was, and remains in his retirement, a participant and a major benefactor of the arts. He serves/served as a board member for several arts organizations including the *Elgin Symphony Orchestra(ESO)*, *Elgin Youth Symphony Orchestra(EYSO)*, *Elgin Choral Union (now Elgin Master Chorale(EMC))*, the *Fox Valley Arts Hall of Fame* and is a member of the *St. Charles Arts Council* and *St. Charles Cultural Commission*. He is a long-time supporter of *Steel Beam Theatre* in St. Charles. He was also a board member of the now defunct *Elgin Opera* and is a major supporter of *Elgin's Soirée Lyrique*. For seven of the last eight years, he co-chaired the *American Grand (Piano) Concert Series* presentations at Elgin Community College.

Stu Ainsworth is very involved with Kiwanis International as a Past-President and is a current member of the St. Charles Noon Club, as well as a Past-Lieutenant Governor of Division 10. He is a member of two Kiwanis clubs. He is also a member and major sponsor of the *Fox Valley Preservation Partners*.

Mr. Ainsworth continues his advocacy for the entire arts spectrum in the Fox Valley. His support of the fledgling *Chamber Music on the Fox* has been crucial as the embryonic organization continues to expand its repertoire and offerings on an annual basis.

3. Significant Awards and Recognitions

In 2016, the ESO honored Mr. Ainsworth by renaming the annual children's concerts *Ainsworth Concerts for Youth*. In 2017, the *Illinois Council of Orchestras (ICO)* named him as **Illinois Volunteer of the Year** based on the significant contributions he has made to the *ESO*, *EYSO* and *EMC*. Mr. Ainsworth has a strong reputation in the music community – nationally, locally and internationally. He spent years traveling with *Berkshire Choral International* in Santa Fe, New Mexico; Canterbury, England; Salzburg, Austria; Sheffield, Massachusetts; Montreal and Vancouver, Canada.

4. Positive Impact on the Arts in the Fox Valley

How do you measure the contribution of a person who is not directly involved in the creative process? We can measure numbers of exhibits, commissions, awards an artist has earned as one approximation of worth and contribution to society. In the case of a patron, contributor or advocate, those measures are much more difficult to quantify or reduce to a series of metrics. Sterling "Stu" Ainsworth has spent most of his late-adult years as an

emissary for the *Elgin Symphony Orchestra*, the *Elgin Youth Symphony Orchestra*, the *Elgin Choral Union* (now *Elgin Master Chorale*), the *Elgin Opera* (now defunct), the *American Grand Concert Series*, the *Saint Charles Art and Music Festival*, the *St. Charles Arts Council* and *St. Charles Cultural Commission*. He is also a long-time supporter of *Steel Beam Theatre* in St. Charles.

Mr. Ainsworth has been recognized by his peers as well as outside agencies that have confirmed and applauded his contributions. Since 2002, he has served on the Board of the *Elgin Symphony Orchestra*. He is the Chair of the Education and Community Outreach Committee on the ESO Board. Through his leadership and vision, the ESO has greatly expanded its community presence and its community involvement outside of the normal concert productions. His passion and support for ESO programs for children inspired the ESO to rename its annual children's concerts in his honor. In 2016, this series was renamed the *Ainsworth Concerts for Youth*. Each spring between 7,500 and 8,500 students attend a concert performed by the ESO at the Hemmens Cultural Center in Elgin. The Education Committee produces a teacher's guide that is used in the classroom for several months prior to attendance at this concert. Mr. Ainsworth is also the lead sponsor of the ESO's Masterclass series and Traveling Ensembles program.

The Listeners Club was founded several years ago under the leadership of Mr. Ainsworth. The Listeners Club meets before every ESO Classics Series concert. These lectures are conducted at the Gail Borden Public Library where attendance has steadily grown. This series is also repeated at Greenfields of Geneva, a senior living facility in Geneva, Illinois.

Another critical part of the ESO mission is bringing music to patients and caregivers in hospital settings. Stu Ainsworth strongly supported and advocated for this program before it was implemented in 2009. Each week, ESO musicians perform at Advocate Sherman Hospital providing the healing power of classical music to patients, families and caregivers in one of life's most stressful environments. This program has also been expanded to the AMITA System and to Advocate Good Shepherd in Barrington.

Mr. Ainsworth is a strong supporter of the *Elgin Youth Symphony Orchestra (EYSO)*, serving as a board member, and as president of the board from 2007 to 2010. The EYSO has several honors chamber ensembles under the auspices of their *Chamber Music Institute (CMI)*. Since 2007, the *Sterling Brass Quintet (SBQ)* has wowed audiences with their signature sounds. SBQ is made possible by the generosity of Mr. Ainsworth. He was the founding patron of the SBQ and has been its sole sponsor since its inception.

Mr. Ainsworth played the piano and clarinet while growing up in Iowa. He later discovered that his favorite instrument was his voice. He both sang and served on the board, including as board president, of the *Elgin Choral Union* (later *Elgin Master Chorale*). He is a major sponsor of Elgin's *Soirée Lyrique*.

Mr. Ainsworth is a lead sponsor of the *St. Charles Arts Council's Art in Public Places* project through a generous contribution. This project catalogues and celebrates the collection of public art downtown, in the library, parks, park district buildings, schools, businesses and more. Mr. Ainsworth was a board member and event chairman for the *St. Charles Art and Music Festival* and has co-chaired seven of the last eight *American Grand Concert Series* at Elgin Community College.

Sterling "Stu" Ainsworth has achieved a unique position in the Fox Valley. As a benefactor, donor, director, board member, and leader, he has created a model of service for others to emulate and follow. The arts need stability and support. As government priorities have shifted away from in-school and not-for-profit support of the performing and visual arts, persons such as Mr. Ainsworth are an even more important resource for arts organizations. In each organization that Mr. Ainsworth has supported, he has deeply embedded his values and his appreciation for the arts. Each year, thousands of students attend the *Ainsworth Concerts for Youth* at the Hemmens Cultural Center. Many of these students are being exposed to classical music for the first time in their lives. For many, it will be the only exposure. We can never know how these brief moments will change a specific life. We do know that music creates physiological changes to the brain that promote learning and thinking. We do know that if small embers are ignited, these encounters can light fires of genius years from now, unbeknownst to Mr. Ainsworth or any of us.

Whether someone is an attendee at events, theatrical productions or exhibits in St. Charles, a student at an *Ainsworth Concert for Youth*, a member of the *Sterling Brass Quintet*, or simply a patron at a concert of the *ESO*, *EYSO*, *EMC*, or *Soirée Lyrique*, the influence of Mr. Ainsworth's generosity of purse and spirit shines throughout the Fox Valley community creating a clear path for others to follow. There can be no creativity or creative acts without benefactors and sponsors who encourage and elevate the artists' product to a worthy level. Mr. Ainsworth has done this for generations of students and adults in the Fox Valley. His light and his generosity will serve as a beacon to others. His plaque on the Fox Valley Hall of Fame Wall at Hemmens will verify and attest to the value we place on those who create and those who honor and support these creations.