



GOVS WHO LEAD THROUGH SERVICE AWARD

GEORGE AND SHARON MABRY

Retired Faculty Members of the APSU Department of Music

Over the course of many years, Drs. George and Sharon Mabry have brought music and culture to the Clarksville community while teaching in the Music Department at Austin Peay State University. George is originally from Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Sharon is from Newport. They met as students at Florida State University. They then married, graduated and moved to Nashville. While there, Sharon taught high school music for a year and became music editor of what was then the Baptist Sunday School Board. She then went on to earn her master's degree from George Peabody College (now a part of Vanderbilt University) while George worked toward completing his doctoral degree.

In 1970, George was hired at Austin Peay as the director of choral activities. Three months later, Sharon became a professor of music education and voice at APSU. While teaching, Sharon went back to George Peabody College and earned her Doctor of Musical Arts in Vocal Performance. In the late 1970s, she traveled to Austria to study at the Franz-Schubert-Institut, where she earned a performance certificate. She also embarked on a more than 40-year career as an award-winning professional singer, performing as a recitalist and soloist with symphony orchestras across the globe.

George became the first director of the APSU Center of Excellence for the Creative Arts (CECA) in 1985. He viewed the center as a resource for community outreach and elevating support for creative arts outside of the campus community. CECA later named the George Mabry Award in honor of his service. Throughout their careers, George and Sharon mentored area students. Their focus on providing them with more opportunities brought several high-caliber musical events to Clarksville. In the fall of 2010, a group of Clarksville residents, led by local attorney Evans Harvill, organized the Mabry Legacy Campaign, which sought to raise \$500,000 in scholarships in order to rename the concert hall in honor of George and Sharon's commitment to academics and enhancing the community. On November 11, 2012, the space was officially renamed the George and Sharon Mabry Concert Hall.

In 2003, George retired after 33 years with Austin Peay. The published composer then began his second career as director of the Nashville Symphony Chorus, where his performances received national recognition. He fully retired in 2012 and began writing and producing original musicals, such as "An Elegant Obsession," with retired APSU history professor Richard Gildrie. Sharon, who contributed a column for 25 years to the NATS Journal of Singing, continued teaching, performing and writing. Her first book was published by Oxford University Press in 2000 and issued in paperback in 2009. In May 2022, after 52 years of teaching, she retired and earned the designation of being the longest-serving employee in University history. The couple has supported Austin Peay through contributions to many scholarships, the Woodward Library Society and the annual Holiday Dinner. Their service to their community is inspiring.