



**Richard Walter Hillert**, best

known for his work as a composer and teacher of composition, was Distinguished Professor of Music at Concordia University, River Forest, Ill., his alma mater. His *Worthy Is Christ*, with its

antiphon, "This is the Feast of Victory," was written for the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, published in 1978. Known to millions of Christians simply as "This Is the Feast," the canticle is now widely published in more than 30 worship books of many denominations, and sung weekly in worship services around the world.

Richard Hillert was born in Granton, Clark County, Wis., on March 14, 1923. He attended parochial and public schools and later enrolled at Concordia Teachers College, River Forest (now Concordia University Chicago), where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in Education. He served as teacher and music director for parishes in St. Louis, Mo., Wausau, Wis., and Chicago and Westchester, Ill.



He received a Master of Music (1955) and a Doctor of Music (1968) in composition from Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill. He also studied composition with the Italian composer, Goffredo Petrassi, at Aaron Copland's Berkshire Music Center, Tanglewood, Mass.

His career as a teacher at Concordia spanned four decades, from 1959 to 1993. During this time he taught classes in music theory and composition, music literature, 20th century music, orchestration, keyboard instruction, comparative arts and liturgical worship.

**Hillert served as teacher and music director Zion, Wausau, Wis. (1957)**



As a composer, Richard Hillert wrote liturgical pieces and hymns and served as music editor for *Worship Supplement* (1969) and *Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978).

**Richard, here with his parents and older brother Ted, lived and worked in Granton, Wis., until 1947, when he became a student at Concordia, River Forest. (1933)**



**Hillert studied with Goffredo Petrassi at Tanglewood. (1956)**

Among his most frequently performed liturgical works for congregation is *Setting One of Holy Communion* which appears in *Lutheran Book of Worship* and *Lutheran Worship* (1982), which includes *Worthy Is Christ*. Other major liturgical works include a setting of *Evening Prayer* (1984) and a *Eucharistic Festival Liturgy* (1983).

In 1987, *We Rely on the Power of God* was sung in the Mass celebrated by Pope John Paul II in Sun Devil Stadium, Tempe, Ariz. The pope included the text in his sermon.

His compositions and publications include liturgical music for congregation, choral motets, hymns, hymn anthems, psalm settings, organ works, concertatos and cantatas, including settings of the *Christmas Story According to Saint Luke* and *The Passion According to Saint John*. He edited 11 volumes of the *Concordia Hymn Prelude Series*.



**Hillert's career as a teacher at Concordia spanned four decades, from 1959 to 1993.** (1965)

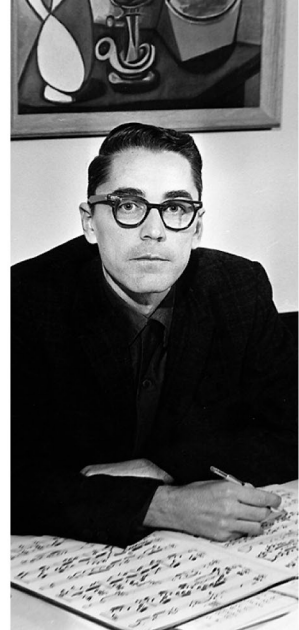
The list of hymns is quite extensive and many of them involved direct collaboration with a number of distinguished hymn poets of the day, including Jaroslav Vajda, Henry Lettermann and Jill Palaez Baumgaertner. His liturgical texts were derived mainly from the biblical Psalms, the ordinary and proper readings from the Old and New Testaments, and words from the historic liturgy of the Western church. Non-liturgical compositions include symphonic works for orchestra,

chamber works for small orchestra and ensembles as well as many works for keyboard, instrumental solos and songs. Major organ works include *Ricercata*, and concert works with sacred texts, such as *Five Canticles from the Exodus* (1958) and *Seven Psalms of Grace* for baritone solo and chamber orchestra (1998).

He served in various capacities in the music department at Concordia, including chair in 1964-65 and from 1986-1989, coordinator of the Master of Church Music program, and associate editor of the journal *Church Music* (1966-80). He received honorary Doctor of Letters degrees from Concordia University at Seward, Neb., in 2000, and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 2001. In 2002, he received an honorary Doctor of Sacred Music degree from Valparaiso University.

Richard Hillert authored numerous scholarly articles and reviews for the periodicals *Church Music*, *CrossAccent*, and *Currents in Theology and Mission*, and other professional books and journals. Richard enjoyed his role as mentor and friend to his former students, many of whom have careers as practicing church musicians, elementary and secondary school teachers, and teachers in higher education, music editors and publishers, and composers. He was an honorary life member of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians.

Richard also applied his creative energy to painting. He enjoyed the work of 20th century artists as much as he did 20th century musicians.



**He enjoyed the work of 20th century artists as much as he did 20th century musicians.** (1962)