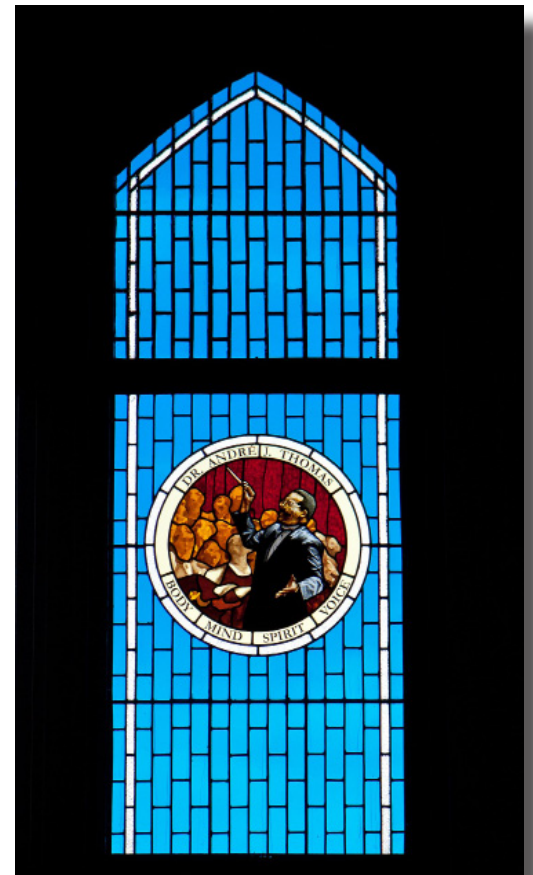


**ANDRÉ J. THOMAS**  
**honored with**  
**Window**  
**by**  
**Ruth Pryor**



**BODY - MIND - SPIRIT- VOICE** is the communal song shared by Dr. Thomas and Dr. Anton Armstrong (friend for 35 years and Conductor of the St. Olaf's Choir). Dr. Armstrong expressed that this stained glass window would serve as inspiration for generations to come and he concluded his statement with the scripture from Matthew 25:21, "Well done my good and faithful servant".

On January 25, 2013, the newest stained glass window in the Heritage Museum in Dodd Hall was unveiled. This was a complete surprise, "for the Honoree," Dr. André J. Thomas, the Owen F. Sellers Professor of Music, Director of Choral Activities and Professor of Choral Music Education at the Florida State University as well as Artistic Director of the Tallahassee Community Chorus. This event was sponsored by the FSU College of Music and the Tallahassee Community Chorus.

Prior to the unveiling, Dean Don Gibson asked Dr. Thomas to meet with him. Dr. Thomas was reluctant to do this and even wondered if he was in any trouble. This event was a surprise (and a top secret event by invitation only). The Dean distracted him by touring the music facilities, Ruby Diamond and eventually, directed him to Dodd Hall where all the family, guests and friends were waiting to congratulate him. When he arrived he was "speechless".

The program began with a welcome by Dean Don Gibson where he shared the tribute from Dr. Anton Armstrong, Professor of Music and Director of the St. Olaf Choir. The FSU Provost, Dr. Garnett Stokes, provided background historical information about the Werkmeister Library, which is also the FSU Heritage Museum. She shared background information of Dr. Thomas and then dedicated the window to honor Dr. André J. Thomas.

The program continued with a surprise concert of five selections by Dr. Thomas' Chamber Choir. The choir was directed by FSU Grad students, Felicia Barber and Greg Lefils, accompanied by Anthony Bernarducci at the piano.

The donor of the window is Mrs. Ruth Pryor, former Associate in Research at FSU; FSU Heritage Docent; ARF Board Member and Member of the Tallahassee Community Chorus.



The artisan from the FSU Master Craftsman Studio, Mr. Chris Horne, who created the window, is standing next to Dr. Thomas. The Director of Public Relations at the Master Craftsman Studio, Mrs. Sarah Coakley completes the picture.

*The Master Craftsman Studio brings creativity and entrepreneurship together to facilitate sustainable artistic enterprise and education.*



Mrs. Ruth Pryor, Dr. André Thomas, Mrs. Portia Thomas and Dean Don Gibson



The FSU Chamber Choir singing “Lift thine Eyes from Elijah”; “Now is the Month of May-ing”; “Hymn To the Garnet and Gold”; “When the Trumpet Sounds” and “For the Sake of Our Children”, to the assembled audience.

**Tallahassee Community Chorus Background** - The Tallahassee Community Chorus began in 1988 as a collaborative effort between the FSU School of Music and 37 community singers. In the past 25 years the group has grown to more than 250 members and it was proud to celebrate the silver anniversary at the Unity 8 concert this year. It includes university students and singers from all walks of life, age is no restriction. It is the only professional singing group that does not require auditions. Dr. Thomas began directing the group in the Fall of 1988. The Chorus sings with the University Orchestra. To date the Chorus has performed at Carnegie Hall, Kennedy Center, China for the first international Beijing Choral Festival and Prague International Music Festival. They will perform this Summer at the Paris Choral Festival and in Britain.



**In the photo is Dr. Thomas and Dr. Judy Arthur (Accompanist and Choral Director, Leon High School) during the Unity 8 concert of the FSU, Tallahassee combined Ensembles, accompanied by the FSU Orchestra**

Dr. André J. Thomas' first job was minister of music, at the age of 14, for the Tabernacle Baptist Church in Wichita, Kansas. At 25, while at Northwestern, he got the break of a life-time, when he landed a contract with a major symphony orchestra with mentors to promote his career. He was confident of his ability saying, "I can play!!!". He knew from the age of 4 that he could make music, but teaching students to sing began to be his priority and passion.

His career continued through earning his doctorate at the University of Illinois. He began his college teaching career at the University of Texas at Austin. In 1984 he came to FSU as Assistant Professor of Choral Music. After starting the Tallahassee Community Chorus in 1988 he became renowned nationally and internationally as a director, composer/arranger, adjudicator, clinician, President of the Florida American Choral Directors Association, pedagogue and President of the Southern Division of the American Choral Directors Association.

His international conducting credits are extensive. They include conductor/clinician for the International Federation of Choral Musicians, summer residency of the World Youth Choir in the Republic of China and the Philippines, winter residency of the World Youth Choir in Europe, and a premier performance by an American choir (Florida State University Singers) in Vietnam. He has been the guest conductor of such distinguished orchestras and choirs as the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in England, guest Conductor for the Berlin Radio Choir in Germany, the Netherlands Radio Choir, the Charlotte Symphony, Tallahassee Symphony, China's People's Liberation Orchestra and the Czech National Symphony Orchestra. In 2011, Dr Thomas received the Distinguished Service Award, a recognition of his peers in "Chorus America", for his dedication and accomplishments in the choral arts area.

Recently, Dr. Thomas shared with the Chorus about getting a FaceBook message about him directing Anne Hathaway for the New Jersey All-State Choir in 1997 (she was a soprano). Dr. Thomas shared with the Chorus, "You never know who you will have in your choirs, but it is important to treat every child special, for indeed they are!!!!".



The Board of Directors for the Tallahassee Community Chorus with Dr. Thomas and Provost Stokes

**Acknowledgements:** Special thanks to Claire Timm, the photographer from the Chorus, who provided the photos and the profile photo of Dr. Thomas, which assisted the artist to create the original drawing for the window; Donna McHugh, Assistant Vice President, Community Relations, FSU, for her creativity and vision for the Heritage Museum as well as providing guidance to the Master Craftsman Studio; and Jan Smith, President of the Tallahassee Community Chorus.