

# Songs Worth Singing: The Story of Composer, Conductor, and Choirmaster Brazeal Dennard



I am now in my fifty-third year of choral conducting, a profession and career that I had no intention of pursuing as my lifes work. You sometimes do not know what your calling in life will be. You become what you are by circumstance. So wrote Brazeal Dennard in a presentation at the National Association of Negro Musicians (NANM) in 1996. Dennard worked tirelessly to promote and preserve the works of African-American musicians through coalition building and social entrepreneurship in the arts. He also left behind a rich musical legacy in Detroit, where he founded the Brazeal Dennard Chorale in 1972, co-founded the Detroit Symphony Orchestras Classical Roots concert series in 1978, worked as a series editor for Alliance Music Publishers, served three terms as president of NANM, and left of body of work as a composer and arranger of Negro spirituals for the singing community. In *Songs Worth Singing: The Story of Composer, Conductor, and Choirmaster Brazeal Dennard*, Eldonna L. May draws on thirty years experience of working with Dennard professionally, years of archival research, and interviews with Dennards friends, family, colleagues, and associates to take readers on a journey into the life of a key African-American figure in modern music history. In this compelling biography, May weaves together the strains of Dennards early life under segregation in Detroit's Black Bottom, his military service in the 1950s, his struggles to pursue a soloists career in the face of discrimination, his decision to pursue a career in vocal music education, and the remarkable network of national and international contacts and mentors he developed through his leadership roles in NANM and the Detroit Musicians Association. Here is the story of one mans dedication to his music, cultural heritage, students, and hardscrabble birthplace, Detroit. This title should appeal to anyone

interested in African-American history, music and musicianship, and choral composition and conducting.

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