



# PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, Dr. Willis Charles Patterson broke the color barrier by challenging NBC to audition African American opera singers and in 1963 secured the role of King Balthazar, the African King, for the television production of Menotti's Amahl and the Night Visitors.

WHEREAS, he provided the world an image of an African American opera singer and paved the way for others.

WHEREAS, he was a celebrated performer of the Basso repertoire including art songs and opera, as well as popular genres including jazz.

WHEREAS, he was the first African American faculty member to join (what is now) University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre, and Dance, (SMTD) Associate Dean, and Professor Emeritus.

WHEREAS, in his position of Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies and Minority Affairs, he advanced the cause of racial equality at the SMTD providing a way for more minority students to study in their selected fields, and received financial support.

WHEREAS, he challenged the standard canon by incorporating Spirituals in recitals.

WHEREAS, he appreciated and celebrated the support he received from his community including leadership from his church and the Paul Lawrence Dunbar Center of Ann Arbor.

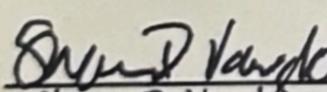
WHEREAS, he taught, advocated for, mentored, and supported numerous students many of whom have distinguished themselves professionally in the world of music, as well as countless members of the community in support of their dreams.

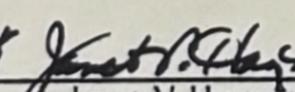
WHEREAS, he founded the Our Own Thing Instructional Program in 1969 and the Our Own Thing Chorale in 1972 serving the Chorale as Music Director and as Instructional Program Director for five decades, without compensation.

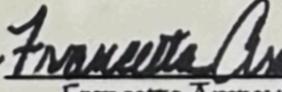
NOW, THEREFORE, the Our Own Thing Chorale and Instructional Program Board of Directors do hereby proclaim that Dr. Willis C. Patterson be honored for his gift and love of music, his commitment to his students and community, his lifetime achievements, and his steadfast work to share it for all to enjoy.

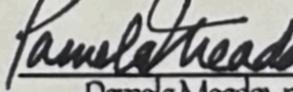
Willis C. Patterson Our Own Thing Chorale Board of Directors

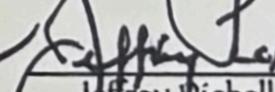
November 4, 2025

  
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