

**MEMORIAL RESOLUTION OF THE FACULTY  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS DAVID CARL PETERSON**

David Carl Peterson, age 78, died peacefully on October 8, 2014, in his home, surrounded by family. He is survived by his wife, Joan, a son, Daniel (Donna); daughter, Susan Chwae (Edward); two granddaughters, Taylor and Gabrielle Chwae; and sisters, Mary Krueger (John), Beth Brugger, and Faith Mauk (Tom Lonsway).

Dave received his musical training at St. Olaf College and at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which included graduate work in theatre and music. He studied composition at the Juilliard School in New York.

A very talented, creative, and prolific individual, Dave was initially inspired by a lumberjack tale, “Wisconsin is My Doorstep”, written by Professor Robert Gard, founder and director of the Wisconsin Idea Theatre. He wrote and produced a musical production combining musical comedy with this folklore, which launched his career with the Wisconsin Idea Theatre in 1963. It was the first of many Peterson musical productions based on Wisconsin themes. He avidly researched the holdings of the Wisconsin Historical Society for long-forgotten stories and songs, and transformed his discoveries into powerful narratives that were performed at county fairs, state parks, schools, and other venues around the state, the Midwest, and the world.

In 1965, after a nationwide competition, the American Educational Theater Association and the USO selected his show about the mythical beast that scared Rhinelander residents during lumbering days, “The Hodag,” for a seven-week tour of U.S. armed forces installations in Europe. During the Vietnam War, he took his shows to military bases in the Pacific Rim and the Caribbean.

Dave received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1967 for the purpose of bringing the arts to five small communities in Wisconsin. At the end of the summer, a command performance of “The Hodag” was played in Spring Green. In attendance was “Lady Bird” Johnson, a lifelong advocate for the arts, and Roger Stevens, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts.

In 1970 he founded the Heritage Ensemble in Door County. During the next 20 years under Dave’s direction, the cast of singers and instrumentalists performed in Peninsula State Park and toured the state. Now known as the American Folklore Theatre, the company continues to share Wisconsin history through music, theater, and comedy.

Deeply dedicated to the Wisconsin Idea, Dave Peterson’s influence determined the course of many careers and lives. His many music theater productions deeply involved performers, school children, and the general public numbering in the tens of thousands. Dave retired in 1995, but continued writing, performing, and working in the arts up until the time of his death.

Respectfully submitted by the Memorial Committee:  
Professor Emeritus Dick Wolfe  
Professor Cheley Bowles  
Professor Barry Orton