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Peter M. Blachly Biography

PETER MACDONALD BLACHLY was born into a family of classical musicians and began studying piano with his mother, Elisabeth Macdonald (Haughwout) Blachly, at the age of 4. At age 8 he was accepted as a soprano into the Junior Choir of the Washington National Cathedral, graduating to the Senior Choir less than a year later in the fall of 1959. That year he also switched from piano to classical guitar, studying with Aaron Shearer, who later went on to found and chair the classical guitar department at Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore (now a part of Johns Hopkins University). Peter's main interest, however, was folk, blues, Americana and rock music. He was introduced early to the music of Buddy Holly, the Everly Brothers, Kingston Trio, Woody Guthrie, and Woody's protege Ramblin' Jack Elliott, with whom he later became close friends.

Peter began performing professionally in 1968 with *Claude Jones*, a rock band he formed with some of his college classmates (all of whom dropped out of college when the band's fortunes began rising). During his career he has shared the stage with the likes of Tim Harden, Poco, Buddy Guy, George Clinton, and many others, and has written and recorded several (mostly unknown) albums of his own music. "Writing music for my great-grandfather's hymns has felt like coming full circle," he says, "And it has been amazing to get to know him through his words more than 100 years after his death."



“I knew very little about my great-grandfather when I was growing up,” Peter explained. “But my father used to tell a favorite story about him. In 1922, when my father was not yet 5 years old, his grandfather, in failing health, came to live with them in Norman, Oklahoma. When Oatman began suffering from insomnia, his doctor prescribed a dram of brandy every evening just before bedtime. However, this was during prohibition and alcohol was illegal. Further, Oatman was a teetotaler and had never touched a drop of alcohol in his life. His son-in-law (my grandfather, Frederick Frank Blachly) took him to talk with the Mayor of Norman to see if any dispensation might be made. The Mayor, learning of the situation, and deeply impressed that such a celebrity was sitting in his office, unlocked a cabinet in his desk and pulled out an unopened bottle of brandy. ‘Let’s just keep this between ourselves,’ he said with a wink as he handed the bottle over. My father said that from then on until the day he died his grandfather always looked forward to bedtime.”

Peter is no stranger to the Grammys. His brother, Alexander Blachly, a professor of music at Notre Dame University, was nominated for a recording of sacred music performed by *Pomerium*, a New York-based a cappella choir that the New York Times has called “the gold standard” of early music. Alex’s son, James Blachly, Music Director and Conductor of the Johnstown Symphony Orchestra, won a Grammy in 2022 for his recoding of Dame Ethyl Smith’s *The Prisoner*. And Peter has twice previously submitted albums for consideration: *Promised Land* in 2012 and *Prickly Stickers* in 2105.