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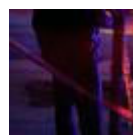
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THE BALTIMORE SUN | FEB 20, 2015





Aubrey Maurice Murphy was a fixture on the Baltimore music scene since the 1960s. (Baltimore Sun)

Aubrey Maurice Murphy, an acclaimed pianist, organist, conductor and vocal coach who had been a fixture on the Baltimore music scene since the 1960s, died Jan. 27 of prostate cancer at the Department of Veterans Affairs Hospital on Loch Raven Boulevard in Northeast Baltimore.

The longtime Lafayette Square resident was 77.

"Maurice was a superb artist, a gifted and sensitive accompanist, and a wonderful friend. His playing and his bearing had an unforgettable sense of majesty and dignity," said Tom Hall, director of Baltimore Choral Arts Society and WYPR-FM radio host.

"Maurice was a fantastic communicator, in a variety of musical styles, from gospel music to classical music. His music-making was always imbued with a sense of purpose and passion that he shared expertly, and with phenomenal generosity," he said.

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Yvette Y. Matthews, an alto, was a friend and student of Dr. Murphy's for 42 years.

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"Everything I am musically, I owe to Maurice Murphy," said Ms. Matthews, who lives in Hampden. "I was able to sing all over the world because of him."

The son of George Murphy, a pianist and church musician, and Myrtle Gates Murphy, a high school principal, Aubrey Maurice Murphy, was born and raised in Washington, where he graduated from Cardozo Senior High School.

As a child, he received his first music lessons from his father, and when he was an adolescent, he studied piano and music theory in the junior department of music at Howard University.

Dr. Murphy was a graduate of the Peabody Conservatory, where he earned a bachelor's degree in 1961 and a master's degree in 1963, both in piano performance.

Dr. Murphy was the first African-American to receive a master's degree from Peabody, said Margaret Bell, a spokeswoman for at the conservatory.

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He earned a doctorate in vocal pedagogy and accompaniment in 1983 from the Catholic University of America.

He also briefly served in the Army.

From 1967 to 1972, he was on the faculty of what is now Notre Dame of Maryland University, and was an associate professor of fine arts at Coppin State University from 1971 until he retired in 2007.

At Coppin, he taught voice and accompanied the Coppin Choir in many concerts, including appearances at the White House and on two tours to South Korea.

In 1996, Dr. Murphy received the Vice President for Academic Affairs Achievement Award from Coppin, and in 2002, he performed at the university for an audience that included former President Bill Clinton.

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He also taught voice at Peabody Preparatory School for more than 25 years, where he served as the co-chairman of the vocal department. He taught voice at Towson University, and from 1995 to 2001 was a voice instructor at the Baltimore School for the Arts. Many students went on to win competitions and to perform with major opera companies such as the Metropolitan Opera and Houston Grand Opera.

He also accompanied student and professional singers throughout his long career, including numerous concerts in Baltimore and Washington.

"He had a great sense of grandeur and played powerfully because he had big hands," said Mr. Hall. "He leaned into the piano and got lots of sound out of it."

"We performed over the years in many different venues," recalled Ms. Matthews. "He was a no-nonsense kind of teacher, had very high standards and took no prisoners. He'd say, 'Your musical gift is yours, and use it to the best of your ability.' "

Dr. Murphy taught Ms. Matthews to sing in seven languages, and she had a performing career that took her throughout the United States, Canada, Europe and Japan. She sang at the Metropolitan Opera, Houston Grand Opera and at La Scala in Milan, Italy.

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He was a stickler when it came to singing in foreign languages.

"He really had high standards for the music and poetry and what the composer intended. He taught me also to sing with my whole body," said Ms. Matthews. "It

was not always easy working with him, but he kept you at it before he let you go before the public."

"He took his teaching seriously and could work with children as well as adults and professionals. He was not a corner cutter. He never did that. He knew what he wanted, and he knew what it took to get what he wanted. He also believed that a fear of God was a great motivator," said Mr. Hall, with a laugh.

Julius Tilghman, a pianist, is another longtime friend.

"I first met him when I was in high school when I was studying at Peabody Prep, and through the years he's been a mentor and good friend," said Mr. Tilghman, who lives in Walbrook.

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He described Dr. Murphy as "outgoing, enthusiastic and like a live wire."

"Maurice was a perfectionist. He was never satisfied until a piece was done the way he thought it should be done," he said.

In addition to his professional life, Dr. Murphy directed the Bach Society of Baltimore from 1984 to 2000, and was accompanist and assistant director of the Baltimore Choral Arts Society.

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He had been minister of music at Metropolitan United Methodist Church, music director at St. James Episcopal Church, and was the organist at St. Peter Claver Roman Catholic Church.

His last church music position was at the Episcopal Church of St. Mary the Virgin in Walbrook Junction.

Funeral services for Dr. Murphy will be held at 11:30 a.m. Saturday at the Episcopal Church of St. Mary the Virgin, 3121 Walbrook Ave.

A memorial concert will be held at 4 p.m. April 11 at Brown Memorial Park Avenue Presbyterian Church, 1316 Park Ave., in Bolton Hill.

Dr. Murphy is survived by a brother, George Wyndell Murphy of South Orange, N.J.; two nephews; and a niece.

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