



Dr. Wallace M. Cheatham

October 3, 1945 - October 22, 2021

Wallace McClain Cheatham was born in Cleveland, Tennessee on October 3, 1945, to the union of Martin Luther and Ollie Frances (Simpson) Cheatham. Wallace accepted Christ at an early age. He began playing the piano for his Sunday School at Pleasant Grove M.B.C. and other area churches. His grandmother's employer recognized his musical talent and gave him free piano lessons. Those lessons began with simple melodies and developed into complex compositions. That was the beginning of his life-long love of including music in his life every day.

Wallace received his Bachelor of Science degree from Knoxville College, an HBCU, in Knoxville, Tennessee. He later received a Master of Science Degree from the University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee (UWM). In 1982 he received his PhD from Columbia Pacific University. The prestigious Honorary Degree of Fine Arts was awarded to him in 2002 by the University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee.

Wallace developed his love of travel at Knoxville College when he played with the Concert Choir on tours. He was also a member of Operation Crossroads Africa and spent a summer building homes in Kenya.

Later in life, as a member of the International Consortium for the Music of Africa & Its Diaspora (ICMAD), he lectured and played his own compositions in London, England. During one of his trips, his wife Faye assisted as his soloist when demonstrating his music, and then she later presented it in a full recital at the University

of Cambridge in Cambridge, England. He traveled to Beijing, China with (ICMAD) where he was one of the featured lecturers. During this conference, his piano and vocal compositions were performed by his colleagues. His book Dialogues on Opera & the African American Experience and also his compositions have been translated into many languages. His music has been performed all over the world.

For more than three decades, Wallace served as the organist for st. Mark AME Church. He was the pianist for the seven active choirs, played all of the service music, and served wherever he was needed.

He often played for weddings, funerals, and community events. For the last fifteen years, he enjoyed being the organist for Living Hope Presbyterian Church.

Wallace was a member of many organizations: Association Study African American Life and History, National Association of Negro Musicians, Wisconsin Alliance of Composers, American Choral Directors Association, Music Educators National Conference, American Guild of Organists (AGO), R. Nathaniel Dett Club, Knoxville College Alumni Hall of Fame, McDowell Club and phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.

Wallace, also, relished working with community groups. He was the director of The New Jubilee Community Choir. He directed The New Jubilee Children's Choir and The New Jubilee Youth Chorale. For many years, he worked with the African American Children's Theatre. They all appreciated the time and energy he devoted to enhancing their own talents and love of music.

His love of music extended beyond public performances, lectures, and professional organizations. Teaching was another way that he shared his talents. His teaching career began in the Tennessee Public School System. In 1968 he joined the Racine, Wisconsin Unified School District. It was in 1971 that he was hired by the Milwaukee Public School System and remained here until his retirement in 2003.

When he had leisure time, Wallace enjoyed studying history, watching the

news, and reading newspapers.

Watching soap operas was also a favorite past time of his, and he was a wonderful storyteller. Wallace's family and friends will always remember him as the quiet and humble genius who enriched their lives.

Wallace is survived by his devoted wife of fifty years Faye Watson Cheatham; daughters Tosca Cheatham Biles (Wesley) of Dayton, OH, and Kimberly Ann Cheatham of Morrisville, NC; beloved grandsons Grafton McClain and Mason Riley of Dayton, OH; brother Martin Cheatham of Las Vegas, NV; sister Vicki Bolden of Minneapolis MN; Uncle Thomas (Patricia) of Powell, TN; and a host of family, friends, nieces, and nephews.

Cemetery Details

Northwest Cremation Services

6630 W. Hampton Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53218

Previous Events

Memorial Service

NOV 5. 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM (CT)

Northwest Funeral Chapel
6630 W. Hampton Ave
Milwaukee, WI

Tribute Wall

PM

“ *A truly gifted and caring man.*



Phyllis Mathews-Turner - November 20, 2021 at 02:30 AM

CW

“ *1 file added to the album Dr. Cheatham Speaking and Performing*



Chuck Werth - November 14, 2021 at 02:58 PM

BS

“ *Dr. Cheatham will always be remembered for his musical genius. I remember asking him: Dr Cheatham, what is the best way to perfect sight reading skills? His reply, "sight read everyday." I will always appreciate that. May God comfort his family and cause them to be strengthened through his memory.*

Betty Washington Salahadyn - November 06, 2021 at 08:30 AM

DH

“ *God gifted Dr. Cheatham to the world. I am grateful to have known him as an exemplary educator, maestro and creative, caring man of God. His august presence will linger.*
Dr. Janie Hatton

Dr. Janie Hatton - November 06, 2021 at 04:55 AM



“ *Pearline Terry lit a candle in memory of Dr. Wallace M. Cheatham*



Pearline Terry - November 06, 2021 at 12:34 AM



“ *Our deepest sympathy to Faye and the Cheatham family. Rev. and Mrs. Lawrence Terry*

Pearline Terry - November 06, 2021 at 12:32 AM



“ *I remember singing in his groups . I traveled many Saturday mornings to sing in his New Jubilee Community Choir, He was a brilliant musician and humble at the same time , A joy to talk to and be in his company.He was so passionate about rhythms especially difficult ones and would dance them at rehearsals if needed ,so the singers would be able to get them right.*

Thoughts and prayers go to the family

Pearline Terry - November 05, 2021 at 06:59 PM



“ *Pearline Terry lit a candle in memory of Dr. Wallace M. Cheatham*



Pearline Terry - November 05, 2021 at 06:28 PM

KS

“ Katherine Sartin lit a candle in memory of Dr. Wallace M. Cheatham



Katherine Sartin - November 05, 2021 at 03:30 PM

DL

“ Dr. Sandra Leconte lit a candle in memory of Dr. Wallace M. Cheatham



Dr. Sandra Leconte - November 05, 2021 at 01:23 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Dr. Wallace M. Cheatham.



November 05, 2021 at 11:39 AM

FH

“ I remember when I first met Wallace. I have always admired him and his great musical artistry. He played for me many times for concerts. He was one of the greats and legends. I was blessed to know him and sung under his direction. My prayers and love to Faye and family.

Francine McNeil Harris - November 04, 2021 at 11:57 PM

DC

“ *Dr. Wallace M. Cheatham... A man and his Music! Thanks for everything!*
Sing-cereely,
Dr. Chas Cheatham

dr. chas cheatham - November 04, 2021 at 09:12 PM

JK

“ *We will never forget Wallace as a great person and musician. With love and respect I will cherish him. Joanne Pruitt Koehn* ❤️ 🙏

joanne pruit koehn - November 04, 2021 at 02:28 AM

PB

“ Dear Faye and Family:

I'm very sorry to hear that Wallace has passed away; may he RIP eternal! Wallace was a wonderful guy, musician, and scholar alike. We have "truly" lost a GEM.

Please know that you and the family are in my prayers, that God will grant each of you peace, comfort, happiness, and joy in the lastly memories of your DEAR Wallace.

We, the members of the R. Nathaniel Dett Club of Music and Allied Arts, are with you this day, and always. Thus, we will continue to honor Wallace in music and spirit for years to come.

The Dett Club's Centennial Celebration and Concert in June of 2022 will be dedicated to Dr. Wallace McClain Cheatham. 1/3 of the concert will feature Wallace's beautiful and well-written compositions that he personally chose before his untimely passing for the centennial.

Love, Peace and Comfort....

Sincerely,

Paul-Martin Bender

President, R. Nathaniel Dett Club of Music and Allied Arts

Chicago, IL

Paul-Martin Bender - November 02, 2021 at 08:21 PM



“ *Love's Tapestry was purchased for the family of Dr. Wallace M. Cheatham.*



November 02, 2021 at 10:09 AM



“ *Dear Faye and Family, I am very sorry to have just learned of Wallace's passing. I knew him through the MacDowell Club, as well as sharing other musical events with him. He made wonderful contributions to music locally, and afar. Please accept my heartfelt condolences. Sally Schwarz, retired voice teacher, Carroll University, and Florentine Opera Chorus.*

Sally Schwarz - November 01, 2021 at 08:51 PM



“ *Dr. Cheatham was a wonderful music teacher for both of my children and a friend of my late husband. He was a remarkable teacher and musician and he left this world a more beautiful place.*

Monica Gramling (Stefaniak) - October 31, 2021 at 09:37 PM



“ *Faye and family: One of the great honors and blessings of my life was to perform Dr. Cheatham's exquisite vocal works. He was a musical mentor and inspiration to me. He blessed this earth beyond measure with his gifts. May he Rest In Peace. Love and miss you forever, Doc! ❤️*

Cecilia Davis - October 28, 2021 at 03:15 PM

KM

“ Dr. Cheatham an amazing musician, composer, and mentor in our community. My daughter and many of her friends were his vocal students. He made such an impact on our students especially my daughter Kaprice Maxwell, who has never forgotten him and has continuously credited him for the vocalist and musician she is today. He created an atmosphere for her to explore other genres of music and by doing that she has evolved a passionate love for classical, traditional gospel, and jazz. Thank you Dr. Cheatham, your legacy will continue to flourish for many generations Rest in Peace.
Kemba Maxwell
Proud Musician/Vocalist Parent



Kemba Maxwell - October 28, 2021 at 01:23 PM

BS

“ Dear Faye and Family: I am saddened for the loss of Wallace. He was such a powerful musical force here, in Milwaukee, and world wide. He was an important part of MPS music education and left his mark there, too. I'm embracing you from afar and am keeping you in my thoughts. Condolences ~ Barbara Sem (MPS and Florentine Opera)

Barbara Sem - October 28, 2021 at 08:13 AM

BN

“ I have just become aware of Wallace's passing and upon learning this I am in shock with the news. Wallace and I both commenced our MPS careers at North Division. He was a super person. I had great respect for both Wallace and Faye
I wish to give my condolences to the Cheatham family for their loss.

Bonnie Newby
Waxhaw. NC

Bonnie Newby - October 27, 2021 at 02:55 PM

PP

“ While I didn't know Dr. Cheatham well, he was a regular at our library, Dr. Martin Luther King Branch in Milwaukee Wi. He had been a frequent and smiling presence here for longer than my tenure, and my day always brightened when I saw him come in and said hello. I am aware of his contributions to the world of chorale, opera, and music in general, but I wanted to say that he contributed also to making King a better place to work with his presence here. All of us here who knew him were shocked to learn of his passing.

Our thoughts are with his family.

Peter Van Peurseem

Peter Van Peurseem - October 27, 2021 at 11:35 AM



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Dr. Wallace M. Cheatham.



October 26, 2021 at 10:33 PM