

Pioneering Composer and Hymn Writer Buryl Red Dies

Buryl Red, a pioneering composer and hymn writer who influenced modern worship music leaders, died April 1 in New York City after a long battle with cancer, Associated Baptist Press reported. He was 76.

Red was the founding musical director and conductor of The CenturyMen, a men's choir made up of Southern Baptist church music directors from around the world. Since the choir's founding in 1969, The CenturyMen have performed across the U.S. and 11 other countries, according to .

When The CenturyMen's "Beautiful Star: A Celebration of Christmas" was nominated for a Grammy in 2000, Red told Baptist Press: "We see our work as a way to communicate the message of Christ with the secular world. I feel like our music can communicate beyond the musical language of the church."

Red was best known for his collaborations with Ragan Courtney, including the 1970s pulpit-musical "Celebrate Life!," which sold about a million copies in 25 years, Associated Baptist Press reported. Released in 1972, "Celebrate Life!" is still in print, and is sold by LifeWay Worship, the music division of LifeWay Christian Resources. Red and Courtney also created the "Brand New Wings" and "In Remembrance of Me" choir sheet music.

In a blog post, LifeWay Worship Director Mike Harland credited Red with introducing Baptists to the style of modern worship music that came out of the Jesus Movement in the 1970s.

Red "loved virtually every style of music, as long as the presentations of it reached a level of excellence befitting the glorious Savior we love," Harland wrote.

Red's musical works as a composer, conductor, producer and arranger were heard in such diverse venues as Carnegie Hall, Saturday Night Live and thousands of schools, churches and theaters around the world. He had more than 1,600 published compositions and arrangements, produced more than 2,500 recordings, and supervised and composed or arranged music for several hundred shows, documentaries and musical specials for network and cable television, Associated Baptist Press reported.

Red is survived by his wife, Virginia; son, Eric; and grandson, Adrian. A private funeral will be held April 9 in Manhattan, N.Y.