



Reginald Michael McCraw

October 19, 1947 - May 30, 2020

Michael McCraw died on May 30, six years to the day after being hit by a car and sustaining a traumatic brain injury that forced him into assisted living. He is survived by a brother, Richard McCraw, in South Carolina.

Michael enjoyed an intimate relationship with music for more than sixty years, sharing that relationship with students at the Jacobs School of Music for seventeen of those years. Internationally known as a virtuoso on the baroque bassoon, with some 140 recordings in his discography, Michael is mentioned in the standard reference work on classical music as a notable performer and teacher of our time. However, his impressive professional credentials do not even begin to capture the essence of Michael McCraw. For that, one must also take into account the outgoing, larger than life personality and convivial lifestyle that render him unforgettable to musicians everywhere, not to mention publicans, servers, and restaurateurs from Bloomington to Barcelona, Charleston to Cologne, and Toronto to Turin.

Offspring of a fiddler and banjo picker in the Blue Ridge Mountains, Michael learned to read music at the age of five singing shape note hymns in a rural church. In his childhood, he had piano lessons, then took up the clarinet and in his senior year of high school, Michael began to play the bassoon. After starting a music education degree in college, Michael realized that he wanted to pursue performance seriously, so he transferred to the recently opened North Carolina School of the Arts. He went to New York City after he graduated to pursue further studies and quickly became an active freelance musician. It was there, in the heady days of the early 1970s, that Michael and I became friends, undertaking exploits that would be completely inappropriate to recount on this occasion. By 1973, Michael had become interested in early repertory and taken up the baroque bassoon. There were no teachers for that instrument at the time, so he taught himself to play and make reeds for it, reading treatises and letting the instrument teach him how it wanted to be played. He went to Cologne in 1979 as an experiment and ended up staying in Europe until 1991, building a busy career performing and recording with most of the leading early music ensembles of the time.

Michael's next move was to Toronto to become principal bassoonist with the very successful period instrument ensemble Tafelmusik, where he remained until 2001, when

the visiting lecturer position he had held at the Jacobs School of Music since 1998 evolved into a full time, tenured position. Many of his students have achieved notable success in performing and teaching careers, and Michael's move to Bloomington brought him back into the lives of many musicians whom he had known and worked with in Europe and earlier in New York City.

In addition to being a singular musician and teacher, Michael McCraw was also a singular human being. An avid and creative cook, his interest in food inspired him to undertake a recipe book whose working title was *White Trash Visits Italy*, by Termey-Sue Bassano. He was well known as a patron of all the finer eating and drinking establishments in Bloomington. He had an avid interest in the visual arts, some of which also interest the Kinsey Institute. (But he didn't like Andy Warhol, because Andy once spiked his drink behind his back at a party, leaving Michael feeling terrible the next day.) Michael's penchant for delighting the eye extended to a sartorial splendor that turned heads, even at a school replete with opera divas. Michael chose not to drive, and his was a very familiar face to Bloomington bus drivers, but he was also known to walk up to complete strangers in cars and very politely ask them for a ride. Nobody ever refused.

There are no service scheduled at this time. Cremation Rites have been accorded. Allen Funeral Home and Crematory have been entrusted with arrangements. Online condolences, photos, and memories may be shared with family and friends at <http://www.allencares.com>

Comments



“ I met Michael a couple of years ago at his last residence when I came in to play piano for the residents, as I did weekly. A couple of my friends from church remembered him from when they were students at Jacobs School of Music in the Early Music Institute (or whatever name it was under). We started out on a bit of a rough footing but I was determined to win his friendship. I made a point of speaking to him almost every time I was there and I do believe we were friends. I got a chuckle when I asked him if he had a song he'd like to hear and he replied, "Hard-hearted Hannah, the Tramp of Savannah." So I played it for him. I was very sad to hear of his passing, especially as visitors were forbidden because of the COVID-19, and so the last time I saw him was in March. I will miss seeing him when visitors are once again allowed.

Carole Canfield "the piano player"

Carole Canfield - September 12, 2020 at 08:23 PM



“ Michael was a church, band and school friend. He was so talented even in those early days. RIP my dear friend!

Louise Bartlett - June 07, 2020 at 11:22 AM



“ In 9th grade, Michael and I were running out of time to complete our Individual bug collections for freshman biology, and we both only needed a few more butterflies before our projects were due. With a butterfly net in hand, we each were running in a narrow field beside the road near our homes trying to catch our finest specimens to mount for our bug collections. We did not care how silly we looked to our neighbors as we ran and swung that net to catch beautiful monarch butterflies for each of us. I made an A on my bug collection, and I am sure Michael did, also. Michael was a true church and school friend. Mary Lou Whittaker Hoffman.

Mary Lou Whittaker Hoffman - June 03, 2020 at 01:22 AM