



David N. Baker, Jr.

December 21, 1931 - March 26, 2016

David N. Baker Jr., distinguished professor of music and Jazz Studies Department chair emeritus at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, died peacefully at his home in Bloomington, Ind., Saturday, March 26, surrounded by his family.

Baker was a member of the Jacobs School of Music faculty since 1966, founding the Jazz Studies program and serving as its chair from 1968 to 2013, leaving a legacy in the field of jazz and beyond.

He was also an incredibly kind and generous man who dearly loved the Lord, and his family, friends, colleagues and students. He was a voracious reader and lifelong learner who also loved IU basketball, the Los Angeles Lakers, Saturday night monster movies and reruns of “The Twilight Zone” and “The Andy Griffith Show.”

Baker was born Dec. 21, 1931, in Indianapolis to David N. Baker Sr. and Patress Lasley Baker.

He graduated from Crispus Attucks High School in Indianapolis before attending Indiana University, earning a Bachelor of Music Education degree in 1953 and a Master of Music Education degree in 1954. He studied with a wide range of master teachers, performers and composers, including Thomas

Beversdorf, Bobby Brookmeyer, Bernhard Heiden, J.J. Johnson, George Russell, William Russo, Gunther Schuller and Janos Starker. Originally a gifted trombonist, he switched to the cello after sustaining jaw injuries in a car accident.

He began his teaching career at Missouri's Lincoln University in 1955.

Baker was a regular on the thriving Indianapolis jazz scene of the era—especially on its historic Indiana Avenue—with the likes of fellow jazz giants Jimmy Coe, Slide Hampton, Freddie Hubbard, J.J. Johnson, Wes Montgomery, Larry Ridley and David Young. They are all included in the "Jazz Masters of Indiana Avenue" mural on Capitol Avenue in Indianapolis.

He was a member of the Quincy Jones Big Band during its 1960 European tour, beginning a lifelong friendship with the music icon.

Top in his field in several disciplines, Baker taught and performed throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, Scandinavia, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. He co-founded the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra and served as its conductor and musical and artistic director from 1990 to 2012, becoming maestro emeritus on Dec. 1, 2012.

A 1973 Pulitzer Prize nominee, Baker was nominated for a Grammy Award in 1979 and honored three times by DownBeat magazine: as a trombonist, for lifetime achievement and as the third inductee into its Jazz Education Hall of Fame. He received numerous awards, including the National Association of Jazz Educators Hall of Fame Award (1981), IU President's Award for Distinguished Teaching (1986), Arts Midwest Jazz Masters Award (1990), Governor's Arts Award of the State of Indiana (1991), American Jazz Masters Award from the National Endowment for the Arts (2000), Indiana Historical Society's Living Legend Award (2001), James Smithson Medal from the

Smithsonian Institution (2002), Emmy Award for his musical score for the PBS documentary "For Gold and Glory" (2003), Living Jazz Legend Award from the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (2007), Sagamore of the Wabash (2011), IU President's Medal for Excellence (2012), Satchmo Award from the Louis Armstrong Educational Foundation (2014), City of Bloomington Black History Month Living Legend Award (2015) and five honorary doctorates, including from Oberlin College (2004) and New England Conservatory (2006).

As a composer, Baker was commissioned by more than 100 individuals and ensembles, including Josef Gingold, Harvey Phillips, Ruggiero Ricci, Janos Starker, Beaux Arts Trio, New York Philharmonic, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Fisk Jubilee Singers, Louisville Orchestra, Ohio Chamber Orchestra, Audubon String Quartet and International Horn Society. His compositions, tallying more than 2,000 in number, range from jazz pieces and symphonic works to chamber music and film scores.

A dedicated music educator as well as composer and performer, Baker was involved in numerous music organizations. This included membership on the National Council on the Arts; board positions for the American Symphony Orchestra League, Chamber Music America, Arts Midwest and the Afro-American Bicentennial Hall of Fame/Museum; and past chairmanships of the Jazz Advisory Panel to the Kennedy Center and the Jazz/Folk/Ethnic Panel of the National Endowment for the Arts. He was past president and past vice president of the International Association for Jazz Education, past president of the National Jazz Service Organization and senior consultant for music programs for the Smithsonian Institution. He served six times on the Pulitzer Prize Music Jury.

Many of his students became giants of jazz themselves, including Jamey

Aebersold, Jim Beard, Chris Botti, Michael and Randy Brecker, John Clayton, Peter Erskine, Jeff Hamilton, Freddie Hubbard, Robert Hurst and Shawn Pelton.

Baker's prolific body of work includes more than 65 recordings, 70 books and 400 articles.

“But he always chose his teaching and his students as his principal calling,” said Jones, his friend of more than 50 years. “The choice to dedicate one’s life to helping others achieve their aspirations is a mark of a truly selfless and kind person.”

That dedication helped Baker fight a courageous multi-year battle with Parkinson’s disease with Lewy body dementia, overcoming seemingly insurmountable challenges to serve the profession and the students he loved so well.

Along with his parents, Baker was preceded in death by sisters, Shirley Crawford and Clela Gregory; brother, Archie Tufts; and nephew Virgil Gregory.

He is survived by his wife, Lida Belt Baker; daughter, April (Brad) Ayers; granddaughter, Kirsten (Nick) Bartalone; former wife, Eugenia Baker; nephews David Michael Crawford (Dawn), Kim Crawford and Michael Batts; great-nephews, Elijah, Greyson and Trey Crawford; and great-nieces, Temeley and Tanzyn Crawford.

Visitation is scheduled for Saturday, April 2, and Sunday, April 3, from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. each day at Allen Funeral Home, 4155 S. Old State Road 37 in Bloomington. The family respectfully requests that all visitors refrain from handling or ingesting peanuts, tree nuts and shellfish on the day of visitation, due to severe allergies.

Services will be private.

“I can’t think of anything much more honorable than teaching young people to be decent, to be successful,” Baker once said. “Teaching is such a sacred act. To show somebody about life ... I teach under jazz, but what I teach is living.”

In that spirit, a memorial celebration concert will be held in the fall at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the David N. Baker Jazz Scholarship at the Jacobs School of Music, c/o the Indiana University Foundation, P.O. Box 6460, Indianapolis, IN 46206-6460.

Online condolences and memories may be shared with family and friends at www.allencares.com

Previous Events

Visitation

APR 2. 2:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Allen Funeral Home and Crematory
4155 S. Old State Road 37
Bloomington, IN 47401
(812) 824-5905
<http://www.allencares.com>

Visitation

APR 3. 2:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Allen Funeral Home and Crematory
4155 S. Old State Road 37
Bloomington, IN 47401
(812) 824-5905
<http://www.allencares.com>

Tribute Wall



“ *I just found this! I am so sorry April, I had no idea! I hope your family is doing well.*
Dotty Gevers

Dotty Gevers - March 02, 2018 at 01:43 PM

“ Dear Lida, April and the Baker Family,

I express my deepest condolence for the loss of a great man, colleague and friend.

David was a major inspiration in my life and the person who identified me as a potential faculty member for Indiana University while completing my Ph.D, studies at the University of Wisconsin. After arriving at IU, David became a mentor, supporting my teaching, scholarly, and creative endeavors. He assisted with my establishing the IU Soul Revue (offered as a course through the department of Afro-American Studies--as it was called at the time) by granting ensemble credit for students in the jazz studies program, arranging for rehearsal space, sharing instruments from the jazz program, and offering his already cramped office as extra storage space.

In the jazz studies program, I shared teaching the non-jazz historical courses and worked with David in one of his courses, where I learned from the master. Over the years, David and I became close friends. He always made himself available when I needed advice and feedback on my ideas for new research projects. I'll always remember the many lunches, conversations and laughs we shared. David laced his accounts of situations with humor, which kept me "rollin."

David knew no stranger and he had great compassion for people. I will miss his fine qualities, especially that smile that endeared him to all that crossed his path. His spirit, love of life, and his innovative musical creations will remain with us forever through the many recordings this great man made.

I know David is making new music in his new resting place, which we all will get to hear some day. I'll always be grateful for the opportunity to have shared space with and to have known this great man.

*In Peace and with Love,
Portia Maultsby*

Portia K. Maultsby - June 06, 2016 at 05:56 PM

PM

“*Dear Lida, April and BakerFamily members, Please accept my deepest sympathies for your loss. May the love from family and friends help revitalize your most cherished memories of David’s vibrance, compassion, intelligence and creativities, and sustain you in the days ahead. David was loved! He was loved because he gave love through his humanity and his teaching. As a master teacher, he embodied positive energy and shared it through his teaching. Through his love of music and teaching, he patiently taught me both how to critically listen to Black music genres as a musician and to understand the sociocultural contexts generating their aesthetic dimensions. As a professor myself, I find that David was rare among professors in his willingness to engage so respectfully and generously with students. As his graduate teaching assistant, I learned so much from him about how to be an effective teacher. David also modeled the benefits of building your own creative universe and ignoring other folk’s political quagmires. These lessons learned from David’s mentorship continue to shape me as a professor, folklorist, and ethnomusicologist and I am truly appreciative. Lida, I also thank you again for your kindness to me when we were grad students I am eternally grateful for your generosity and friendship.*

*Take care,
Phyllis May-Machunda (formerly Phyllis May)*



Phyllis May-Machunda - April 05, 2016 at 10:27 PM

MG

“ Dear Lida,

I want to let you know that you have been in my thoughts and prayers both before and after David's death. Although we have only known each other a short time, you have touched my heart in so many ways. I hope all the many memories of your life together will bring you comfort and peace.

Your friend from the Wed. group,,

Marie Gougeon

marie gougeon - April 05, 2016 at 05:05 PM

MR

“ Lida, April and Family,

We mourn with you in the passing of David. Emma Baker and Marie Bledsoe, my mother, were sisters . We always knew David to be a kind, loyal and loving person. He will certainly be missed. Prayerfully, M.Jean (Bledsoe) Robinson

M.Jean (Bledsoe) Robinson - April 04, 2016 at 03:02 PM

TW

“ *My deepest sympathies are being sent to Lida and the entire Baker Family during this time!! David will be missed by all who knew him as a compassionate human being who gave until the end! Gods Speed to all!*

*Tony White,
Los Angeles, CA*

Tony White - April 04, 2016 at 10:58 AM



KW

“ I was a teenager in the late 50's when Dave Baker was already becoming a legend in the Indianapolis Jazz Community - truly a global center of the art form. His example of approaching music in general and Jazz in particular is, without exaggeration at this occasion, with seriousness, fun and high performance has pushed the entire genre forward. Oh, and he was also cool in the hippest since of the Jazz Player!

While he was alive there was only one mentor of his stature, David Baker. Now that he lives in the rich and wondrous Ancestry of Western Music that extends from Mozart to Bird, we are reminded how fortunate it is for the Jazz Community that David Baker lived, performed, taught, nurtured, loved and fought as one of us. Bless him.

Keni Washington - April 03, 2016 at 05:08 PM



“ DeMorris Smith lit a candle in memory of David N. Baker, Jr.



DeMorris Smith - April 03, 2016 at 09:07 AM

KP

“ So sorry to hear of David's passing. I had the pleasure of knowing him as a childhood friend of April, as a student in the music school, and as a professional who attempted in a small way, to assist in his physical therapy.

He was always positive and supportive, and in music school in the seventies, that could be a rare commodity! I recall auditioning on drums for the big bands, and feeling very nervous since we had to play along with a recording of Ron Carter playing quarter notes, as well as "Gone, gone, gone" from Porgy and Bess, but David made it very comfortable through warmth and humor. He was always very down to earth ; encouraging after he had attended some performance in which I had participated, and functioned as a friend, as well as mentor.

He will be missed!

Love,

Kent Pellerite

Kent Pellerite - April 01, 2016 at 02:59 PM



“ Lavender & White Sympathy Floor Basket was purchased for the family of David N. Baker, Jr..



April 01, 2016 at 10:21 AM

TG

“ A truly lovely man, a family friend, known to my youngest daughter as *The Muffin Man* (at 2, this was her interpretation of his name "Dr. Baker")! He often told her he planned to someday write her a song about this.

A child sees clearly a kind soul; she knew his to be such and the two had a special connection. Perhaps he had this affect on most persons with whom he had contact, but to her it was unique! She lit up when Dr. Baker expressed his enthusiam for her choosing the baritone as her band instrument this year. Now 12, hearing her speak of her respect and adoration for this man melts my heart!

Thank you Dr. Baker (David) for being a part of our life. May your home with God be joyous and the music live on!

Trisha and Gabrielle Goodwin

Trisha Goodwin - March 31, 2016 at 10:15 PM



“ *I have no background in music and went to Jazz Fables when it was his thing, and that is why I love jazz today. Not only great music, but he was always friendly and kind. I got to take my daughter to his new piece when he brought it to Indianapolis, and I'm glad she got to meet such a great musician*

Lisa Davidson - March 31, 2016 at 10:00 PM

CH

“ I was in the first cohort of students to take the Afro American Studies program (that is what it was called then) that was launched in 1970-71. It was two semesters of courses in history, literature, art and music. I took all eight classes before graduating in 1971, possibly becoming the first graduate of the newly created discipline (I believe I was the only graduating senior that year). Mr. Baker taught both semesters of the music class, and he gave me a grounding in the Black music experience that has served me well to this day. I recently was Chair of the Board of the Jazz Heritage Center in San Francisco, I founded a fund to pay jazz musicians who perform every Saturday at a farmers market on the historic Fillmore Street, and I have been involved in a number of efforts to support and promote local musicians in the Bay Area. A part of the credit for my work goes to Mr Baker, who gifted me with a foundation and deeper appreciation for music - especially the music given to the world by Black people. May he rest in peace, and may you find comfort in his legacy and the many lives he touched.
Peace and Blessings,
Christine Harris

Christine Harris - March 31, 2016 at 07:04 PM

JE

“ AS A 23 YEAR MEMBER OF MINI UNIVERSITY, I ATTENDED DAVID'S PROGRAMS, AND WAS ALWAYS ENRICHED BY HIS GIVING US DELIGHT, HUMOUR, GREAT MUSIC AND WISDOM.....TRULY A DECENT, FINE GENTLEMAN, WHO WILL BE MISSED BY ALL WHO KNEW HIM.....JEANNE ELLENSTEIN...AUSTIN , TEXAS

JEANNE ELLENSTEIN - March 31, 2016 at 11:18 AM

PA

“ Davey was a student at IU when we first met in Indy. Eugenia, you will remember that. I also knew Buddy Baker and enjoyed the Baker Brothers trombone music. Several years later, we moved to Bloomington and met up again with Davey. I knew Lida from the Indianapolis Flute Club and Mu Phi Epsilon music fraternity. My funniest memories happened when Davey and I went to the same hair salon for a while. We had time to share stories and memories. He was always friendly. I am in awe of all his accomplishments - what he did, but even more in awe of who he was. He leaves an impressive legacy. I offer my prayers and condolences to all the family and to his many friends.

Peg Albertson - March 31, 2016 at 10:22 AM

DK

“ You do not know me. I enjoy eating at Longhorn's on Sunday. Professor Baker was there also. I never spoke to him. I gave him his privacy. However, I always knew I was in the presence of a great man. He will be missed even there.

Dorothy Korb - March 31, 2016 at 06:29 AM

KB

“ I met Mr. Baker as a senior at Arsenal Technical High School in 1970 when he and others performed in a small auditorium for the music classes. I never had an appreciation for jazz until that day. I ran into him in the hallway many years later (1997) when I was working at IU as a secretary and asked if he had a moment. He graciously spent time with me so I could relate my story of seeing him much earlier in my life. He projected joy as we talked about music and I felt I saw the warmth of a man that had light in his life. I feel he must have impacted each person he ever met in a joyful way. As we parted he joked - that because we both had the last name Baker - he enjoyed seeing his "Northern Cousin". I still get a big smile on my face when I remember that.

I wish to extend my most sincere condolences to all the members of his family and extended family. Mr. Baker will be sorely missed and fondly remembered.

Kathy Baker

Kathy Baker - March 31, 2016 at 06:22 AM

MV

“ May your hearts soon be filled with wonderful memories of joyful times together, as you celebrate a life well-lived. Grief is hard....may your family find comfort in God's promise at John 6: 40. Please accept my sincere condolences.

Melodie Valley - March 30, 2016 at 11:07 PM

MA

“ I'll always remember David's smiling eyes. He was a mentor not only to his students, but to everyone who had the privilege of knowing him, or even being in his proximity. He was what the Germans refer to as "ein Mensch," a person of integrity, honor, and deep human compassion.

Thank you, David, for being a master human being. We still have much to learn from you.

*Your former student and friend,
Marianne Ackerson*

Marianne Ackerson - March 29, 2016 at 07:47 PM

VW

“ I was blessed to meet and speak with Mr. Baker following a jazz band concert at DePauw University which featured works by Quincy Jones. The concert was awesome! But getting to shake hands with Mr. Baker and trade a few words was beyond awesome!! He was so kind and approachable. Truly a humble gentleman. I will never forget these few moments, and I will always recall them every time I listen to one of his works. May you be comforted in your loss knowing that Mr. Baker is playing his beloved trombone for all in heaven.

*In Christian love,
Vivian M. Whitaker
Cloverdale, IN*

Vivian M. Whitaker - March 29, 2016 at 02:40 PM