

# Composer and conductor Buryl Red dies

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NEW YORK (ABP)—Buryl Red, a conductor, producer and arranger known around the world as musical director of The CenturyMen and composer of the 1972 classic *Celebrate Life*, died April 1 after a battle with cancer.

A graduate of Baylor and Yale universities and born in Little Rock, Ark., Red, 77, wrote more than 1,600 published compositions and arrangements, many of them award-winning. He produced more than 2,500 recordings and arranged music for hundreds of shows, documentaries and musical specials for network and cable television. The Washington Post described his works as “uncommonly creative.”

In 1969, the Radio and Television Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention established the CenturyMen, an auditioned men’s chorus of professional musicians who are directors of music in Baptist churches across America and from around the world. With Red as conductor, the group has performed on national television, been finalists for Dove and Grammy Awards and traveled around the world.

In 1972, he wrote music for *Celebrate Life*, a collaboration with book and lyrics author Ragan Courtney, published by Broadman Press, that became a staple in Southern Baptist youth choirs. The song “In Remembrance,” published in the 1991 Baptist Hymnal, is from the musical.

Bob Burroughs, a composer and former church music director for the Florida Baptist Convention, remembered Red as a friend, mentor and advice-giver who always had time for people.

“He gave me advice that I still use today in my own music composition

style,” Burroughs said. “He was a giant among church and school musicians alike, a hero to many, friend to thousands, and his quiet, gentle persona will be missed.”

Greg Stahl, executive director of the CenturyMen, described Red as a “true giant” among Baptist church musicians that he puts in the same category with Isaac Watts, Fanny Crosby and B.B. McKinney.

Stahl said the CenturyMen had been working with Red to plan a tribute concert in New York City, where he lived, as a “way of saying a personal goodbye,” but the cancer spread to his liver and ended his life before they got the opportunity.

CenturyMen President Lee Chitwood said the show will go on as memorial tribute to Red and a celebration of his lifelong work. Scheduled for 7 p.m. on April 29 at Central Presbyterian Church in New York City, the concert will feature performances by the CenturyMen and other artists and reflections from several speakers giving “testimony of the enormous impact that Buryl has had on our lives.”

“Buryl will most assuredly be missed but highly remembered for his lasting musical contributions to so many,” said Chitwood, minister of music and worship at First Baptist Church in Newnan, Ga.

Stahl, associate pastor for worship and music at River Oaks Baptist Church in Houston, said with all the changes that have occurred in church music over the past 10 to 15 years, “I wonder if we will ever see another Buryl Red.”