

In commemoration of Max Miller

Several leaders of the School of Music and STH have collaborated to create the attached tribute to Max Miller, a great soul who contributed mightily to STH, the School of Music, and Marsh Chapel, not to mention the larger world of music. I have pasted the first paragraph of the tribute below and you can read the attachment in its entirety. Max Miller's legacy was remarkable. Those who knew him celebrate his life mightily, and those who did not know him have received his gifts in ways that you can now celebrate as you read the attachment.

Max Miller served on the faculties of the School of Music and the School of Theology at Boston University for forty-two years until his retirement in 1991. He was simultaneously University Organist, Director of Music at Marsh Chapel, Director of the Master of Sacred Music program, conductor of the Seminary Singers, and Professor of Organ in the School of Music. He took the Seminary Singers on tour every year, and one suspects that participants could contribute many anecdotes about Max's aplomb under the inevitably unpredictable vicissitudes of such an enterprise.

With appreciation for a life well lived,

Mary Elizabeth
Dean and Professor of Theology and Education

(tribute follows...)

Max Burdorf Miller (1927-2013)

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He taught organ not only to majors in that instrument but also to those studying within the MSM program. For Max every student was his student, whether they could play the most difficult of Reger's *Phantasien* or a more modest repertoire. He guided all of them to develop their musicality to the highest level possible. Probably he did not often say to a student "don't you think that's too difficult for you." All of his students remember him with the greatest affection.

Max Miller began his study of the organ in his native California. He must have been precocious player. While studying Arnold Schoenberg's difficult *Variations on a Recitative*, he received coaching from the composer. (Max published a reminiscence of this encounter, a copy of which is kept the Arnold-Schoenberg-Archiv in Vienna.) Max and his wife Betty lived in Vienna for several years, while Max studied with the eminent Austrian virtuoso, teacher, and composer, Anton Heiller. Max received his Ph.D. from Boston University and was a Fellow of the American Guild of Organists.

Max was dedicated to his role as church musician. He rehearsed the Chapel choir weekly and conducted every Sunday service. There were special programs, to be sure, but the high quality of preparation and presentation—abetted by Max’s endearing personality—created a wonderful community. Those relationships are commemorated in his 1984 hymn tune named MARSH CHAPEL, which now appears in hymnals in both the US and Canada. Over the years, his Chapel assistants enjoyed a unique apprenticeship in how to run a choir rehearsal and in the fine art of service playing. For decades Max was in demand as a workshop presenter at organists’ conventions.

For many years he wrote an “Ask Uncle Max” column for *The American Organist*, the national publication of the American Guild of Organists. His columns were always the perfect blend of erudition and good musical sense. Over-specialization, however attractive it might be in today’s academe, did not appeal to Max. His interests were very wide, encompassing theology, literature, and much else.

His knowledge of the organ repertoire was impressive, and he was the guiding spirit in the founding of The Organ Library, located in the School of Theology. This has grown to be one of the largest collections of organ music in the world, accessible through a searchable database. The Organ Library awards the biennial Max B. Miller prize to outstanding books devoted to organ literature and performance.

On the occasion of his seventieth birthday (October 21, 1997) a group of his students presented Max with an informal “Festschrift” as a testimony to their affection. The contributions ranged from the scholarly to the whimsical (Max would have appreciated both!) One of his students created a little “diploma” which concluded with the following ditty:

The organ’s firm foundation is not its reed or flutes;
It is our Max B. Miller, who makes the pipes all toot.
At Marsh he came to teach us. The ciphers did relax.
We wish you joy and laughter.
Happy retirement, Max!

For more than four decades, Max Miller inspired so many at Boston University, not only with “joy and laughter” but also with musical artistry and erudition. *Requiescat in pace.*