

Auda Marie Thomas

May 6, 1943 - January 27, 2016

Auda Marie Thomas, age 72, of Harrah, OK, a noted musician and educator, was born May 6, 1943, in Enid, OK. She was the daughter of Aude E. & Beatrice R. Thomas. She passed away on Wednesday, January 27, 2016, in Oklahoma City after a courageous battle with cancer. A nationally certified teacher in piano, theory and music education, her passion for music began as a young child and continued through the completion of several degrees.

She studied piano with Dr. Clarence Burg at Oklahoma City University 1962-63 and continued for many summer sessions. She earned her undergraduate degree in music from Southwestern State College in 1965, a graduate degree from The University of Oklahoma in 1967 and a degree in pastoral ministry from Newman College in Wichita, KS. Auda Marie joined the faculty at Russell Babb Elementary School in Harrah, OK in 1966 as an elementary music specialist, where she built a program that was used as a model for the Oklahoma State Department of Education. Her inspiration for many of her innovative programs was a result of workshops in teaching gifted and talented students offered by Claire Jones at Oklahoma City University, including the Ceneral Music Project.

Auda Marie instituted the Gifted and Talented Program at Harrah Public Schools in 1970. Her program was named one of the ten outstanding elementary school music programs in the U.S. by Music Educators National Conference (MENC). In August 1979, she opened the Arts Explosion, an academic preschool program that allowed children to experience academic learning through the creative arts. Arts Explosion students attended all performances of the Oklahoma City University Children's Theatre from 1979 until 2010. The preschool also offered classes in Parenting with Love and Logic. The Arts Explosion closed its doors in May 2010, having graduated over 600 students with excellent results in academic success.

Auda Marie was a 50-year member of the Oklahoma Music Teachers Association, an affiliate of Music Teachers National Association (MTNA). At the national level, she served for nine years on the National Executive Board. In addition, she served as chair of the MTNA High School Performance Auditions, as national coordinator of the performance auditions and composition competitions for all grade levels, as the South Central Division Elementary Music Coordinator and High School Competition chair. She served on the OMTA State Executive Board for over 40 years and served as State President for four years.

One of her most lasting legacies was continuing the State Achievement Auditions which were instituted by OCU's Dr. Clarence Burg. Auda Marie retired as Audition Chair in 2014 after having served in this position for 40 years. In 1987, the OMTA Executive Board presented Auda Marie with the Honorary Life Membership for her dedicated work. In 2004, she was named a MTNA Foundation Fellow. In 2014, she was named a Distinguished Alumni of the Bass School of Music at Oklahoma City University.

Auda Marie served for 34 years as organist and choir director at St. Teresa of Avila Catholic Church in Harrah. She continued to run a thriving piano studio until her illness prevented her from continuing. Auda Marie loved music, education, and promoting the arts. Her legacy will live on in the hundreds of lives she influenced through her music and inspiration.