



Gary Sipes

December 2, 2009

Sipes, Gary Beloved Friend, Music Educator, Mentor, and Colleague. Age 73, died on Friday, 11/27/09. Pianist and Faculty Member at the MacPhail Center for Music. Taken too abruptly, he will carry on in the hearts and music of the countless lives he touched through his 47 year teaching career. Survived by sister, Ruth McKay of San Antonio, TX; and partner John Stensing of St. Paul. Memorial service Friday, Dec. 4 at Washburn-McReavy Edina Chapel, 50th Street & Hwy 100. Visitation 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM; Service noon - 1:00 PM; Reception 1:00 - 2:30 PM. Interment at 3:00 PM, Forest Lawn, 1800 Edgerton, St. Paul. In lieu of flowers, memorials preferred to the Gary Sipes Piano Scholarship Fund - MacPhail Center for Music. Contact Jonathan Lundgren at 612-767-5308. A Memorial Celebration is being planned at MacPhail, www.macphail.org.

Tribute Wall



“ *Happy Birthday Gary, You are with me always.*”

~

John Stensing

Contact Me

October 12, 2011 at 12:00 AM

SH

“ Gary Sipes was my junior high school orchestra director. I studied harp and flute and he was a great encouragement to me in those endeavors. I will never forget when he recognized me in 1962 as outstanding musician of our school and I will never forget him and all that he taught me.

~

Sonora Hartley,

San Antonio, Texas

Sonora Hartley - September 08, 2010 at 12:00 AM

JM

“ I knew him for several years at the University of Illinois, where we were both students of the great Claire Richards. Gary & I gave a joint recital; He loaned me a Dinner Jacket for the occasion. He was a terrific pianist with an amazing technique. I must say he was an unforgettable performer!John McCauley, NYC

~

John McCauley,

New York, New York

John McCauley - April 02, 2010 at 12:00 AM



“ I truly believe that no words can describe the ways Mr. Sipes helped every person that he met. I am so thankful for all of the knowlege that he gave me over the short time we worked together. He will always be a part of my memory when I sit down to play the piano. Thank you so much Mr. Sipes, your love and devotion will always be remembered. Our lives will not be the same without you, but I hope to honor your memory. My most sincere thanks to all his family and friends for letting all of Gary's stidents get to know this inspiring, devoted and humorous person

January 01, 2010 at 12:00 AM

NS

“ Gary took me under his wing five years ago. Up until his death he became and remained my esteemed and dedicated teacher, kind and understanding mentor, and above all one of my dearest friends. He holds a special place in my heart for the joy, life, love, laughter, and wonderful memories he has given to me. Gary was a giver. I always came out of piano lessons encouraged and filled up. He opened my eyes, my heart, my mind to so much and I am deeply grateful to him. My life is greatly enriched from having known him. You will be missed, Gary. All my love,

~

Natalie Scholl,

Minnesota

Contact Me

Natalie Scholl - December 27, 2009 at 12:00 AM

EL

“ Gary was a wonderful teacher and friend. He introduced me to many composers including Shostakovich, Rachmaninoff, and Ravel. He pushed me to become a better pianist and gave me lots of opportunities to perform. He cared a lot for his students. I will miss him greatly.

~

Elaine Liu,

San Carlos, California

Contact Me

Elaine Liu - December 15, 2009 at 12:00 AM

CW

“ I have so many wonderful memories of Gary and because of Gary. Though I studied with him only four years and have had many wonderful teachers since, he remains the most important teacher in my many years as a student, because he seemed to believe that my potential as a student was endless. This faith in my abilities helped me take on pieces such as Gershwin’s piano concerto in F and Rachmaninoff’s second piano concerto, which now I can hardly believe I played. He was a wonderful teacher, mentor and friend, and he will be greatly missed by so many people.

~

Christine Worrall,

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Christine Worrall - December 12, 2009 at 12:00 AM

TA

“ I don't know how to express what Gary meant to me. He was my mentor, and my friend. At times, even a parent. If I had not met and studied with him when I did, I would never have played again. What he gave me in motivation and confidence is priceless. He was one of the greatest human beings I've ever met.

~

Tim Anderson,

Dallas, Texas

Contact Me

Tim Anderson - December 09, 2009 at 12:00 AM

BO

“ I will be forever thankful that I was a student of Gary's, back as a junior high and high school kid in the 1980s. Yes, Gary taught me so much about the keyboard, and my playing improved tremendously thanks to his patient instruction. But Gary taught his students so much more about living a purpose-filled life. He so clearly loved what he was doing, and took such great joy in the achievements of his students. I have thought of him often over the years. I know I will continue to think of him often -- especially every time I dust off one of my old Chopin or Debussy books, and try to recapture even just 50% of the player I was when I was studying with Gary!! I extend my sincere and profound condolences to his family and loved ones.

~

Bill Otteson,

Edina, Minnesota

Bill Otteson - December 08, 2009 at 12:00 AM

RN

“ I came to know Gary when I became a student at MacPhail the final year before it became a part of the University of Minnesota, in the mid 60's. He was one of my teachers. I remember his encouraging me to go on to the University of Minnesota the following year for my Master's Degree, which I did. I taught at MacPhail for the next five years until my husband and I moved away from Minneapolis. I appreciate Gary's acceptance of me as a person and his encouragement regarding my ability. One memory I have of him is of how I would see him on 2nd floor, cup of coffee in hand. I ponder on the reality of the fact that he is really gone.

~

Rhoda Nelson,

Clarkfield, Minnesota

Rhoda Nelson - December 07, 2009 at 12:00 AM

AO

“ *The world has lost a true music artist and dedicated teacher. I have been a piano student of Gary's for 23 years. All who studied with him were guided and encouraged to bring out their very best expression of the beautiful music we were playing. The depth of his knowledge, his commitment to excellence, and his incredible abilities as a pianist and teacher enriched my life. Gary's legacy and genius will live on in the lives of all who knew him as a teacher, colleague, mentor, and friend. We all mourn the loss of his wonderful presence in our lives.*

~

Alice Ottavi,

Golden Valley, Minnesota

Contact Me

Alice Ottavi - December 04, 2009 at 12:00 AM

SW

“ I have known Gary for 15 years now, as a colleague of his at MacPhail. He invited me into his studio to hear him "air out a few piano pieces" when he was getting ready for his last big recital a couple years back. Every note was in place (he had handed me the piano score to read while he played), and his interpretation was superb. I attended the funeral today and the graveside service, and I have to say my heart is completely broken in two at the loss of this fine man, this wonderful friend, and this artist. Gary was an original. God bless John, Ruth, and all who knew and loved Gary. I will miss him, as will many, many others.

~

Sandy Waterman,

Vadnais Heights, Minnesota

Contact Me

Sandy Waterman - December 04, 2009 at 12:00 AM

CS

“ Gary was my mother's piano teacher - she became his pupil when she was in her 70's. She loved him and her lessons and grew to know about his life and met all his friends and loved them all. She died 6 years ago and Gary played at her funeral - he loved her too. Anne Morrow said it best in her card to me - Gladys (my mother) greeted him with open arms in that place beyond. Catherine Sjostrand (Gladys Houck's daughter).

~

Catherine Sjostrand,

Grand Rapids, Minnesota

Contact Me

Catherine Sjostrand - December 04, 2009 at 12:00 AM



“ Gary was my good friend and valued colleague. I had the good fortune to teach in the studio next door to him at MacPhail. I never knew when Gary would come knocking, asking in a panic for computer help or for a piece of music that he needed NOW. He often wanted me to read through duets with him when he had a few spare moments. I will miss everything about him, from his artistry, teaching skills and wisdom to his wonderful sense of humor. My heart goes out to John and to all of his students.

~

Gail Olszewski

December 04, 2009 at 12:00 AM

KH

“ *Mr. Sipes was my teacher from 1977 to 1982. (I am 47 now, but he will always be Mr. Sipes to me.) I was a 15-year-old girl and nervous as anything when I first played for him, hoping to become his pupil. Thankfully, he took me under his wing, and I'll be forever grateful. Mr. Sipes never let me get away with sloppy fingering or overuse of the damper pedal (though I still tried if I hadn't practiced enough) - and oh, he heard even the teeniest, quietest wrong note! - but he also brought a sense of humor and great kindness to each lesson. When my fingers touch the piano keys, I often think of him. I am happy to have known him. The night I learned of his passing, I sat down at my piano and played the Chopin Berceuse in D flat major, in his honor. I remember falling in love with that piece, thanks to him. I will miss you, Mr. Sipes. You brought out the beauty in everything - music, humans, life.*

~

Kristin Heiberg,

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Contact Me

Kristin Heiberg - December 04, 2009 at 12:00 AM

MG

“ The day I met Gary@John They were walking there dog past our shop on Payne Ave. Murph was working on something and I was takeing a break at the piano I think they heard the music Murph saw them looking in the window and invited them in for a tour. John said that Gary also played so I said please play If you like. He opened my Scott Joplin book and began. I will say It was the best my piano has ever sounded. Then john said that Gary was a teacher and there would be a recital and we could come. After hearing his students I told Gary when you said you were a teacher you didnt tell us you were THEE teacher. I wish I could have got to know him better now that will have to wait. Best wishes to John

~

Mike Grealish,

St. Paul, Minnesota

Contact Me

Mike Grealish - December 04, 2009 at 12:00 AM



“ *I studied with Gary as a teenager, biking or busing to his home in south Minneapolis. I was given the push I needed to expand my abilities on the piano. I was exposed to wonderful works by Gottschalk and Lecuona, full of latin rhythm. I also fondly remember the Saturdays where students would gather at his home for theory class. He was greatly invested in the betterment of all his students, and I will be forever grateful.*

~

Joe Chouinard

December 04, 2009 at 12:00 AM



“ *In the past four years and throughout all of high school, I've had the great privilege of studying under Gary. He gave so much insight and meaning to the music he taught and was just an overall great guy. Some lessons, we'd just spend time talking to each other, tell stories in between "run throughs" and just have fun. That is what made Gary so special - the fact that not only was it about music, but it was also about a personal connection between the student and teacher. I will miss Gary very much. I doubt I will ever come by a better teacher than he.*

~

Jordan Werre

December 04, 2009 at 12:00 AM

AF

“ I had the privilege of studying with Gary as a high school student, and though he greatly improved my skill as a pianist I think the greater lessons I learned from him stemmed from his kind-hearted approach to teaching and his quiet sense of humor. Gary's studio always provided a quiet place to retreat from life's troubles and concentrate on creating something of beauty. Gary, you are greatly missed. Thank you for the care you gave to each of us as your students.

~

Alexis Friedrich,

Richfield, Minnesota

Alexis Friedrich - December 03, 2009 at 12:00 AM

PB

“ Chris and I are saddened to hear of Gary's death. John, we have been thinking of you so much this week. We are just down the street if there is anything you need! I will miss seeing Gary walking his dogs or driving down the street. He always had a friendly word to say.

~

Paula Barclay,

Saint Paul, Minnesota

Contact Me

Paula Barclay - December 03, 2009 at 12:00 AM

MG

“ I met Gary years ago, when as a nervous beginning voice student I was auditioning at MacPhail for a scholarship. He offered to play for my audition, encouraged me, gave wise and gently-placed advice, and kept me laughing with his bottomless repertoire of jokes. Years later, when I was teaching Early Childhood music classes at MacPhail, I was fortunate to be able to experience Gary's elegance and sensitivity as a solo pianist and his huge-heartedness as a down-the-hall friend who was never too busy to send my blues packing with his smile. What a gentleman, what an artist. I know I join countless others in feeling like a better person for having known Gary, and will miss him so.

~

Maggie Gallivan,

Coquitlam, British Columbia

Maggie Gallivan - December 03, 2009 at 12:00 AM

LM

“ Our house is one of tears. I (Larry) started with Gary 43 years ago playing Moonlight Sonata. Not only did he introduce me to the classical music world, he introduced me to D.D. in 1979 (married her in 1981), (who also studied with Gary), and brought eternal enjoyment into my life, D.D.'s life, and into our son's (he passed at 26 yrs old). I can not tell you how much my heart hurts and D.D.'s. With love especially to John, Larry & D.D. Mechelke Apple Valley, MN

~

Larry Mechelke,

apple valley, Minnesota

Contact Me

Larry Mechelke - December 03, 2009 at 12:00 AM

DH

“ *I have fond memories of my days as a student of Gary's from 1967-1973. I have carried so much of what he taught me into my career as a college professor and pianist. He was a marvelous teacher and above all, a true gentleman. He will be missed by all who knew him. My deepest condolences to John and to all of Gary's colleagues at MacPhail.*

~

Duane Hulbert,

Tacoma, Washington

Contact Me

Duane Hulbert - December 02, 2009 at 12:00 AM

JB

“ I started taking piano lessons from Gary when I was 15 years old and I remember him as a kind, warm and good person. I also remember Gary as a thoughtful, dedicated and inspiring teacher. It has been over 36 years ago that I took piano lessons from Gary, but in my mind I still see him as if I were that 15 year old kid. I'm thankful that Gary was a part of my life. I extend my condolences and sympathies to his family.

~

John Barron,

St Paul, Minnesota

Contact Me

John Barron - December 02, 2009 at 12:00 AM

MB

“ *I first knew Gary when I was a college student and he was my music history prof. He became my accompanist for my senior recital and, not only a teacher, but my friend as well. We have kept in touch for almost forty years since my graduation and remained friends to the day he died. He was truly an inspiration and a fine person.*

~

Michael Bennett,

Grand Rapids, Michigan

Michael Bennett - December 02, 2009 at 12:00 AM

DO

“ Our two older daughters studied with Gary Sipes, first in Buffalo and then at MacPhail. When my husband was laid off work for a few months, I told Gary we couldn't afford the lessons. He was appalled at the idea of their quitting and said he would just continue their lessons without pay. I have never forgotten his generosity and true dedication to music. My husband and I also developed an understanding and appreciation of classical music because of Gary. He was a wonderful teacher. Peace be to his memory.

~

Donna Ortquist,

Buffalo, Minnesota

Donna Ortquist - December 02, 2009 at 12:00 AM



“ An incredible mentor and colleague. I cannot imagine Honors Recitals and the Concerto/Aria concert without him in the audience.

December 02, 2009 at 12:00 AM



“ I knew Gary only from him coming into Rainbow Foods . Always had a wonderful smile and friendly hello. My heart goes out to John who would come with him sometimes. Margaret

December 02, 2009 at 12:00 AM

TR

“ *I only studied with Gary for a short time. We shall all miss his dedication to his craft and his irreverence.*

~

Terry Reznicek,

St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin

Contact Me

Terry Reznicek - December 02, 2009 at 12:00 AM

NB

“ I got to know Gary when I was the Director of Finance & Administration for MacPhail several years ago, before my move to Colorado. He was a great teacher and a fine musician. My condolences to his family and friends, especially those still at MacPhail.

~

Nancy Biele,

Lyons, Colorado

Nancy Biele - December 02, 2009 at 12:00 AM



“ THE WORLD IS A BETTER PLACE BECAUSE OF GARY SIPES AND HIS WONDERFUL WORLD OF MUSIC . GOD BLESS HIM, MARY ANN AND BOB LEO

December 02, 2009 at 12:00 AM

VE

“ Gary was my teacher, friend and mentor. I received so many life lessons from him and will forever be grateful for his honesty and his love. He reignited my love for the piano, kicked my bum when I needed it and taught me to always follow my dream. I love you Gary and I will miss you.

~

Victoria Engelmayer,

Los Angeles, California

Victoria Engelmayer - December 01, 2009 at 12:00 AM

WH

“ Gary Sipes began opening the world of classical music to me as a 13 year-old piano student. His great musical and pedagogical gifts that he shared with me set me on my path to a career in music, and I will cherish the memory of his fine personal qualities my entire life. Thank you, Gary! Ward Holmquist Artistic Director Lyric Opera of Kansas City

~

Ward Holmquist,

Kansas City, Missouri

Contact Me

Ward Holmquist - December 01, 2009 at 12:00 AM



“ Gary was a fine friend and colleague. I will miss his playing and his fine humor!
Leonard Danek
Professor of Music
Northwestern College
St. Paul, MN

December 01, 2009 at 12:00 AM



“ Gary taught me and so many others about true artistry and the depth and joy of music. He was like a father. The loss is profound . .

~

Mandy Tuong,

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Mandy Tuong - December 01, 2009 at 12:00 AM

CT

“ I came to know Gary three years ago when my daughter Mihika started studying with him. In this short time, he challenged her to play music that I never thought she would attempt and she blossomed under his tutelage, growing into a sensitive and accomplished musician and I thank him for this gift from the bottom of my heart. I really enjoyed his wry humor, his love of flowers and beauty and his unflinching devotion and dedication to his students. His legacy will live on in the hearts and hands of the many students he has taught. He will be deeply missed.

~

Charita Thakkar,

Eden Prairie, Minnesota

Charita Thakkar - December 01, 2009 at 12:00 AM

PH

“ *In loving memory of my friend, mentor and lifelong piano teacher- the great Gary Sipes who passed away Friday, November 27th 2009. Your passionate teaching enriched the lives of so many students, families and the Twin Cities music world. I will always be your student, I will never forget what you, taught me and I will pass those lessons on to my son.*

~

Philip Hotchkiss,

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Contact Me

Philip Hotchkiss - December 01, 2009 at 12:00 AM

BR

“ We love you Uncle Johnny, and want you to know we are here for you whenever you need us. Gary will be missed very much.XOXOXOXOXOBecky Russell and family

~

Becky Russell,

Montrose, Minnesota

Becky Russell - December 01, 2009 at 12:00 AM

LS

“ Gary Sipes was a great teacher, mentor and friend. He introduced me to my husband, John, and performed at our wedding. He always encouraged the best in his students and he will be greatly missed.

~

Laura Springer,

Oakdale, Minnesota

Laura Springer - December 01, 2009 at 12:00 AM

LH

“ Gary Sipes was one of the great music educators of our time. I was honored to have studied piano and music theory with him at MacPhail. As both a teacher and a friend, he was a very important part of my life. Gary's loss will be felt throughout the entire Minnesota performing arts community. I extend my deepest sympathies to his family. Lou Hurvitz

~

Lou Hurvitz,

Mendota Heights, Minnesota

Contact Me

Lou Hurvitz - December 01, 2009 at 12:00 AM