

## From Child Prodigy to Master Teacher

*Anthony di Bonaventura, a CFA pianist, was a figure of international stature in the music world*

By Laurel Homer

ANTHONY DI BONAVENTURA, a College of Fine Arts professor of music in the School of Music, died on November 12, 2012. He was 83.

"We are deeply saddened by the passing of our beloved Professor di Bonaventura," says CFA Dean Benjamín Juárez. "A major figure in the music world since his debut as a child prodigy, Tony enriched the School of Music with his passionate commitment to musical excellence and his advocacy of new music by such luminaries as Ligeti, Berio, Ginastera, and Persichetti, all of whom wrote music for him."

In addition to his position at BU, di Bonaventura was director of the Brandywine International Piano Institute at West Chester University of Pennsylvania. He performed in 27 countries, playing in recital and with the

major orchestras and conductors of the world. He appeared in the Great Performers series at New York's Lincoln Center and at such major music festivals as Saratoga, Ann Arbor, Bergen (Norway), Spoleto and Lucca (Italy), and Zagreb (Croatia). And his recordings for Columbia, RCA, Connoisseur Society, and Sine Qua Non have consistently received high acclaim. His releases include three compact discs on the Titanic label, consisting of 14 Scarlatti sonatas, the complete Preludes, op. 32, of Rachmaninoff, and an all-Chopin recording of his late works.

Acknowledged as a master teacher of international stature, di Bonaventura was awarded the Metcalf Cup and Prize for Excellence in Teaching, Boston University's highest teaching award, in 1992. He gave master classes at UCLA, the University of Michigan, the East-



**Acknowledged as a master teacher of international stature, Anthony di Bonaventura was awarded the Metcalf Cup and Prize for Excellence in Teaching, BU's highest teaching award, in 1992.**

man School of Music, Brigham Young University, North Carolina School of the Arts, the University of Toronto, the University of Texas, Tulane University, and the Yamaha School of Singapore.

"He was interested in every student as a person, and I had never seen that before," Konstantinos Papadakis (CFA'00) told the *Boston Globe*. "He wanted us to be good, healthy, curious human beings, to do justice to

the music, to be honest, to be humble."

At the Graz Festival in Austria in fall 1986, di Bonaventura gave the world premiere performance of György Ligeti's Concerto for Piano, written especially for him, and thereafter performed the concerto in Vienna, Paris, London, St. Louis, and New York's Carnegie Hall. Other world-renowned composers who have written expressly for him are Luciano Berio, Vin-

cent Persichetti, Milko Keleman, and Alberto Ginastera, whose Second Sonata was given its world premiere by di Bonaventura in 1982. In 1991, he premiered Witold Lutoslawski's Piano Concerto in the Netherlands, with the composer conducting, followed by performances of the work with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Polish National Radio Symphony, and the San Francisco Symphony, on the occasion of the composer's 80th birthday, in 1993.

Di Bonaventura began his piano studies at the age of 3 and gave his first professional concert at 4. He won a scholarship to New York's Music School Settlement at 6 and appeared as a soloist with the New York Philharmonic at 13. At 16, di Bonaventura became the pupil of the celebrated Russian teacher Madame Isabelle Vengerova and later entered the Curtis Institute of Music, graduating with highest honors.

Acclaim by critics and audiences came early in his career. His brilliant performances in an early European tour led to his selection by the great conductor Otto Klemperer to perform the complete Beethoven Concerti at the London Beethoven Festival. *Laurel Homer is director of communications at the College of Fine Arts.*

## Max Burdorf Miller Inspired the BU Community

*CFA professor also was director of music at Marsh Chapel*

MAX BURDORF MILLER (GRS'55) served on the faculties of the College of Fine Arts and the School of Theology for 42 years, until his retirement in 1991. He was simultaneously University organist, director of music at Marsh Chapel, director of the Master of Sacred Music (MSM) program, conductor of the Seminary Singers, and a CFA School of Music professor emeritus of organ. He inspired many at Boston University, not only with joy and laughter, but also with musical artistry and erudition.

Miller died on January 5, 2013. He was 85.

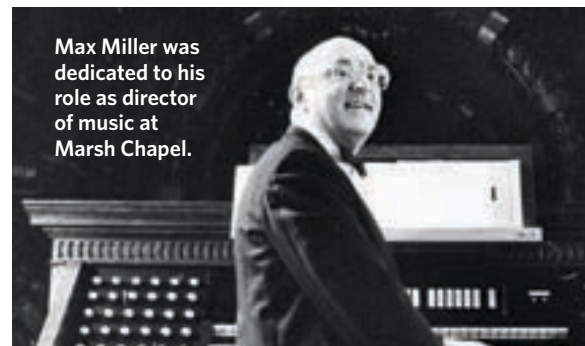
He earned bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Redmond and a PhD from Boston University.

He began his study of the organ in his native California. While studying Arnold Schoenberg's difficult *Variations on a Recitative*, he was coached by the composer, and he published a reminiscence of this encounter. A copy is kept in the Arnold Schoenberg Archives in Vienna.

Miller and his wife, Betty, lived in Vienna for several years while he studied with the eminent Austrian virtuoso, teacher, and composer Anton Heiller.

He taught organ not only to those majoring in the instrument, but also to those studying in the MSM program. For Miller, every student was his student, whether they could play the most difficult of Reger's *Phantasien* or more modest repertoire. He guided all of them to develop their musicality to the highest level possible.

Miller was also dedicated to his role as church musician. He rehearsed in the chapel choir weekly and conducted every Sunday service. The high quality of preparation and presentation, accompanied by Miller's endearing personality, created a wonderful community. Those relationships are commemorated in his 1984 hymn tune, "Marsh Chapel," which appears in hymnals in the United States 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.



Max Miller was dedicated to his role as director of music at Marsh Chapel.

For decades Miller, a fellow of the American Guild of Organists, was in demand as a workshop presenter at organists' conventions. And for many years he wrote the column "Ask Uncle Max" for the *American Organist*, the guild's national publication. His columns were always the perfect blend of erudition and good musical sense. Overspecialization, however attractive it might be in today's academe, did not appeal to Miller. His interests were wide, encompassing theology, literature, and much more.

But his knowledge of the organ repertoire was especially impressive. He was the guiding spirit in the founding of STH's Organ Library, which has become one of the largest collections of organ music in the world and is 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 70th birthday, a group of his students presented Miller with an informal Festschrift as a testimony to their affection. The contributions ranged from the scholarly to the whimsical. One of his students created a "diploma" that 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!

*This tribute was compiled by CFA, STH, and Marsh Chapel colleagues.*