Robert M. Cundick • 1926-2016

Tabernacle organist was key member of LDS music team

Obituary » He had important role in rehabilitation of the Assembly Hall, purchase of organs.

By CATHERINE REESE NEWTON

Robert M. Cundick, organist at the Salt Lake Tabernacle from 1965 to 1991 and a prominent composer, died Thursday at his Salt Lake City home of causes incident to age. He was 89.

“Bob Cundick was certainly one of the most important and influential Latter-day Saint musicians of his generation, and perhaps the entire history of [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints],” longtime friend Roger Miller, emeritus professor of musicology at the University of Utah and past Tabernacle organ staff in 1977 and was senior organist there from 1991 to 2007.

More than one fellow musician described Cundick as fearless. “He would take on almost anything if he felt it was necessary and useful to his church and community,” Otley said.

Miller remembered how Cundick “fought tooth and nail” for the preservation of the Assembly Hall after some church leaders suggested it be demolished. He was principal designer of the hall’s organ, with its distinctive façade; pitching the small building on Temple Square’s southwest corner as a fine recital venue, he organized the long-running Temple Square Concert Series. Likewise, Miller said, Cundick was “the genius behind the BYU Jerusalem Center concert series,” which started as a venue for immigrant musicians who had nowhere else to perform.

Composer Crawford Gates, a close friend for more than 60 years, described Cundick as “a composer of the first rank and a friend of the first rank.”

“He was a wonderful colleague, very much concerned that the choir staff work as a team,” Longhurst said. “There was a very warm collegiality among the staff.”

Best-known for his oratorio “The Redeemer,” Cundick wrote in a style that was “forward-looking, but at the same time very accessible to the average listener,” Otley said.

“He was kind of a Renaissance man.... He leaves a huge, huge void in the organ scene,” said principal Tabernacle organist Richard Elliott, one of many younger musicians when Cundick mentored.

Born in Salt Lake City in 1926, Cundick earned bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees in music from the University of Utah, where his mentors included the eminent Utah composer LeRoy Robertson and legendary Tabernacle organist Alcxander Schreiner. After serving in the U.S. Merchant Marine during World War II, he married Charlotte “Cholly” Clark in 1949; she survives him, as do their five children, 23 grandchildren and 38 great-grandchildren; a brother, Bert; and a sister, Carol Hoopes. A funeral is scheduled for Wednesday at noon at the Salt Lake Wilford Stake, 1765 E. 3080 South.

LDS missionaries among many who would benefit from boost in state scholarships

Paying for college » Program would grow under proposal.

By ANNIE KNOX

The gears of bureaucracy don’t brake for Alden Williams.

The senior at Copper Hills High School thought it hard to believe that a scholarship would be granted the state that would help pay tuition at Utah State University. But he’d forgotten to mail in just one of several required forms and was denied.

“I’m still going to pursue this in hopes it gets fixed,” his father, Dana Williams, told a panel of lawmakers and higher education officers Wednesday as the 18-year-old serves a Mormon mission in southern France.

Officials didn’t take immediate action on his request for more lenient deadlines for the state’s New Century and Regents scholarships. But the issue is likely to come up again as the 2016 Legislature opens.

About 3,000 Regents and roughly 300 New Century scholarships available annually are an important resource for young missionaries like Williams, because they can be deferred during the two-year service.

When students miss a due date or their transcripts are delayed, “Why isn’t more grace given?” asked Draper Republican Sen. Howard Stephenson, chairman of the Public Education Appropriations Subcommittee. “If a student is qualified, I can’t understand why there would be a huge void in the organ scene, as "a composer of the first rank and a friend of the first rank."

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