

Maestro DePriest Larger than Life

Beloved conductor dies at 76

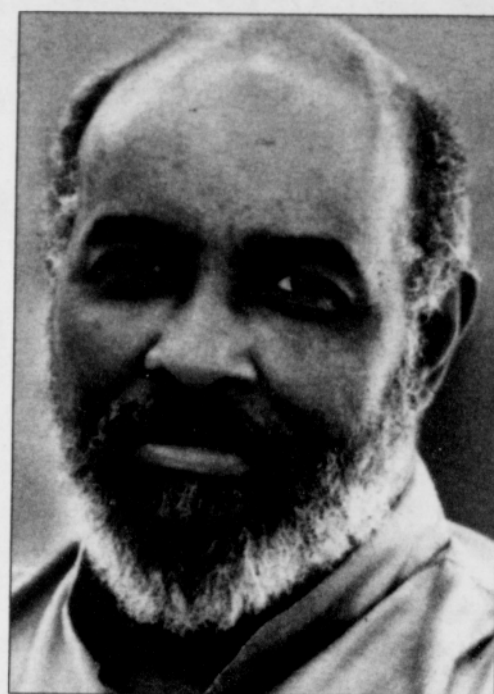
Maestro James DePriest, a beloved conductor and longtime Oregon Symphony director, died on Friday at his home in Scottsdale, Ariz. He was 76-years-old.

At the time of his death, DePriest was director emeritus of conducting and orchestral studies at the Julliard School and laureate music director of the Oregon Symphony.

According to his manager and the vice president of Opus 3 Artists, DePriest passed away from complications stemming from a heart attack he suffered last year.

The Oregon Symphony released a statement Friday that read in part: "A passionate and eloquent man, Jimmy was larger than life, a powerful force for music and the arts in the community if Portland and beyond." He served as our director and conductor from 1980 to 2003.

His work with the orchestra literally put it on the map. Under



James DePriest

his leadership, the orchestra moved from a small part time group to a full time, nationally recognized orchestra with 17 recordings.

Oregon was not the only symphony to benefit his talents. In his Julliard biography, it says that DePriest appeared with every major North American orchestra, and internationally, he had conducted in cities like Amsterdam, Vienna, Budapest, Prague, Sydney, Tel Aviv and Tokyo.

DePriest was born in Philadelphia in 1936. He was the nephew of contralto Marian Anderson. He studied at the Philadel-

phia Conservatory of Music and earned a bachelor's and a master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania.

In 1962, he contracted polio while on a tour in Thailand, leaving him with a frail walk that Portland audiences couldn't help but notice. While a celebrity of classical music, DePriest was also famous for his composition of "The Cosby Show" theme song, made in collaboration with good friend, Bill Cosby.

In 2005, President George W. Bush presented DePriest with the National Medal of Arts, the nation's highest honor for artistic excellence.

The Oregon Symphony's statement said he "possessed an amazing ability to evoke the emotional content of the classical repertoire, especially work from the Romantic Period. No one will ever forget his iconic love and passion for Rachmaninoff."

"He will be missed by the Symphony, its musicians and staff. We all recognize that we stand here today because of him. Our hearts and best wishes go out to his wife, Ginette, and his entire family," the symphony said.

His Legacy Will Live On

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