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Democracy Dies in Darkness

Performing Arts Patron Evelyn Hayes



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Evelyn Swarthout Hayes, 87, a retired American University music professor and concert pianist who was a prominent voice in the cultural life of Washington since the 1940s, died of cardiac arrest March 24 at George Washington University Hospital. She lived in Washington.

She was the wife of Patrick Hayes, a former National Symphony Orchestra manager and director emeritus of the Washington Performing Arts Society, who died in 1998.

In 1997, the couple were awarded the Levine School of Music's 10th annual Paul Hume Award for their contributions to Washington's cultural history. In all their endeavors, the couple sought to increase the exposure of Washingtonians to more and better culture and fight racial segregation in the arts. They led struggles to integrate both groups of performers and audiences.

If Mr. Hayes received the greater share of the publicity, he always credited his wife as a major influence on his life, maintaining that "I never made a musical judgment without consulting her."

Last year, the pianist Andre Watts said in an interview that "the real musician in the family, as he [Mr. Hayes] would be very quick to point out to you, was Evelyn."

Mrs. Hayes taught piano at American University from 1951 to 1976. She also gave piano recitals at the National Gallery and the Phillips Collection and in conjunction with the Friday Morning Music Club, of which she was a member.

In the early 1950s, she created "Music in the Schools," a radio program she hosted for three years on WGMS-FM (103.5). The program featured recorded music, pieces played by Mrs. Hayes and the voices of imaginary characters.

In addition to these activities, she served as a judge at local, national and international piano competitions and lectured across the country. She served two terms as president of the American Matthey Association, an international association of piano educators.

Mrs. Hayes was born into a musical family in Jacksonville, Ill. Her father, Donald Swarthout, became fine arts dean of the University of Kansas, from which Mrs. Hayes graduated. She then studied piano in London under Tobias Matthay. After that, she settled in New York, where she became a concert pianist and teacher.

She married Patrick Hayes in New York in 1939 and came to Washington with him in 1941. After managing the NSO, Mr. Hayes founded the Hayes Concert Bureau, with his wife's help, in 1949. In 1965, the for-profit Hayes Concert Bureau became the not-for-profit Washington Performing Arts Society.

Mrs. Hayes worked to help and promote emerging artists, especially in the Washington area. In 1982, a piano series devoted to emerging talent was named in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Hayes. Mrs. Hayes served as a series adviser for many years.

Survivors include a son, Bryant, of New York; a daughter, Elisabeth Hayes of Chicago; and a grandchild.