

Jonathan Paul May

## Jonathan Paul May: His musical legacy will keep growing

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The effect Jonathan May of Winter Park had on the local music community will continue rippling outward long into the future. Each week, almost 1,000 student musicians met with him in his roles as a conductor and schoolteacher, as part of orchestras or during private lessons.

"He passed on his love of music to the children by association," said his younger brother, Daniel May of Pittsburgh. "He was the Johnny Appleseed of music. His legacy was planting seeds, and where he planted them, they grew wildly."

Jonathan May died Feb. 27 from a sudden brain bleed. He was 51.

One of seven children of a composer father and cellist-pianist mother, May probably heard his first classical music before he was even born, his brother said.

Born in Eau Claire, Wis., he learned to play cello in elementary school while growing up in Sioux Falls, S.D. He earned a bachelor's degree at Augustana College in Sioux Falls, where his father, Walter May, was chairman of the music department. His father died in 2007.

May got his master's degree at Colorado State University in Fort Collins.

"Some people wander around wondering what to do with life — it was never a problem with him," his brother said. "He always loved youth orchestras and played wherever he went — wherever his studies took him."

Jonathan May moved to Florida in the early 1990s to join the faculty of Stetson University in DeLand. He was music director of the Florida Symphony Youth Orchestra from 1994 to 1998.

He was artistic director of the Florida Young Artists Orchestra since its inception in 1998. That organization draws together about 200 students 6 to 22 years old from eight Central Florida counties for five separate orchestras. May was conductor for the group on a 2001 tour of Italy and led young musicians on concert tours of England, Scotland, Australia and Austria.

He was often featured as an all-state conductor and as conductor of regional string festivals. In January 2007 he conducted the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra in Prague, and in June 2008 he took the Florida Youth Artists Orchestra and the Florida Festival of Youth Orchestra to Carnegie Hall in New York.

He was known for his wit and silly word games as well as for establishing traditions for his classes.

"He was very beloved by his students," his brother said. "They were there for the music, but they were there for him, too, from the third grade to college."

At the time of his death, he also was the orchestra director and a composition teacher at Trinity Preparatory School in Winter Park, director and founder of the Central Florida Youth Orchestra in Leesburg, director of the Flagler Youth Orchestra, and a strings teacher at Park Maitland School.

"There is so much foundation and support from players, parents and financial backers," his brother said. "They are committed to keeping his legacy alive and strong. Without a doubt, the orchestras will continue," he predicted.

As Jonathan May would often say to his orchestras: "You must ... ." To which they would respond: "... adjust."

He is also survived by his wife, Maureen May of Winter Park; sons Elliot May of Tallahassee and Nathan May of Winter Park; daughters Emily May of Winter Park and Allison May of Gainesville; and his mother, Eleanor May of Sioux Falls, S.D.

A public memorial is planned for 4 p.m. March 4 at Northland, a Church Distributed, 530 Dog Track Road, Longwood; for more information, call 407-257-8886.

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