



Belinda Staten Womack

Mezzo Soprano & Music Educator

Destined to be of service and excel in the performing arts, Belinda was a native of Winston-Salem, NC and born on October 01, 1951, the cusp of the post-World War II Era. Music was ever present. She thrived on it because her parents were educators and music enthusiasts. They were vigilant about providing voice and piano lessons for Belinda throughout childhood and they specifically insisted she acquire exposure to a wide variety of music genres, from opera to jazz.

As a teenager and well into adulthood, Belinda gave community concerts of spirituals and patriotic as well as opera classics. Audiences were intensely delighted by her diction, elocution, and powerful [Mezzo Soprano](#) voice. Arrangements by H.T. Burleigh and artists such as Marian Anderson, Leontyne Price, and Mahalia Jackson were among her inspirations. Union Baptist Church and later

First Baptist Church downtown were among local choirs in which she sang.

Ever productive and industrious, Belinda developed an affinity for teaching music by completing her music education major and teacher certification at Winston Salem State University in 1973. Prior to and years after graduation, supplemental and continuing education courses were completed at the Joshua Piano Studio, NC School of the Arts, University of Kansas, Livingstone College, North Carolina A&T State University, Trinity University, and The Levine School of Music.

Her storied life too involved the racial integration of East Forsyth High School in her hometown during the Civil Rights Era, where she graduated in 1969 under the choral direction of Maxine Blackwell. Other milestones were the marriage to her first husband, Reverend Francis Manns, Jr., in 1973 and the parenting of her three dedicated daughters who were often found full of merriment and doing their homework during Belinda's rehearsals.

Being selected in 1983 to join the Beta Lambda Chapter of the National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa, Inc. was also significant given Belinda's devotion to education. By 1989, she relocated to the Washington, DC metropolitan area to share her teaching talent and continued to exemplify the principles of her hallowed organization through being of service to her profession.

Throughout her magnificent career of performing and teaching, Belinda sang solos

under the direction of maestros Vivien King Bright, James A. Dillard, Sandra Dixon, Permilla F. Dunston, Naomi C. McLean, and Peter Perret. The latter she did as a member of the Winston-Salem Symphony Chorale. Of note was a performance at the Lincoln Center in New York.

Leading many of her students to championship choral, dramatic, and instrumental performances, Belinda alternately served in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Public Schools and the Washington, DC Public Schools systems for nearly 40 years combined.

Her legacy of service and advocacy of students in music education, including the humanities, is legendary. She often sponsored trips for competition and enrichment. She purchased instruments, sheet music, books and materials and benevolently left them as a gift at former schools where she taught.

In addition, Belinda's inner strength fueled the ability to overcome adversities. This included the death of loved ones such as her last and doting husband, George Womack, and medical set-backs. Being diagnosed with [Multiple Sclerosis](#) in 2002 had the most impact. It was a culmination of years of individual symptoms that were collectively identified when she began experiencing severe neuropathy in her legs. In 2006, she was also injured in a vehicle accident by a negligent motorist and conquered months of physical therapy.

Monumental courage, faith, and the care of an excellent medical team at The George

Washington University Hospital helped Belinda to continue teaching full time after the accident. Lively, independent, and outgoing, she was saddened when the eventual progression of her Multiple Sclerosis led to her full retirement in 2008.

While on disability retirement and living with her eldest daughter, Francinda, Belinda mentored her three grandchildren: Arianna, Imani, and O'Neil, Jr. She kept her passion for music vibrant as well. Two highlights were singing regularly as a guest performer with the Delta Towers Chorus in Washington, DC and then once singing in the home of Author and Professor, Maya Angelou.

By 2012, Belinda was no longer ambulatory and Francinda became her primary caregiver with the assistance of her teenaged daughter, Imani, along with support from siblings Kenyatta (registered nurse) and DaBeth.

During her convalescence, hospice-palliative care ensued by early 2014 and then Belinda passed peacefully at home. She was surrounded by loved ones, per her final wishes. On Wednesday morning, **May 28, 2014**, the synchronization of hers and Dr. Angelou's deaths (though many miles apart) led the family to mourn and celebrate the lives of two phenomenal women.

Be it known to all that Belinda made every note count. She savored the immense comfort and joy brought by the presence of family, friends, and music. She was jovial, intelligent, and each day stunning in

presentation, replete with a smile that captured the hearts of many.

She was as gracious in being of service to others as she was humble in receiving help during her own times of need. It was a trait she gleaned from her late maternal and paternal grandmothers, Lelar Venson and Lola Taylor, respectively.

Incomparable class and an agape love for all whom she encountered are the hallmark lyrics of her life song. Music was the string she used to thread her life's purpose, while prayer and uncompromising faith guided her course. She shall be ever cherished and venerated.

OBITUARY:

Wife of the late George Womack, who was a horticulturalist and also a landscaper. Loving mother of Francinda Manns (formerly Francinda Manns George), DaBeth Manns and Kenyatta (Pat) Hazlewood. Sibling of Albert Scott, twins Bruce and Brian Ballentine, Leonardine Garrett, and Leonard Staten, Jr. Grandmother of Imani and O'Neil George, Jr.

A multitude of aunts, uncles, cousins, extended family and friends are left to mourn as the family of Willie Mae Murphy is especially acknowledged. Belinda was preceded in death by her parents, Daisy and Leonard Staten, Sr., husband George, and precious granddaughter, Arianna.

FUNERAL: Saturday morning, June 7, 2014 at 10:00 (Viewing) and 11:00 (Service)

were held at Springdale Community Church located on 9601 Ardwick-Ardmore Road in Springdale, Maryland 20774. A stellar Eulogy was delivered by Pastor Howard K. Hammond and is available as a sound recording.

INTERMENT: Saturday afternoon, June 7, 2014 followed the funeral at Ft. Lincoln Cemetery (Garden of Reflection) located on 3401 Bladensburg Road in Brentwood, Maryland 20722. This is the Garden where humanitarian, Dr. Dorothy I. Height, is laid to rest.

MEMORIAL SERVICE: Saturday afternoon, June 14, 2014 at 1:00 was held at the downtown First Baptist Church located on 501 W. Fifth Street in Winston-Salem, NC 27101. A poignant Impact Statement was delivered by musician, Everette Funches. Musical selections by soloist Gloria Jackson (Precious Lord) and pianist Theodore Akenyele (Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing) were moving tributes.