

ROBERT LOUIS SHANKOVICH

Age 92, of Lower Burrell, passed away following a brief illness, on January 29, 2025. Born on August 23, 1932, in Washington, PA, he was the ninth child born to Polish immigrants, Antoni (Anthony) Szalankiewicz and Zofia (Sophia) Kedzior.

Robert's musical talent dominated his entire life teaching and performing. He began his study of music at an early age with piano lessons with a local teacher, Laura (Mrs. Howard) Ashton. Upon graduation from Trinity High School, he enrolled at the Duquesne University School of Music, where he earned his Bachelor of Music Degree and subsequently, his Master of Music Degree. He completed his degree studies at Carnegie Mellon University, earning a Doctor of Arts Degree. In addition, Robert completed post graduate studies at the Peabody Conservatory of Music in Baltimore, Maryland and at the University of Pittsburgh.

Robert began his professional career teaching public school music in Baltimore. However, his first year of employment was interrupted with his draft into the U.S. Army. He undertook his basic training at Fort Ord, California, where he was trained as a Field Communications Crewman. He was shipped to Wuerzburg, Germany, where his musical training led to the opportunity to join Special Forces. There, he served as the conductor of the 10th Division Artillery Band, Chorus and Jazz Ensemble. This ensemble performed at various military parades and functions and presented concerts at the towns and villages throughout Bavaria. Leave time provided the opportunity to visit Paris, Rome and England, among other countries.

Upon completion of his active military duty, Robert was employed by high schools in Creighton and Natrona Heights, PA and in East Liverpool, Ohio. After a three-year teaching experience there, he was offered a faculty position at Duquesne University School of Music. During his 40 year tenure there, teaching music theory, analysis and choral conducting, he attained the rank of Full Professor, ending his career as the Director of Graduate Studies. He was inducted into the prestigious Century Club of Distinguished Alumni and upon retirement, was awarded Emeritus status. He continued his affiliation as a member of the Duquesne University Retirees Association and annually presented a competitive award to an outstanding instrumentalist.

Rounding out his professional activities, Robert gave presentations at several music symposia throughout the United States and Berlin, Germany. Of particular significance was his visiting professorship lecturing (in Polish) at the Academy of Music in Cracow, Poland, specializing in the analysis of contemporary Polish composers. Back at home, he served as organist and Minister of Music in several large parishes in the North and South Hills.

Robert married Carolyn Bruno, an esteemed choral director and teacher. By that time, both he and Carolyn had achieved a resounding reputation for their professional accomplishments. Carolyn ended her extensive teaching career at Duquesne University, where she and Robert worked together for several years. 35 years of their happy union ended when Carolyn died from complications from a stroke in 2012.

During his retirement years, Robert volunteered his services to a United Way organization, "Open Your Heart to a Senior." He also served as a Board member for the West Virginia Institute for Spirituality in Charleston, West Virginia. He was frequently called upon to tutor young college bound musicians, offering private instruction in music theory and composition.

Robert's hobbies included a love of languages, English and Polish (spoken in a bilingual home), as well as fluency in French and German. This was spurred by and developed from four years of Latin studies in high school, where he was awarded a medal of superior achievement. As a would-be author, he has authored over 50 pieces of poetry and prose, albeit unpublished. Reading was another favorite pastime, particularly books dealing with religion and philosophy and he had amassed a virtual library of books, many inscribed to him.

Robert's lifetime was frequently punctuated by travel. Excursions to Niagara Falls, New York and Niagara-on-the-Lake in Canada were some of his favorite. International travel included extensive touring of The Holy Land and many European countries.

Robert enjoyed cooking and entertaining, bringing together family and friends for holiday dinners but also at any time during the year, the motto always being to "celebrate life!" His guests also enjoyed seeing all of Robert's many house plants symbolizing nurturing, growth and the blossoming of life and a reflection of his devout commitment to his religious and spiritual beliefs.

Robert was preceded in death by his wife, Carolyn; his parents; and by his siblings, Benjamin Shankovich, Mary Rometo, Estelle Manes, Josephine Olshak, Helen Maul, Stanley Shankovich, Walter Shankovich and Florence Raymond. Left to cherish his memory are several nieces and nephews.

Family and friends will be received from 2 to 5:00 P.M., on Thursday, February 6, 2025, in the **JOSEPH J. CARDARO FUNERAL HOME**, 1125 Kenneth Ave., New Kensington, 724-337-3325. Prayers of Transfer will be at 10:30 A.M., on Friday, February 7, 2025, in the funeral home, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial at 11:00 A.M., at St. Mary of Czestochowa, New Kensington. Private Burial will be in Greenwood Memorial Park, Lower Burrell.

Memorial contributions can be made to the West Virginia Institute for Spirituality in Charleston, West Virginia or to the Mary Pappert School of Music at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh.

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