

PATRICIA TANNER



Patricia Ann Tanner, age 77, of Mt. Nebo, passed away February 14, 2025. Tricia Tanner was the one who made the music happen. She did it for some of the most accomplished folk artists of our time, as Executive Director for Pittsburgh's Calliope Folk Music Society. Imagine, she presented more than 900 artists over her 25 year career; including Arlo Guthrie, Mavis Staples, Odetta and Taj Mahal. It's an

accomplishment unlikely ever to be matched. Looking back over her brilliant career, asked how she did it, she simply said: "I loved them all."

She passed away on her wedding anniversary, surrounded by friends and family. She is survived by her niece, Melissa Tanner; and great nephews, Carmichael and Dominic Mullen; and great niece, Naomi Linger. She was predeceased by her beloved husband, Jay Thomas Steffler. Also surviving is father-in-law, Jerry Steffler; and sisters-in-law, Lynda Sempf, Shelle Balwiin; and nephews, Brandon and Andrew Baldwin; nieces, Lara Houk, Terrah and Stephany Baldwin, Jessika Keefer, Leisel Sempf, Erin Golna and Haley Switzer; and seventeen great-nieces and nephews. With a Master of Arts in Art History from the University of Pittsburgh, Tricia produced documentaries on the arts for Pittsburgh Filmmakers, was Executive Director of the Laurel Mountain Symphony, and then served for 25 years as Executive Director of Calliope: The Pittsburgh Folk Music Society.

Her colleagues who worked with her and served on the Calliope Folk Music Board are stunned by her loss, and abundant in their praise and admiration. Tricia's long-time associate, Donna Isaac, said: "We shared more than the work. Tricia's passion for the music was infectious. That's what made working with her such a joy."

She introduced world-class artists like Rhiannon Giddens and the Carolina Chocolate Drops, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, and War and Treaty to Pittsburgh audiences, some before they were nationally known. Calliope was their stepping stone.

Tricia was skilled at using the diverse strengths of a few to achieve the Calliope mission, which required patience, kindness, and a sense of humor. She guided the organization when Covid shut down live performances, and she made the adjustments for Calliope to make a comeback after that difficult time. It required changes in venues, types of performers, and ways to keep subscribers engaged. Best of all, it worked. Calliope is alive and well.

If you happened, during Covid, to stream the actor Jeff Daniels and his son, Ben, from their home studio in Michigan, introducing their new CD, you'd never forget it. That was Tricia at work.

She was rightfully proud of being one of the original Steelerettes, way back when, the first and only Steelers cheerleaders, where she formed friendships of a lifetime. Their modest uniforms looked like bathing suits from the 30s, as Art Rooney, "The Chief," wanted. He was one of her fans. And they had so much fun. Because Tricia made friends so easily.

Tricia's Steelerette uniform is on display at the Western PA Sports Museum at the Heinz History Center. You have to see it. Andy Masich, President, CEO, said "Tricia has made history in Western Pennsylvania, and has touched the hearts and earned the thanks of countless fans."

Once, at one of the early Mariposa concerts in Ontario, Tricia took a walk down by the lake to get away from the magic and mayhem for a bit. A young musician approached and spied an empty rowboat. He invited Tricia to hop in. So Bob Dylan rowed Tricia around the lake and they had a good chat.

Right now, some of the most amazing American and Canadian folk musicians are tuning their instruments. Above the clouds, Doc Watson, Odetta, John Hartford, Kate McGarrigle; they're warming up to welcome their pal in Pittsburgh, who got them onstage in front of standing room audiences. It's payback for your great smile, Tricia, for your simple, welcoming way, for your attention to their every need. It's a tribute to your kinship to their music, their talent, their livelihood. You protected their privacy right up until the lights went up, and they laid bare their enormous talents before hundreds of fans in a packed house. And it's what made them, and every one of us want to come back for more.

Here's a standing ovation for you, Tricia, from all your fans, your colleagues at Calliope, all those last minute ticket goers, those needing special assistance, the local musicians whose opening acts inspired so many of us to pick up an instrument and head to a Calliope class. So many who now have their own bands, and paying gigs across this great country. We all miss you dearly.

Yes, Tricia Tanner. Indeed, you made the music happen. You really did.

So, from "The Parting Glass," sung by some of the world's most cherished Irish bands on your Calliope stage, we hear your sweet voice singing along.

But since it fell into my lot
That I should rise and you should not
I'll gently rise and softly call
Good night and joy be with you all.

A Memorial Service will take place Thursday, February 27, 2025, 12 Noon, at **H.P. BRANDT FUNERAL HOME**, 1032 Perry Hwy., Pittsburgh, PA 15237. A Celebration of Life will be held at a later date, with location TBD.

At the family's request, please do not send any flowers. Instead please consider donations to honor Tricia Tanner may be made to Calliope: The Pittsburgh Folk Music Society at www.Calliopehouse.odonate.



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