



Dr. Robert Welch

February 20, 1935 - March 4, 2024

Dr. Robert Bennett “Bob” Welch was born to Thomas Earl Welch and Malinda Leona Welch on February 20th, 1935, in Neon, Kentucky. Even prior to high school, Bob excelled at being a musician and trumpet player. It would set a course for his later life as a musician and music educator.

Bob graduated from Morehead State University in Morehead, KY with a Bachelor of Arts in 1963. He obtained his Master of Arts degree in 1967 from Morehead State. In 1984, he was awarded his Doctor in Musical Arts from the University of Kentucky.

He held the position of Band Director at the Letcher County High School in Neon, KY from 1957 to 1958, at John I. Burton High School in Norton, VA from 1958 to 1963 and at Eastern High School in Middletown, KY from 1963 to 1967. He also served as Orchestra Director of the Louisville Youth Orchestra from 1963 to 1968. He and his award-winning high school band programs developed a reputation for excellence.

Bob continued his music education career to the college level at Western Carolina University from 1968 to 1979, where he held positions of Director of Bands and later, Music Department Head. He was also the conductor and music director of the Asheville Symphony Orchestra from 1972 to 1978. He founded a summer music camp for young musicians, and a summer music

festival by bringing in high-level orchestral musicians from New York to perform in residence for the season. He taught a generation of dedicated music educators who shared his joy in making music, and in inviting others to join in that passion.

From 1979 to 1984, he was the Division Head of Fine Arts at Limestone University in Gaffney, SC. He was also Director of Bands, and inspired another generation of music educators. He took both concert and Jazz bands to tour and perform in Belgium, and hosted an exchange group in return.

He became Dean of the College of Fine Arts at Valdosta State University in Valdosta, GA in 1984. He continued that role through 2000. He was also the founding conductor of the Valdosta Symphony Orchestra from 1990 to 1995.

Bob retired from his distinguished career as a musician and music educator after 44 years, and 300 guest conducting and clinician engagements. He moved to Roswell, GA in 2000 to enjoy a life near his children. Grandchildren were produced shortly thereafter.

He passed away suddenly on the morning of March 4th, 2024. He is survived by his wife of 66 years, Joyce, his two sons, Robert Keith Welch, and David Bennett Welch, and their wives Elaine Welch and Susan Welch. There is one granddaughter, Riley Welch, and two grandsons, Matthew Welch, and Thomas Welch.

Bob shared his joy and passion with all of us. We, his family by blood and by choice, will continue to be very proud of him and the many memories he has left, and with the legacy we continue to leave from his influence.

Cemetery Details

Green Lawn Cemetery

10993 Alpharetta Hwy
Roswell, GA 30076

Previous Events

Visitation

MAR 16. 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM (ET)

Northside Chapel Funeral Directors & Crematory
12050 Crabapple Road
Roswell, GA

Funeral Service

MAR 16. 2:00 PM (ET)

Northside Chapel Funeral Directors & Crematory
12050 Crabapple Road
Roswell, GA

Tribute Wall

CT

“ I hesitated about sharing this because I don't know that the family will see this, but I hope that they do. I had a fond memory when I came across my Valdosta State University concert choir cassette tape of Verdi Requiem from 1991. I decided to see if I could track my beloved choir director down. This was April 2024. When I came across his obituary my husband found me crying my eyes out. It was my second year in college. I grew up singing and playing the piano through high school. I couldn't give up choir, so I joined my freshman year. I'm an accountant. This means that I was the only person in choir that was not a music major. Music is my soul and I loved the class never missed anything. Toured to Florida for a few days to sing at some churches. I remember one time in class he was slightly aggravated and said “do y'all know that some people don't have to be here but want to be here and she is sitting right there and is the only student I have had that is not a music major”? I was shocked that he knew who I was. I am not a great strong singer but I loved every minute in the choir. It took away the stress of an introverted ,overwhelmed, high anxiety college kid and filled my soul. It must have just been a week or so after he passed when I came across the tape. I remember when the opera singers came to practice with us. Dress rehearsal with the symphony.. first note, they all stood up and turned around and looked at us shocked at how great we sounded. Imagine our shock to find out he was going to sing part of the solo. Now to find a way to get it on a jump drive or something.



Crystal Avant Till - February 06, 2025 at 06:32 PM

KB

“ I have many wonderful memories of Dr. Welch. I was with Limestone College when we first went to Belgium. When we landed I was in charge of the music. All of our folders were packed in three large Jim Beam boxes. This caused much fun at customs. Everyone had gotten through and here I was trying to explain that it was not liquor. The customs officers were tearing open the boxes and pulling out music looking for booze! I am almost in a panic mood at this point. I was more worried about Dr. Welch being upset about the music being tossed than anything else!! At that moment here comes sweet ol Bob yelling “No”! Running behind him was our tour guide yelling in the native tongue. After much discussion, I and the music were allowed to go. Dr. Welch asked me if I was okay and I told him I was scared. He asked why. I told him that I was scared to tell him I couldn't have gotten the music out of customs. He laughed and said he knew that I could and that was why I had the music. He never knew but if I had to I would have torn every box open myself to show them. I was not losing that music and have to tell him that!!

Kay Bradshaw Bracey - March 16, 2024 at 06:56 PM

CT

I love this!

Crystal Avant Till - February 06, 2025 at 06:35 PM

AD

“ Dr Welch, Pres Bailey and VP Rainey spent 5 years and built the foundation for our current successfull Symphony Orchestra in Valdosta . Everytime we attend a concert we thank God for Dr Welch and his design formula for the music enrichment artform that benefits all of South Ga and North Florida.

allan dear - March 16, 2024 at 12:24 PM

CM

“ Charlie and Conny Morris purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Dr. Robert Welch.



Charlie and Conny Morris - March 15, 2024 at 03:02 PM

EC

“ I was a String member of the Valdosta Symphony Orchestra in it's early years of founding as a new faculty from the Physics Department. Bob Welch assigned me to play in the first violin section, and his willingness to entertain program repertoire suggestions allowed me to be a part of many orchestral pieces I had only dreamed of performing! One afternoon we were rehearsing the orchestral accompaniment for the Mendelsohn Violin Concerto, and he granted me a once in a lifetime opportunity to play the solo violin part for the piece! He was very patient with me, and I did get through the entire three movements with the orchestra! I was certainly not ready for a public performance, but it was a lifelong fantasy fulfilled that I was most thankful for! To me, this showed a kindness and temperament not typical of the orchestra conductors that I had experienced before. Maestro Welch had that personable touch of not only bringing a diversity of the most prized and beloved classic orchestral works to our programs, but made them accessible and treasured to each of us as players as well! He was the greatest and most knowledgeable conductor I was privileged to play for in my lifelong experience as a string player!

Ed Chatelain,
Retired VSU Faculty
1987-2022!

Edward E Chatelain - March 15, 2024 at 11:56 AM

BJ

“ This gentleman was of, and about his time and place - a visionary in both. And he was a lot of fun! Those who had the privilege of knowing him, his Dear Wife Joyce and family reflect all those qualities. He leaves a community of aspiring musicians in a much better place than he found them. I've no doubt he's doing an animated soft-shoe shuffle on the other side of the gate. RIP, Dear Friend. Bob Johnson

Bob Johnson - March 15, 2024 at 11:42 AM

LS

“ Larry and Noriko Stockton purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Dr. Robert Welch.



Larry and Noriko Stockton - March 14, 2024 at 06:16 PM

LS

“ Larry and Noriko Stockton planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mr. Robert Welch.

Larry and Noriko Stockton - March 14, 2024 at 06:16 PM

CW

“ Dean Welch taught me to drink coffee and know the flavors in his blend. He also brought me my 1st mixer after I came to work with cake and explained the problems of seeking a mixer. He will be missed.



Carma Wright-Pickett - March 14, 2024 at 05:46 PM

DS

“ 2 files added to the album VSC



Dallas Suttles - March 14, 2024 at 04:16 PM

BM

“ *Becky Morris purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Dr. Robert Welch.*



Becky Morris - March 14, 2024 at 02:40 PM

CK

“ *SOB (Sweet Old Bob)
He always would challenge us to be a great group of musicians.
Always highlighting many of us with great solos and I was one of the
fortunate ones to get many of them. You will be dearly missed.
Thanks for all the great memories.*

Connie Kirschbaum

Connie Kirschbaum - March 13, 2024 at 10:26 AM

LS

“ *Bob was an inspirational educator and warm human being. Many former students, including me, were very fortunate to study with him.*

Larry Stockton

Larry Stockton - March 12, 2024 at 06:52 PM