

Rich Matteson

Biography

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The legacy of jazz musician Rich Matteson will be heard when others perform. Mr. Matteson, who founded the award-winning University of North Florida jazz program in 1986, died June 24, 1993 after a long illness. He was 64.

Mr. Matteson jokingly called himself the best jazz euphonium player in the world because he was the only one. But he'll be remembered as a man who loved music and loved teaching it, and for taking the instrument to new levels of acceptance, having played with jazz greats Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Clark Terry, Louis Bellson, and many others.

Mr. Matteson was honored frequently by the International Association of Jazz Educators and is a member of its Hall of Fame. He was a founding member of the Tubists Universal Brotherhood Association, won the Homer Osborne Award, and was honored as an Ambassador of Jazz by Walt Disney World. Last year he was Down Beat magazine's Lifetime Achievement Award winner. "I guess Gabriel will have to move over," said Harvey Phillips, with whom Mr. Matteson formed the Matteson Phillips Tubajazz Consort. They played all over the world.

Mr. Matteson made his biggest mark as an educator. He began as an associate professor at the University of North Texas, and he gained recognition for the many master classes that he conducted throughout the world. He was brought to Jacksonville when philanthropist Ira Koger asked him to head the new department at UNF. Bunky Green, who succeeded Mr. Matteson as director of jazz studies at UNF, recalled how Mr. Matteson disliked mediocrity. "For Rich, a C wasn't good enough. He'd advise that a student take the class over again." As a player, Mr. Matteson was an inspiration, said guitarist Jack Petersen. "It was just something that was there. When he played, he made you want to play."

Mr. Matteson is survived by his wife, Michelle "Mikki", and four sons, Mark, John, TK, and Chris.

-Reprinted from memorial program

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