



A CELEBRATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE

*Dr. William Edward Taylor, Jr.*  
*"Billy"*

JULY 24, 1921 - DECEMBER 28, 2010

THE RIVERSIDE CHURCH OF NEW YORK  
490 RIVERSIDE DRIVE  
NEW YORK, NY 10027

MONDAY, JANUARY 10, 2011

# Order of Service

Officiating  
Reverend Dr. Calvin O. Butts, III  
Pastor, The Abyssinian Baptist Church

## PRELUDE

Solo Piano Recordings of Dr. Taylor

## WELCOME & INVOCATION

The Rev. Stephen H. Phelps,  
Interim Senior Minister, The Riverside Church

## GATHERING PRAYER

Rev. Dr. Calvin O. Butts III

## MUSICAL SELECTION

Billy Taylor Quintet

Special Guest: Geri Allen with Winard Harper,  
Chip Jackson, Jimmy Owens, Frank Wess  
*Theodora*

## SCRIPTURE READING

Anthony Thompson  
*Psalm 23*

## TRIBUTE

Ramsey Lewis, Loren Schoenberg, Kevin Struthers

## MUSICAL SELECTION

Billy Taylor Quintet  
Featuring Frank Wess

## REMEMBRANCES

Rev. Dr. Calvin O. Butts III, Robin Bell-Stevens

## OBITUARY

Silent Reading  
Christian Sands, Piano Solo  
*A Bientot*

## EULOGY

Gil Noble

## FOR THE FAMILY

Kim Taylor-Thompson

## VIDEO TRIBUTE

## MUSICAL SELECTION

Cassandra Wilson  
*I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free*

## BLESSING & BENEDICTION

## RECESSIONAL

Billy Taylor Quintet  
*It's a Grand Night for Swinging*



# Obituary

Dr. Billy Taylor, a Jazz pianist, composer, and educator, was a cherished national treasure. He was born on July 24, 1921, in Greenville, NC to William Edward Taylor and Antoinette Bacon Taylor. Billy received a B.S. in Music from Virginia State College and a Masters and Ph.D. in Music Education from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

Billy's professional career began in 1944. On his first night in New York, one of his idols, Ben Webster, heard him play at Minton's Playhouse in Harlem. Within two days, Billy became part of Webster's quartet at the Three Deuces on 52<sup>nd</sup> Street, alternating sets with the Art Tatum trio. Billy soon became Tatum's protégé. From 1949-1951, Billy served as house pianist at Birdland, the legendary Jazz club. Starting in 1952, Billy Taylor led his own Trio.

In a career that spanned more than six decades, Billy composed over 350 songs, and works for theater, dance and symphony orchestras. One of his most notable works, "*I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free*," became an anthem of the Civil Rights Movement.

Billy coined the phrase, "Jazz is America's classical music." In 1958, he served as Musical Director of the first television series produced about Jazz, *The Subject is Jazz*. In 1964, Billy founded Jazzmobile, bringing Jazz to the streets of Harlem and to New York schools. He programmed and hosted Jazz programs for WLIB and WNEW in New York, and for National Public Radio. In 1969, Billy became the David Frost Show's Musical Director, the first African American to hold such a position. In 1982, Billy became the Arts Correspondent for *CBS Sunday Morning*, where he profiled over 250 Jazz artists. He served on the National Council of the Arts, and, since 1994, was the Artistic Advisor for Jazz to the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Billy received two Peabody Awards, an Emmy, a Grammy, 23 honorary doctorates and other prizes, such as the National Medal of Arts and a Lifetime Achievement Award from Downbeat Magazine.

Billy passed away on December 28, 2010. His survivors include his wife, Theodora, his daughter, Kim Taylor-Thompson, and his son-in-law, Anthony Thompson. A son, Duane, passed away in 1988. Dr. Taylor leaves his brother, Rudolph Taylor, and his sister, Joyce Hymes, his sister-in-law, Valerie Fisher, and many cousins, nieces and nephews.

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THE FAMILY OF DR. BILLY TAYLOR WISHES TO EXPRESS ITS  
SINCERE APPRECIATION FOR ALL THE KINDNESS SHOWN TO THEM AT THIS TIME.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF DR. TAYLOR AND IN LIEU OF FLOWERS, THE FAMILY HAS  
REQUESTED THAT DONATIONS BE MADE TO:

JAZZMOBILE, INC.  
154 WEST 127TH STREET  
HARLEM, NY 10027

[WWW.JAZZMOBILE.ORG](http://WWW.JAZZMOBILE.ORG)