



H. Robert Reynolds

April 10, 1934 - January 30, 2026

Internationally recognized conductor, educator, author, and orchestrator H. Robert Reynolds passed away peacefully at home in Ann Arbor, Michigan, on January 30, 2026. He was 91.

Born in Canton, Ohio, Harrah Robert Reynolds was the only child of Harrah Earl Reynolds and Ethel Curry Reynolds. He grew up in Meadville, Pennsylvania.

Malvern Hill Curry, Bob's grandfather, gave his nine-year old grandson his first instrument, an E-Flat alto horn, and initial music lessons (young Robert was hoping for a bike). Bob's middle school and high school music teachers, Mr. and Mrs. Inglefields, married, provided further guidance. In Robert's senior year at Meadville High, Mr. Inglefields asked if anyone wanted to conduct the band. Robert raised his hand.

Thanks to summer study at Interlochen, Robert learned about and then attended The University of Michigan. In Ann Arbor, he earned degrees in Music Education and Performance, studying conducting with Professor Elizabeth A. H. Green, in his words, "the greatest teacher I ever had."

Beginning as a public school band director (and part-time basketball coach), in Onsted, Michigan, and then as band director at California's Anaheim High

School, Robert Reynolds started his collegiate career in 1962 at what was then Long Beach State College. There he inspired students, soon to be lifelong friends, who would later join the Los Angeles Philharmonic, play in major recording studios, and conduct at major universities. By 1968, the University of Wisconsin-Madison invited him to be Director of Bands, an era that would include collaborations with fellow horn player John Barrows, and fellow conductors Robert Fountain and Otto Werner Mueller.

In 1975, and not without trepidation, he accepted the storied Director of Bands position at his alma mater, The University of Michigan. He retired from the School of Music at Michigan after 25 years in the role, serving as the Henry F. Thurnau Professor of Music, Director of University Bands, and Director of the Division of Instrumental Studies. Following his career at Michigan, he accepted a position as Principal Conductor of the Wind Ensemble at the University of Southern California where he held the H. Robert Reynolds Professorship in Wind Conducting for 19 years. Bob served as conductor of the Detroit Chamber Winds and Strings (DCWS) for 35 years, collaborating with members of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and Detroit Opera, many of whom were his former Michigan students. With DCWS, Robert recorded works by Ives, Mozart's Gran Partita K.361/370(a), a work he called "a soul-mate", and seminal orchestral and chamber wind works by Igor Stravinsky. For 20 summers he served as conductor of the Young Artists Wind Ensemble at the Tanglewood Institute, summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Robert conducted performances in Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, Chicago's Orchestra Hall, Powell Hall in St. Louis, Academy of Music in Philadelphia, Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles and at Tanglewood's Seiji Ozawa Hall. Internationally, he conducted concerts at the Maggio Musicale in Florence, the Tonhalle in Zurich, the Holland Festival in Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, at the 750th anniversary of the City of Berlin, and at the

Sydney Opera House. In May of 1984, in an historic tour with the Michigan Symphony Band, he gave the premiere performance of Karlheinz Stockhausen's opera *Samstag aus Licht* at La Scala Opera in Milan, a work he and his students recorded for Deutsche Grammophon. Routinely, he was invited to Australia, Austria, Belgium, Costa Rica, Denmark, England, Holland, Japan, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden to serve as a featured conductor and lecturer.

Professor Reynolds earned hundreds of awards and recognitions during his career. From 1983-1985, he served as President of the College Band Directors National Association, later becoming the first recipient of that organization's Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2010, Duquesne University awarded him an honorary doctorate in recognition of his impact as a conductor and educator. In 2019, he became the first band conductor since John Philip Sousa to be inducted into the American Classical Music Hall of Fame. Often at the request of his former students serving as members, he was a frequent guest conductor of America's esteemed military bands. In 2002, he received the Medal of Honor from the Midwest Clinic where an annual conducting symposium bears his name.

As part of his 90th birthday celebration, Professor Reynolds gave his last public performance as conductor in Hill Auditorium on April 12, 2024, conducting Grainger's *Irish Tune* with the Michigan Symphony Band. He chose to conclude his conducting career where it began, a palindrome perhaps, like his family name, Harrah.

That fall, GIA published his *In Pursuit of Great Conducting (2024)*, co-authored with his dear friend and colleague, Dr. Doris Doyon. In what became his final professional appearance, at the December 2024 Midwest Clinic in Chicago, he and Doris discussed his lifetime of lessons shared in their book.

A standing-room audience of educators and conductors hung on every word.

Today, generations of musicians consider him a singular and transformational mentor. Spanning six plus decades, tens of thousands of musicians played in ensembles he conducted, and thousands participated in conducting workshops with him, each urged to inform their own intuitions, to sense the music. His embrace of composers, emerging and established, is legend. Hundreds of thousands of musicians young and less young, amateur and professional, have performed works written by composers H. Robert Reynolds helped launch. Now, bands and wind ensembles worldwide are often the most progressive and committed stewards of new music and living composers. His students and colleagues would assert that Bob Reynolds is the reason why.

Equally at home leading the Michigan Marching Band in Rose Bowl renditions of the Star Spangled Banner, conducting virtuoso works of Messiaen, works for middle school musicians by Frank Erickson, or commissioning tomorrow's composers today, H. Robert Reynolds changed his students, wind music, and music education, forever.

Bob's life beyond music was equally blessed, sustained by his devoted family and friends. He loved sports (when he didn't lose), time in nature, and telling jokes. To break the tension, his words to generations of students and colleagues as they were about to step on stage: "try not to embarrass us." Among his pastimes were chess, table tennis, the Colorado mountains, pipes, sports cars, wine, single barrel bourbons, fine cuisine, collecting historic autographs and coins, and time with his spirit animals, Aussies.

Robert Reynolds is survived by his wife, Kristin, and three children, Susie (Bruce) Reynolds Bringham, Patti Reynolds Kiraly, Kirsten M. Reynolds; four grandchildren, Jeremy (Ana Milena) White, Sarah (Justin) Mills, Katie (Adam) Liebendorfer, and Amy (Michael) Chapey; and two beloved great grandchildren, Gabriella and Daniella White. They will miss his corny Dad

jokes (groaners) and sage advice.

Caring to the last, Bob left us with words of comfort and gratitude:

“I have lived a blessed life filled with great family, wonderful children, unbelievable friends, charmed professional years and have been married to my ideal wife, friend, and kindred soul.” - H. Robert Reynolds

A Celebration of Life will be held at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, the family has requested donations be made to the H. Robert Reynolds scholarship fund at the University of Michigan’s School of Music, Theatre, and Dance:

Link:

<https://giving.umich.edu/um/w/h.-robert-reynolds-scholarship-in-music-340313?searchType=fund&keyword=Reynolds>

To leave a memory you have of Bob or to sign his online guestbook, please visit www.rbfhsaline.com Arrangements entrusted to the Robison-Bahnmler Funeral Home in Saline.

Cemetery Details

Forest Hill Cemetery

415 Observatory Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
<http://foreshillcemeteryaa.org/>

Events

Details are pending.

Tribute Wall

MS

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Mark Scatterday - February 08 at 03:56 PM

MS

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Mark Scatterday - February 07 at 06:23 PM

SR

“ 1 file added to the album Family Pictures



Stephen Robison - February 03 at 01:28 PM

AN

So happy ! So well fitted to each other. A blessing to all !!!

Angela Noble - February 18 at 11:37 PM