



## John S. Shelton

January 21, 1932 - October 23, 2021

John Stanley Shelton, 89, of Cape Girardeau, died October 23, 2021, after a brief battle with cancer. He was born on January 21, 1932, in Murray, Kentucky, to Cora Jones Boyd and James William Shelton.

John's musical ability was apparent at a young age. He began piano lessons at age 6 and was studying with a professor at Murray State Teachers College by age 10. He graduated from high school at age 16 to attend Murray State. John also studied organ in college and commuted to First Baptist Church of Paducah, Kentucky, to serve as organist for Choir Director Doyle Dumas, who became a lifelong friend. It was also in college that he met and began dating (Helen) Ann Chissom. He graduated from Murray State in 1952 at the age of 20 with Bachelors of Arts in Music Education and Music Performance.

John obtained his Master of Music degree at the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago in 1953 and became the Minister of Music at First Baptist Church in Owensboro, Kentucky, Ann's hometown. He and Ann were married by her father at First Baptist Church on June 26, 1954. Their marriage of 52 years was filled with deep love, much laughter, and mutual respect until Ann's death in 2006.

John earned his doctoral degree in music education at Peabody College, which has since been absorbed by Vanderbilt University. After a brief stint in Danville, Virginia, where John was the Organist/Minister of Music of First Baptist Church, he joined the music faculty at Southeast Missouri State University in 1962 and was the first member of the music faculty to hold a

doctoral degree.

In addition to teaching music education and piano, he was instrumental in establishing the Artist-Lecture Series held in Academic Hall, a prelude to the River Campus touring performances. John also helped to establish and was the first director of the Choral Union, a combined choir of SEMO students and community singers that still exists. Throughout his years in Cape Girardeau, he also directed many church choirs, serving one year at First Baptist, 25 years at Centenary United Methodist, and 3 years at First Christian. He retired from the university as a full professor in 1998 and continued to accompany performers, conduct choral groups, and perform flawlessly well into his eighties.

John is predeceased by siblings Eugene Boyd and James, Fred, Dorothy, Mary Brandon, Frances, Charles, and William Shelton. He is survived by children Suzanne Shelton (Michael Sump), Elizabeth Shelton, and Brian Shelton (Penny), grandchildren Gabe, Jacob and Luke Shelton, and his loving companion of 13 years, Kathryn Vance. But his most enduring legacies are the performances in which he shared his extensive talent and the hundreds of music students and future educators he nurtured and mentored throughout his life.

Visitation will be at Ford and Sons Funeral Home on Mt. Auburn from 4-7 pm Wednesday, Oct. 27. The service to honor John's life will be Thursday, Oct. 28, at 10:30 am at Centenary United Methodist Church. Those unable to attend may view the service, which will be streamed live at 10:30 a.m., by visiting <<https://www.centenarynow.org/>>

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to The John and Ann Shelton Music Education Scholarship (Southeast Missouri University Foundation, One University Plaza MS7300); Centenary United Methodist Church Music Department (300 N. Ellis); or the United Way of Southeast Missouri (1417 D, N. Mt. Auburn Rd.). All are in Cape Girardeau, MO, 63701.

Online condolences may be made at [www.fordandsonsfuneralhome.com](http://www.fordandsonsfuneralhome.com).



# Previous Events

## Visitation

OCT **27**. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Ford and Sons Mt. Auburn Chapel  
1001 N. Mt. Auburn Rd.  
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701

## Funeral Service

OCT **28**. 10:30 AM (CT)

Centenary Global Methodist Church  
300 N. Ellis  
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701

# Tribute Wall

BL

“ I remember Dr. Shelton, not just as a great musician and educator, which he was, but moreso as kind, generous and gracious man. I have many great memories of him while singing in the Centenary choir. He was a good man.

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**Bob Limbaugh** - October 27, 2021 at 03:28 PM

GB

“ Music feeds the soul. John fed many souls in his time here on earth! Please accept my sincere sympathy. Gwen Bennett

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**Gwen Bennett** - October 27, 2021 at 03:01 PM

JB

“ I, too, have long been an admirer of John's, first as a colleague at SEMissour State University, and thereafter as a friend who always enjoyed the chance to chat with John and reminisce about old events. John will be greatly missed by all who had the opportunity to know him. I extend my sympathy to all of John's family.

*Dr. John Cashion Bierk*

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**John Cashion Bierk** - October 26, 2021 at 05:28 PM

SV

“ My name is Scott Vangilder. I was a music education major (instrumental/vocal), graduating from SEMO University in 1978. I was lucky to have Dr. Shelton as my professor of Technics of Teaching Elementary Music. He was a great teacher and mentor and I enjoyed his class very much. Several times during my SEMO university career I was asked by Dr. Shelton to perform in a brass group at Centenary Methodist church to accompany his choir. I always felt honored to do so and contribute in a small way to his church music. Dr. Shelton is indeed a "musical father" to many, I am one of them. I taught instrumental music in Missouri for 31 years and I am always proud of my SEMO music education and to be one of Dr. Shelton's "musical children". My heartfelt condolences to the family of Dr. John Shelton.

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**Scott Vangilder** - October 26, 2021 at 12:05 PM



“ Florist Choice Bouquet was purchased for the family of John S. Shelton.



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October 26, 2021 at 05:42 AM

TV

“ Dr. Shelton was a father to many musicians and members of the Cape Girardeau community. His love for music, family and his devotion to Christ in his mission was unparalleled. He was a mentor to me and certainly taught me well as I endeavored upon my professional music career. I wouldn't have known what hemiola was were it not for John Shelton. Many a Sunday morning were spent in front of Dr. John behind the baton. Most important he was a kind and gentle man whose family I treasured as though they were my own. He was a great friend and a gifted pianist beyond measure. He will be greatly missed but his memory deeply etched in the history of Cape Girardeau Missouri.

Tom Vaughn - October 25, 2021 at 08:02 PM

KC

“ Words cannot express my gratitude for Dr. Shelton. I wouldn't be the person that I am today without all of his encouragement over the past 30 years. He was truly one of a kind and will be missed greatly. My condolences to the Shelton family. Kyle Cronan

Kyle Cronan - October 25, 2021 at 07:48 PM



“ Blessed Heart was purchased for the family of John S. Shelton.



October 25, 2021 at 04:39 PM

SJ

“ *John Shelton was a icon for our local classical music scene. In 2013, he was recipient of the Otto Dingledein Award for Excellence in the Arts and Lifetime Achievement. Moreover, few persons in our community, if any, have done more than he to promote and preserve the traditional church music canon. Even in retirement he performed regularly, often with Elizabeth. In fact, only three weeks before his death, he gave a beautiful rendition of a Brahms rhapsody at Centenary Church, much to the delight and gratitude of the congregation.*

*Marsha and I send out heartfelt condolences to Brian, Elizabeth and the family. We will miss him.*

*Stephen Limbaugh, Jr.*

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**Stephen Limbaugh, Jr.** - October 25, 2021 at 03:35 PM