



## Robert Blafield

June 17, 2017

Robert Blafield of Richmond died June 17, 2017, at Berkshire Medical Center after bravely facing a lengthy illness.

He was born in Staten Island, NY and felt an immediate connection with the Berkshires after a family trip to Western Massachusetts. He and his wife Audrey, a landscape painter, fell in love with the area and decided to live here year round and raise a family. Bob was weaned in New York City on Italian Opera and at the age of fifteen, he was privileged to sing under Arturo Toscanini. He knew then that music would be his life and career. Robert moved to the Berkshires in 1960 from New York City where he coached voice and opera to become the music director at the Berkshire Playhouse in Stockbridge. He was a talented composer, organist, pianist, choral director and conductor. He was the Founding Music Director of Berkshire Lyric Theatre in 1963, and later established their Blafield Children's Chorus, named in his honor. His stated aim was "to foster the vocal arts" in our Berkshires, which he did with passion and love over the next forty-four years, retiring as the Artistic Director of BLT in 2007. During that span he was responsible for a series of highly successful productions of musicals, opera, major oratorios as well as concerts and recitals of all description. A very partial list includes "The Pirates of Penzance," "The Mikado," "Brigadoon," "Carousel," "Dido and Aeneas," "Amahl and the Night Visitors," "Gianni Schicchi," "Noye's Flood," Bach's "Mass in B Minor," Mozart's "Requiem," Bloch's "Sacred Service," and Handel's "Israel in Egypt." Bob was on the faculty of numerous local schools

and was the organist and choirmaster at a number of Berkshire churches and synagogues, including many years at St. Marks in Pittsfield, Temple Anshe Amunim in Pittsfield and most recently at South Congregational in Pittsfield. After he retired at the age of 88, he continued to pursue his passion for music. He continued to practice piano, compose, and teach piano and voice at home until the very end of his life. In the course of more than six decades of teaching, he was able to nurture the vocal talents of countless singers of all ages, including several that have gone on to professional lives in music. Robert touched so many lives and will continue to live on in our hearts. He showed a deep and unconditional love for his daughters, grandchildren, family and friends. He was there good times and bad for the people he loved and cared for. He gave us so many gifts: His wonderful sense of humor; a curious and active mind; a love of learning through books, art, conversation and travel; a deep commitment to home, family and friends; ability to have sheer fun; a connection to nature and animals; strength of character; and wisdom about how to live a meaningful and quality life.

He leaves his loving daughters Alma Blafield and Kari Dupuis; son-in-law Jeff Dupuis; his beloved grandchildren Laura and Emily; sister Doris Nelsen; and his dear dog Toto.

MEMORIAL NOTICE: There will be a celebration of Robert's life at South Congregational Church in Pittsfield, MA on Saturday, June 24th at 11:00 AM. A reception will be held in the church parlor after the service. There will be music, readings and the service will be led by the Reverend Joel Huntington. In lieu of sending flowers, the family suggests that donations be made to the Blafield Children's Chorus in care of the Berkshire Lyric Theatre, Inc., BLT, Box 347, Pittsfield, MA 01201; or to the South Congregational Church Community Food Pantry, 110 South Street in Pittsfield, MA 01201.