



## Dr. James Arthur Williams

May 9, 1939 - August 28, 2019

Graveside services for Dr. James Arthur Williams will be held on Tuesday, September 17, 2019 at 1:00 P.M. at Palmetto Cemetery in Columbia, SC.

Dr. James Arthur Williams was a native of Columbia, South Carolina. He was born May 9, 1939 to the late George and Ophelia Taylor Williams. He was the youngest of five children. He departed this life on Wednesday August 28, 2018 in Dayton Ohio.

He was educated in the Columbia, South Carolina Public Schools, Allen University, The University of Illinois, Columbia University and The Ohio State University. In 2003, Alma College honored him with the Doctor of Letters degree. During the summer of 1974, he spent six weeks in Poland studying Polish music and culture as a member of a select team of eighteen Alabama college professors. He has served as guest conductor to numerous choral groups and frequently served as an adjudicator for District and State Music Festivals. He served as guest conductor of Alma College Choir. In 1992, he was guest conductor of the Tuscaloosa Festival Orchestra with Della Reese as soloist. In 1994, Alabama Public Television produced a documentary on him entitled "Lift Every Voice".

Dr. Williams has taught in the Columbia, South Carolina Public Schools, Morris College, Urbana University and the University of Dayton. For twenty-

five years, he was Chairman of the Fine Arts Department and Conductor of the internationally acclaimed choir at Stillman College. He served as Adjunct Professor of Voice at the University of Dayton, Professor of Music and Worship at Payne Theological Seminary and United Theological Seminary. In 1994, he became a Professor of Music and Choral Director at Wilberforce University. The Wilberforce University Choir appeared on "The Today Show" with Bryant Gumbel and recorded with the famous Ray Charles. In 1999, the choir was invited to tour Egypt for ten days during Black History Month. This tour was such a success that the U.S. Ambassador invited the choir to return for an encore performance on July 4th at the Cairo Opera House.

In 1994, the State of South Carolina awarded him its highest award, "THE ORDER OF THE PALMETTO". His arrangement of "His Eye Is On The Sparrow" has been orchestrated and performed by the Central State University Chorus with the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra, The Cincinnati May Festival Orchestra and the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra. His numerous recordings include "God, Me, and Daddy", a collection of sacred songs with his daughter, Dr. Melody J. Williams.

Dr. Williams has been a church organist since the age of twelve and served churches in South Carolina, New York City, Illinois, Alabama and Ohio. He is a member of McKinley United Methodist Church and associate member of First Baptist Church of Dayton, Ohio. He served as Minister of Music at Bethlehem Baptist Church, Columbia South Carolina, Sidney Parks CME Church, Columbia, South Carolina, College Hill Church, Dayton, Ohio and Bethel Missionary Baptist Church, Dayton, Ohio, Bailey Tabernacle CME Church, Tuscaloosa, Alabama; McKinley United Methodist Church, Dayton, Ohio and Central Chapel AME Church, Yellow Spring, Ohio.

He was Director of Music for the 1986 General Conference of the C.M.E. Church, Director of Music for the 1976 General Assembly of the Presbyterian

Church in the U.S.A. (PCUS) and served as Chairman of the Hymnal Commission of the C.M.E. Church.

He was a primary consultant for "Every Voice and Sing", a five-part PBS documentary that chronicles the birth and rise of Black College Choirs. He was Adjudication Coordinator and Chief Adjudicator for the "Black College Choir Expositions" in Las Vegas, Nevada for five years.

He holds membership in the National Association of Negro Musicians, the American Guild of Organists, the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) and he is a life member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

He is survived by his sweetheart, Dorothy Bostic Williams; three children, Angela, Melody and James; a foster son, William Henry Caldwell; his pride and joy, grandson, Salih; a sister, Cornelia Fair and a host of other loving relatives and friends.

**DONATIONS MAY BE MADE TO:**

Allen Univ-Div of Inst Adv/James Arthur Williams & Dorothy Bostic-Williams  
Scholarship for Music - 1530 Harden St., Columbia, SC 29204

Tel: 1 (803) 376-5724

Web: <http://www.allenuniversity.edu> (<http://www.allenuniversity.edu>)

Please leave the family your condolences and prayers.

The Williams family acknowledges, with grateful appreciation, all of your kind expressions, love and sympathy.

Thank you for helping us care for our families.

A. A. Dicks, Sr. and Staff



# Cemetery Details

## Palmetto Cemetery

5101 Fairfield Road  
Columbia, SC 29203

# Previous Events

## Graveside Service

SEP 17. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (ET)

Palmetto Cemetery  
5101 Fairfield Road  
Columbia, SC 29203

# Tribute Wall

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“ Mrs. Williams.& family , Professor Williams was a remarkable "man of music", where ever he shared his expertise & talents - which obviously culminated in him being international as he displayed & shared his gifts!. When he lived in Columbia, SC & served as choral director at CA Johnson HS. he recognized a quality in the voice of my late twin sister, Miriam Kohn Kennedy & offered to train her voice at his home on Page St. The rest, shall we say is history. I shall forever be grateful to how he impacted her "career in music:" for a lifetime. She indeed was a talented protege that he touched & developed early in life. To God Be The Glory

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**M L Kohn- former CAJ Faculty (22 years) - April 02, 2020 at 03:11 PM**



“ I had a flashback of a fad while attending C. A. Johnson High School. I was in music class when Mr. Williams told us, “Black people have no business wearing white stockings and white lipstick. They look like they’ve got white mouth disease. 😊 Sometimes we adopt a trend that wasn’t made for us was a message that stuck with me longer than his music lessons.

I bravely volunteered to stand and sing a song of my choice for a class demonstration. Unlike the judges on American Idol, he let me sing *The Twelfth of Never*. I sang the whole song. When I finished, I heard giggles. He said, “Her voice will be all right when she gets the diphthongs out.” I didn’t know what diphthongs were, but I was glad that he didn’t stop me. That would have been embarrassing.

*Memories are so precious! Thank you for letting me share.*

*Blessings to you and family,*

*Gloria Shell Mitchell (Class of 1966)*

*Sent from my iPhone*

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**Gloria Mitchell** - September 14, 2019 at 12:09 AM