



Åke-Eric Renqvist

February 7, 1932 - November 7, 2023

Musician and director musices Åke-Eric Renqvist, 91, died peacefully of heart failure on November 7th, 2023. He was born on February 7, 1932 in Helsinki, Finland, and lived in Newport, Virginia from 1995 until his passing. He was predeceased by his parents Georg and Signe, and his brother, Olof.

Left to cherish his memory are his five children in Finland (Max, Anne-Maj, Anna-Stina, Petri, and Linnea), grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. In Virginia, his wife, Helen, and son, George Robert (Jenna), and grandchildren, Leif and Ava. In Baltimore, MD, his stepdaughter, Piia Helve.

Åke's interest in the violin started at age five, after seeing one played at a party. When he was 12 years old, he had taken only three violin lessons when Finland was attacked by the Soviet Union in 1942. After their home was destroyed in Helsinki, his family moved to the country where Åke developed a love for cross-country skiing and continued to teach himself to play the violin. In his late teens and early 20s, Åke and his brother could often be found playing with local dance bands, for which he often played violin, bass, and vibraphone, while his brother played accordion. He later completed his studies at the Sibelius Academy and studied conducting with Premysl Charvat, then principal conductor for the National Opera in Prague. Åke played viola for 29 years with the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, during which the orchestra made many recordings and toured all over the world. Åke first visited the United States in 1968 at age 35 while on tour with the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra.

Mr. Renqvist also had an extensive teaching career, including many years at Helsinki Conservatory and other music academies, as well as director of a private music school in Helsinki. He mentored many students who have gone on to play professionally around the world. Åke was awarded the distinguished title director musices in December of 1995 by the President of Finland in honor of his thirty years of teaching and conducting the North Kymi College of Music Symphony Orchestra and the Rauma Sinfonietta.

When the time came to retire from his long and distinguished career as a violist, teacher, and conductor in Finland, Åke and his wife relocated to her hometown in Newport, Virginia. During his time in Virginia, Åke continued to collaborate with former students and colleagues as featured soloists and many local students flourished under his instruction. He was music director and conductor of the Blacksburg Community Strings for 22 years. During his career, he shared his love of stringed instruments by providing violin, viola, cello, and bass lessons. He continued to teach from his home studio until shortly before he passed.

In addition to his life's work of playing, teaching, and conducting music, Åke is fondly remembered for his passions for baking Finnish rye bread, building projects, and learning new languages, and his love of sweets and his cats. The family expresses gratitude for his good care to the medical professionals and staff at Lewis Gale Montgomery Hospital and Heritage Hall Rehabilitation Center in Blacksburg.

A memorial service will be held on Saturday, December 2nd, 2023 at 11:00am at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Blacksburg (1301 Gladewood Drive).

Memorial donations may be sent to Blacksburg Community Strings (2802 Shadow Lake Road, Blacksburg, 24060), Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Blacksburg, or a charity of your choice.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

DEC 2. 11:00 AM (ET)

Unitarian Universalist Congregation
1301 Gladewood Drive
Blacksburg, VA 24060

Tribute Wall



“ *Paula V. planted a grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Åke-Eric Renqvist.*

Paula V. - December 01, 2023 at 03:29 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Åke-Eric Renqvist.*



November 23, 2023 at 07:03 AM



“ *Helen and family, I am very sorry to learn of your loss. Jan Spahr*

Janet Spahr - November 19, 2023 at 02:36 PM



“ I am grateful to have been Ake's student and to have known such a wonderful person. He invited me to go to Finland in 2010, and I wanted to share some of the pictures.



Dave Duckett - November 16, 2023 at 12:25 PM

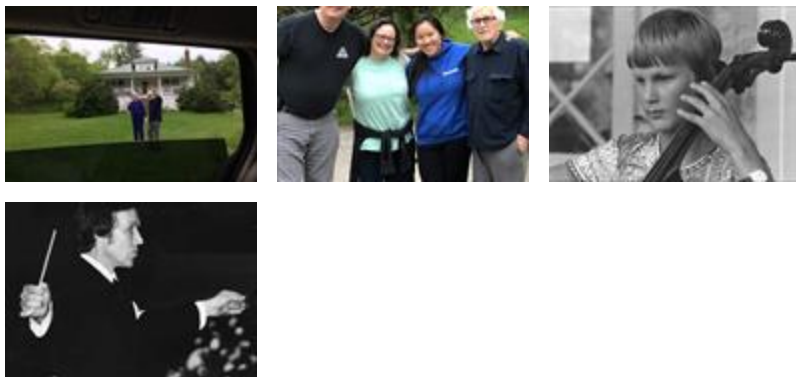
PH

Helen, this is Pauline Dowdy's daughter Peggy. I send my condolences to you and your family in the loss of your husband. May God grant to Peace during this time. Blessings

Peggy Dowdy Huffman - December 01, 2023 at 12:37 PM



“ 4 files added to the album Ake_Memories



Kari Jukka-Pekka Vainio - November 15, 2023 at 05:06 AM

ST

“ *Peace be with you.*

Sandra Thornton - November 14, 2023 at 11:39 AM

TC

Photos, wonderful!

Taina Kaarlataina.kaarla@gmail. comtaina - November 16, 2023 at 05:08 AM

NB

Helen and family, I am so sorry.

Nancy Ahalt Brooks - November 29, 2023 at 07:18 AM