

Hanna's music plays on

Hanna Powell Memorial Piano Festival honors music teacher's heart

When folks remember Hanna Powell, they remember a strong, talented woman who loved music — teaching music, and teaching music to children in particular.

After her death in 2017, after a long battle with breast cancer, it seemed fitting to memorialize their musician with a piano competition in her name. The first Hanna Powell Memorial Piano Festival, part of the Maine Piano Festival at the Sanford Performing Arts Center, was held last May. This year the festival is set for Feb. 12.

“The idea behind the competition is to support talented young musicians who want to pursue their hopes and dreams in music,” said her husband Dr. Andy Powell, who sponsors the festival.

A talented pianist, organist, and music teacher, Hanna taught at St. Thomas School in Sanford as a part-time music teacher from 2012-2016. She was qualified to teach at the college level, but she chose to teach children.

“She loved music, loved teaching music to those of all ages, but in particular children and young musicians,” said Dr. Powell, who lives in Sanford with their sons Patrick and Jonathan. “It was important to her that they had fun with it.”

In her teaching she liked to emphasize variety and bring children's music from different countries, teaching on recorders, African drums, chimes, bells, and boomwhackers. She also taught private piano lessons to many students and played at Redeemer Lutheran Church and taught children's music ministry.

Hanna was born in Finland to a musical family and came to America in 1990 to pursue her piano studies. She graduated from DePauw University in Indiana in 1995 where she received her Bachelor of Music degree in piano performance and music education with a choral emphasis. She continued her studies with Karen Shaw and world-famous pianist Menahem Pressler at Indiana University, where she received her Master's in Piano Performance in the fall of 1998. This is also where she met Andy before their eventual move to Maine.



Hanna Powell was a loving mother (Patrick and Jonathan) and wife (Andy) who also had a passion for sharing her love of music, especially with children. Below, she leads son Patrick through their winter recital. Right, Hanna played her doctoral recital in October 2015 on this organ, completing her doctoral in organ despite her battle in the late stages of her disease.



Hanna grew up playing piano from an early age, but a serious mowing accident in the late 1990s affected her sensitivity in her hands, forcing her switch to the organ. Hanna was diagnosed with advanced breast cancer in May 2006. Despite battling this illness for 11 years, Hanna remained positive and lived her life to the fullest. Hanna died Easter Sunday, April 16, 2017.

Hanna's husband Andy and her sons



Patrick (SHS Class of 2021, now a sophomore at the University of New England) and Jonathan (SHS Class of 2023) are honored to continue Hanna's legacy through supporting young musicians and their love of music.

“I'm so proud of her accomplishments,” said Dr. Powell. “Hanna would be very happy to see the competition and that her legacy lives on through her music.”