

Howard Karp (1929-2014)

“True nobility and genuine love expressed in sublime musicianship and pianism, and in the example of a beautifully lived life,” was how I expressed myself upon learning of Howard Karp’s passing in June of 2014.

Howard Karp was a musical and pianistic giant. With his astounding, always inquisitive and encyclopedic mind which seemed to know everything about everything, and with his consummate musicianship and pianism, he could have been overpowering. But a gentler, more modest person never existed. I do not think I ever heard him express a negative thought about anything, and one got the impression he could only see goodness in every aspect of life around him. I still hear that spirited chuckle in his inimitable, enthusiastic voice, whenever I think of him.

He had a huge heart, and lived for his family, his students and his friends. Artistry such as his usually always takes a sacrificial toll on the family. Yet I know of no family anywhere that showed a more harmonious love and selflessness for each member than the Karp family. Music was all of their lives—Howard’s, Frances’, Parry’s and Christopher’s—and it only blessed each of them in positive ways.

Howard and Frances Karp have been models of devotion to each other—models of what a marriage can be between two dedicated musicians and teachers. They have been a team—inseparable in everyone’s mind.

Howard Karp’s magnificent performances survive in the memory of all who were fortunate to hear him, and some are preserved and available on CD. One hears a grand spaciousness without pretentiousness or pompousness, combined with enormous depth of thought, infinite tenderness, and virtually flawless execution, even in live performance. Every note has character and meaning.

Howard Karp was mainly drawn to the highest and noblest in music, and to the highest and noblest literature. It was the highest peaks, the Mount Everests of the literature, that attracted him, and he actually conquered them.

His work ethic was legendary—always seeking new challenges, never taking the easy path to anything, and cheerfully and enthusiastically giving his all to every endeavor he undertook. He never rested on the sublime heights he had already achieved.

Howard Karp’s example as a devoted servant of music, and of true goodness personified in every aspect of life will always be an inspiration.