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## Music Professor Jerry Helton Remembered for His Voice and Teaching Legacy

Winthrop University

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# Music Professor Jerry Helton Remembered for His Voice and Teaching Legacy

## Quick Facts

- Winthrop honored Helton in 1987 with the Kinard teaching award and in 2013 with the Medal of Honor in the Arts, which is the College of Visual and Performing Arts' highest tribute.
- David Wohl, dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts, said that even though Helton was retired, he taught as an adjunct for the department and was in demand as a teacher of voice throughout the community.



*Jerry Helton*

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – **Music Professor Jerry Helton**, who excelled at performing and then brought those same high standards to Winthrop voice students for 36 years, passed away this weekend.

His funeral will be held at 4 p.m. Thursday at **St. John's United Methodist Church**. Visitation will follow. [Greene Funeral Home – Northwest](#) is handling arrangements.

Helton retired in 2006 with the title of professor emeritus of music. Winthrop honored him in 1987 with the **Kinard teaching award** and in 2013 with the **Medal of Honor in the Arts**, which is the College of Visual and Performing Arts' highest tribute.

In mourning his death this week. **Department of Music Chair Don Rogers '75** said Helton was renowned throughout the region as a consummate performer and a master teacher. "His students are performing throughout the world - a fine legacy to his brilliant teaching career at Winthrop," he added.

**David Wohl**, dean of the [College of Visual and Performing Arts](#), said that even though Helton was retired, he taught as an adjunct for the department and was in demand as a teacher of voice throughout the community. "He made significant contributions to the Department of Music, the College of Visual and Performing Arts and Winthrop," Wohl noted.

**Helton**, a Van Lear, Kentucky, native, studied voice at the Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music and privately in New York and Europe. He discovered his knack for teaching while studying at the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia from 1964-69.

While he had many of his own successes – singing tenor with such American greats as Beverly Sills, Franco Corelli, Richard Tucker and Jerome Hines with various opera companies in Charlotte, Cincinnati, Brooklyn, Boston, New Orleans, Philadelphia and Barcelona, Spain, and winning awards – Helton found teaching equally rewarding.

Helton started teaching voice performance at Winthrop in 1970 and groomed many students to sing in major opera companies around the world, including the Metropolitan Opera, the New York City Opera, the San Francisco Opera, and the Newberry Opera Company. Helton has had numerous students place or win in district and regional voice competitions including the Metropolitan Opera and San Francisco Opera auditions.

**Bass-baritone Kristopher Irmiter '84** honored his mentor by performing at the 2013 Medal of Honor ceremony. The Grammy-nominated artist who has performed in all 50 states and throughout Canada, said Helton touched his life forever.

“Of many that have helped me to pursue the ‘Impossible Dream’ of a performing career, Jerry Helton is the most influential,” Irmiter wrote for the Medal of Honor ceremony program. “For more than 30 years I have profited from his teaching, wise counsel, and his support in helping me to achieve more than I ever thought possible as a Winthrop freshman. It is impossible to quantify what he has meant to the lives and musical careers of so many, both performers and teachers.”

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[\[Back to Previous Page\]](#)

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<a href="#">Alumni &amp; Friends</a>	<a href="#">Directions</a>	<a href="#">Employment</a>	<a href="#">Library</a>	<a href="#">Records &amp; Registration</a>	<a href="#">Visit the Campus</a>
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