



John Clare Mast

January 6, 1933 - June 23, 2014

(News article) John Mast, a legendary Toledo jazz pianist and composer, died Sunday in the Tonganoxie Nursing Center, Tonganoxie, Kan.

He was 81 and his son, Paul, said he died of a mild heart attack. He had moved to Kansas to be near his son.

Mr. Mast was born Jan. 6, 1933, in Toledo, the son of James Clare and Edna Sanford Mast. Three years later, he played his first notes on the piano, the instrument with which he would establish a lifelong relationship. His father was a jazz pianist who inspired Mr. Mast's musical diligence.

Mr. Mast gained renown as a classical pianist while in high school, his son said. At age 14, he was invited to give a solo recital at the Toledo Museum of Art, and was flown to New York City to give a performance on NBC.

In 1951, Mr. Mast, then 18 and pursuing a degree in piano performance at Indiana University, performed the first movement of Tchaikovsky's Concerto in B-flat minor with the Toledo Symphony Orchestra. Julian Seaman, The Blade's music critic, called Mr. Mast a pianist with "praiseworthy style," adding that "it seemed a shame that [the] orchestra could not equal the quality or style of young Mr. Mast."

Mr. Mast had been involved in an automobile accident that month, The Blade reported. Although he had suffered mild brain damage, he insisted on performing despite his painful injuries. Four months after the concert, however, he withdrew from college to rest. His doctor told him he would never play again.

Mr. Mast rejected that fate, his son said, and took up jazz. For the next 18 years, he was a traveling accompanist, soloist, and ensemble player, peregrinating around the country.

His travels always brought him back to Toledo, however. He was a fixture at Fifi's Restaurant and Rusty's Jazz Cafe. Both clubs, along with many others locally, have since closed - Fifi's in 2012, and Rusty's in 2003.

Mr. Mast was most comfortable in nightclubs, but the concert for which he was best remembered took place in an auditorium.

In 1994, Mr. Mast, along with several collaborators, played a series of his arrangements memorializing his friends Harold Lindsey and Harold Jaffe at the Franciscan Center of Lourdes College.

Rusty's owner Rusty Monroe said the performance, called "A Tribute to Two Harolds," was worthy of Carnegie Hall.

Jim Gottron, his friend, said Mr. Mast always played well. If you caught him on the right night, though, he was spectacular.

On one of those nights, Mr. Mast met his partner, Joni Rando, with whom he spent 22 years. And it was on one of those nights that Mr. Gottron, although he had heard Mr. Mast many times before, stayed hours after he had planned just to hear his friend at his best.

Surviving are his son, Paul J. Mast; stepson, David Williamson, and five grandchildren.

Funeral services will be at 4 p.m. Sunday at the Quisenberry Funeral Home in Tonganoxie, Kan.

The family suggests tributes to the American Cancer Society or the Humane Society.

Contact Blade Staff Writer Jennifer Gersten at: jgersten@theblade.com, 419-724-6050, or on Twitter [@jenwgersten](https://twitter.com/jenwgersten).

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