

Music Industry Icons Gathered to Honor the Life and Legacy of Legendary Songwriter Will Jennings

Jennings penned numerous iconic hits that have resonated with generations of listeners from country to pop

NASHVILLE, TN, UNITED STATES, January 23, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The music community gathered yesterday afternoon at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum's Ford Theater for a [Celebration of Life](#) for one of their own, Will Jennings, who passed away on September 6, 2024 in his home in Tyler, TX at the age of 80.

Jennings was one of the most revered songwriters of his generation, penning an extraordinary number of timelessly beloved songs for an eclectic range of musical icons like Eric Clapton, Steve Winwood, Whitney Houston, Roy Orbison, B.B. King, Celine Dion and Tim McGraw to name a few.

The Celebration of Life was a poignant and joyful reflection of Jennings' monumental contributions to music, featuring highlights of his career with personal testimonies from fellow songwriters, artists, and friends who spoke about his kindness, creativity, and impact on the music industry. Performances of some of Jennings' most beloved songs followed, with



L-R: Wendy Moten, Amy Grant, Vince Gill, Lance Freed, Russ Titleman, Emmylou Harris, Lilly Winwood and Rodney Crowell at Will Jennings Celebration of Life. Photo Credit: Amiee Stubbs Photography



L-R: Wendy Moten, Rodney Crowell and Vince Gill perform "Please Remember Me." Photo Credit: Amiee Stubbs Photography

artists who had worked alongside him offering renditions of his classics that spanned decades. Special guest appearances and performances included Rodney Crowell, Vince Gill, Amy Grant, Emmylou Harris, Wendy Moten and Lilly Winwood (daughter of Steve Winwood).

A particularly touching moment during the event was a video from Steve Winwood, honoring his friend Will Jennings as he spoke about a particular piece of music that Jennings would always play for him. Winwood recalled a particular time, about 10 years ago, when he then sang this melody to Jennings. Winwood said he will always remember that moment and he will always remember Will.



Amy Grant performs "Oh How The Years Go By."
Photo Credit: Amiee Stubbs Photography

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*Darrell Franklin, SVP at
Sheltered Music Publishing*

Jennings was widely recognized for his extraordinary songwriting ability and his impact on the world of music, crafting songs that have resonated with generations of listeners from country to pop. Born in Kilgore Texas, and relocated to Tyler, Texas as a child, Jennings primarily loved the iconic blues songs influenced by B.B. King. He recognized that he couldn't make a living writing three-chord songs about the Blues, so he studied poetry and earned degrees that landed him a job as an Associate Professor of English and French literature at the University of Wisconsin. Jennings' love of music overwhelmed his desire to teach, and he eventually decided to move to Nashville to write songs. That move caught the attention of

music publisher Lance Freed, who signed Jennings to a publishing deal in 1974. In 2023, Lance Freed, All Clear Music and Fuji Music Group acquired 100% interest in the publishing rights and writer's share to Jennings' entire catalog of music.

“On behalf of everyone at Sheltered Music, we have gathered among some of the industry's top talent to recognize and celebrate Will's incredible life and legacy,” said Darrell Franklin, SVP at Sheltered Music Publishing. “Will wasn't just a master of words, but he wrote songs for the common man. He understood that language and spoke to their hearts. His work will undoubtedly continue to inspire songwriters and music lovers for generations to come.”

It was Jennings' work with Clapton on the timeless classic "Tears in Heaven" that catapulted him to global recognition. The song, written in the wake of Clapton's tragic loss of his son, not only became an international hit but also won multiple Grammy Awards, including Song of the Year. Jennings' biggest hit remains the 1997's Titanic theme "My Heart Will Go On." The song, written by Jennings and composer James Horner and sung by Celine Dion, earned numerous Oscars, Grammys and Golden Globes, becoming the most-played radio hit in history according to the Songwriter Hall of Fame.

He's been called the greatest American lyricist of the late 20th century with numerous recognizable hits including "Up Where We Belong," "Can't We Go On Together," "I'll Never Love This Way Again," "People Alone," "Back in the High Life Again," "My Father's Eyes," "Free Fallin'," "While You See a Chance," "Please Remember Me," "Where Are You Christmas," "Somewhere in the Night," and "Street Life." Jennings also co-wrote "Higher Love" with Steve Winwood, which landed on Billboard's Hot 100 as a # 1 song.

Jennings received numerous Golden Globe Awards and two songs, "My Heart Will Go On" and "Up Where We Belong," both received Academy Awards along with an additional four songs that were nominated for Song of the Year by the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. His resume also includes awards of recognition including inductions into both the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame, the prestigious Songwriters Hall of Fame in New York and The Texas Songwriters Hall of Fame in Austin, Texas.

In addition to his songwriting achievements, Jennings' impact extended beyond the music itself. His advocacy for songwriters' rights and his involvement in mentoring younger generations of



L-R: Wendy Moten, Lilly Winwood and Emmylou Harris perform "Higher Love." Photo Credit: Amiee Stubbs Photography



L-R: Vince Gill, Lilly Winwood, Kerry Marx, Mark Beckett, Amy Grant, Wendy Moten, Emmylou Harris, Larry Paxton, Rodney Crowell and Katherine Marx. Photo Credit: Amiee Stubbs Photography

musicians left an indelible mark on the industry. His passing marked the end of an era, but his timeless songs will remain a testament to his extraordinary talent. Will Jennings legacy lives on through his music, his influence, and the memories shared by those who were fortunate enough to know him and work alongside him.

Will Jennings is survived by his wife of 59 years, the former Carole Thurman and by two sisters, Joyce and Gloria.

See full press release here: <https://conta.cc/4gc78Uf>

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