

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 7, 2009

Editor's Note: Headshot of
Maestro Benachowski attached

CONTACT:

Desert Symphony Offices
(760) 773-5988

Media Only: John Hussar
PRNewsWorks

(760) 567-8073

john@prnewsworks.com

Desert Symphony's Renown Maestro Edwin R. "Ben" Benachowski Mourned at 86

PALM DESERT (Calif.) — Desert Symphony Maestro Edwin "Ben" Benachowski, who conducted the Palm Springs Desert Resort's only professional symphony for 20 years entertaining thousands with classical and pops music, died Monday of an apparent aortic aneurism at Palm Springs Regional Medical Center. He was 86.

"Ben was an institution whose wit, intelligence and masterful presence as a conductor, thrilled audiences, young and old," said Nancy Tapick, president of Desert Symphony in announcing the maestro's death.

A memorial service will be held at 1 p.m. Friday, at Forest Lawn Mortuary in Cathedral City. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made in his memory to Desert Symphony, 72925 Fred Waring Drive, Suite 101, Palm Desert, CA 92260.

Benachowski is survived by his wife of 57 years, Marilyn, who is co-concert master and contractor for the Symphony. He also is survived by his daughter, Joanne Wilson, son Roger Benachowski, and four grandchildren.

Ben Benachowski, a Julliard School of Music graduate and trained clarinet player, and his wife moved to the Coachella Valley in 1985 and made their home in Indian Wells.

Ben Benachowski took over as music director of Desert Symphony in 1988. The first concert in July 1989 attracted such celebrities as Buddy Rogers and Ginger Rogers that helped launch the new Desert Symphony. The Desert Symphony began fund-raising by honoring entertainers such as Bob Hope, Frank Sinatra, Jack Jones and McCallum Theatre CEO Ted Giatas with the Amadeus Award. The Amadeus Award was given to entertainer John Tesh in 2008 in celebration of Desert Symphony's 20th Anniversary. Tesh and Desert Symphony performed at The McCallum Theatre, the Desert Symphony's concert home.

"Ben was really a pioneer for classical music in the Coachella Valley," Marilyn Benachowski said. He also did his best to help the new McCallum Theatre get going. "Ben was personally called by President Ford to help the theatre out and we gave the very first Summer Pops concert there."

Under his baton, Ben Benachowski conducted the finest professional musicians from throughout Southern California including members of all the prominent symphonies and the major movie and recording studios.

The 2009-2010 Bravo! Concert Series with seven concerts will go on as planned in Ben Benachowski's memory, according to Tapick. Assistant conductor Thomas Hartley will conduct the concert. The season opens Nov. 8 with a tribute to the Maestro.