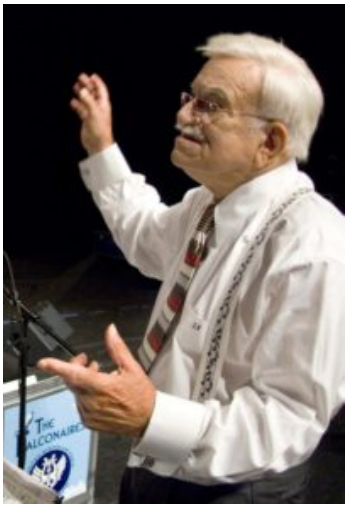
Funeral Home



Samuel Kay Nestico

Born: February 6, 1924

Date of Death: January 17, 2021

Sammy Nestico, a trombonist, composer, and arranger who became one of the key figures in the development of jazz education, died on January 17 at his home in Carlsbad, California. He was three weeks shy of his 97th birthday.

His death was announced by his family in a statement on Nesticos official Facebook page. The exact cause of death was undisclosed; however, he had been in long-term hospice care at his home for several months.

Nestico was a true giant in the world of music, and of jazz in particular. A veteran of the Charlie Barnet, Tommy Dorsey, Woody Herman, and Gene Krupa orchestras as a trombonist, he made his most enduring contribution to big-band jazz during his 17 years as an arranger for the Count Basie Orchestra. Nestico was also a first-call arranger for vocalists, working extensively with the likes of Sarah Vaughan, Frank Sinatra, Barbra Streisand, and Toni Tennille.

Prior to his collaboration with Basie, Nestico established himself among the foremost composers and arrangers for military bands. He spent 15 years in the U.S. Air Force Band, most of them as chief arranger for its jazz ensemble the Airmen of Note, before transferring to the U.S. Marine Band and directing the White House orchestra under Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson. The Airmen of Note have since 1996 sponsored the Sammy Nestico Award competition for composers and arrangers of big-band jazz.