Marie Barker Nelson Bennett

June 15, 1926 ~ November 18, 2018

Marie Barker Nelson Bennett passed away peacefully on Sunday, November 18 surrounded by her family.

Marie was born on June 15, 1926 to parents, Ellis Webster and Virginia Freeze Barker in Salt Lake City, Utah, along with her beloved twin sister, Marillyn Barker Edwards Johnson. Four years later her brother Richard Ellis Barker was born.

Growing up, Marie's family lived on the lower avenues and later they moved to a family home on 264 South 1000 East where they lived most of their lives until the death of their father in 1952. Marie attended Wasatch School, Webster School, Bryant Junior High and East High School. At East she was active in the A Cappella Choir, sang in a quartet and, along with her sister Marillyn won the girls double tennis championship.

Following high school graduation, Marie attended the University of Utah, where she earned a Bachelors of Arts degree, majoring in Music and minoring in Art and Theater. Marie was very prominent in extra curricular activities. She was a member of the Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority, performed in many theatrical productions and was the head of the Student Participation Committee. She played the bass in the school orchestra, sang in several choruses and wrote songs for the Kappa's. She was elected to the Beehive Honor Society as one of nine top students in activities and was honored in Phi Kappa Phi for scholarship when she graduated in 1947. At the commencement exercises Marie performed as piano soloist with the orchestra playing Rachmaninoff's "Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini."

Life for Marie became even more exciting when she was accepted to Yale University where she was able to study composition with the famed composure, Paul Hindemith. With his aid she was able to finish a four-year Bachelor's of Music Degree in two years.

Moving back to Utah, Marie taught piano and composition at the McCune School of Music. She also worked at the Deseret News as a reporter in the society department.

On December 18, 1950 Marie married Harlan Eugene Nelson in the Salt Lake Temple. In 1952 they moved to Ogden, Utah where they lived for five years while Harlan worked for IBM. Then, in 1956 they moved back to Salt Lake City, where they bought the Salt Lake Travelodge motel and later the Salt Palace Travelodge.

Marie and Harlan had four children, Gregory Harlan, Jan, Mark Andrew, and Metta Marie. As a family, they loved taking trips together, especially to Lake Powell. Music was ever present in their home, with all the children joining in singing and playing various instruments. Marie and Harlan were active members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, raised their children in the gospel and taught them to love the Savior. Marie served in numerous callings in the church and most recently blessed the sisters in Relief Society each week with her beautiful piano arrangements.

Tragedy hit in 1981 when Jan was killed by a drunk driver on April 6 and Harlan died suddenly on May 4. Subsequently Marie took over management of the family real estate businesses. During this time Marie was active in the business community being on the Salt Palace Board, the Executive Committee of the Salt Lake Visitors Bureau and served as president of the Salt Lake Hotel/Motel Association.

In 2003 Marie married Wallace Grant Bennett (Wally). They enjoyed 15 years of companionship and love, travel, and sharing time with both families.

Marie pursued her career as a composer throughout her life. While she was working at the Deseret News in 1953 she composed a String Quartet and earned a Masters degree at the University of Utah. When she was age 47 she again went back to the University of Utah and began a seven-year study of composition, receiving a PhD in 1980. Her thesis was an oratorio, "Once in Israel".

Over the years Marie has composed seven musical plays, eight symphonies, five concertos, an opera and numerous songs and sonatas for various instruments. The Utah Symphony has performed three of her works and she has had three New York premiers.

Orchestras that have premiered or recorded her works include the London Symphony, Prague Symphony, Slovak Radio Symphony, Czech Radio Symphony, New York Chamber Orchestra, Concordia, Seattle Symphony, Boston Modern Orchestra, Utah Symphony, Salt Lake Symphony, Whatcom Orchestra, the Paradigm Chamber Orchestra and the Artemis Chamber orchestra. Conductors include Gerard Schwarz, Marin Alsop, Joseph Silverstein, Roger Briggs, Gil Rose, David Cho, Joel Rosenberg and Harold Rosenbaum.

Marie was the recipient of the Merit of Honor Award from the University of Utah and has her works held in a special collection at the University of Utah. In 2013 Marie received the Governor's Medal with the Utah Governor's Mansion Artist award.

Her opera, "Orpheus Lex" was premiered in 2010 by the New York Virtuoso Singers at Symphony Space in New York City. The conductor, Harold Rosenbaum thought it was a masterpiece and suggested that Marie submit it for a Pulitzer Prize, which she did.

Marie has been a member of the following groups: Kappa Club, International Women's Forum, Music Circle, Piano Club, Alpha Dorian, Great Minds Study Group, Yale Club of Utah, Monuments and the Utah Symphony Guild.

Marie is survived by her husband, Wallace G. Bennett and her three children, Gregory (MaryLynn), Mark (Sarah) and Metta, ten grandchildren: Patrice (Ryan), Emily (Gus), Daniel (Terry), Nathan, Carrie Sue (Jake), Amanda, Andrew, Lauren (Layton), Simone and Ava, and eleven great grandchildren. She is also survived by Wally's children: Douglas (Mary), Grant (Colleen), Bruce (Paige), Stephen (Naxelui), Janna, and their children.

Funeral services will be held at the St Mary's Ward House, 1350 Wasatch Drive, Salt Lake City, Utah. with the bishop officiating, starting at 12:00 noon Monday, November 26, 2018. A visitation will be held at the same location from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM, Sunday, November 25, 2018 as well as prior to services beginning at 10:30 AM to 11:45 AM.