

Composers of Great Band Works

Brian Harris, Bandroom.com Publications

Karl Lawrence King (1891 - 1971)

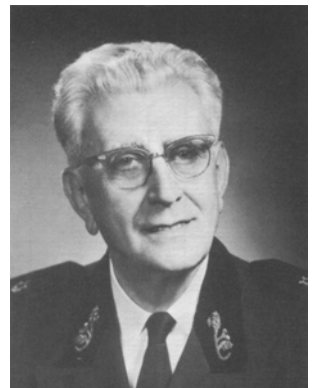
Lifeline

- born in Paintersville, Ohio (February 21), an only child.
- the family moved to Canton, Ohio when King was 11 years old.
- at age 12, he used earnings from his newspaper route to purchase a cornet and pay for music lessons; later switched to baritone because of embouchure problems.
- left school at age 14 after completing the 8th grade; took a job as a printer's assistant with the local newspaper.
- at 17, had two numbers (a march and a dirge) accepted for publication.
- at 19, he joined the Robinson Famous Circus band as a baritone player.
- after three years spent with different circus bands, he joined the Barnum and Bailey Circus at age 22.
- at 23, accepted his first director/conductor position with the Sells-Floto/Bufalo Bill Circus band.
- by age 24, he had more than 150 compositions in print.
- married at age 25, resigning his job with the Sells-Floto band.
- at 26, accepted position as conductor of the Barnum and Bailey Circus band.
- at age 27, he enlisted in the US Army (WWI) but the war ended before he began service; he returned to his hometown of Canton as director of a local band.
- at 28, he began his music publishing business and his only son (Karl L. King, Jr.) was born.
- at 29, the family moved to Fort Dodge, Iowa where he accepted the job as director of the municipal band, a position he held until his death 52 years later.
- at 32, his father died.
- at age 59, he was feted with a testimonial dinner attended by the governor of Iowa, a Congressman, other dignitaries and leaders in the band world including Glenn Bainum, A.A. Harding, Paul Yoder, and William Santleman (conductor of the Marine Band).
- at 62, was awarded an honorary doctorate in music from Phillips University in Enid, Oklahoma.
- at 70, conducted a clinic-concert of his works for the Texas Bandmasters Association in San Antonio, Texas.
- at 74, his 96-year-old mother died.
- at 79, a disastrous fire destroyed the building where the Fort Dodge band was headquartered, destroying most of his original manuscripts.
- died (March 31) of acute diverticulosis at age 80 in a Fort Dodge, Iowa hospital.



Anecdotes and Trivia

- his father (Sandusky) sold farm equipment and played tuba in the town band.
- his mother (Anna) was not involved in music.
- met his future wife (Ruth) at age 11 while delivering newspapers to her father's music store.
- his only formal instruction in composition consisted of four piano lessons and one harmony lesson.
- taught himself how to orchestrate by studying scores.
- founded and ran the K.L. King Music House (music publishing).
- was mostly interested in composing and conducting; did not enjoy teaching music lessons.
- was influential in establishing the "Iowa Band Law" which allowed cities to levy a local tax "for the maintenance and employment of a band for musical purposes." This law was eventually adopted by 28 other states.
- was a founding member of the American Bandmasters Association and the Iowa Bandmasters Association.
- was one of the first composers to write music for the (then) growing school band movement.
- composed over 200 marches and close to 100 other compositions (waltzes, serenades, galops, etc.).
- once said: "I've sung my song. It was a rather simple one; it wasn't too involved; I'm happy about it."



Sources

Karl L. King by Thomas J. Hatton (1975); *Karl L. King: His Life and His Music* by Jess Louis Gerardi, Jr.; Karl L. King website (<http://www.s-hamilton.k12.ia.us/KarlKing>)