

Thurlow Spurr

biography

The word “legendary” is often used too generously these days. To really be considered legendary, a musician needs to build a practical and enduring body of work – a work that continues to influence people over the years. In this instance, “legendary” is the perfect word to describe Thurlow Spurr. Because when one person can lay claim to a resume of producing and directing over 20,000 live shows in 50 years; the production of over 100 audio and video recordings and command performances for four U.S. Presidents, it becomes quite clear the incredible impact Thurlow Spurr has made on the gospel music industry.

In 1959, as a minister of music he created a traveling gospel group called The Spurrflows. In an industry dominated at the time by traditional piano and organ accompaniment, Spurr opted instead for something very few had seen before - drums, electric guitars and rich ensemble harmonies. The Spurrflows became so popular and renowned for their ability to communicate that the Chrysler Corporation hired them to represent Chrysler in over 3,000 concerts worldwide.

The Spurrflows were just the first of many traveling groups that Thurlow formed himself. In the past five decades, he has put over 50 different groups together for road shows across the country and around the world. Some of those groups have included Common Ground, First Gear, Garden Party, Dust, Crimson Bridge, Earth Opera, Pilgrim 20, Pride of Man, Love's Distinction, and Festival of Praise. He also influenced later notables such as Cam Floria's Continentals, Roger Breland's Truth, Derrick Johnson's Regeneration, and Richard Roberts' World Action Singers.

Thurlow's talents quickly got the attention of the highest office in the land, and he and his performers were invited to produce several command performances for Presidents Nixon, Carter, Ford, and Reagan. From there, his reputation for excellent musical presentations took him overseas where he led musical tours in North Korea, South Korea, the Kremlin in Russia, and several trips to Israel which included a Citywide Anniversary Celebration for the Israeli Government.

He has been connected with booking and management for well know artists in the Christian music field such as Dino, Karen Wheaton, Bobby Jones & New Life, Vonda VanDyke, and Larnelle Harris. Since their collaboration began, Larnelle Harris has become one of the most awarded vocalists in gospel music, earning 5 Grammys and 11 Dove Awards, a Stellar Award, and the prestigious Silver Bell Award from the Ad Council for his involvement in the longest-running television ad campaign of all time. Larnelle, still represented by Spurr, continues to travel the world as one of the premier vocalists of our generation.

Thurlow's contributions and achievements vary from Musical Director for the annual Dove Awards and Producer of dozens of award –winning television specials as well as hundreds of daily and weekly television shows. He has produced shows such as The Bob Hope Special - NBC Television Network, The Chrysler Corporation, The Readers' Choice Awards Show, The Charisma 15th Anniversary Special, Eastern Airlines, The National Kidney Foundation Convention, American Motors New Car Announcement Shows, Busch Gardens, Hershey Park and Sea World. He has also produced the award-winning Christmas special for television; Christmas with The Spurrflows, Let Heaven and Nature Sing, Floatin' Along With The Spurrflows, America's Young Majority, Dino's Piano Praise, and Larnelle Live. He was also Director of Music and Talent Division Head for the PTL Television Network for over three years.

Thurlow has been the Minister of Music in the Salem Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, the First Church of the Nazarene in Detroit, Michigan, Calvary Assembly in Orlando, Florida and Metro Church in Edmond, Oklahoma. It was at Metro Church where he created a music series called Metro Band that still remains available in print and CD. He has additionally produced over sixty record albums and created more than thirty choral books for church choirs.

Thurlow is also the president, director and producer of Concert Ministries which is a non-profit organization that has maintained the longest-running and largest multi-state, multi-denominational choir in the nation. The 250+ member Michigan/Ohio Concert Choir has remained loyal to Spurr for the past 35 years. To date, the choir has performed over 500 concerts and they still sell out theaters each Christmas season in Michigan, Ohio and Saint Louis.

In the 1980's, Festival of Praise, which was an outreach program of Concert Ministries, was by definition, a musical training

tool that was intended to communicate the Gospel through praise and worship. Integrated with dance and drama and based on scripture the six musical concerts and seminar type programs ran for ten years taking thousands to a more meaningful understanding regarding genuine worship.

In one of his latest endeavors, he has created an incredible anthology of the world's most beloved and enduring music called: the Thurlow Spurr Collection featuring the Music of Life. Arranged for concert piano and orchestra it is a unique collection of the world's greatest and most loved Hymns, Love songs, Broadway hits and Classical pieces, as well as the best Patriotic and Christmas music.

Thurlow continues to still discover, recognize and encourage the best in Christian talent as creator and producer of the I Want To Be A Star Search talent contest. It is based on Daniel 12:3 "Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever." The contest focuses on giving Christian talent an opportunity to expand their musical horizon while pointing people to Christ.

Thurlow's impact on gospel music has been far-reaching. His former students and employees hold many prominent positions throughout the industry and most are considered experts in their field.

A man dedicated to working for the Kingdom of God. A man of great passion, known not only for his musical prowess, but also for his motivational skills, Thurlow continues to share his philosophy that "an audience listens with their eyes." He continues to captivate audiences the world over with an infectious enthusiasm for his craft, his flair for dramatic stage direction, his dedication to a higher standard of excellence and presentation...and of course, that winning smile.