



## **B. E. Taylor** - *Music and Fine Arts*

The late B.E. Taylor already was a hugely successful singer, recording artist, and front man for the enormously popular B.E. Taylor Group when, in 1982, he married Veronica DeBlasis and chose to make Wheeling his home. He raised a family, sang in area churches, and lent his voice to many charity causes including the House of the Carpenter, Soup Kitchen of Wheeling, Special Olympics, and Children's Hospital, among others.

William Edward Taylor was born in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, in 1951. The eldest of three sons of Bill and Betty Taylor, he was called "Billy Eddie" by his mother, which eventually was shortened to B.E. At the age of 11 he was diagnosed with a serious kidney disease, and while housebound for a year he learned to play guitar and developed a lasting passion for music. He fronted his first band, "The Red Coats," while in high school. He formed "B.E. Taylor and the Establishment," a progressive rock band, before joining three ex-members of "Crack The Sky" to form "The B.E. Taylor Group." They quickly filled clubs and in 1981 scored a Billboard hit with "Vitamin L," accompanied by a music video that aired nationally on MTV. The group had three major label releases before B.E. embarked on a solo career.

Taylor co-hosted the nationally recognized Christian music show "LightMusic," which won the Billboard award for "Best Contemporary Christian Video Show" from 1993-1995. He sang on many national commercials and shared the stage with national acts including Bruce Springsteen, Chicago, Hall and Oates, and The Beach Boys.

His association with Christmas happened almost by accident when he contributed a song in 1991 to a radio station's seasonal compilation that became widely popular. He recorded and released his first Christmas CD, "B.E. Taylor Christmas," on his own label, Chrishae Records, in 1994. He ultimately would release two additional Christmas CDs.

In December 1996, a one-time performance of the Christmas album occurred at Oglebay Park. That set in motion the B.E. Taylor Christmas Tour that eventually would play annually to audiences across the Midwest. The tour routinely sold out two nights at Heinz Hall in Pittsburgh and the Capitol Theater in Wheeling. He would headline the Capitol more than 40 times.

Taylor appeared as guest soloist with the Wheeling and Pittsburgh symphonies and was featured on the national home shopping network QVC performing music from his Christmas CDs. In 2008, the Pittsburgh Ballet commissioned "Forever Love," with a special guest appearance by Taylor.

B.E. always recognized military personnel at his concerts. In the wake of 9/11, he produced a charity concert held at the Capitol Theatre that raised thousands of dollars. This inspired him to release "One Nation Under God" in 2004. In 2010, he appeared with composer Marvin Hamlisch and the Pittsburgh Pops in "A Salute to America" built specifically around music from "One Nation Under God." In 2010, WQED-TV and other PBS stations across the country began airing video of the B.E. Taylor Christmas Concert as an annual fundraiser, a tradition that continues today.

In March 2007 Taylor was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor. During this period, he continued to tour, headline concerts, and release CDs and a concert DVD. Taylor was awarded the Duquesne University Lifetime Achievement Award in 2008, is a member of the Beaver Valley Hall of Fame, and was given the Distinguished West Virginian Award by former Governor Bob Wise. Sadly, he died in 2016. Though he is gone, his spirit and message of love lives on through his music and all of the lives he touched.