



# ENQUIRER

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DOUG ALLEN/THE ENQUIRER

Pallbearers carry Melba Wheatley's casket to a hearse outside Bachman-Hebble Funeral Service. Wheatley was buried Tuesday.

## Musician also wise friend

Friends fondly recall entertainer/composer Melba Wheatley

MARK SCHWERIN  
*The Enquirer*

She was a famous entertainer and composer who enriched lives across the country with her music.

But on Tuesday, Melba Wheatley also was remembered as a wise friend and loving grandmother.

Wheatley, 95, died Saturday, many years after she traveled throughout the country, singing opera and spirituals in America's opera houses and

concert halls. She, along with her sisters and brother, James Dorsey, are recognized today for their many musical contributions.

It was music that first drew Grace Alice Mashaw and Wheatley together. At services honoring Wheatley's life on Tuesday at Bachman Hebble Funeral Service, Mashaw recalled the time she and her daughter traveled to Traverse City to perform.

Mashaw planned to sing while her



Melba Wheatley

daughter, then in high school and today a professional violinist, also was to perform. The only problem was, they had no accompaniment.

Luckily, Wheatley was there. "We got to Traverse City and here was this beautiful woman, who became our accompanist," Mashaw, a Kalamazoo resident, said.

That was in 1973. Over the years, Wheatley and Mashaw became friends, united in music and their Ba-ha'i faith. Wheatley sometimes would send her compositions to Mashaw, who grew fond of the hymn-like pieces.

One piece she was drawn to is titled

Please see WHEATLEY, 2A

## Passing of Melba Wheatley

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