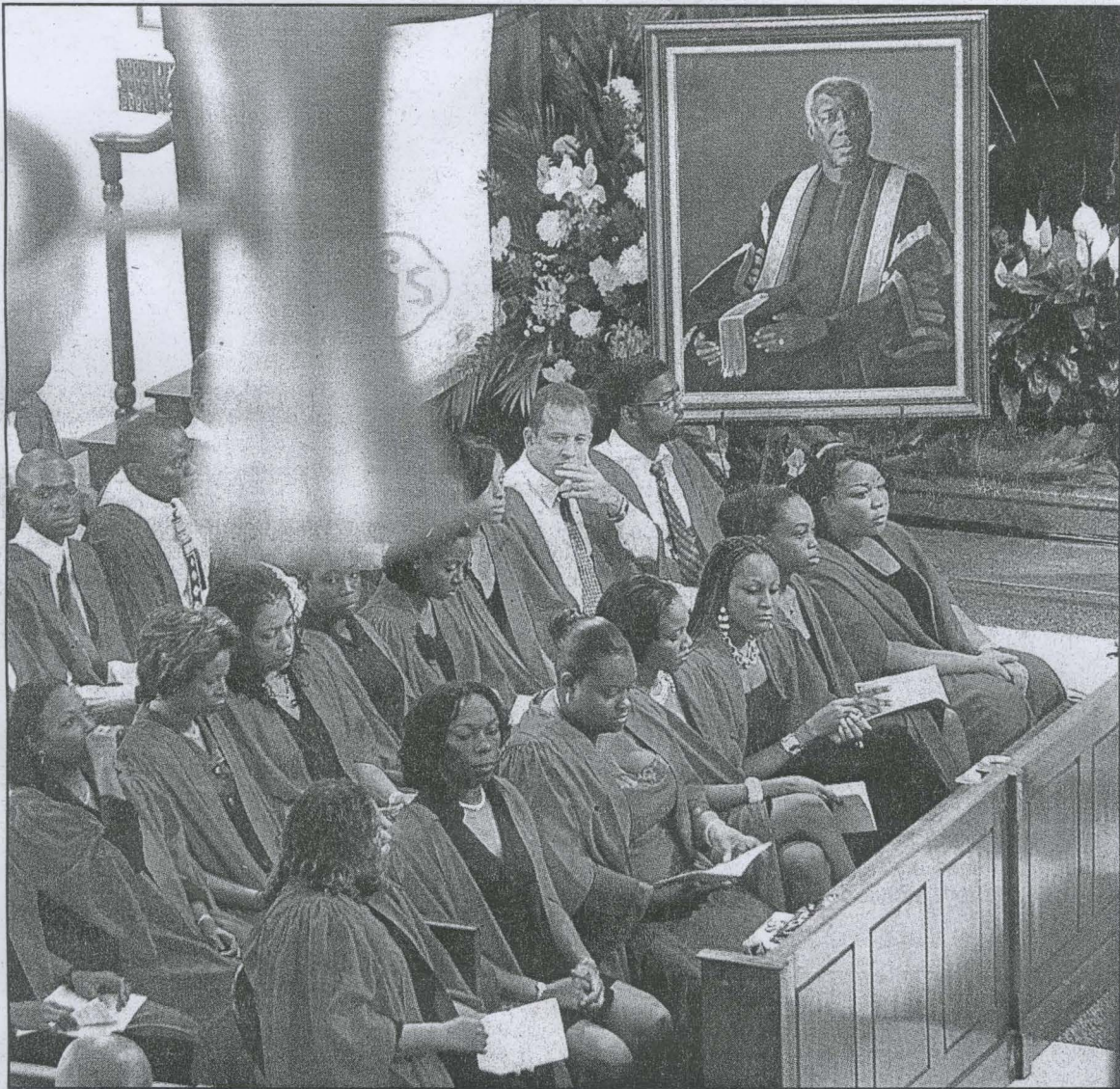


**The dance
will go on**



RICARDO MAKYN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A portrait of Professor Rex Nettleford hangs beside the combined choirs of the University Singers, the University Chorale and the National Dance Theatre Company at the University Chapel in Mona, St Andrew, yesterday, during the thanksgiving service for the late cultural icon.

BIN Rex Nettleford

Mourners reflect on the legacy of Rex Nettleford

Mark Beckford
Staff Reporter

AN ECLECTIC band of mourners gathered at the University Chapel in Mona, St Andrew, yesterday to celebrate the legendary feats and remember the compassion of cultural giant Professor Ralston Milton 'Rex' Nettleford.

Among those in attendance at the official service of thanksgiving for

the intellectual icon were politicians, diplomats, maintenance workers, students, professors, and dancers.

Those in mourning reflected the people Nettleford's life touched, and are perhaps best encapsulated in a phrase used by Professor Edward Baugh – "every puss, dog and fowl".

The select few who spoke during the funeral recalled Nettleford's bountiful contribution to the Jamaican society a lifetime of work which they said bore

the fruits of educational institutes, a dance company, academic treasures and an unmistakable Caribbean identity.

"Since the advent of Jamaican and Caribbean independence, few individuals have left as significant a stamp on the annals of Jamaican and Caribbean life as the Honourable Rex Nettleford," declared Lloyd Goodleigh, president of the Jamaica Confederation

PLEASE SEE **DANCE**, A2

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of Trade Unions, who delivered the first tribute.

Prime Minister Bruce Golding called Nettleford's death an immense loss, but said the institutions he created would carry on his work.

Golding said Nettleford in his lifetime assisted in certifying the Caribbean identity, helping to correct along the way many misconceptions planted in the psyche of the masses.

"There was Rex Nettleford, that superb mind, that restless intellect that felt himself called to validate our identity; for many of us had doubts about that identity," Golding said. "Too many of us looked in the mirror and didn't like what we saw and tried every conceivable means of changing it. Rex Nettleford helped to clean that mirror."

Opposition Leader Portia Simpson Miller told the gathering that her memory of Nettleford was a collage of "animated snapshots". Simpson Miller's renaissance man-like description of Nettleford did not fit him in a box. Instead, to her, he was a human being, trade unionist, dancer and a wise man.

"This is your graduation, but not your final lecture, for your institutions will live on and your writings will be read for generations," she said in her tribute. "Take your bow, cultural icon. This is your final curtain call but not your final performance."

Marlon Simms, dance captain of the National Dance Theatre Company, painted Nettleford as a caring "father and brother" despite the high positions he held. Simms recounted the personal handwritten letters of appreciation he and his dance colleagues received at the end of each season.

Nettleford's appreciation for them was returned in spades during the service, after which the urn containing his ashes was taken through a guard of honour to the university registrar's office for safekeeping. A private ceremony will be held on Thursday in the University Chapel gardens.

Nettleford died in a Washington, DC, hospital on February 2, hours before his 77th birthday and days after he suffered a heart attack while on a visit to the United States.

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‘Much that can never die’

BW-Rex Nettleford
Laura Redpath

Senior Staff Reporter

FUNERALS AND memorials, recognising lives that were lived, usually leave marks of sadness, whether tracks of running mascara or creases where frowns were.

However, the thanksgiving service honouring Professor Rex Nettleford's life had persons humming the tunes of hymns that were sung with tender expressions on their faces.

Doris Davies worked with 'Prof' for more than 25 years at the Trade Union Education Institute. She wore a colourful suit, standing out against the mass of black, with varying shades of purple. Davies said Nettleford gave her the fabric for her outfit, as well as a cream and brown necklace.

"That is why I wear it today," she said with a firm grip on tissue. "I couldn't miss this for anything."

Three tents were erected on the chapel lawn to accommodate approximately 1,000 people. When it was time for the recession, there were close to 2,000 people there. Many lined up and watched as the urn containing Nettleford's ashes was taken by.

Opposition Leader Portia Simpson Miller said the professor was an example to all boys and girls, reminding them that their dreams were achievable.

Mourners who were drying their tears muttered, "mhm" and a woman clutched her chest, her eyes squeezed shut.

"There is much about the life of the Honourable Rex Nettleford that can never die," Prime Minister Bruce Golding said in his tribute. "The bridges he has built have enabled our minds to travel beyond their self-imposed boundaries."

Constable Vernal Young of the Island Special Constabulary Force stood outside the main doors in his crisp uniform, watching and waiting for the recession.

"[Nettleford] inspired me," the constable said in a low voice. "This funeral has shown a great amount of principle and discipline."

RAIN THREATENED

Clouds repeatedly threatened to burst open but nothing more than a few drops fell. Eventually, the sun came out, shining brightly. The notes of hymns echoed from the chapel walls and many stood outside, silent and listening.

"Tonight the music of hallelujahs will lift with the gentle breeze blowing across the cane piece as it rises to Bunkers Hill, to Accompong, to Blue Mountain Peak, and spreads over the



PHOTOS BY RICARDO MAKYN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Mourners gather outside the University Chapel after the official funeral.



Sergeant Basil Walters of the Jamaica Constabulary Force's Mobile Reserve leads a procession taking Nettleford's ashes through a guard of honour to the office of the University Registrar for safekeeping after the thanksgiving service.

Caribbean Sea," Edward Baugh, professor emeritus, said in his eulogy.

"And as the spirits dance on the waves, we will hear under the singing, the drums," he continued, "The drums – the heartbeat of the people. Good night, sweet prince, and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest."

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Right: Sergeant Basil Walters of the Jamaica Constabulary Force's Mobile Reserve leads the bearer party during the recession of the urn containing the remains of Professor Rex Nettleford. Looking on in foreground is Professor Barry Chevannes.



Former government minister Dudley Thompson was also in attendance at the thanksgiving service.