Music was in his blood, and jazz was in his heart. For over sixty years, George Edward Heid was an integral part of Pittsburgh’s jazz scene — as a performer, audio engineer, teacher, and mentor.

While growing up in his father’s recording studio, George Heid Productions—where many Pittsburgh jazz masters, including Billy Strayhorn, Erroll Garner and George Benson made their first recordings—he began playing piano. Switching to drums in high school, he went on to play with many of Pittsburgh's jazz greats, including his brother Bill Heid, David Budway, Dwayne Dolphin, Gene Ludwig, Lou Stellute, Sonny Barbato, Dr. Mike Taylor, and Jimmy Ponder.

In the late 1970s, George expanded his recording and tape duplication business to offer pro audio installation and sales. Over the next twenty years, he specified and installed audio systems for numerous local radio stations and colleges as well as Heinz Hall, the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, the Benedum Center, Van Gelder Studios, Audiomation Studios, and Unitel Mobile Video.

But he was proudest of the installations he did at Pittsburgh jazz venues, including Graffiti, Dizzy’s Club Cafe, The Balcony, and Dowe's on 9th. In 1985, George was contacted by The Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild to specify and install a system for recording the Guild’s music events. During his tenure as chief recording engineer, he recorded over 100 concerts, including dates by Wynton Marsalis, McCoy Tyner, Stanley Turrentine, Ray Brown, Betty Carter, Max Roach, Art Blakey, New York Voices, Joe Negri, and Roger Humphries, Sr., among many others.
George took great pride in his relationship with world-renowned recording engineer Rudy Van Gelder and modeled his own recording style after the many techniques he learned from Rudy. Over the years, George engineered numerous albums, many of which were released on his own label, Corona Records. Just a few of the artists who graced Corona releases included Roger Humphries, Dwayne Dolphin, Sean Jones, Bill Heid, George Heid III, Benny Benack III, Brett Williams, Warren Wolf, Victor Provost, Peter Bernstein, Joe “Sonny” Barbato, David and Maureen Budway, The Balcony Big Band, Billy Price, Modern Times, Max Leake and Sandy Staley.

George also worked to bring jazz to a wider and younger audience. This support began with his son, George Heid III, who began playing drums and piano at age 3 in his father’s Aspinwall recording studio and home. One of George’s proudest moments as a mentor and a father came in 2012, when he saw George III win awards at the Monterey Next Generation Jazz Festival and then perform at the Monterey Jazz Festival later that year.

In 2012, George helped create Lighthouse Arts, Inc., a non-profit organization devoted to “improve the quality of jazz education by making accessible the opportunities for students and the community.” George served as co-president alongside Dr. Harry Clark, former principal and cofounder of the Pittsburgh High School for the Creative and Performing Arts (which son George attended).

In 2018, Lighthouse Arts released an album that celebrated Pittsburgh’s rich jazz culture and spoke directly to George’s belief that jazz should be a continuum that spans generations and evolves with time. Featuring 22 musicians across 12 tracks, *The Past is the Present: The Continuing Jazz Legacy of Pittsburgh* featured three generations of musicians: the young lions (including George Heid III, Benny Benack III, Warren Wolf, and Brett Williams); the torchbearers (including James Moore, Jeff Bush, Roby Edwards, Paul Thompson, and Thomas Wendt); and the ascended masters (including David Budway, Sean Jones, Lou Stellute, Maureen Budway, Dwayne Dolphin, and Roger Humphries, Sr.). George engineered the album at his studio. This past January, Lighthouse Arts produced a free *The Past is the Present* concert at City of Asylum.
In 2019, Lighthouse Arts hosted seven house concerts at George’s studio in Aspinwall, bringing artists in all three categories to the stage. These intimate events were free to the public; video recordings are available at the Lighthouse Arts website and on YouTube.

George’s Facebook page sums up his love of jazz and the artists who create it: “I have been blessed by the music of gifted artists and privileged to have participated with so many.”

Every one of those artists were equally blessed and privileged to be part of George’s musical journey.

A Celebration of Life ceremony will be held on Monday, July 10, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild, 1815 Metropolitan Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15233 (North Side). Formal program begins at 6:00 p.m. All are welcome. Reservations are recommended. Please RSVP to Robin Thompson at rthompson@manchesterbidwell.org or by calling 412-322-0800. Reception to follow.