

OBITUARY: BILL MOTZING 1937-2014

by Bill Motzing (Jr)

[This obituary appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald on March 25, 2014]

Bill Motzing wrote music for more than 30 films, including famous Australian ones such as *Newsfront* (1978), *Silver City* (1984) and *Young Einstein* (1988). He also wrote for television series such as *True Believers* (1988), *Mother and Son* and *Prisoner*, as well as recording more than 30 albums.

Despite his public work, Motzing was no respecter of famous names. He conducted his son's school orchestra and musicals as well as arranging works for, among others, INXS, John Williams, international symphony orchestras and Sherbet. He would always accept a project he thought was worthwhile, regardless of the money or prestige.



Man of many notes: Bill Motzing in the recording studio... PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

William Edward Motzing was born on August 19, 1937, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the son of William Motzing snr, a machinist in a steel mill, and his wife, Mary (nee Rairigh), who worked in accounts for a clothing retailer. He went to the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, where he took a bachelor's degree in 1958, then a master's degree from the Manhattan School of Music in New York in 1960.

Also in 1960, he became the youngest member of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, and married Bette Anne Loder. After a couple of years he began performing with jazz groups and worked with the Radio City Music Hall orchestra in New York from 1964 to 1971.



Motzing married Bette Anne Loder in 1960... PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

As well, from 1968 to 1971, Motzing went around the world as sound designer for the band Blood, Sweat & Tears. After visiting Australia with the group, he moved to Sydney in 1972 to become a lecturer in the jazz program at the NSW State Conservatorium of Music (now Sydney Conservatorium of Music) and later at the Australian Film Television and Radio School.

In the 1970s and '80s Motzing arranged and conducted strings and horns on many local hits, including Peter Allen's *I Still Call Australia Home* (added to the National Film and Sound Archive's Sounds of Australia registry in 2013) and Billy Field's *Bad Habits*, the title track of the best-selling album in Australia in 1981. Motzing took a gold award at the 12th Tokyo Music Festival for *Bad Habits*.



*The singer Billy Field: Motzing took a gold award at the 12th Tokyo Music Festival for Field's album *Bad Habits*... PHOTO COURTESY AUSTRALIAN JAZZ REAL BOOK*

Sherbet's *Howzat*, arranged by Motzing, as well as being a hit locally, reached the Top 5 of the UK charts and the US Billboard Hot 100 chart. In 2008 he also arranged and conducted *Don't Wait Until Tomorrow* for Leo Sayer.

Sayer said of Motzing: "I spent so many happy hours in the company of this great man, and great musician, often witnessing the incredibly inspiring effect he had on young musicians, always displaying an easy grace and wisdom. He really cared about his students, followed up on their progress, kept a big door open for all at his house, and they loved him back."



Leo Sayer: he often witnessed "the incredibly inspiring effect Bill had on young musicians, always displaying an easy grace and wisdom"... PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

In Motzing's film work, his score for *Young Einstein* won the Australian Film Institute (AFI) Award for best original music score and the APRA Music Award. In all, Motzing was nominated for five AFI awards.



Bill Motzing (left) pictured in 1980 in Sydney with (L-R), his wife Bette, daughter Carrie, and son Bill... PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

He also conducted orchestras, including the Australian Chamber, the Australian Opera and Ballet and the Sydney Symphony orchestras. In Europe, he conducted the BBC Radio Orchestra, the Irish Radio/Television Concert Orchestra, the Czech Philharmonic, the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra of the Hungarian State Opera and the Babelsberg film studio orchestra in Berlin.

There was some confusion when his son, also Bill, who sounded just like him on the telephone, also went into music. The confusion reached a peak when the younger Bill began playing drums and one day the older Bill turned up to a gig with his trombone when the band was expecting a drummer.



Motzing (right) in hospital in New York (Little Neck Ward) shortly before his death in 2014... PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

In 2008, Motzing was told he had Parkinson's disease, but he continued to teach at the conservatorium until he retired in 2011. In 2013, he was diagnosed with Shy-Drager Syndrome, a rare, incurable, aggressive disease that stops the body's major organs. He returned to New York to live with his son and family.

Bill Motzing is survived by his children Bill and Carrie, daughter-in-law Martha and five grandchildren. Bette Anne died in 2010.