



Cheryl Ralston Van Metre

November 23, 1940 - January 9, 2026

Edisto Beach, SC

Cheryl Van Metre, founder of Van Metre School of Dance and The Appalachian Ballet Company died peacefully Friday, January 9, 2026 at her home in Edisto Beach, SC.

Born in Maryville, TN, she was the daughter of Robert Ralston and Margaret Goddard Ralston. Her first local television appearance was on The Mary Star Show where she (who as a 20 some year old who had never cooked) demonstrated preparing a broccoli casserole. On camera she with all her theatrical presence mixed pre-minced broccoli, cheese, a can of fried onions, and a can of mushroom soup so while it baked, she could speak live on TV with local celebrity Mary Star about her newly opened ballet school and her vision of ballet for Appalachia. Her family still includes this casserole at all their gatherings.

From her youth she had a vision of bringing visual arts and classic ballet to East Tennessee. She studied the art of performance and instruction of dance with The Chicago Ballet, The National Ballet of Mexico, England's Royal Ballet Company, and The Kirov Ballet in USSR now St Petersburg Russia. Her dance company and The Van Metre School of Dance performs on both national and international stages. Most notable, her performing company under the direction of Amy Vaughn, who was appointed Artistic Director of Appalachian Ballet Company in 1997, has continued to present the Nutcracker Ballet at the Knoxville Civic Auditorium for six decades. Cheryl served terms as both vice president and president of the ballet teachers accrediting board, The SouthEastern Association of Schools of Dance.

Cheryl is survived by her husband of 69 years, Col. Mitchell R. Van Metre, II, son, Rev. Dr. Mitchell Van Metre, III, his wife of 47 years, Rebecca Finger Van Metre, a grandson, Stephen Van Metre and his wife Maddy and two great-grandsons, Brandon and Michael Van Metre who all currently live in South Carolina.

A graveside service will be held 11:00 a.m., Wednesday, January 14, 2026 at The Presbyterian Church of Edisto Island Cemetery with Father Joseph Smith officiating. The family will receive friends following the graveside service at the cemetery. A celebration of life service will follow at 12:30 p.m., at Saint Francis Episcopal Church with Father Joseph Smith officiating.

Memorials may be made, "In memory of Cheryl Van Metre", Founding Director of The Appalachian Ballet Company, 215 West Broadway Ave., Maryville, TN 37801 or appalachianballet.org.

Mickey and the Van Metre family may be reached at PO Box 101 Saluda SC 29138.

Please share your memories and condolences online at www.rameyfuneralhome.com.

Cemetery Details

Presbyterian Church on Edisto Island Cemetery

2164 SC-174
Edisto Island, SC 29438

Previous Events

Graveside Service

JAN 14. 11:00 AM (ET)

Presbyterian Church on Edisto Island Cemetery
2164 SC-174
Edisto Island, SC 29438

Celebration of Life

JAN 14. 12:30 PM (ET)

Saint Francis Episcopal Church on Edisto Island
1650 SC-174
Edisto Island, SC 29438

visitation following graveside service

JAN 14 (ET)

Presbyterian Church on Edisto Island Cemetery
2164 SC-174
Edisto Island, SC 29438

Tribute Wall

KK

“ Since meeting Cheryl in the pool at swimmin women water aerobics in 2018, Cheryl has been my Edisto mentor. She cast me in plays, trusted me with her beloved Arts in the Park concert series & taught me to appreciate the importance of community. I was honored to have helped her navigate her battle with cancer. She fought with dignity and grace, and at the end, with courage that was monumental.

I once decided I would direct a play. On day one, I told Cheryl I could handle the task alone. On day 2, I called pleading with her to rescue me! She did so with joy and a small amount of “I’ve created a monster”!

Cheryl mattered to me and loved her dearly.

Kathy Kuntz - January 16 at 12:22 PM

CD

“ One of the words Cheryl used regularly but sparingly when directing a play was the word, “potential.” At some point in every production, bringing smiles and reassurance to the actors, Cheryl would roundly announce, “I think it’s got potential.” While holding the highest standards for the art, Cheryl was able to work brilliantly at the grassroots level. She was a master at spotting potential - bringing actors to the stage, sometimes with little or no theatrical experience, and helping them tap their own latent abilities. And such fun it was to work with and learn from her. Had it not been for Cheryl, I would never have acted in *On Golden Pond*, playing alongside my husband Johnny in the roles of Ethel and Norman, nor would I ever have found myself directing a play on my own holding up Cheryl as the model to guide me (including bringing dark chocolate to rehearsals).

Cheryl cared about all of us -the actors, the crew, and not least, her neighbors and strangers in the audience. Needless to say, I and so many others involved in community theater on Edisto cared deepy for Cheryl and will do our best to honor her legacy.

Cate Douglass - January 15 at 12:40 PM

JD

“ Cheryl Shanghaied me into being in a play. That’s how I joked about it but, truthfully, it enriched my life immeasurably. I had sworn to never again stand before an audience to recite something from memory after I blanked during a memorized speech as a teenager and fled the podium in embarrassment. Cheryl promised me a brief on-stage appearance where I would have only one line consisting of one word before dying of a stab wound. I agreed and rehearsed, but before opening night, she presented me with a second role. I had to appear as a second character and say a couple of sentences before falling dead of poisoning. I agreed, had great fun, appeared in several other plays she directed, and met many wonderful interesting friends. I am grateful!

Johnny Douglass - January 15 at 11:46 AM

CM

“ Cheryl was not only key to expanding the Arts at Edisto Beach and Island she was instrumental in creating spaces at the beach to enjoy them. As some of the fist people we met on moving here she and Mickey have been active in making Edisto the great place it is. Always involved and always active. She will be missed.

Crawford Moore, Mayor - January 13 at 10:21 PM

DP

“ The Van Metre's were active in promoting cultural events at Edisto.

Debbie Padget - January 12 at 06:29 PM

MR

“ As a seven or eight year old little girl, I was completely under the spell of my beautiful ballet teacher. She was still teaching in her original studio, in the basement of her in-laws' home in Maryville. She was magical! And her achievements were superhuman. Rest in peace, sweet Cheryl. Or, to us little girls in those days, Mrs. Van Metre. God bless.

Mary Lynn (Curtis) Roy - January 12 at 11:46 AM

KH

“ Although I don't think that I ever met her in person, Cheryl Van Metre is a legend in the Maryville /Knoxville art community. I have had the pleasure of seeing the Appalachian Ballet Company's production of The Nutcracker several times over my lifetime, usually at the Clayton Center for the Performing Arts on the Maryville College campus as I am a lifelong resident of Maryville. What a wonderful gift to the community and especially the school children who are able to attend the matinee shows 🙏 Blessings to her family and friends and all who will miss this special Lady

Kay Hensley - January 11 at 07:42 PM

KF

“ Cheryl was such a gift to Edisto. She brought such joy to the community, especially with the Edisto Art Guild. She was a superb director of community theater here. She cast me in my first play here in 2009 "Opal's Husband"-- what fun and my favorite role was in "Mama Won't "Fly" in 2019. That was the last play she directed but she continued to inspire and guide as Creative Consultant for later plays. She was a dear and loving person and I loved her. My love to her grieving family.
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Kathlyn Fritz - January 10 at 02:28 PM