

Malcolm Forsyth (1936 - 2011)



Calgary, AB (July 5, 2011) - Stellar Canadian composer Malcolm Forsyth passed away today at the age of 74. Widely known for the high quality of his original works for orchestra and his pieces for brass ensemble, Dr. Forsyth recently had the world premiere of his large-scale orchestra-choral work *Ballad for Canada* performed by the National Arts Centre Orchestra (Pinchas Zukerman, conductor), which includes his daughter, Amanda Forsyth, principal cellist in the ensemble; the work was co-commissioned by NACO and the Edmonton Symphony orchestra who will also perform the work November 11-12, 2011 at the Winspear Centre with the Richard Eaton Singers.

Malcom Forsyth is one of only three Canadian composers to have won the JUNO Award for Classical Composition of the Year three different times (the other two are Alexina Louie and R. Murray Schafer). His pieces that won the JUNO Award are: *Atayoskewin* (1987 award), *Sketches from Natal* (1995 award), *Electra Rising* (1998 award). The Canadian Music Council named him Composer of the Year in 1988. He was installed as a Member of the Order of Canada in 2003 and received the Queen's Jubilee Medal in the same year.

Born in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, December 8, 1936, Forsyth studied trombone, conducting and composition at the University of Cape Town and received a Bachelor of Music in 1963. He played trombone with the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra while studying and receiving his Master of Music in 1966 and Doctorate of Music in 1969. In 1968, he emigrated to Canada and joined the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra with which he played bass trombone for eleven years. Beginning in the same year, he taught trombone, theory and composition, and conducted the orchestra at the University of Alberta, and in 1996 was appointed Composer-in-Residence there. He retired in 2002. Diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in October of 2010, Malcolm Forsyth died at 2:30 a.m. Tuesday, July 5, 2011 at Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton. His memorial service will be held after July 18.

The Canadian Music Centre's catalogue cites 211 entries of Forsyth's works that are either scores or recordings of his compositions. Truly a professional composer, his oeuvre contains works for the whole spectrum of textures and instruments (and at varying levels of difficulty from student works to pieces for professional aggregations) including: orchestra; concerti for accordion, trumpet, piano and cello and orchestra;

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brass ensembles; solo works and duo sonatas for saxophone, clarinet, horn, and cello; concert band and brass band; music theatre, chamber music combinations large and small; chorus and electronic tape; recorder; and woodwind quintet, among others. He was commissioned by Maureen Forrester, Judith Forst, Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, National Arts Centre Orchestra, the CBC, Canada Council, and the Canadian Brass, among others.

CMC Prairie Regional Director John Reid knew Dr. Forsyth for more than 23 years, got together with him as often as possible, and has many happy memories. "I fondly recall Malcolm's *Meet the Composer* session in Calgary before the performance of his Trumpet Concerto by the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra in which he described this massive 20+ minute work arising out of a simple five-note motif and proceeded to explain to us just how that worked. We were amazed!" Further, "One of the happiest nights of my life was attending cellist Yo Yo Ma's performance alongside the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra with Malcolm as my guest, and listening to his fascinating ongoing commentaries about the orchestra, its members and their histories, observations on the Saint Saens concerto performance, and the Prokofiev, Romeo and Juliet score (also on the program), which he too had conducted. He possessed a wealth of knowledge on the orchestral art form, and was eager to share it. He was a great man who had a lot to give."

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