

## BILL ANDREW'S AWARD WINNERS

### South Fraser Branch RMTA Celebrates Canada Music Week With Dr. David Duke

Submitted by Brenda Sleightholme  
South Fraser Branch RMTA

The South Fraser Branch RMTA wished to celebrate Canada Music Week in a unique and meaningful way. For the past two years, we have held a successful student writing competition featuring the winning students in a recital. Each entry received a critique on their composition. We noticed that many branches across Canada commissioned composers to write compositions for their Branch. The honour and prestige of presenting a well known Canadian composer's works to the public and the exposure to students as to what Canada Music Week meant to them was our goal. We wanted our students to have an opportunity to learn these piano works by a local composer and have his perspective on their interpretation of them. Perhaps students might be encouraged to perform these commissioned pieces at our annual Showcase at Guildford Mall in Surrey BC to be held later this year or our monthly Branch recitals.

We also wanted our chosen composer to be available for a masterclass to listen to the students perform the compositions. Through public publicity and the involvement of families and friends of the participants, we hoped to make this event a recognition of Canada Music Week throughout our South Fraser communities.

Our first task was to find a Canadian composer suitable for our objectives. The composer had to have experience composing children's piano music at a Grade 2 to 6 level and live in our area. With some help from one of our distinguished alumni members, Janice McCubbin (herself a notable teacher of compositions which have won many CMW competitions over the years), we reviewed the Canadian Music Centre's list of BC composers. The Centre's web site includes a list by city and biographies of their associate composers. We also reviewed the rules of commissioning pieces on the Canadian League of Composers web site.

After short-listing a number of suitable composers, we chose Dr. David Duke, who is now the Dean of Language, Literature and Performing Arts at Douglas College in New Westminster. Dr. Duke has written many pieces for learners, including the Waterloo piano publication, *Magical Years of the Chinese*. Frederick Harris has published his works in the *Encore Series* for violin and piano, and many of his works are

listed in the syllabi of the Royal Conservatory, Conservatory Canada, the Canadian Conservatory, and Contemporary Showcase 2005. He has written and broadcast extensively about Canadian music and composers – most recently a biography of Jean Coulthard with co-author William Bruneau. He was head of the School of Music at Vancouver Community College until early 2004.

When I met Dr. Duke in May of this year and pitched our proposal to him, he accepted without hesitation and promised to have the compositions ready for September 1st. He said he would use the Sibelius program to write his compositions and send them to us in PDF form so our members could download them from our website. Dr. Duke followed through with a Grade 3 piano composition entitled *What?* and a Grade 6 piano composition entitled *Aubade*. They are beautiful pieces which our Branch is very proud to have had commissioned.

At our first meeting in September, the two commissioned compositions were unveiled to the membership. The membership was notified before the meeting that they would have a head start if they came to the meeting and picked up the hard copy there before the posting on our web site. The Canada Music Week poster, available through CFMTA, with our own header advertising the event, was circulated through our membership by area (we have 17 areas under the South Fraser RMT). A teacher in each area posted the posters in their community.

Our string teacher members also wished to be included in the event and noted that there were David Duke compositions written for strings. We decided to expand our celebration to include any David Duke composition written for any grade level and for any instrument. We circulated a list of his compositions from a number of syllabi.

Deadline for entries was November 1st. Many teachers came forward to offer their assistance as greeters, secretaries, helping with publicity, scheduling, etc.

**continued on next page**

### South Fraser Branch RMTA Celebrates Canada Music Week With Dr. David Duke continued

We had a full day on November 28th for the composer to listen to the performances and conduct masterclasses. Our venue, Surrey's Newton Fellowship Church, was filled with an appreciative audience of teachers, students, friends and the community-at-large in the South Fraser area.

What? is a challenging piece with two different possible interpretations – an angry aggressive What?! or a sad, oh dear, question mark. Dr. Duke suggested this piece lends itself to division and ensemble playing as it is an invention. It has teaching points such as accustoming students to hear “disagreeable” sounds and modern counterpoint lines that rub together and cause friction.

Aubade has an evocative sound; the definition of “aubade” is music that is to be played in the morning for a specific person or persons as opposed to the “serenade” which is intended for evening. Dr. Duke suggested finding the right tempo isn't always a matter of turning on the metronome. This “teaching piece” features hand crossing. The sun rising is the climax of the piece and he encouraged the students to enjoy the opportunity to play *ff* on a grand piano.

Other selections performed for Dr. Duke included the Preliminary level Shalom, Grade 2 The Cathedral in the Snow, She's Like the Swallow arrangement, Grade 6 Seagulls, Night Song for Grade 10 viola, and Violin Sonatina for Grade 9 violin.



Dr. David Duke

Dr. Duke suggested that his The Cathedral in the Snow was a good formula to use for students composing their own compositions.

Although Dr. Duke heard many What?'s and Aubade's over the course of the day, he said there was no one right way to play the pieces. It is not true that the composer knows best. The performer brings the “X” factor to the table. As a composer, Dr. Duke reserved the right to make changes which he did in some cases. He emphasized that it was important for composers to write for people who are learning their instrument. He gave many tips during the day to young composers on how to get started and expand their ideas.

It was an honour for our Branch to have such a distinguished composer spend the day listening and working with our students. I know the students really appreciated Dr. Duke's comments and will be inspired to continue practicing their pieces. Many of our students had never been in a masterclass setting before and I know they really enjoyed this type of interaction with an adjudicator as opposed to the festival/competition setting.

As Dr. Duke said, “I hope this becomes an annual event for the group; there are so many good composers writing in our area that it's too good an idea to just do once.” We totally agree!

**aubade**  
commissioned by the South Fraser Branch Registered Music Teachers

david gordon duke

very free, evocative

*pp*

with pedal, *ad lib.*

7 lazily, molto andante  $\text{♩} = 66$  or slower

*pp*

*dolce, cantabile*

*sempre sotto voce* *simile*

## BILL ANDREW'S AWARD WINNERS

### Halifax Branch RMTA Celebrates Canada Music Week with Peter Allen

submitted by Daryl Chaddock

St. Cecilia Day , November 22, 2009, found the members of the Halifax Branch of the Nova Scotia Registered Music Teachers` Association gathered in the Elsie MacAloney Room in the Dalhousie Arts Centre along with students, parents and the interested public.

The evening began with Skippy Mardon, provincial co-ordinator of the Music Writing Competition, giving an overview of the competition and its value in the community among aspiring, young composers. She named several students who won awards in the past and have gone on to become composers in their own right.

We heard two compositions by current winners and a certificate was presented. Savannah Cox, student of Michael King, came third in Class B of the Music Writing Competition with her piece Vertigo which we heard her perform. Brandon O`Leary , student of Josephine Skinner, placed first for Class C with Requiem in g minor . A CD of this composition was played for us.

Peter Allen, a Halifax based composer, teacher, concert pianist and conductor , was introduced. He is a member

of the Halifax Chapter of the NSRMTA and is currently a professor of piano at Dalhousie University . Twelve students of Halifax Chapter members, performed Allen`s piano compositions. Peter then commented on the performances and told us the history of the pieces. He was very encouraging and said he enjoyed hearing these works played so well.

Peter then performed a recent composition "Etude". He also played a CD of "The Hurricane Juan Piano Concerto" which was commissioned by the CBC and performed for the first time in Halifax in 2008, by Symphony Nova Scotia with Peter as soloist. Copies of the complete orchestral score were passed out to students and teachers so they could follow as he played excerpts from three movements of the work . A question period then followed.

The evening concluded with pictures being taken of Peter Allen and the students who performed.

We, the audience, in Halifax , were treated to a wonderful evening, with a Canadian composer, for Canada Music Week® .

Participating teachers from the Nova Scotia Registered Music Teachers Association, Halifax Chapter: Susan Diepeveen, Simon Docking ,Louise Eastwood, Meghan Henley, Skippy Mardon, Diana Torbert, Carol von Syberg and Lorna Wanzel.



Performers at the Halifax Canada Music Week® Celebrations with special guest Composer Peter Allen