

Students of the School of Music Perform

HARRY SOMERS AND CONTEMPORARIES

Programme Insights given in person by Harry Somers

I

Three Sonnets (1946)

Harry Somers
(1925-)

- I. *Prelude*
- II. *Lullaby to a Dead Child*
- III. *Primeval*

Pamela Knight, piano

Strangeness of Heart (1942)

Harry Somers

Marlene Stanley, piano

Sonata #2 (1986)

Jean Coulthard
(1908-)

- I. *Allegro ma non troppo: con forza, drammatico*
- II. *Threnody*
- III. *Allegro vigoroso*

Glenn Colton, piano

II

Dialogues for Trombone and Percussion

Thomas Schudel
(1937-)

Mairi Chadwick, trombone
Rob Lee, percussion

INTERMISSION

III

- Conversation Piece (1955) Harry Somers
Susanne O'Keefe, voice (text - Fram)
- Evocations (1966) Harry Somers
Jennifer Deering, voice (text - Somers)
- Three Songs (1946) Harry Somers
Kimberley Wiseman, voice (text - Whitman)

IV

- Wonder Song Harry Somers
- Hymn from Serinette, *Scene 12* (1989) Text by David Wilson
(1778-1866)

MUN CHAMBER CHOIR
Douglas Dunsmore, conductor
Michelle Sullivan, accompanist

HARRY SOMERS Born in Toronto in 1925, Somers only really began to study music in his early teens and, as if to make up for lost time, immediately engaged in intensive study. At 16 he entered the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto where he studied piano with Reginald Godden (1941-43) and Weldon Kilburn (1946-49) and composition with John Weinzweig (1942-43; 1946-49), receiving scholarships in 1947 and 1949. In the latter year he was awarded a composition with Darius Milhaud in Paris (1949-50). At that time Somers' music was subject to the dual influence of serial music (championed at that time by Weinzweig) and a more personal, past-conscious view of music and the musical repertoire. He once remarked that, for him, "...composition evolves from a body of tradition and series of conventions, by they old or new. Now in the 1950s I was out of touch with developments that were happening in composition; I had to learn my own way. And my own way was to write works that employed Baroque techniques fused with serialism and the more highly tensioned elements of 20th-century music I was familiar with at that time.

Harry Somers is a founding member of the Canadian League of Composers and in 1971 was named a Companion of the Order of Canada. He has received honorary doctorates from the University of Ottawa (1975); the University of Toronto (1976) and York University (1977). Since the late 1950s he has composed almost exclusively on commissions from such organizations and individuals as the National Ballet of Canada (*The Fisherman and His Soul*, 1956; *Ballad*, 1958; *The House of Atreus*, 1963), the Koussevitzky Music Foundation (*Lyric*, 1960), the Pittsburgh Wind Symphony (*Symphony for Woodwinds, Brass and Percussion*, 1961); the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (*Movement for Orchestra*, 1952; *Twelve Miniatures*, 1964; *Evocations*, 1966; *Five Songs from the Newfoundland Outports*, 1968; *Kyrie*, 1972; *Three Songs of New France*, 1976), the Toronto Symphony (*Stereophony*, 1963; *Elegy-Transformation-Jubilation*, 1981), the Saskatoon Symphony (*The Picasso Suite*, 1964), Yehudi Menuhin (*Music for Solo Violin*, 1974), the Guelph (Ontario) Spring Festival (*Three Limericks*, 1980), the Banff Centre School of Fine Arts (*Movement for String Quartet*, 1983) and the S.C. Eckhardt-Gramatté National Competition for the Performance of Canadian Music (*Shaman's Song*, 1983). Since the early 1970s he has composed extensively for such CBC Television productions as the *Images of Canada* series (1973-74) and *The Garden and the Cage* (1978), a documentary on Quebec authors Marie-Claire Blais and Gabrielle Roy. In 1983 he scored incidental music for a Stratford (Ontario) Festival production of *Macbeth*, directed by Des McAnuff.