

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier University



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Maureen Forrester lends name to acclaimed recital hall at Laurier

Waterloo, Ont. (Aug. 24) — Baritone Theodore Baerg competed with basketball and bleachers for rehearsal space when he studied music at Wilfrid Laurier University in the 1970s. As a student in the 1980s, concert pianist and trumpet soloist Guy Few wore fingerless gloves to ward off the auditorium's cold when he warmed up for recitals.

On Sept. 25, the two will be among four distinguished alumni returning to perform for a concert celebrating the dedication of Laurier's highly acclaimed recital hall in honor of Maureen Forrester. Also featured will be Ms. Forrester, soprano Kathleen Brett, bass-baritone Daniel Lichti, and the Penderecki String Quartet.

The hall is being named the Maureen Forrester Recital Hall in recognition of her contributions to the arts in Canada and to the musical world, and for her work on behalf of Laurier. Chancellor from 1986 to 1990, Ms. Forrester has been a longtime friend to the university and part of the evolution of one of Canada's premier music faculties.

Proceeds from the concert will be used to establish the Maureen Forrester Music Scholarship Fund for outstanding music students.

The 327-seat hall, located in the John Aird Centre, is the primary showcase for concerts and recitals by music students and faculty. It has become a favorite venue for the Canadian Chamber Ensemble, the Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Orchestra, Viva Voci, NUMUS, and others.

Since opening in 1988, the hall has been praised by performers, music critics, concert-goers, and producers for the excellence of its acoustics. One reviewer called the hall a "marvel" that "seemed to nurture sounds from each end of the scale."

David Jager, creator and executive producer of CBC Stereo's *Two New Hours*, has recorded numerous concerts in the hall. "The acoustics are very warm. We have been able to create a sound that has fantastic immediacy — it catches the ear."

Few, who has performed in the hall several times and recorded a demo tape there last spring, appreciates the intimacy of the hall. "It has a very warm feeling that fosters a connection between the artist and the audience."

(More)

Baerg — whose career has put him on concert stages throughout Canada, the United States, and Europe — says the recital hall is second to none in Canada and equal to any in which he has performed. "That puts the students on the same footing as anyone else.

"Having the proper facility makes a tremendous difference to a developing performer," says Baerg, who was a student representative on the university's building committee when the needs of the fledgling music faculty were being discussed. "Students need to practise and perform in the kind of venue they will encounter later."

Anne Hall, dean of the faculty of music, says the hall is integral to the faculty's commitment to prepare students to perform as professionals. "Students have a heightened appreciation for their role as a performer when they step onto that stage."

Those in the performance program are required to participate in at least one recital a term and, during their fourth year, to present a full-length solo recital. The hall is also used frequently for masterclasses.

Designed by Marshall Long Acoustics of Los Angeles, the convex curves of the walls and ceiling, and the bevelled wood panels on the stage promote a rich blending of sounds by eliminating 90-degree angles.

Other features of the John Aird Centre include: two rehearsal halls, 40 practice rooms, electronic music and organ studios, eight classrooms, and the Robert Langen Gallery. In addition to the music faculty, the building also houses the faculty of social work and the departments of French, modern languages and literature, and mathematics.

Until the Athletic Complex opened in 1973, the Theatre Auditorium was used for sports, music events, and drama productions. Improvements made to the Theatre Auditorium when the John Aird Centre was built in the late 1980s include an enlarged orchestra pit, a new sound system, and new balcony seating.

Founded in 1975, the faculty of music at Laurier is now recognized as offering one of the finest undergraduate programs for music in Canada. The outstanding performance faculty and the music therapy program — the first in an English language university in Canada — attract students from across Canada. There are currently more than 300 students.