

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier
University



Laurier names music professor top researcher of the year

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WATERLOO – Wilfrid Laurier University has broken new ground in appointing a professor from the Faculty of Music as the 1998-99 Research Professor of the Year – an award that relieves him of teaching and administrative duties so that he can concentrate on a major research effort.

"In naming Glenn Buhr as University Research Professor, Laurier is honoring one of Canada's leading composers," says Rowland Smith, Vice-President: Academic. "His works have been performed throughout Canada, as well as in the United States and Europe."

"To many," says Smith, "the idea of a music composer being honored as a 'Research Professor' may seem surprising. Isn't a researcher someone who makes discoveries in a laboratory? On the contrary, at most universities, research is currently seen as a sustained contribution to the discipline in which an academic works; the furthering of our understanding of what a discipline entails or how we practice that discipline."

"By honoring Glenn Buhr, Laurier is implicitly recognizing the important role played by its Faculty of Music in the musical life of Canada."

Contacted at his second home of Winnipeg, Buhr said the appointment is "very exciting. It sets a precedent for creative arts."

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An associate professor and Laurier faculty member since 1984, the same year he won an award in the CBC Radio National Competition for Young Composers, Buhr received his BMus degree from the University of Manitoba, an MMus from the University of British Columbia and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Michigan.

A prolific composer, he has had more than 60 commissions, writing works for such major organizations as the Toronto and Montreal symphony orchestras. He was the Winnipeg Symphony's first composer-in-residence and later its Artist Laureate, and for five years headed the enormously successful Winnipeg New Music Festival.

The BBC Welsh Symphony, Edmonton Symphony, Vancouver Orchestra, the Saint Louis Symphony, the BBC Welsh Symphony and the National Arts Centre Orchestra, among others, have also performed his works. The Toronto Symphony, the Toronto Children's Chorus, the NEXUS percussion ensemble and the Hannaford Street Silverband premiered a recent work – *Cathedral Songs*.

The Research Professorship runs from July 1998 to June 1999, and in that year, Buhr plans to put together a large operatic piece, with words by librettist Margaret Sweatman, who is also a novelist, poet and Buhr's wife.

"This isn't research for the sake of research," he says. "I'm hoping to do some workshops in the spring of 1999 and put on a full performance in 2000-2001."

Buhr is currently finishing a triple concerto for the Verdehr Trio of Michigan State University, which is to be premiered in Prague in May 1999. He and Sweatman are also working on moving back to Waterloo (he has been commuting almost every weekend). The situation was made more difficult because the house they own on the Red River was heavily damaged in the flood of 1997.

Incidentally, Buhr is also a huge promoter of Laurier's Faculty of Music: "I think it's the greatest school in the universe," he told *Classical Music Magazine*.