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# ALUMNI CONCERT SERIES

*Co-presented by The Canadian Music Centre and the University of Victoria*

# Rudolf Komorous Celebration

A concert of distinguished School of Music alumni performing music by legendary Czech-Canadian composer, bassoonist, and teacher Rudolf Komorous, in celebration of his 85th birthday.

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**Thursday, December 8, 2016 • 8:00 p.m.**

Phillip T. Young Recital Hall

MacLaurin Building, University of Victoria

Adults \$20 / Seniors \$15 / Students & UVic alumni \$10

## Featuring

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**CATHY FERN LEWIS** voice

**MARY BYRNE** flute, alto flute

**ERIN MARKS** oboe

**HEATHER ROCHE** clarinet, bass clarinet

**TYSON DOKNJAS** violin

**ALASDAIR MONEY** cello

**ALEX REMPEL** bass

**TZENKA DIANOVA** piano

**CARLIE GRAHAM** percussion

**CHRISTOPHER BUTTERFIELD** percussion

**OWEN UNDERHILL** conductor

Artistic Advisor: Cathy Fern Lewis

## A Message from the Artistic Advisor



Fortunate and enriched are those who have come into the orbit of Rudolf Komorous. Having Rudolf as a professor of 20th c. Analysis, from 1974–78, was indeed profound. His whole person and way of being and teaching was and still is inspiring. His interest and commitment to the aesthetic of the odd, strange or bizarre, called “estetiku divnosti”, provided an oasis, a sphere which encouraged us to pursue our individual voices. He brought ‘new music’ to Victoria and it continues to thrive here as a result of his

influence. Now, many of his former students form a vibrant network across this country and beyond.

His complex journey from Prague, through Peking, Japan, America to Victoria...left a deep impression. His musical compositions reflected his journey. They were different, and transparent, implementing unusual combinations of instruments in surprising juxtapositions, interconnecting them in both familiar and exotic ways.

In 1987 Rudolph introduced me to the poetry of Han Shan, through his cycle *Cold Mountain Songs* for voice and cello, which I premiered that year. Now, thirty years later, and written for this occasion, it is an honour to be premiering his most recent work, *Stone House*, singing poetry of Fiona Sampson. The beauty with which he has crafted his musical rendering of Sampson’s one sentence, one breath poem, is Komorous at his finest.

It has been a pleasure to assist in creating this evening’s celebration concert. It would not have been possible without the generous support from the Canadian Music Centre, BC Regional Director, Sean Bickerton; CMC Librarian, Stefan Hintersteinger; and Acting Director of the University of Victoria School of Music, Christopher Butterfield. Sincere thanks also to School of Music Concert & Publicity Manager, Kristy Farkas, composers Owen Underhill, Linda Catlin Smith, Rodney Sharman and Christopher Reiche.

*We all share respect and love for Rudolf Komorous and we are here to say **Thank You and Happy 85th Birthday!** Let’s listen to a few of your compositions, and afterwards, share a warm beer and enjoy a piece of cake.*

cathy fern lewis / December 8, 2016

## **Letter from the Canadian Music Centre:**

The theme of this, the Canadian Music Centre's first concert season in BC, is Celebrating Our Legacy!, with the goal of celebrating the very first generation of composers to write concert music from the west coast of Canada.

They have been designated as BC legacy composers, chosen because they have made a larger-than-life contribution, both in terms of their bodies of work and their substantial dedication towards teaching the next generation of composers.

Murray Adaskin, Barbara Pentland, Rudolf Komorous, Jean Coulthard, and Elliot Weisgarber each exemplify this kind of exceptional contribution to our musical heritage.

To plan a concert worthy of serving as a tribute to each composer, we invited champions of each one to help us identify the works that should be featured in each program and the musicians best suited to perform those works. Soprano Cathy Fern Lewis has been invaluable as that extraordinary champion of Rudolf Komorous, working closely with School of Music Acting Director Christopher Butterfield, and Kristy Farkas. They have assembled an extraordinary group of UVic alumni to perform for us tonight.

In addition to the concerts, we also commissioned five documentary films dedicated to each composer, from award-winning film-maker John Bolton. Each short film is based on a performance of one of their signature works. And in each case we have also dedicated a significant new infrastructure enhancement or program to their memory.

This past August we launched the Canadian Music Centre's Victoria Creative Hub in collaboration with the Victoria Conservatory, The new CMC library there, which I encourage you to visit, has been dedicated as the Rudolf Komorous Music Library.

It is forty years ago now that I attended UVic's School of Music as a young violinist. It was an extraordinary time, with an amazing group of young composers studying at UVic, drawn in large part by Rudolf Komorous (who was acting chair then), Martin Bartlett, and Murray Adaskin. That group of students includes Owen Underhill, who is conducting this evening; Christopher Butterfield, now Acting Director of the School of Music; Linda Caitlin Smith, Rodney Sharman, David McIntyre and many others.

It is with a deep sense of gratitude for those amazing formative experiences, which helped make my own life devoted to music possible, that I am pleased to dedicate this Celebration and the CMC's new Victoria music library to Rudolf Komorous.

Thank you for being here this evening to help us honour him,

Sean Bickerton, BC Director  
Canadian Music Centre

# PROGRAM

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**Olympia** (1964)

Rudolf Komorous

Christopher Butterfield and Owen Underhill:  
melodica, bass harmonica, flexatone, acolyte bells,  
sleighbells, ratchet, nightingale

**Stone House** (2016) *World Premiere*

Rudolf Komorous  
Poem by Fiona Sampson

Cathy Fern Lewis, voice; Mary Byrne, alto flute;  
Christopher Butterfield, percussion

**Morning Glory** (2007)

Linda Catlin Smith

Mary Byrne, flute/alto flute; Heather Roche, clarinet/bass clarinet;  
Tzenka Dianova, piano; Charlie Graham, percussion;  
Tyson Doknjas, violin; Alasdair Money, cello;  
Owen Underhill, conductor

**Lurid Bride** (1999)

Rudolf Komorous

- I. Morgan Le Fay (to Alison Cameron)*
- II. Solferino Bridle (to Christopher Butterfield)*
- III. Strange Coquetry (to Mark Ellestad)*
- IV. The Spitball (to David MacIntyre)*
- V. The Melancholy Sixte (to John Abram)*
- VI. The Aviatrix (to Martin Arnold)*
- VII. Rouged Ghost (to Jennifer McLaughlin)*
- VIII. The Biter Bit (to Patrick Carpenter)*
- IX. Ligature (to Stephen Parkinson)*
- X. Troppo Vero (to Owen Underhill)*
- XI. Tagasode (to Linda Catlin Smith)*

Mary Byrne, flute / alto flute; Erin Marks, oboe;  
Heather Roche, clarinet / bass clarinet; Tzenka Dianova, piano;  
Charlie Graham, percussion; Tyson Doknjas, violin;  
Alasdair Money, cello; Alex Rempel, double bass;  
Owen Underhill, conductor



**RUDOLF KOMOROUS** was born December 8, 1931 and educated in Prague, Czech Republic. He studied composition with Pavel Borkovec in Prague during the 1950s, also excelling as a bassoon player. His playing won him first prize at the Concours International d'Exécution Musicale in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1957. This led to a two-year term (1959–61) teaching bassoon and chamber music in China at the Beijing Academy and Central Conservatory of Music. He was also the principal bassoonist in the Prague Opera.

Komorous's involvement with the Czech avant-garde in the 1950s and '60s led to a close association with painters and sculptors. He was a member of an interdisciplinary, avant-garde scene known as the 'Šmidra Group'. Heavily influenced by Dada, surrealism and American abstract expressionism, their motto was the "aesthetics of the bizarre" through which common materials could be transformed into something sublime, mysterious or even magical. In 1961 Komorous co-founded Musica Viva Pragensis, which was regarded as one of Europe's leading new music ensembles during the eight years of its existence.

In 1969, following the Soviet invasion of his country, Komorous emigrated with his family to Canada. After teaching for two years at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, he joined the faculty of the School of Music at the University of Victoria. From 1971–1989 Komorous taught music composition and theory at UVic and later served as the School of Music's Director. Many of his students went on to become successful composers, so much so that Eastern Canadian composers began to refer to their country's avant-garde scene as "The Victoria Mafia." From 1989 he served as Director of the School for the Contemporary Arts, Simon Fraser University.

Komorous's catalogue of compositions includes works for orchestra (5 Sinfonies), solo instruments, voice and chamber ensembles. He also has worked in the electronic music field and was the founder of the University of Victoria's Electronic Music Studio. His compositions have been featured at music festivals including the Venice Biennale, Warsaw Autumn, Donaueschingen, and Prague Spring. His two operas were produced in Vancouver, Toronto, Victoria, Montreal, Buffalo, and New York City. His works have been published by Universal Edition, Vienna and E.C. Kerby, Toronto. Several of his compositions are available on CD.

Komorous refers to himself (perhaps jokingly) as "the last avant-garde composer". The minimalism of his early works is to him "the true minimalism", completely dissimilar to the later busy music which, to his dismay, was labeled "minimal". At the beginning of the seventies, following a short period of searching for laws of proportions in music, he started exploring the possibilities of writing new melodies and harmonies that structurally work in unusual ways. In Komorous's opinion art should not change for the sake of cheap "novelties" but the change should be dictated by ever changing traces of real life.

Komorous is retired and lives in Victoria.

## PROGRAM NOTES

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**Olympia** (1964) is a truly minimalist work and one of the first ever. It had its premiere in Warsaw at the Autumn New Music Festival and was received with such unusual success that it was given an encore right then and there. Komorous composed *Olympia* for the exhibition opening of his friend and painter Jaroslav Vozniak, who was also a member of the 'Smidra Group'.

**Stone House**, for voice, alto flute and small percussion, is set to a poem by the same name by poet Fiona Sampson, taken from her latest book, *The Catch*, released in February 2016. Sampson started life as a concert violinist, studying at the Royal Academy of Music, and performing for and with musicians including Sir Simon Rattle and Pierre Boulez. Her work has been set by composers including Sally Beamish, Steve Goss and Luminata Spinu, and is currently having three sonnets from Coleshill set by Sir Harrison Birtwistle. She is a professor of poetry at University of Roehampton in London, England and has just released her latest book of poetry entitled *Lyric Cousins*.

*Stone House* was composed especially for this celebration for Cathy Fern Lewis and Christopher Butterfield.

**Morning Glory** (2007) was composed in the summer. As an amateur gardener, I intersperse my composing time with small excursions into the back garden for daily weeding and watering. Often I've thought about melody as a winding vine — the twists and wrappings around a beat, the curves and contours of tunes. In this work, I was exploring the different soundworlds this particular ensemble can offer, while also exploring the various ways I could partner instruments in melodic relationships. I was particularly happy that the morning glories we planted entwined themselves with the ivy that covers the southern wall bordering my garden.

~ Linda Catlin Smith

**Lurid Bride**, composed for the Vancouver New Music Ensemble, was commissioned by Owen Underhill and Vancouver New Music for the 2000 Vancouver International New Music Festival in which Rudolf Komorous was a featured composer. Each of the eleven sharply distinct movements is dedicated to former students of Komorous and are based on research into actual historical incidents or situations. Individually titled, each is a musical representation having its own distillation of emotional qualities. This is in no way programmatic music, and the listener is not informed of the source material. Nevertheless, there is inherent in this music a profound relationship between life and art. Komorous tells the following story which perhaps best explains his thoughts on this subject:

"My friend, the painter Mikulas Medek, who was a brilliant man, had a theory about what art is. Once, he went with his children to the woods and they found a skeleton of a rabbit. He told the children that this skeleton was the remnant of a certain event. He also said that writing a piece or painting a picture is the event and what you are looking at or listening to is actually that rabbit skeleton. I used this theory in full. It might be the best one ever put forward for art."

~ Owen Underhill

**Stone House** by Fiona Sampson

Really what I want  
is to return  
again and again  
to a source that's inexhaustible  
and daily

but not a spring not ever  
water which is  
labile and cold which I  
don't trust seeing  
the glitter fall apart  
in my hand

feeling my hand grow cold  
I mean a wall  
warm with the sun thick with it  
like shelter  
a wall thickly curved  
and made by hands

whose gestures I could make  
in my turn  
in turning to a wall  
its orange flank  
glowing in the late light  
behind nettles

and under elder trees  
the source is love  
I think but huge and abstract  
this too a house  
whose roofless rooms become  
part of the wood

whose fire is choked with brambles  
and wild apple  
and with anemones  
those lucky stars  
pouring through doors and windows  
and through the wall.

## BIOGRAPHIES

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**CHRISTOPHER BUTTERFIELD** studied composition with Rudolf Komorous at the University of Victoria (B.Mus. 1975) and with Bülent Arel at the State University of New York at Stony Brook (M.A. 1977). He lived in Toronto between 1977 and 1992, where he was active as a performance artist, rock guitar player, and composer. In 1979–1980 he taught in the graduate visual arts department at Concordia University in Montreal, and in 1986 and 1989 he taught in the School for the Contemporary Arts at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. In 1992 he was appointed Assistant Professor of Composition at the University of Victoria and is currently the Acting Director of the School of Music. His music has been performed across Canada and in Europe, and is recorded on the CBC and Artifact labels.

An active teacher, adjudicator, lecturer, recording artist, and published author, **MARY C.J. BYRNE** is internationally respected for her wide-ranging work as a flute-in-hand musician and teacher. With the Victoria Conservatory of Music, Camosun College, and her own Piccolino Studio, she boasts thriving studios and classrooms of students at all ages and stages of musical interest. She is a regular performer with the Victoria Symphony. Without borders or boundaries, she eagerly performs chamber, solo, and small orchestra music for the full flute family. Mary is in demand as lecturer and writer on topics of music and as leader of music-tourism. She earned B.Mus. in Flute Performance and Music Education and M.Mus. in Flute Performance degrees from the University of Michigan, and a Ph.D. in Musicology from the University of Victoria, specializing in pedagogy and performance practice of the flutists at the Paris Conservatoire during the 19th and 20th centuries.

**TZENKA DIANOVA** is an internationally acclaimed concert artist. She completed her musical education in Europe, Canada, and New Zealand, working with renown pianists such as Dmitri Bashkirov and Tamas Vesmas. She has won numerous prizes, collaborated with leading composers of today (commissioning new works for piano), recorded solo and concerto albums, and published a book on John Cage's prepared piano music. In Victoria, she is known for her work with the Victoria Symphony.

**CARLIE GRAHAM** is grateful to work with the exceptional musicians in her hometown of Victoria for appreciative listeners. She is happiest when collaborating with composers on new pieces and exploring percussive sonic possibilities. When not hitting things with sticks, Carlie is a consulting librarian for global Fortune 500 companies.

**CATHERINE FERN LEWIS** is renowned as a highly versatile soprano and sound artist. An ambassador and active exponent of Canada's new music and art scene, Lewis has premiered over one hundred pieces by prominent composers and created her own multi-media works that push the boundaries of performance. Lewis earned a BMus from UVic where she was influenced by professors Rudolf Komorous and Martin Bartlet. She devoted three subsequent years to vocal training in Europe and Canada, studying under luminaries Frances James Adaskin, Selena James, Mary Morrison and Pierre Bernac. She appears as soloist with symphony orchestras

and in recitals of new and traditional music. Her improvisations have shaped the work of collaborators from other disciplines; many pieces have been written expressly for her. Lewis' personal creative explorations are uniquely interdisciplinary, combining movement, sound, film and installation. Her site-specific work has been presented by art galleries and festivals in Canada and Europe. Lewis lives in Victoria and teaches at the Victoria Conservatory of Music.

**ERIN MARKS** is one of Vancouver's best-loved oboe soloists. She plays oboe and English horn with Vancouver Opera Orchestra, Pandora's Vox, and appears frequently as an extra musician with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra. She has also appeared with the Turning Point Ensemble under the direction of Owen Underhill as well as played extra in the Victoria Symphony and many other orchestras. Erin is a frequent recitalist. Last year she played with esteemed organist, Edward Norman in a Trinity University Faculty and Friends concert and is called upon regularly by the organists of Vancouver's most important churches. Ms. Marks earned her Master's degree in Oboe Performance from the Manhattan School of Music, studying with Joseph Robinson, Principal Oboist of the New York Philharmonic. Spending several years performing throughout New York, Ms. Marks enjoyed success as a freelance artist.

Cellist **ALASDAIR MONEY** grew up in Victoria and studied with James Hunter for many years at the Victoria Conservatory of Music. He graduated in 1991 from the Associate in Musical Arts Diploma program and went on to complete a Bachelor of Music degree at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. While there, he studied with Lawrence Lesser and Michael Haber. After graduating from NEC in 1995, Alasdair went to England to study in London with Raphael Wallfisch at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama where he received a post-graduate diploma in cello performance. He also completed a Master of Music degree in cello performance at the University of Victoria where he studied with Pamela Highbaugh-Aloni and Paula Kiffner.

Alasdair has attended such festivals as Banff and Orford in Canada and the Dartington, Evian and Verbier music festivals in England and in Europe. While back in Canada, Alasdair works with the Victoria and Vancouver Island symphonies, the Emily Carr String Quartet, the Galiano and Aventa ensembles and has played with the Vancouver Symphony orchestra.

Holding a Bachelor of Music in double bass from the University of Victoria, **ALEX REMPEL** is a regular performer with the Victoria Symphony and the Vancouver Island Symphony. Also a dedicated performer of jazz, bluegrass, country, and old-time music on both bass and mandolin, he is a co-founder and core member of acclaimed indie-roots band West My Friend, with whom he has released three albums and toured across North America and Europe. He is an experienced chorister and has been a full-time member of the highly-regarded Victoria chamber choir Vox Humana for several seasons.

**LINDA CATLIN SMITH** grew up in New York and lives in Toronto. She studied music in NY, and at the University of Victoria. Her music has been performed and/or recorded by Tafelmusik, Other Minds Festival, Trio Arbos (Madrid), Victoria, Kitchener-Waterloo and Vancouver Symphony Orchestras, Arraymusic, Tapestry New Opera, Via Salzburg, Evergreen Club Gamelan, and the Del Sol, Penderecki, and Bozzini string quartets, among many others. In 2005 her work *Garland* (for Tafelmusik) was awarded Canada's prestigious Jules Léger Prize. Recently two solo discs of her music have been released: *Thought and Desire*, with Eve Egoyan, and *Dirt Road* on the Another Timbre label.

**OWEN UNDERHILL** lives in Vancouver where he is active as a composer, conductor, artistic director of Turning Point Ensemble and as a faculty member in the School for the Contemporary Arts at Simon Fraser University. As a composer, Underhill writes for diverse combinations including orchestra, voice and choir, and a wide variety of chamber music. He is an alumnus of the University of Victoria where he studied with Rudolf Komorous. His music is on several recordings including his 2011 disc *Still Image*. As a conductor, Underhill is a member of the Turning Point Ensemble, one of Canada's most distinctive and accomplished large-size chamber ensembles. Underhill has been especially active in contemporary music and music of the early twentieth century and has conducted over 250 premieres by Canadian composers. Active as a programmer and promoter of contemporary music, Underhill was Artistic Director of Vancouver New Music from 1987 to 2000.

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