


The gift of music

BY KEITH KNIGHT - May 1, 2010

Walter MacNutt Music and Memories Concert; Wed. Jun. 2, 7:30 p.m.; St. Thomas Church (Huron Street), Toronto

Walter MacNutt lived and breathed music. His legacy as an organist, choir master and composer is a gift to the entire Anglican Communion.

MacNutt's compositions and arrangements covered a wide variety of art songs, instrumental arrangements, Christmas carols, devotional motets, hymns, descants and plainsong accompaniments. His career took him to Toronto, Charlottetown, Winnipeg and Windsor.

He was a modest man, says friend and colleague Robert MacLennan, and "he would be pleased but embarrassed" by the notion of a special concert to mark the centenary of his birth.

MacNutt was born in Charlottetown, P.E.I., in 1910 and moved to Toronto in the late 1920s. Dr. Healey Willan, a well-known Anglican composer, discovered MacNutt's incredible talent and provided lessons in organ and composition. At age 21, MacNutt won a national competition and a year later became an associate of the Toronto Conservatory of Music. He served as organist and choirmaster at Trinity Church in Barrie, Ont., for four years, beginning in 1931.

Most of his sacred compositions date from his time as organist and choir director of St. Thomas Church (1954-77) in Toronto. Every week on CBC Radio, the Windsor Singers performed MacNutt's British folksong arrangements.

Giles Bryant, former organist of St. James' Cathedral and St. Mary Magdalene's Church in Toronto, will host the concert. Choristers will include members of St. Thomas' Church choirs under the direction of John Tuttle, organist of the University of Toronto, Trinity College and St. Thomas Church.

Piano music and vocal accompaniments will be provided by distinguished pianist, composer and radio host Peter Tiefenbach. Soloists will include soprano Denise Williams, concert and recording artist, and a former St. Thomas' choir member; and tenor Jamie Tuttle, a section leader in St. Thomas' choir.

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