

Communiqué

MANITOBA ARTS COUNCIL

Names Manitoba Arts Award of Distinction Recipient

FEBRUARY 29, 2008 – WINNIPEG:

Dr. Robert Turner, Manitoba's most senior distinguished contemporary music composer has been named the sixth recipient of the Manitoba Arts Council Arts Award of Distinction. This \$30,000 award is presented annually to recognize the highest level of artistic excellence and distinguished career achievements by a professional Manitoba artist.

Dr. Turner studied piano from an early age and his first pieces were written without formal instruction. He holds a Bachelor of Music from McGill University (1943), a Masters in Music from Vanderbilt University's George Peabody College (1950) and a Music Doctorate from McGill University (1953). Although he completed numerous compositions during these years, the earliest he acknowledges is String Quartet No. 1, written in 1949. Dr. Turner's first major commission was received from the Vancouver Symphony and resulted in the Canadian classic *Opening Night: A Theatre Overture* (1955). After composing his first opera in 1968 Dr. Turner decided to devote more time to composing and accepted a professorship at the University of Manitoba. In 1985 Dr. Turner retired from teaching and remains a Professor Emeritus of Music at the University of Manitoba.

Dr. Turner is author to over 70 compositions in all genres from symphonic and chamber works to operatic, vocal and ensemble pieces, including three symphonies, four concertos, three string quartets and two operas. A great number of works has been commissioned by prominent national and international organizations, most notably the Canada Council, the Manitoba Arts Council and CBC Radio.

In recognition of Dr. Turner's distinguished, creative and innovative contributions to Canadian music and culture he received the Commemorative Medal for the 125th Anniversary of the Confederation of Canada (1993), the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal (2003) and was appointed to the Order of Canada (2003).

"Dr. Turner's orchestral works have been performed by every major Canadian orchestra and his chamber music and solo pieces are presented nationally and internationally," says Dr. Judith Flynn, Chair of Council. "We are so very pleased to celebrate this important senior artist and the lasting contribution he has made to Canadian music and generations of composers in our community."

Dr. Turner lives in Winnipeg with his wife Sara. He will be honoured at a ceremony to be held on March 13th from 5-7 p.m. at the Millennium Centre in Winnipeg. Previous Arts Award of Distinction recipients include: Leslee Silverman (2002), Robert Kroetsch (2003), Grant Guy (2004), Guy Maddin (2005) and Aganetha Dyck (2006).

Please be advised that Dr. Turner is not available for interviews but has provided the following statement: "I very much appreciate receiving the Manitoba Arts Council's Award of Distinction. I accept this recognition with gratitude toward those who have commissioned and performed my orchestral and chamber music so beautifully."
- Robert Turner

JURY MEMBERS: Patti Caplette, Winnipeg; Shirley Elias, Winnipeg; Jim Hiscott, Winnipeg; Geneviève Pelletier, Winnipeg; Carmen Robertson, Regina; Danny Schur, Winnipeg; Diana Thorneycroft, Winnipeg

The **Manitoba Arts Council** provides funds to professional artists and arts organizations. It is an arm's-length agency of the Government of Manitoba and is funded by the Department of Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport.

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