



## **STEPHEN SMITH - Piano**

Listeners, critics, and audience members alike know Stephen Smith as "a sensitive and dynamic performer" with a "highly poetic touch" and "superb musicianship which illuminates everything he plays." Renowned pianist Jane Coop called her former student "an extremely intelligent and perceptive musician who has great facility and strength in his technique." And Simon Carrington (one of the founding members of the Kings Singers) has called Smith "a magnificent pianist," saying, "It's a privilege to hear such beautiful playing!"

Smith grew up in rural Nova Scotia, where he sang and played the piano from an early age. After initial studies in his home province in both piano and organ, he attended the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, England, obtaining his Master of Music degree and the college's Professional Performers' diploma. While a

student there, he gave recitals throughout England and participated in national and international piano competitions, winning numerous awards and distinctions.

In 1990, Smith came to Vancouver to study at the University of British Columbia. After obtaining a doctoral degree in piano performance in 1994, he embarked on what has become a decades-long career in the city of Vancouver, encompassing solo and chamber music performances, choral accompanying, conducting, teaching, adjudicating, composing, arranging, and writing about music. His work as both pianist and composer is well represented on commercial recordings, many of which are now available on Spotify, Apple Music, and similar platforms.



## **MICHELLE BRUCE - Strings**

Michelle Bruce is well known on the Sunshine Coast for teaching violin, viola and cello for over thirty years. She is a Suzuki trained teacher who uses much of its pedagogy to teach RCM and fiddle. She is the co-founder of the Sunshine Coast Community Orchestra and founder of the Coast String Fiddlers. These two groups have been active since 1992. Her leadership in forming these groups led her to receiving the Meritorious Service Medal (M.S.M.) which was presented to her by Governor General David Johnston in June of 2017.

Michelle was the past conductor of SCCO Introductory and Intermediate Orchestras and is currently the concertmaster of the Coast Symphony Orchestra, a violinist in Chamber String Orchestra, the Messiah Orchestra and Grace Notes Quartet.

She has taught at fiddle camps throughout BC and has been a string adjudicator in the Yukon. She teaches privately and is involved with her daughter, keeping the fiddle camps going with Cross Canada Mini Fiddle camps

Michelle is known for her warm style of teaching by praising the effort and not the result. "The sense of community is built on working together and what better way than playing music together."



## **FIONA BLACKBURN – Vocal & Choral**

Fiona Blackburn was educated at the University of British Columbia, where she earned a Bachelor of Music in voice performance, a Bachelor of Education in secondary music, and a Master of Music in choral conducting. Professionally, Fiona performed, recorded and toured for 13 seasons with the Vancouver Chamber Choir; for five seasons, she sang with Vancouver Opera in numerous roles. Fiona's solo work includes performances with Canadian orchestras including the Vancouver Symphony, Vancouver CBC Orchestra and Symphony Nova Scotia, to name a few. Fiona has two Celtic CDs to her credit and even performed for five summers on an Alaskan cruise ship.

As an educator, Fiona has taught music from kindergarten to university, where she was adjunct professor in the Department

of Education at UBC. Fiona is a sought-after clinician and adjudicator across Canada - knowledgeable as a judge in classical voice, musical theatre and choral competitions.

Since 2004, Fiona has been the Founding and Artistic Director of the British Columbia Girls Choir, which became internationally known when the girls received top honours and were awarded the coveted 'Children's Choir of the World' trophy at the 2018 Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod in Wales. Fiona has also directed adult choirs, including the: Maple Ridge Choral Society, Zephyra Women's Choir and Pacifica Singers. Fiona is now the newly appointed Artistic Director of the Nanaimo-based Malaspina Choir, a classical concert choir known for its performances of the great choral masterworks.

For her work to promote choral singing in our province, Fiona was awarded the BC Choral Federation's 2016 Healey Willan Award. She is known for her passionate support of the art of singing in all its forms, as well as her engaging and uplifting interaction with singers of all ages.