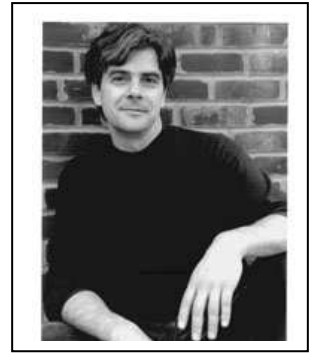


Glenn Buhr

Glenn Buhr is a composer of symphonies and ballets who also plays in a jazz quartet. His accolades include a Juno award for a song he composed for a con man movie, and top prize in the prestigious Italian Pro Loco Corciano Competition.



Surveying his diverse musical success, it is no wonder a reviewer remarked once: “Buhr’s musical imagination appears to be boundless.”

He balances a busy performance and composing schedule with teaching duties at Wilfrid Laurier University’s faculty of music. His career took off shortly after he finished his music studies at the University of Michigan and secured a teaching position at WLU.

It was 1984 and Buhr decided to mail out copies of his orchestral dissertation to symphony orchestras across Canada. While many came back, the conductor of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra was interested, and in September 1985, Buhr attended his own world premiere to positive reviews.

Since then, Buhr’s compositions have been performed by chamber ensembles, soloists and orchestras around the world. His international success is balanced by his strong support of regional orchestras.

After serving as director of contemporary music for the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony, Buhr wrote that community music and a “collective approach” to performance is integral to healthy culture. While European music is part of our musical identity, he wrote that it is important that local, contemporary compositions share the stage.

“There is no reason that symphony orchestras should continue to function like one of Napoleon’s army battalions, with the conductor as commander-in-chief and the players soldiering on under his divine guidance, trusting his connections to the great ones – those gods (mostly dead white European males) who wrote the music in the first place. The class divisions that supported that system of governance in earlier times have long since disappeared.”

Buhr, who has been nominated for four Juno awards, is well known as the co-founder of the renowned Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra’s New Music Festival. In 1998 he was named University Research Professor at Wilfrid Laurier University, the first time a creative artist has been given the honour.

Performing in the Glenn Buhr Quartet, he finds a way to balance the work of his classical compositions. “Jazz is a social thing. It involves sharing, some originality and crowd participation . . . Jazz is a nice alternative to writing for orchestra.”

Buhr, who studied at the University of Manitoba and the University of British Columbia, became interested in music as a teenager. “I started listening to music like crazy, and yearning and yearning to do it,” he said, “I’ve been doing it ever since.”

Photo courtesy of Jennifer Buhr