

# THE ROCA REPORT

The **Richmond Orchestra and Chorus Association** (ROCA) is a group of dedicated amateur musicians under professional leadership who believes that a rich cultural scene is essential to building a strong, healthy and vibrant community and music enhances the lives of both performers and audience members.

This newsletter is intended to keep all of our ROCA friends up to date on plans for the chorus and orchestra. We hope you enjoy learning a little more about the ROCA family. If you have any questions or comments please do not hesitate to contact us at [roca.office@gmail.com](mailto:roca.office@gmail.com).

In this edition of the ROCA Report we feature:

- Award winning organist, soprano Susan Ohannesian
- Trumpet player Anatoly Brusylovskiy – his life in music
- Music history with Zoom

If you enjoy this newsletter, please consider sharing it with your friends and family.

## OUR ROCA FAMILY

The ROCA singers and musicians come from diverse backgrounds and experiences. As we can't share our music at present, we would like to share a little of ourselves outside of the musical world.

### Susan Ohannesian (Soprano): Organist and Singer Extraordinaire!

*ROCA is very proud of one of our sopranos, Susan Ohannesian, who was awarded a Distinguished Service Award by the Royal Canadian College of Organists in 2020. Here is a little of her story.*

I grew up loving music. My parents both played the piano, my mum sang and we attended St. James Anglican Church in downtown Vancouver, which had a strong musical tradition. I sang in the junior choir at St. James and then as a teenager, joined the adult choir. I started piano lessons when I was 8 years old and organ lessons with Gordon Atkinson at St. James when I was 16. I became a member of the Royal Canadian College of Organists (RCCO) in 1969.



It was when I started learning to play the organ that I became passionate about music and decided that I wanted to be a church musician and piano and organ teacher. I did a Bachelor of Music degree in organ performance at UBC, studying with Hugh McLean and later with Patrick Wedd, who was my mentor and friend as well as my teacher. While at UBC I sang in Choral Union and enjoyed singing large choral works, much beyond the scope of a church choir. I also became involved in the Vancouver Society for Early Music and learned to play the harpsichord.

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# Susan Ohannesian (Soprano): Organist and Singer Extraordinaire!

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After graduation from UBC in 1974 I was appointed as organist/choir director at St. Philip's Anglican Church in Dunbar where I served for 27 years. Paul and I were married in 1976 at St. Philip's and I recruited him as a tenor for the church choir. For quite a few years I sang with Vancouver Cantata Singers under James Fankhauser. Soon after I left Cantata Singers, I was attending a choral reading session put on by one of the music stores and I sat next to Brigid Coult. After the session she suggested I audition for Elektra Women's Choir. I did, and sang with Brigid in that choir for many years. I already knew Brigid through the Anglican church, our mutual friend and mentor, Patrick Wedd, and the RCCO.

In 2002 I left St. Philip's and went to St. Mary's Kerrisdale to be the organist working with Brigid, who is the Music Director. At St. Mary's I have also directed, on and off, the handbell choir, cherubs choir and junior choir. I have been an organist in this Anglican Diocese for 47 years, I will turn 70 in April and I'm looking forward to retiring at the end of May. Since 1969 I have been involved with the RCCO and last year was awarded a Distinguished Service Award.

Five years ago I retired from Elektra Women's Choir and joined Richmond Chorus with my husband. I was tired of singing and travelling with women only and wanted to sing in a choir with Paul. We have really enjoyed singing in Richmond Chorus and are very grateful to Brigid for keeping the choir together, learning and singing on Zoom and we look forward to, hopefully, singing at Fraserview in the fall.

## Anatoly Brusylovskiy (Trumpet)

*"I can speak from experience, music knows no boundaries and no exclusion. In the world of music there is peace and harmony; something we can really use in our daily lives." - Anatoly Brusylovskiy*

I have never imagined myself as anyone else but a musician. I was born and raised in Kiev, Ukraine. My father was a drummer and from a very young age that was exactly what I wanted to be. My father kept telling me: "If you really want to play drums, you have to be ready to come first and leave last, worrying about getting around and setting up". One day, a new teacher from a nearby music school came to our class looking for trumpet students. Remembering everything my father told me, I decided to give it a try. That was the moment trumpet became part of my life. Music school was followed by Glier National Music College of Ukraine and then many orchestras. I had the privilege of playing with Kiev Municipal Orchestra (Ukraine), Big Band of National Circus of Ukraine, the Orchestra of Ghesher Theatre (Israel), Ukrainian National TV and Radio orchestra and others. From jazz to classical, I took every opportunity to grow as a musician, while meeting wonderful people from around the world.



In 2004, my family and I moved to Canada. For a couple of years, I was focused on the livelihood of our family, but it wasn't long before music found its way back into my life. I joined Richmond Symphony Orchestra, started my private teaching studio Music of the Winds, and in 2019 I organized a big band, Hudson Street Jazz Orchestra, which I direct and conduct. Once Covid pandemic is over I hope to create a youth jazz orchestra.

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# Anatoly Brusylovskiy (Trumpet)

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While in middle school I joined a youth orchestra, which became for me and my friends our second home, our safe place. It saved many of us from going the wrong way and played an extremely important role in our development. I hope my youth jazz orchestra will create a similar experience for young people in the Lower Mainland.

It was a tremendous joy to join the Richmond Symphony Orchestra and get back into an environment that I love, doing what I love and being surrounded by people sharing my interests and aspirations. I can speak from experience, music knows no boundaries and no exclusion. In the world of music there is peace and harmony; something we can really use in our daily lives.

I am not sure if music can save the world, but I am certain it can make it so much better.

## The History of Choral Music in the Time of COVID

Just over a year ago, life suddenly changed with the Covid Pandemic. Like so many people, choirs were hit badly: no more singing together, no more meeting up with our friends every week, no more experiencing the shared joy of doing something we love. The Richmond Chorus's Artistic Director, Brigid Coult, was not going to let our choir family fade away. Instead, she created an interesting and educational series to keep us all engaged. Each Tuesday, the ROCA singers gather together on Zoom to learn about the history of choral music through Brigid's fascinating anecdotes and recordings. Here's what a few of our choir members have to say about our Zoom sessions.

*"I really appreciate Brigid's dedication and hard work to make the zoom sessions so enjoyable and informative. The fellowship with our chorus members is great." - Susan S.*

*"I love the collegiality of the Zoom sessions and the way Brigid compares various recordings of the same piece. She has put in a great deal of time and effort to provide the choir with interesting, informative, varied and fun sessions every week." - Susan O.*

*"I love the Zoom sessions with Brigid! I've always been enticed with her trivia that she gives us on the music we have been performing during the regular season. Now we get a more in-depth look into the composers and their styles. I miss singling with everyone but this season has helped to enrich my appreciation and knowledge of the music we perform. It takes me back to my university years and reminds me how much I love studying. I've also learned so much music theory as well. A big thank you to Brigid for saving our choir season in a different way!" - Kathy H.*

*"So engaging to be learning every week about the history of the music we have come to love and to get to see my choir family. We have traversed this difficult time together supporting each other on our Tuesday nights." - Jen D.*

### ZOOM GREETINGS FROM THE RICHMOND CHORUS!

