

W. CLAUDE BAKER JR.

Claude Baker has distinguished himself as a scholar, an educator, and a composer for decades. David Effron, former chair and professor emeritus of instrumental conducting at Indiana University, attests to Professor Baker's depth of compositional achievement, stating: "His compositions have been acclaimed worldwide for their freshness, vitality, genuineness, audience friendliness, and especially for his creative success in exploring new avenues of sound and orchestration. His highly emotional works are a joy for musicians to perform and audiences to experience." Expanding on how this compositional expertise enhances his teaching approach, J. Peter Burkholder, IU distinguished professor emeritus of musicology, explains, "The breadth of Professor Baker's influences as a composer, his openness to a wide variety of music, is directly related to his teaching. He does not impose a system or ideology on his students, but encourages them to find their own voice and to draw on a range of influences. As a result, his students tend to write music that seeks to appeal and engage rather than to impress."

Early in Professor Baker's career, internationally renowned conductor Leonard Slatkin identified him as one of the three "best young symphonic composers in America." Years later Maestro Slatkin went on to say that "Claude has the keenest ear I've seen in any composer. He can distinguish the smallest difference in, say, a percussionist's mallet. So, the players have great respect for him." This ability to gain the respect of colleagues, musicians, students, and audiences led to his appointment for eight years, from 1991–99, as composer-in-residence of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, one of the longest such residencies to date with any major orchestra in this country.

In May 2005, the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra (ISO), under the baton of its former music director, Mario Venzago, premiered Professor Baker's *Märchenbilder*, a composition that was commissioned by the ISO to celebrate the orchestra's 75th anniversary. Prior to that performance, Maestro Venzago wrote the following assessment of Professor Baker's music: "I have to confess that in recent years I have never been so touched by new music. First of all, the scores are technically perfect and have the mastery of Ravel and Stravinsky. Every piece is



different and written with plenty of fantasy and inner necessity. And finally, the music goes to the heart . . . and I have been *überwältigt* by emotion." Among the many orchestras, in addition to St. Louis and Indianapolis, that have performed his works are those of San Francisco, Atlanta, Pittsburgh, Detroit, and Nashville, as well as the New York Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra, Orquesta Nacional de España, Musikkollegium Winterthur, Staatskapelle Halle, Orchestre National de Lyon, and Das Berner Symphonieorchester.

In 2002, in recognition of his work in the orchestral medium, Professor Baker was selected as the recipient of an Academy Award in Music from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Other professional honors include two Kennedy Center Friedheim Awards; a Manuel de Falla Prize from the Government of Spain; the Pogorzelski-Yankee Prize from the American Guild of Organists; the Eastman-Leonard and George Eastman Prizes; and awards from ASCAP, BMI, and the League of Composers/International Society of Contemporary Music. He has been commissioned by the Koussevitzky Music Foundation in the Library of Congress, Fromm Music Foundation at Harvard University, Barlow Endowment for Music Composition, and Meet the Composer. Fellowships have come from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Rockefeller Foundation, Bogliasco Foundation, and the state arts councils of

Indiana, Kentucky, and New York. In 2008–09, he was named the Paul Fromm Composer-in-Residence at the American Academy in Rome.

Indiana University has honored him with grants from the Arts and Humanities Initiative, the New Frontiers in the Arts and Humanities Program, and with multiple summer faculty fellowships. In 2007, he received the university-wide Tracy M. Sonneborn Award for accomplishments in the areas of teaching and research.

In the academic arena, Professor Baker has amassed over 45 years of teaching experience, having held appointments at the University of Georgia, the University of Louisville, and the Eastman School of Music prior to assuming his current position at Indiana University in 1988. His gifts for teaching—and his effectiveness—are undeniable. Student evaluations reveal that he is a superb teacher with a genuine concern for the personal and professional growth of each student. His students have garnered many prestigious accolades for their compositions and have been appointed to the faculties of leading universities and conservatories around the world.

During his tenure with the St. Louis Symphony, he developed numerous community-based initiatives aimed at providing creative opportunities for young people, most notably the establishment of composition programs for many grade levels in the St. Louis Public Schools. In appreciation of his contributions to the cultural life of the city, the University of Missouri–St. Louis awarded him an honorary doctorate in 1999.

Claude has been an exemplary professor, composer, and member of our community. We have benefitted greatly from his wise counsel and generous spirit. The speed of his wit may on occasion exceed our thought processes (!), but we value the spirit and graciousness he and his wife, Susan, bring to our lives. We know they will continue to be a valued presence in our community for years to come.

Our most heartfelt congratulations to Claude on his retirement, with our gratitude for his many years of service and dedication to the school.

David Dzubay