

Daniel M. Brewbaker, Ph.D., Biography



Daniel M. Brewbaker, “Brewb” - Class of 1969 - b. 1951 - d. May 14, 2017

From the EHS Yearbook, Student Council 2-3-4, Class Council 2-3-4: President 3-4, Band 2-3-4, Orchestra 2-3-4.

Renowned composer currently residing in New York, holds the distinction of being the first American commissioned to compose a work for the legendary Kirov Orchestra and Chorus in St. Petersburg, Russia. His composition, “The Poet,” received its premier at the White Nights Festival in June of 1999, conducted by the notable Valery Gergiev.

Born in Elgin, Illinois, in 1951 and a pianist since the age of 4, Daniel Brewbaker had a brilliant academic career, starting with undergraduate study at the University of Illinois, then a Master’s and Doctorate degree from the Juilliard School. While beginning his career as a composer, he was an educator at Juilliard, Hunter, Queens Colleges (CUNY) and the Westminster Choir College. Further studies took him to Rome and other major European musical centers, where he became acquainted with many of the major composers of the last half-century.

His first composition, “Psalm 39”, for soprano and piano, was premiered at the University of Illinois in 1970. After several decades and creating fifty-three compositions, Daniel has been established as an important American composer, receiving a large number of commissions both in the United States and abroad. His works have been performed by some of the world’s leading performers in the foremost musical centers of the world.

His awards include the Nadia Boulanger Award at the Ecole des Artes Americaines in Fontainebleau, as well as first prize in the Lili Boulanger International Music Competition in Paris. He was a Tanglewood Fellow and won an Ives Fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He has served as composer-in-residence at the Camargo Foundation in France in 1988 and 1994, and at the the 1997 Spoleto USA Music Festival in Charleston, South Carolina.

In 2000, Daniel’s choral work “Cincinnatus Psalm” was performed by the Cincinnati Orchestra and Chorus, and conducted by James Conlon at the century-old May Music Festival in Cincinnati. As part of the introduction to the performance of this music, Daniel said, “I like music that moves me, involves me intellectually, emotionally, and physically. So I would hope to engage listeners in my music on those levels.” He said the piece “Scheherezade,” which he first heard when he was about 10 years old, “opened up the world of imagination and the world of travel and adventure...and filled me with this inexplicable sense of joy and of being alive...”

In 1995, his “Concerto for Cello and Orchestra” was premiered by the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and has since been recorded by Carter Brey, principal cellist of the New York Philharmonic. In 2004, Daniel was commissioned to write a violin concerto for one of the world’s leading violinists, Vadim Repin, and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. The work premiered in June of 2005 as part of the series of performances for the American Symphony Orchestra League convention being held in Washington, D.C. Other works have been featured in concert halls from Seattle to New York City to Dublin.

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Daniel Brewbaker makes frequent trips to the Fox Valley area to visit family and friends and has made frequent contributions to the artistic life of the area. According to writer, Kathaleen Roberts, “Legend says Chopin carried around a bag of Polish dirt where he traveled. Daniel Brewbaker carries his great-grandfather’s Elgin watch.”

Daniel’s loyalty and fondness for the Elgin area has led to commissions for the Elgin Youth Symphony and the Elgin Symphony Orchestra (ESO), for which he played for many years. In 1985, his work, “Rhapsody for Orchestra,” received its world premier by the ESO. In 1999, renowned cellist Yo Yo Ma, the gala artist for the ESO, performed one movement of Daniel’s cello concerto “La Serenissima.” In 2003, his composition “Psalm 51” for mixed chorus, organ, and string quartet was premiered at the Holy Trinity Church of Elgin. Daniel conducted this work as well as other sacred music as part of the church’s 100th anniversary festival.

With his music licensed by BMI and published by the world’s leading publishing houses, Daniel Brewbaker is a highly decorated composer of more than fifty published works. His music reflects his deeply spiritual and somewhat mystical nature, and these spiritual values are communicated to the listener with powerful effect.

Daniel and his music are very much a product of the American Midwest, although he has been steeped in the great traditions of European art music. Tim Smith of the *Baltimore Sun* said “Brewbaker (has a) flair for writing unabashedly beautiful themes.”



ELGIN - Daniel M. Brewbaker, 65, distinguished composer and Elgin native, died on May 14, 2017 at the JourneyCare hospice center in Barrington, after a two-year battle with glioblastoma multiforme. Born in Elgin in 1951, Daniel studied piano and trumpet at a young age. He graduated from Elgin High School and completed undergraduate study at the Univ. of Illinois. He then earned Master’s and Doctorate degrees from the Juilliard School of Music. Early in his career as a composer, he served as an educator on the faculties of the Juilliard School and several colleges. His first composition, “Psalm 39,” premiered in 1970 at the Univ. of Illinois, beginning a body of work that grew to nearly 60 works, establishing him among contemporary American composers. His music reflected his deeply spiritual and somewhat mystical nature, communicated to the listener with powerful effect. At a time when many composers have striven for novelty, he wrote music that was unashamedly direct and movingly melodic, echoing his Midwestern roots among European influence. In 1995,

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his Concerto for Cello entitled “La Serenissima” premiered at the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and later recorded by Carter Brey, principal cellist of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. In 1999, the final movement of the concerto was performed by cellist YoYo Ma at a gala concert by the Elgin Symphony Orchestra, a special hometown recognition. In 1999, Daniel received the distinction of being the first American composer invited to compose a work for the legendary Kirov Orchestra and Chorus in St. Petersburg, Russia. Brewbaker’s premiere of “The Poet” was led by the distinguished conductor Valery Gergiev. In 2004, Daniel received a commission to write a violin concerto for Russian violinist Vadim Repin. The 2005 premiere by Repin and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in Washington, DC prompted a critic to praise Brewbaker’s “flair for writing unabashedly beautiful themes.” He received the Nadia Boulanger Award at the Ecole des Artes Americaines in Fontainebleau, first prize in the Lilli Boulanger International Music Competition in Paris, and an Ives Fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Daniel was especially proud of his election in 2006 into the Fox Valley Arts Hall of Fame. He composed for the Elgin Symphony Orchestra, the Elgin Youth Symphony Orchestra, the DuPage Chorale, and the Glen Ellyn Children's Chorus. In 2003, he composed “Psalm 51” for the 100th anniversary of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Elgin, where his family had been lifelong members. In 2016, Daniel was inducted into the Elgin High School Alumni Hall of Fame. He was preceded in death by his father Daniel M. Brewbaker and his mother Ruth C. Brewbaker. Daniel is survived by his cousins and many dear friends. Visitation will be Sunday June 25, from 5:00 pm to 9:00 pm at Symonds-Madison Funeral Home, 305 Park St., Elgin, IL 60120. Memorial Service will be at 11:00 am on Monday June 26, at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, 357 Division St., Elgin, IL 60120 with visitation prior to service at 10:00 am, Rev. Jeffrey G. Mikyska and Rev. Peter Akemann officiating. Interment will follow at Lakewood Memorial Park, Elgin. For more info, call 847-741-1128 or visit www.symondsmadisonfuneralhome.com.