

THE MUSIC MAKER

JAMES CAMPBELL

By Steven Duff • Photo Courtesy Festival of the Sound

Just as in writing a letter, an essay, or a story, the job of artistic director of the Festival of the Sound starts out each year with a blank sheet of paper.

The task of filling the blanks for the Festival has been carried out with distinction by James Campbell for his 23 seasons as artistic director, as he engages the artists for each summer and works with them to develop the programmes for the better part of 50 concerts, all the while maintaining, and where possible, improving the calibre of the operation. The process is somewhat like putting a puzzle together by means of phone calls, e-mails, and faxes, a time-consuming business on top of a very intense performing and teaching career.

James Campbell's "day job" is as professor of clarinet studies and chamber music coach at the University of Indiana. He is also recognized as one of the world's top-ranking clarinetists and has appeared as soloist in such distinguished company as the London Symphony Orchestra and the Philharmonia Orchestra, the musical equivalent of playing with the Boston Bruins. The reference to the Bruins is not by accident as Jim Campbell is to music as Bobby Orr is to hockey.

Although not a native of Parry Sound, Jim Campbell is still considered 'One of Ours'. Like so many others, he came under the spell of the area through spending summers here, starting, appropriately, with the Festival of the Sound in 1980. At the time, he was a performer in the Festival, but was invited by the founding director, Anton Kuerti, to take over for the 1985 season.

Another invitation followed for 1986, and by 1987, Jim had assumed command and in that same year bought a cottage on Blackstone Lake.

As with so many other families, the cottage became a central part of Campbell family life. At the time of purchase, both Campbell kids had arrived on the scene, Celia in 1983 and Graham, only a few months old for that first magical summer. The cottage, then, served, not only as a vacation spot, but as artistic headquarters during the Festival.

The evolution of James Campbell the musician reads almost like the ideal poster for music education. He grew up on a dairy farm near Leduc, Alberta, in an environment where music played an essential role. Both his mother and grandmother were church organists and pere Campbell sang in the church choir. And then came Grade 8 and...membership in the school band! There were concerts, parades, rodeos, and the camaraderie that comes from being in a musical ensemble. His stories spin off into the importance of music education, not only for the love of music itself, but for the development of social skills, commitment, community service, and the idea of getting beyond the notes themselves into other cultures, into art and literature, physics and mathematics. He believes few subjects in school do not relate to music in some way, shape, or form.

In 1967, Jim headed off to the University of Toronto for a degree in music education, although he has never actually used that degree. After graduation, his artistry on the clarinet led him into steady work as a freelance

musician. A freelancer is ready for any sort of work at any time, often on short notice, and could be recording a commercial jingle in the afternoon and then playing for the opera in the evening. No time can be wasted in the freelance world and, relative to that, Jim tells a story about a recording session in London some years ago with the renowned Philharmonia Orchestra. The work in question was the Rhapsody for Clarinet and Orchestra by French composer Claude Debussy. It is a very difficult work, not flashy, but rather transparent and misty, requiring an extraordinary amount of control. Recording is like shooting a film in the sense that for every ten minutes of work, about one is in the finished product. The Debussy Rhapsody is about ten minutes long, so when you do the math, one hundred minutes is the logical requirement. Only one hour was assigned to the project, so the pressure was on, but both Jim and the Philharmonia delivered within the hour and the result is a real treasure of music-making.

The University of Indiana "gig" began in 1988, so the Campbell family uprooted themselves from Toronto and moved to Bloomington, Indiana. The university there has a sterling reputation for its music programme and in Professor Campbell's classes, some half-dozen countries are represented. Additionally, there is a surprising range of ages to be taught, ranging from 17-year-old freshmen to doctoral students in their early thirties. Despite their transplant, however, the Campbells have retained their Canadian citizenship and identity, and the cottage at Blackstone Lake is spiritually their true home.