



## Probis Club of Central Edmonton

May 2017

Editor: Ken Hoffman

### **Speaker: May 16,– David T (DT) Baker, the ESO and the Winspear Centre**

David T (DT) Baker, a former music journalist for the Edmonton Journal, and now assistant director of innovative music programs, spoke about the Winspear.

We were treated to a most interesting history of the ESO, the Winspear concert hall, the Davis organ, and development plans for an institute for music innovation. DT brought together some of the achievements and challenges over the decades – starting with the portaging of a piano to Edmonton and ending with descriptions of innovative youth and adult outreach programs. We were treated to thumbnail sketches of various ESO conductors and music directors, which were probably not for attribution! Also, highlighted were well-known artists of various genres. DT was particularly proud of the joint recording of the ESO and Prokol Harum, which was a world first at that time.

The intriguing design of the Winspear was optimized so that sound carries as far as possible by avoiding right-angles and flat surfaces, thus avoiding the need for amplification. The seating is designed so that, when unoccupied, sound is absorbed by the seating material to the same extent as when the seating is occupied.

DT also recounted major charitable donations which made the eponymous Winspear concert hall and the Davis organ possible. The planned institute for music innovation is strongly supported by Tommy Banks; this will be built at the rear of the existing building.

### **Tour: May 23– Winspear Centre**

Adam Trzebski, Assistant Director at the Winspear Centre, provided us with a tour of the Centre on the May 23. Before the tour, he asked how many of us had visited the Centre previously and was very surprised to see all, or almost all, hands in the air. He then gave a brief history of the facility while we enjoyed a light lunch in the artist's Green Room.

Moving to the concert organ in the main chamber, a young Winspear organist showed how the organ is played and treated us to the theme music from the 'Harry Potter' films. The organ was commissioned on a memorable date - September 11, 2001, and it was named 'Opus 50' as it was the 50th organ to be built by its Quebec maker. We also benefited from the perceptive questions posed by a school group sharing the organ presentation.



Throughout the Tour, Adam pointed out building design and insulation features to ensure that exterior sounds are excluded from the concert hall. These were completely successful, except for LRT noise. This problem was remedied by the City running the trains at slower speeds near Churchill Station.

It was clear from the presentation and tour that the Winspear Centre is a major cultural asset to be enjoyed by all in and around Edmonton.