

Toast for Diane on receiving her Doctor of Letters from UBC by Maggie Burr

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are gathered here today to honour Diane and it is my great pleasure to have been asked to give a toast to her.

I first met Diane when I was singing with the Vancouver Chamber Choir under conductor Jon Washburn, and Diane became his assistant. At that time Jon was on the faculty of Langara College and as one of his perks, they funded an assistant for him. I am quite sure when Diane applied for the job, she expected to learn about conducting from Jon and indeed Jon is a good teacher, but unfortunately his idea of an assistant was to have someone assist him by doing all the things he didn't like doing, so Diane's time was taken up running his errands and photocopying music. Being Diane, of course, she didn't put up with that for long and soon went on to better things. But in the short time she was with us, we were all drawn to her by her vibrancy, her charm and her warmth. It was evident to us all that she was very serious about making music. So when she and Morna Edmundson started Elektra, I was one of the first to hold up my hand. We were together in Elektra for 20 years and now, of course, for the past four years in EnChor.

One of the characteristics that has most struck me about Diane is her strength. I have come to know that under that bubbly blond exterior there is really a steely brunette. She shows her strength in many ways. She has the strength to start a project from the onset and see it through to a huge success, and over the years, she has had the strength to overcome several serious illnesses and come sailing back.

Another beautiful trait she has is generosity. She is generous with her time. When you speak to her she gives you her entire concentration as if she has all the time in the world. She is generous with her praise and always makes you feel that you are giving her a lovely present, and even when you are not doing so well, she very generously doesn't signal you out, just gives general instructions which, of course, could apply to anyone. Her wonderful musicianship hardly needs to be mentioned and her joy in making music infects us all and keeps happily anticipating every Friday morning and every performance.

It is therefore no surprise to those of us who know her that Diane has been so greatly honoured by the University of BC. In receiving her Honorary Doctorate she joins such luminaries as Pierre Trudeau, John Diefenbaker and Mstislav Rostropovich as well as local celebrities like Ben Heppner and Judith Forst. She will now be known as a D. Litt and we can sing about her: "She's delightful, she's delovely, she's d.Litt."

I would now like to propose a toast to Diane
May you make music as long as you live and
May you live as long as you make music.

Please stand a drink to Diane!