

*Citation read on the occasion of the granting of the degree of  
Honorary Doctor of Music to  
**Timothy Vernon**  
by the Senate of the University of Victoria  
June 13, 2017*

Madam Chancellor, it is my privilege to introduce Timothy James Vernon: musician, conductor, scholar, educator, mentor, advocate, pioneer, visionary, family man and more. He is a person of integrity, boundless energy, determination, and infectious enthusiasm. Timothy is passionate!

Timothy is a native son, who has never lost his affection for Victoria, British Columbia, and his Canadian roots. Early musical studies at what would become the Victoria Conservatory of Music showed him to be a precocious youngster and musician. As a brilliant boy soprano, he sang the title role in Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. Also excelling at piano, cello, and organ studies, Timothy commenced his professional career as organist for St. Luke's Church at 14.

At the age of 17, he enrolled in undergraduate studies at the Akademie für Musik in Vienna. In a distinguished class, he graduated with Honours and proceeded to postgraduate studies and the beginnings of a promising professional European career as conductor.

Returning to Canada after 12 years, Timothy's career blossomed. Equally at home with symphonic, operatic and choral repertoire, he has conducted orchestras and opera companies from Nova Scotia to Victoria as well as in the USA and Europe. His tenure at McGill University and his longstanding leadership of Pacific Opera Victoria as Founder and Artistic Director are among the most significant achievements of his career and showcase the multifaceted talents of this passionate and visionary person.

While at McGill University, Maestro Vernon spearheaded several notable projects including taking the McGill choir and orchestra to perform the Mozart Vespers at Lincoln Center, New York City, and envisioning and then conducting a performance of Mahler's 2<sup>nd</sup> Symphony "The Resurrection" in which every student and faculty member in the music school was invited (and agreed) to participate. One participant recalls it thus: "Timothy's knowledge and love of the piece was beyond comprehension. He taught everyone, through that one event, how to love what they do. The fiery ease with which he brought the orchestra and choir to life is still talked about in musical circles."

His vision, passion, enthusiasm, and unfailing energy have been evident in Pacific Opera Victoria since its inception in 1980. Known affectionately by some as "the little opera

company that could,” POV has grown from strength to strength during its almost 40 years. The extraordinary success of the company must be attributed to Maestro Vernon’s inspiration and direction. Timothy’s eye is always on what *can* be done, not on what *cannot*. Faced with the small orchestra pit at the Royal Theatre, which cannot accommodate the large orchestral forces demanded in Romantic operas, Timothy crafted his own orchestral reductions so that POV could produce Wagner and Strauss operas.

While many would have counseled that commissioning and producing new operas would be ‘risky business’ in a town like Victoria, Maestro Vernon defied all the odds with hugely successful productions of *Mary’s Wedding* and, most recently, *Les Feluettes*, a co-production with Opéra de Montréal. Always eager for POV to grow and expand, Timothy has been instrumental in establishing partnership projects with other opera companies, the Uvic Libraries and local musical organizations, bringing the knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of opera to an ever-widening audience. Finally, Timothy has championed young emerging Canadian singers, designers, and directors. Many of Canada’s opera greats, including Victoria natives Richard Margison and Benjamin Butterfield, have begun their careers on POV’s stage.

Maestro Vernon has received the Order of Canada, the Queen Elizabeth Jubilee Silver Medal, a Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, from Royal Roads University, and Opera Canada’s Ruby Award. It is high time for the University of Victoria to recognize the outstanding achievements of this remarkable person.

Madam Chancellor, I consider it a great honour to present to you and this Convocation, Timothy James Vernon, for the degree of Doctor of Music, *honoris causa*.

Written and presented by  
Dr. Mary Kennedy, Professor Emeritus  
Department of Music  
Faculty of Fine Arts  
University of Victoria