

*Daughter's death
and wife's devotion
inspire Matt Doran's latest works
in a lifetime of musical accomplishment*



ANDREA J. WRIGHT for The Columbian

Hazel Dell's Matt Doran dedicated his fourth symphony to his daughter, Marianne, and dedicated his fifth symphony to his wife, Therese.

Where emotion & legacy meet

If you go

■ **What:** Clark College Orchestra presents its winter concert, featuring the world premiere of "Symphony No. 5" by Matt Doran of Hazel Dell.

■ **When:** 7:30 p.m. Wednesday.

■ **Where:** Royal Durst Theatre inside the Vancouver School of Arts and Academics, 3101 Main St., Vancouver.

■ **Cost:** Free.

■ **Information:** 360-992-2662 or visit www.clark.edu and go to "News & Events" and then "Events Calendar."

By **BRETT OPPEGAARD**
for *The Columbian*

As his daughter was dying of breast cancer, Matt Doran needed the escape of his studio. In there, alone, he could write music and leave the stresses and emotions of the situation outside. He felt fueled unlike any other period in his eight decades of life.

Those moments led to reflection, too, inspiring him to think of his legacy. He hoped his compositions would outlast him and be played by future generations. The Hazel Dell resident long ago had put that aspiration into printed words in his unpublished memoirs. He realized, though, that his feelings for his family should be preserved as well. He decided for the first time to dedicate a piece of music, his fourth symphony, to his daughter, Marianne, just before she died at the age of 46 in the fall of 2006.

Doran's prolific output has continued, and his "Symphony No. 5," the third he has written in the past four years, will get its world premiere Wednesday night as played by the Clark College Orchestra, under conductor Don Appert. It is the first world premiere of a symphony by a local composer performed by the Clark College Orchestra in at least the 19 years that Appert has been its conductor.

Career quirks

Doran introduced himself to Appert soon after moving to the area in the late 1990s. Doran's career has a couple of quirky highlights: He was

the first person to receive a doctorate of musical arts from the University of Southern California (in 1953), and in 1964, while teaching at Mount St. Mary's College in Los Angeles, where he worked for nearly 30 years, he gave rocker Frank Zappa the opportunity to perform his first major concert.

Through the decades, Doran has written more than 270 pieces of music, including operas, concertos, oratorios and six symphonies. He has dedicated the one Clark will play Wednesday night, "Symphony No. 5," to his wife, Therese.

Appert said Doran brought him a short piece of music a couple of years ago, called "A Memory of Marianne," which was written directly about his daughter as she was dying. The conductor was so struck by it that he had the work performed with one of his other orchestras, the Oregon Sinfonietta, as quickly as he could get it on a program. That piece later was performed in Santa Clara, Calif., and Los Angeles and is slated for a program in Corpus Christi, Texas, in May.

"It just has a real sense of poignancy to it," Appert said. "It expresses something personal for Matt, and I thought you could feel that sense of loss."

Appert asked Doran for more of his compositions, then commissioned him to write a one-movement symphonic piece for the Clark College Orchestra. That seemed to bring even more music out of him. Doran waited nearly three decades between writing his third symphony and hearing

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CLARK COLLEGE
ORCHESTRA CONDUCTOR,
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ABOUT HIS DAUGHTER,
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CANCER IN 2006

Doran:

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it played for the first time, when the Vancouver Symphony premiered it in 2004. Doran wrote his fourth, fifth and sixth symphonies in the last four years and is working on his seventh. His sixth symphony is dedicated to Doran's two granddaughters, Peyton and Dominika. The seventh symphony is being written

for Doran's four sons: Edmund, Matt, Charles and Tim.

"He's been inspired," Appert said. "It's been like unplugging a dam."

Doran said the short piece about his daughter ends quietly, fading into "a sort of nothingness, in a wondering mood, because we don't know what's on the other side."

It made Doran reflect on mortality, he said, adding, "A parent isn't supposed to bury his child. It makes you wonder sometimes about how things

happen. Is there a God? Is he fair, impartial? Does he allow things to happen?"

Doran said he and his wife had been devoted Catholics before the death of his daughter, but now they have opened themselves up to the idea that "maybe there's nothing." They have given up on organized religion.

The tone of "Symphony No. 5," dedicated to Doran's wife, starts with an imposing and fast introduction, which returns in the final movement. Appert said it has a poignancy like "A Memory of Marianne" — similarly as heartfelt.

Doran said writing music with his family in mind has given him purpose as well as inspiration.

"I like to think my music will last longer than I will," he said. "I hope my family will appreciate the symphonies. After you die, it doesn't matter too much to you, but it matters to who you leave behind. It matters to them that their father, or grandfather, wrote these pieces for them."

Vancouver Symphony's conductor, Salvador Brotons, who commutes from Barcelona, Spain, writes music, and the symphony performs it locally. Appert has his scores played at Clark and with other orchestras in the area as well as abroad, but, besides Doran and the two conductors, Appert said he doesn't know of any other orchestral composers creating original work in South-west Washington right now.

"I think this is really important for the orchestra and the community to experience," Appert said. "When we talk about composers, it's not just old, dead people. People are still alive right here that make music as their means of expression. But it's not something we get to show very often."

For Doran, the accomplishment is much more personal.

"The piece for Marianne gave me the idea to write the other ones," he said. "This is fitting. It kind of brings the family together again."