

Celebration of Life for

Ailsa Carolyn Zaenker

May 1, 1943 – September 3, 2022



Wednesday, October 5, 2022

Pacific Spirit United Church
2195 W. 45th Avenue, Vancouver, BC

Ailsa Carolyn Zaenker

May 1, 1943 – September 3, 2022

Ailsa Zaenker (née Lawson) passed away peacefully in her 80th year on September 3, 2022. A gifted pianist from a very young age, Ailsa enjoyed a long career as a performer, collaborator, and teacher. Her childhood in Winnipeg fostered her musical talents and ambitions. Ailsa debuted with the CBC Winnipeg Radio Orchestra at age 15, studied at the Banff Centre, and successfully competed in national and international music competitions. She graduated from the University of Winnipeg and won a scholarship to study piano in Freiburg, Germany. Her studies in Germany brought her accolades, adventure, and her husband Karl, with whom she raised three children. Ailsa settled in Vancouver in 1970, where she established herself as an active part of Vancouver's classical music community. She taught piano to hundreds of children and adults, and collaborated with and coached many emerging and established musicians.

Ailsa was Vancouver Opera's chorus rehearsal pianist for many years, including for their Opera in the Schools Touring Program in the 1980s. She led the choir at Dunbar Heights United Church and enjoyed time spent with the "Mighty DHUCs". In the last part of her career, she found musical and personal companionship as the accompanist for the choir *EnChor*.

Ailsa cared deeply about her country and humanity. She read newspapers cover to cover, and knew her history and literature. Ailsa was proper, clever, generous, and very funny. She revered her elders, took an interest in her young people, and always looked for that special part inside each person.

She is survived by her children Peter Zaenker (Ludmilla Zaenker), Anita Zaenker, Christina Zaenker (Neil Burnett); her grandchildren Charlie, Darcy, Sophia and Olivia; her former husband Karl Zaenker (Cecilia Martell); her sister Elinor Lawson of Lethbridge; and her niece Kim Goodman of Winnipeg. She is loved and remembered by her twenty-six cousins and their families, and countless friends, former students and musical collaborators, with whom she shared and made many memories. Ailsa was predeceased by her parents, Dorothy and Arthur Lawson, and her sister Judith (Lawson) Goodman, all of Winnipeg.

Special thanks to the dedicated staff at Vancouver General Hospital and Holy Family Hospital who cared for her in her final weeks, and to the staff and community at Cavell Gardens. Donations in Ailsa's memory can be made to First United Church.

Order of Service

Prelude: Peter Zaenker, guitar

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Welcome and Introduction: Rev. Deborah Laing

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Hymn: “*The Day thou Gavest, Lord, Is Ended*” (Voices United 438), verses 1–5

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Prayer and words: Rev. Deborah

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Personal tributes: Anita Zaenker, Karl Zaenker

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Musical offering: J.S. Bach, St. John Passion, BWV 245: No. 19,
“*Betrachte, meine Seel*” performed by Philip Wing, accompanied by Ken Cormier

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Personal tributes: Peter Zaenker, Christina Zaenker

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Hymn: “*Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You*” (Voices United 232), verses 1, 2, and 4

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Scripture Reading: Psalm 139, verses 1–14, read by Judith Ann Donaldson

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Reflection

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Musical offering: Johannes Brahms,
“*Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen*”, performed by EnChor

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Prayer and Lord’s Prayer

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Musical benediction: Leon Dubinsky, “*We rise again*”, performed by EnChor

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Postlude: Franz Schubert, “*Impromptu in E-flat major*”,
performed by Ailsa Zaenker (recorded 2013)

Ailsa’s family invites you to join in a reception in the Memorial Centre across the street,
immediately following the service, where we can share memories and fellowship.

We invite you to share written memories of Ailsa by sending them to
her son Peter (pzaenker@telus.net), for compilation by the family.

