

July 6, 2015



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The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia Remembers Cellist and Founding Member James Holesovsky (1943 – 2015)

(Philadelphia) Cellist James Holesovsky, a member of The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia almost since it was founded fifty years ago, died on June 27 from health-related complications after an extended illness. Holesovsky was 72. Throughout his artistic career, Jimmy, as he was known to his many friends and fellow musicians, was regarded as one of the finest continuo cellists. To honor his fifty-year relationship with the ensemble, the Chamber Orchestra has created [The James Holesovsky Memorial Fund](#) and will host a special public memorial service for the beloved cellist in September.

“Jimmy will take his place as a great musician,” assures Dirk Brossé, the current Music Director of The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia. “Jimmy was an honest man with a great heart and a noble soul. Like everyone who knew and worked with him, I will cherish the memories of our many conversations, meetings, rehearsals and concerts. I will always remember Jimmy as a gentle, finely strung man who passionately shared his abundant knowledge of the instrument he played, as well as his love for music.”

A native of Fort Wayne, Indiana, James Holesovsky graduated from Northeast High School in Philadelphia, the city where his father, Jaroslav Holesovsky, was the supervisor of instrumental music for the Public School system. Holesovsky was invited to join the Chamber Orchestra in 1964 at age 22, a year before he graduated from Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied with Orlando Cole. In the 1960s and 70s, Holesovsky participated in the Chamber Orchestra’s many successful tours of Austria, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Belgium and Israel and its thrilling performances at Carnegie Hall.

Maestro Marc Mostovoy, who founded the Chamber Orchestra in 1964 as Concerto Soloists 16 and served as the orchestra’s Artistic Director for forty years, remembers James Holesovsky as a supremely talented musician. “As one of the original members, I always felt Jimmy was the backbone of the Chamber Orchestra,” recalls Mostovoy. “Jimmy was solid as a rock; a great talent and wonderful musician. He saved many a conductor over the years!”

Holesovsky was the concertino cellist in most of the concerti grossi the Chamber Orchestra performed throughout its first half-century, and the success of those performances essentially depended on him. Some of the outstanding solos pieces he performed included the Fauré *Elegy, Op. 24*; Sidney Grolnic’s *Rhapsody for Cello and Strings* (a world premiere); and multiple Vivaldi concertos with companion instruments. Everyone who witnessed Holesovsky’s solo continuo playing, especially in works such as Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons*, agreed that it was extraordinary. “I knew of no better solo continuo player anywhere,” Marc Mostovoy declared. “Had he wished, I believe Jimmy could have had a solo career, but he chose to stay with us. We were most fortunate to have him.”

During his long and distinguished career as a classical cellist, Holesovsky served as a member of the Dallas Symphony, a faculty member of the University of Delaware, the principal cellist of The Philly Pops and the principal cellist at The Santa Fe Opera for thirty-two summer seasons. He was the recipient of numerous awards and prizes throughout his career. In addition to his fifty years with The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia,

Holesovsky played for numerous organizations in Philadelphia including the Academy of Vocal Arts, the Philly Pops, the Pennsylvania Ballet and Opera Philadelphia. Through the Chamber Orchestra's many contract performances, the esteemed cellist also performed at The Mann Center for the Performing Arts and Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church and with a wide range of artistic collaborators, including Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia, The Philadelphia Singers, Singing City, among many others.

Holesovsky served as personnel manager of the Chamber Orchestra for more than thirty years until earlier this year, when he resigned for health reasons. The Chamber Orchestra's Executive Director Janelle McCoy also remembers him in that role. "As a personnel manager, Jimmy was kind, patient and respectful to all the musicians he hired, whether they were hired as part of our core or as soloists for tours or individual concerts."

McCoy also remembers the gifted cellist for his great talent and personal modesty. "Jimmy mastered his instrument to the point that the legendary cellist Rostropovich personally invited him to study with him in Europe, but Jimmy actually declined this great honor. Everyone who knew and worked with Jimmy understands that his decision to stay in Philadelphia with the ensemble that he loved was a testament both to his genuine modesty and to his lifelong loyalty to his fellow musicians."

Holesovsky listed cellists Leonard Rose, Jacqueline du Pré and Mstislav Rostropovich among his strongest musical influences. But he also loved all kinds of popular music as well, from Loretta Lynn, Tammy Wynette and Barbra Streisand to Johnny Mathis and The Beatles. "These are all great entertainers who put a lot of thought into their musical arrangements and their stage presentations," Holesovsky said. "But mostly, all these artists touched me personally, each in their own way."

Ignat Solzhenitsyn succeeded Mostovoy as Artistic Director in 2005 after serving in other positions at the Chamber Orchestra for a decade and worked with Holesovsky closely. He shared these thoughts about the cellist he knew so well: "Jimmy was an outstanding cellist and a most unusual human being, devoted to music and compassionate to colleagues. His self-effacing manner belied, I think, a grand temperament and rich inner life." Solzhenitsyn added a note of gratitude: "I remain in his debt for gently shepherding me through the pitfalls of orchestral life at the beginning of my professional conducting path. With him passes an entire era."

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[The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia](#)

A founding resident company of The Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia is a 33-member professional ensemble led by Music Director Dirk Brossé, a conductor and composer of international acclaim. For half a century, the Chamber Orchestra has earned a sterling reputation around the world for distinguished performances of repertoire from the Baroque period through the 21st century.

The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia has commissioned and premiered over 70 new works and has performed with such internationally acclaimed artists as Plácido Domingo, Luciano Pavarotti, Mstislav Rostropovich, Issac Stern, Rudolf Serkin, The Eroica Trio, Jean-Pierre Rampal, Julie Andrews, Bernadette Peters, Elvis Costello, and Sylvia McNair, among others. In the fall of 2014, the Chamber Orchestra completed a successful national tour with Branford Marsalis.

The Chamber Orchestra performs from September through May in the Kimmel Center's intimate, 600-seat Perelman Theater and performs one concert program each year in the Kimmel Center's Verizon Hall as well as selected concert programs at Lincoln University. The Chamber Orchestra also performs with other musical ensembles throughout the region and travels regularly across the United States, Europe, and Israel. Chamber Orchestra Music Director Dirk Brossé has made more than 60 CD recordings and has conducted in numerous world-famous concert halls, such as the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Royal Festival Hall, the Barbican Centre and the Royal Albert Hall in London, the Victoria Hall in Geneva, the Seoul Arts Center, the Tokyo Forum and the Concert Hall Shanghai.

"The Chamber Orchestra always walks a fine line between creating an experience that's different from what goes on elsewhere in the Kimmel Center and something that won't alienate mainstream audiences. Music Director Dirk Brossé is so singular that, regardless of an individual concert's success, it won't be like anything else around." - The Philadelphia Inquirer

For information, please contact the Chamber Orchestra at 215.545.5451 or visit chamberorchestra.org.

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