

Donna Rhodenizer

Composer, performer, recording artist, music educator

Donna Rhodenizer began composing music as a teenager. Her writing has been shaped by many years of studying classical piano and violin, her experience singing in a variety of choral groups and her training as a music education specialist. Her initial recognition as a composer was for her compositions for children. As an elementary music education specialist for over 35 years, Donna uses her “hands on experience” with children in her elementary music classroom to create music that sparkles with creativity and humour and reveals an imagination that rivals those of her young students.



Donna's original songs for children are published in five printed song collections with companion CDs for elementary students:

[Dinosaurs, Dragons and Me](#) (CD received a JUNO nomination and Music NS award)

[Computer Cat](#) (CD received an ECMA award)

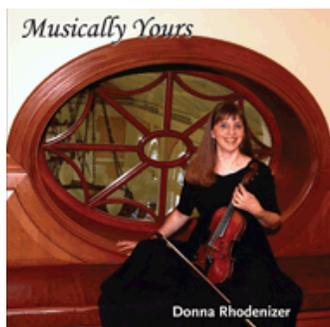
[Blue Skies and Pirates](#) (co-written with fellow writer/performer/musician Andy Duinker)
(CD received an ECMA nomination)

[It's Christmas Time / C'est Noël](#) (English CD received an ECMA nomination)

[La vie pour moi](#) (CD won a Music NS award and an ECMA)

Donna also draws on her choral background to write music for adult choirs. Her attention to lyrical melodic lines and lush harmonies make her music a favourite among choristers. Donna has been commissioned to write songs and/or arrangements for several leading choirs in Nova Scotia, British Columbia and the US. Donna's choral compositions are written in a variety of voicing configurations for professional, community and school choirs. Her music is printed and promoted by Red Castle Publishing, the company she co-founded and co-owns with Andy Duinker. Many performances of Donna Rhodenizer's compositions can be found on [YouTube](#).

As a singer and multi-instrumentalist, Donna has developed a large body of compositions that she performs at festivals, and other venues as half of the performing duo, Donna & Andy.



These performances combine children's music, folk music and instrumental compositions. Donna's instrumental music is featured on a full-length CD, "Musically Yours".

"[Musically Yours](#)" is a very personal album, created "for my parents so they can hear me play whenever they want to". Fifteen of the sixteen tracks are her own original songs; all songs are her own arrangements; and she solos on violin/fiddle, accordion and piano throughout. The title of the CD is her favourite personal sign off

when writing letters and emails. Each song has a story. For example, "Lady of the Red Castle" got its title from the literal translation of her own name. "Tune for Rhody" was written in honour of the uncle who sent her family their first accordion when Donna was a little girl. She plays that same accordion in performances to date and it is the one featured on the CD.

Donna's musical style reflects the influence of her classical training and crosses over into the folk genre, blurring the line often drawn between these two musical styles. She plays with the finesse of a violinist and the heart of a fiddler. The accordion gives her melodies a unique and soulful voice – or can be used to keep the listener's toes tapping. Although her beautiful melodies can stand on their own merits, she has a good ear for supportive and soaring counter melodies. Her harmonies are deep and three-dimensional, and she draws on interesting combinations of instruments to capitalize on that harmonic depth.

Donna has used her composing talents on a second CD, created with the adult listener in mind. Although "[Fine Company](#)" features the vocals of her fellow musician and singing partner, Andy Duinker, many of the songs are penned by Donna. She describes their partnership as a symbiotic relationship: "I write the songs and Andy is my voice". She lends her musical support with backing vocals or her instrumental talents. The songs on this CD show the influence of Donna's Maritime roots with traditional and original compositions standing side by side with a pleasant and complimentary juxtaposition. Once again, arrangements created by these two musicians are fresh and innovative, breathing life into traditional tunes and carrying them forward for another generation of listeners.



Donna received her Bachelor of Music Education from Acadia University, where she majored in violin and minored in piano. She was a Masters of Music Education candidate at Brandon University in Manitoba.

She has been a conference clinician at the International Society of Music Educators (ISME), Music Educators Associations in Ontario (OMEA), New Brunswick (NBMEA), Newfoundland (NLTA) and her home province of Nova Scotia (NSMEA); as well as presenting [music teaching workshops](#) for teachers in Saskatchewan, Ontario, New Brunswick and Hong Kong. Donna also shares her music expertise as a **choral adjudicator** for music festivals.

Donna received the **NSMEA Musica Viva Award** in 2009 for her contribution to music education. At the October 2011 NSMEA conference, Donna's fellow music educators premiered her composition "Celebrate!" commissioned by the NSMEA. It was also at this conference that Donna was awarded the Canadian Music Educators' Association (CMEA) "**Jubilate Award of Merit**" for her significant contribution to music education in Canada. Donna was also awarded the **NSMEA Lifetime Achievement Award** in 2019 as she retired from her 35-year career in the elementary music classroom. In her "retirement" she is a beloved substitute in elementary music classrooms and she continues to compose original music for elementary students and their teachers.



Donna takes great delight in sharing her classroom experience with her colleagues by posting regularly on YouTube and her Facebook page, Elementary Music with Donna. She has over 400 videos posted to date. Her teaching strategies, repertoire and pedagogical insights are well received by her peers and teachers online.

www.elementarymusicwithdonna.com