Duncan John Low MA, PhD

On Saturday, 18 November, Duncan Low died unexpectedly at his home in Oak Bay, BC. Born in Nottingham, England in 1956, he is survived by his partner Janet Scarfe, and his elder brother Steve.

Best known as the Executive Director of the Vancouver East Cultural Centre, Duncan inspired love and respect across an expansive community of artists and friends. His curatorial vision brought a world of brilliant theatre, dance, visual art, music, and hybrid art forms to Vancouver and nurtured and supported local talent to the international stage.

Having left school at 17, Duncan worked as an apprentice chef and started his theatre career as a scene shifter at the Cambridge Arts Theatre. Discovering his place in the theatre world, he became a stage manager for various companies, ultimately becoming company stage manager at Perth Theatre, where he met Janet in 1979. He went on to establish the Scottish International Children's Festival in Edinburgh after being inspired by the Vancouver International Children's Festival. Because of his work at the festival, he had his first contact with Canadian theatre companies, eventually leading to a move to Montreal in 1985. Duncan and Janet moved from Quebec to Vancouver, where he took up the challenge of running the Vancouver East Cultural Centre. For the next ten years, the Cultch, as it has affectionately become known, was his home away from home. Under his early guidance, the historic venue began a process that would eventually lead to its renovation and revitalization. His rhetorical flourishes detailing the building's many shortfalls were hilarious, memorable, and, as it turned out, most effective.

While at the Cultch, he undertook a Master of Urban Studies degree, which he completed in 2010. He then pursued a Doctor of Philosophy from the School of Communications at Simon

Fraser University, which he completed in 2016. In 2017, Duncan was awarded a Canadian Science Policy Fellowship at the BC Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills & Training, Research and Analysis Unit, happily bringing Duncan and Janet to Victoria. Following this fellowship, Duncan entered semi-retirement while teaching online courses at Thompson Rivers University, which he continued until his passing. Duncan was active in the community during this time, volunteering at Our Place and serving as a member of the Canadian College of Performing Arts Board of Directors.

Above all, Duncan will be remembered for his passionate engagement with whatever was capturing his attention at the time: his new-found love of playing the guitar, live performance, online chess, electoral reform, research, sailing, a really good sandwich: He immersed himself fully in his passions and shared his passions generously. He truly loved exposing friends (and strangers) to things that brought him joy, and no one who spoke with him left the conversation without learning something new. He mentored a generation of arts administrators, artists, and curators. His style, directness, ability to get to the bottom of an issue, and his passion will be sorely missed. The people whose lives he touched are better off for having known him, and the broader community is stronger for the leadership he demonstrated as an arts administrator and advocate.

Condolences may be offered to the family below.

McCall Gardens
www.mccallgardens.com