

Oscar was 'titan of the keyboards'

MN August 16, 2013

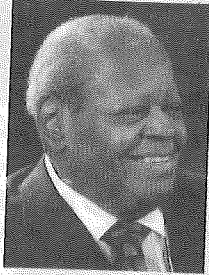
The man who was arguably the world's greatest jazz pianist called Mississauga home from 1972 until 2007.

When he died, Oscar Peterson was hailed as a titan of the keyboards whose recording legacy included some of the greatest jazz recordings ever made, including a classic series of records with fellow legends Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong.

His albums featuring the songs from *West Side Story* and a series of tributes to composers such as the Gershwins, Cole Porter and Harold Arlen are timeless classics of the genre.

A 2006 book, which surveyed professional critics, concluded that Peterson was the best jazz pianist ever.

While his signature, hard-driving trios were renowned for their swinging style, Peterson's sound and style matured as he aged. His bravura technical dazzle was supplanted with a more melodic approach. He was temporarily



Oscar Peterson

derailed by a 1993 stroke, but regained his skills to play in concert halls around the world.

Peterson was also a sensitive accompanist to the world's best jazz singers.

He was also an accomplished composer whose *Hymn to Freedom* and *Canadiana Suite* earned him a spot in the Canadian Songwriters' Hall of Fame.

A proud Canadian and Mississaugan, Peterson was a close friend of Mayor Hazel McCallion.

"His presence meant so much," McCallion said after his death at his Mississauga home on Dec. 23, 2007. "We were so proud to have him in our midst. It's a great loss to Canada and it's a great loss to the world."

The lowdown:

- born Aug. 15, 1925 in **Montreal**
- rose to instant fame in 1949 when called out of the audience at **Carnegie Hall** to join an all-star jazz band
- winner of nine **Grammys**, including **Lifetime Achievement Award**, the **UNESCO International Music Prize** and **Praemium Imperiale**, the arts equivalent of the Nobel Prize
- honoured on Canadian postage stamp, a Member of the **Order of Canada**, winner of the **Mississauga Civic Award of Merit**, inaugural member of the **Mississauga Music Walk of Fame** and the first and only member of the **Mississauga Arts Hall of Fame**
- name graces a **public school** and **street** in Mississauga
- wrote in 2003: "Mississauga, happily, is my home and shall remain so"

Class of 2013: Oscar Peterson