

## Prolific fiddler Oliver Schroer dies of cancer

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Avant garde fiddler Oliver Schroer died on Thursday, July 3 after a year-long fight with leukemia.

Legendary Toronto fiddler Oliver Schroer died of leukemia this week, leaving fans and students of his unique style mourning the loss of an icon.

Schroer passed away Thursday morning at Toronto's Princess Margaret Hospital after a year of fighting the disease. He leaves a legacy of combining Ontario folk music traditions with elaborate classical arrangements.

"Oliver was the inventor of a completely new way to play music on the violin and was a prolific composer of his trademark improvisational style solo tunes," said Elizabeth Szekeres, a fiddler, writer and folk music composer from Caledon, Ont. "The passing of Oliver Schroer has left a giant void in Canada's creative community."

According to Szekeres, Schroer's last words were, "Well, I guess no excursions today."

Schroer gave his final concert on June 5, aptly titled: "Oliver's Last Concert on his Tour of this Planet."

"He had a terrific sense of humour, right to the end," said Szekeres.

In his years of performance, he travelled throughout Europe and North America to give concerts and wrote more than 1,000 pieces of music. He recorded with musicians including Loreena McKennitt, Sylvia Tyson, Great Big Sea and Spirit of the West.

Emilyn Stam, 19, was a long-time student of Schroer's. She said his style and personality will missed.

"He was a huge inspiration. Nothing was ever too big, or too impossible or too crazy. Anything went, musically," Stam told CTV.ca.

"He was always pushing the boundaries of what you thought was possible."

Chelsea Sleeps, 24, also learned a great deal under Schroer.

"He was an amazing musician and incredible human being," she said. "He wanted to be your friend and he wanted to learn about you as a person."

Sleeps said Schroer was an inspirational figure who "wasn't your typical musician at all -- he didn't have the attitude."