



MUSIC IN THE AFTERNOON

Women's Musical Club of Toronto

# NEWS & NOTES

NUMBER 64 | APRIL 2022

## ANNOUNCING OUR 125TH SEASON: CONNECTION & CONTINUITY

By Simon Fryer

125 years is a significant anniversary - an anniversary worthy of significant celebration!

Throughout those 125 years of *Music in the Afternoon* the Women's Musical Club of Toronto has demonstrated a continuous and substantial connection to our city, to Canadian and international artists, and to the global canon of musical creation. Our upcoming anniversary season highlights these connections in contemporary format and explores the continuity of our committed approach in integrated and immersive style.

To begin with, we continue our usual practice of inviting significant artists at various stages in their careers to perform. However, for the 125th, these artists "anchor" their concert and invite their mentors, or those they themselves mentor, to perform alongside them. Our performers establish our view of the present, through their mentors we explore their history, and through those they mentor, the future.



Simon Fryer (Photo: Lindsay Lozon)

The achievement of 125 years of musical history will be divided chronologically into five blocks of 25 years with each concert in our series featuring a representative work from one of these periods. The context of this work in local and international events, will be featured in the program and elaborated online by

dedicated WMCT historian Robin Elliott, following the WMCT's firmly established contribution to international culture.

In keeping with these approaches, a composer has been selected by the Artistic Director and the Artists Selection Committee for commission. This composer has curated a program around this new work in the manner of the other anchor artists of the season. Essentially, the composer is the featured artist on the program and has selected works and performers of significance to their creative journey, designing a program highlighting historical influences on their musical development. Performers and repertoire contribute to the composer's current expression, in the process revealing the composer's past, present, and future direction.

Using this innovative structure, not only do we maintain our successful course of both introducing new talent to the Toronto stage and celebrating established artists, but we highlight the WMCT's contribution to the cultural landscape, and its integration into the history of the city, over this remarkable period of time.

Artists and repertoire demonstrate the canon of past, present and future, as *Music in the Afternoon* explores the genuine history represented by 125 years of musical activity.

Simon Fryer is the WMCT Artistic Director

A full list of performers and regular updates on our 125th season will soon be available on our [website](#).



[WomensMusicalClubofToronto](#)



[@WMCT120](#)

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: MUSIC AND WAR

*By Kathleen McMorrow*

In early April 2022, Pink Floyd reunited to make a video of *Hey Hey, Rise Up*, sampling the voice of a wounded Ukrainian soldier, and based on a WWI protest song. Messiaen's 1941 *Quartet for the End of Time*, written in a POW camp, suggests freedom and dignity. In the 5th century BCE, in the plays of Euripedes, choruses representing Trojan women sang laments for dead children.

Music isn't always employed to call for universal peace, love, and harmony. This medium can certainly have more than one message. Martial sounds, from early pipes and drums to helicopters blasting out heavy metal have been intended either to terrify or to inspire. Haydn wrote a Mass honouring a Nelson victory, and Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture celebrates a Napoleonic defeat.

With horrifying reports of death and destruction in Ukraine demanding our daily attention, how can we take pleasure in performances of string quartets by Russian composers? Why do we not impose sanctions on them, in company with other goods and commodities produced by the invader?

The scholar and conductor Leon Botstein makes clear the confusion in this question. He describes two notable performances of the Beethoven Ninth Symphony in Berlin which had startlingly different aims: one by [Leonard Bernstein in 1989](#) celebrated the fall of the Berlin Wall; the other in 1942, when Wilhelm Furtwängler conducted in honour of Hitler's birthday and the Nazi successes on the eastern front<sup>1</sup>. Yet neither of these associations have had any affect on the work itself.



West Germans scale the Berlin Wall before East German guards as the Cold War barrier came down in November 1989. (Photo: Hesse, Ullstein Bild/Getty)

<sup>1</sup> Botstein, Leon, "Music in Time of War," *Conjunctions* 16 (1991) 122-128

Classical music alone can retain its worth and integrity after being used as propaganda. Symphonies, string quartets, and other permanent works in the canonic repertory will eventually emerge in their own characters, with the temporary hatreds they may have stimulated forgotten. Even Shostakovich's "Leningrad" symphony, with its evocation of specific invasion and resistance, initially applauded, then banned by the Soviets in 1948, can't be tied to its theme, but lives on in concert halls in every city.

Serious music is universal: it connects individuals who might have little else in common, it immerses strangers in a collective experience, while it encourages concentration and reflection, allowing personal emotional responses and interpretations, and it offers hope for a better future.

*Kathleen McMorrow is the WMCT President*

## WHY DID MiTA MOVE TO GRACE CHURCH-ON-THE-HILL?

*By Diane Martello*

The short answer: We had to move to re-establish live performances with an audience for *Music in the Afternoon*. [Grace Church on-the-Hill](#) was available, has a fine piano, good acoustics, is accessible and is reasonably priced. Harder to get to? Yes.



Grace Church on-the-Hill

The longer answer is complicated by the pandemic and University of Toronto policy. Here is a brief summary:

In March, 2020, the World Health Organization declared Covid-19 a pandemic. Performance venues shut down. If they could, people stayed home. The WMCT was obliged to cancel the last two concerts of the 2019-2020 season; concerts which should have been held in our beloved venue

for the past 30+ years, the University of Toronto's Walter Hall.

By the Fall of 2020, after much negotiation, the University of Toronto agreed to allow our performances in Walter Hall with two provisos: performers were to be masked and there was to be no audience.

But, as Covid variants emerged early in 2021, concert venues were again closed completely. Artistic Director Simon Fryer negotiated pre-recorded concerts for the WMCT. Personalized video performances were provided by pianist Eric Lu, the Viano String Quartet and many of our Career Development Award winners, including pianists Francine Kay and Charles Richard-Hamelin, recorder player Vincent Lauzer and violinist James Ehnes to name a few.



Promotion for the  
CDA Celebration  
online concert,  
June 2021

In December 2021, although the Ontario Government allowed performance venues to open with reduced capacity, the University of Toronto remained steadfast in its “no audience” policy! At this point we decided to form a Concert Venue Sub-committee. The task: find an interim concert location for Spring 2022. Thank you, Neville Austin, Daisy Leung, Kathleen McMorrow, and Arts Administrator Shannon Perreault, for finding Grace Church on-the-Hill at the right price, with our dates available, with a fine piano, with good acoustics and with accessibility. Hard to get to? Yes, we acknowledge that.

Will we be back at Walter Hall next Season? Walter Hall is our first-choice venue for *MitA* and we have reserved our dates for 2022-2023. However, performances at Walter Hall are dependent on University of Toronto Policy. The Concert Venue Sub-Committee is actively seeking a “just in case” central location which has our dates available, a fine piano, good acoustics and sightlines, and accessibility.

*Diane Martello is the WMCT Past President and MCM Committee Chair*



Beverly Johnston & Friends perform in an empty Walter Hall for a virtual  
*Music in the Afternoon*, November 25, 2021 (Photo: James Kippen)

## THE WMCT COMMISSIONING PROJECT

*By Kathleen McMorrow*

For each season of *Music in the Afternoon*, one of the performers or ensembles works with a selected Canadian composer to create a chamber work for them. The WMCT provides the fee and presents the première performance at *Music in the Afternoon*.

The first commission was the required piece for the fourth Career Development Award. Jeannie Chung won the live competition held on February 8 and 9, 1997 and later performed Jacques Hétu's *Fantaisie for piano*, op. 59 at her Walter Hall recital in November. On May 24, 1998, a wind sextet premièred Donald Coakley's *Fanfare for a Festive Anniversary*, commissioned for the gala Centennial Celebration Concert, in the lobby of the Weston Recital Hall in North York.

Since 1997, twenty new pieces have been added to the Canadian chamber music repertoire, with instrumentation ranging from solo piano in a work by Stewart Goodyear which he also performed, up to an ensemble of eight cellos, by Kelly-Marie Murphy (which won the Léger, the only Canada Council prize for chamber music.) Most of the scores are now available from the [Canadian Music Centre](#).



Vivian Fung  
(Photo: Geneviève Caron)

Among the commissioned composers have been both senior figures (Juno Award winners Allan Gordon Bell, Christos Hatzis, and Chan Ka Nin) and younger artists whose careers have since flourished (Vivian Fung, Zosha di Castri and Anna Pidgorna.)

A complete list of composers, titles, artists, and date of performance is posted on the WMCT [website](#).



## A HOPPING GOOD TIME

By Shannon Perreault

On Tuesday April 19th, WMCT President Kathleen McMorrow and I were delighted to attend the Royal Conservatory of Music's annual Glenn Gould School Studio Hop & Lunch. Due to COVID precautions, no "studio hopping" was involved this year, but we were treated to a behind-the-scenes glimpse into a master-class at the school, followed by lunch with the WMCT's 110th Anniversary Scholarship winner, violinist Keris Choi. It was



Keris Choi (Photo: Anonymous)

wonderful to learn more about Keris' plans for the future and to celebrate her successful school-year, supported by the WMCT. Many thanks to the Glenn Gould School and to our generous WMCT donors for making it all possible!

*Shannon Perreault is the WMCT Arts Administrator*

## A CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION: OUR UPCOMING 125TH SEASON

By Kathy Halliday

You already know what havoc the Pandemic has wrought on arts organizations so there is no need to repeat it here. But let's think about why the WMCT is not your average arts organization and why it is worth supporting through donations or by sponsoring concerts or initiatives.

Since 1898, Toronto's music lovers have enjoyed world class musicians thanks to the WMCT. For a modest cost, you can hear chamber music at its best from both local and international artists; we offer five remarkable concerts per season.

The WMCT keeps great classical music alive through the centuries and helps to create new art for future ages. At their wonderful concert on March 31st, Cameron Crozman and Philip Chiu debuted our Allan Gordon Bell



Cameron Crozman & Philip Chiu

Music in the Afternoon, March 31, 2022 (Photo: Don Johnston)

commission *Solastalgia*. Each year the WMCT supports a Canadian composer by funding new work, creating music for the next 125 years and beyond.

Students receive substantial scholarships from the WMCT at several eminent Canadian institutions and we support other important opportunities for young musicians.

The WMCT gives the Career Development Award every three years to a Canadian musician on the cusp of a promising professional career. We have helped launch some pretty successful artists, among them James Ehnes, Karina Gauvin and Charles Richard-Hamelin.

Remarkably, there has been a WMCT presence in Toronto for 125 years, through good times and bad, through war and pestilence (twice, actually, on that last). Our organization is run mainly by dedicated and determined volunteers. When you [donate to the WMCT](#), you help us continue to bring the finest in classical and contemporary music to our city while supporting young musicians at critical times in their education and careers.

One hundred and twenty-five years of great music and musicians. Now that's something to celebrate.

*Kathy Halliday is a WMCT Board Member and Chair of the Advertising Subcommittee.*

***If you, or someone you know, loves chamber music and would like to sponsor a concert in our upcoming 125th Music in the Afternoon season, please contact the office by calling 416 923-7052, x.2 or writing to [wmct@wmct.on.ca](mailto:wmct@wmct.on.ca).***