

MUSIC IN THE  
AFTERNOON

MUSIC IN THE AFTERNOON

## NEWS &amp; NOTES

NUMBER 54 | OCTOBER 2016

MARY-MARGARET (PEGGY) WEBB (1922-2007),  
AND HER FOUNDATION

Concert-goers through the early 2000s regularly saw the support of the "Julie-Jiggs Foundation" noted in their programs. Concealed behind this droll name was Mary-Margaret (Peggy) Webb: musician, philanthropist, and usually a member of the audience.

Peggy Webb grew up in Newmarket, one of the fourth generation of the prominent Davis family. On June 18, 1936, the front page of the Newmarket Era featured the funeral of her grandfather, Elihu James Davis, mourned as a leading businessman, politician, and generous patron of his church, the local hospital, and other social causes. Her



Mary-Margaret Webb and her dog

uncle, Aubrey Davis, supported conservation and reforestation in King County. The estate of her mother, Edith Davis Webb, still helps fund the Canada Council Music Instrument Bank.

After graduating with an Arts degree from the University of Toronto, and piano and theory certificates from the Toronto Conservatory of Music, Peggy Webb taught briefly on the faculty of the Hambourg Conservatory, then joined the Royal Conservatory of Music, specializing in beginning and intermediate students, from 1949 to 1985. In 1979 the Conservatory distinguished her with a Certificate of Appreciation.



Mary-Margaret Webb

In 1981, she formalized her charitable activities in the M. M. Webb Foundation. Her cousin Barbara Chilcott Davis, one of the principals in the establishment of the Crest Theatre, and Angela Stripe of Caldwell Securities Ltd. became directors in 1993. While some grants were made to health organizations, the local arts community benefited most from her generosity. The change of name to "Julie-Jiggs" (two of her favourite dogs) shows a whimsical side to her nature (*nom de chien?*), as well as a desire for privacy, or perhaps protection against entreaties from too many starving artists.

Joseph Macerollo was a fellow teacher at the RCM, and president of the Faculty Association, 1979-1985. He describes visiting in later years at her double apartment at Yonge and St. Clair, filled with sunlight, porcelain dogs, and flowering plants, and remembers her as personally reserved, but firmly opinionated, about the controversies roiling the RCM at the time, for example.

Now as the Mary-Margaret Webb Foundation, her legacy focuses on assisting modest, progressive Toronto music and arts organizations including the WMCT (one close to her heart, according to Joe Macerollo), Music Toronto, the Canadian Music Centre, New Music Concerts, Tafelmusik, and Soundstreams.

The WMCT has gratefully acknowledged the support of her Foundation, through its several name changes, for nearly twenty-five years, and looks forward to a continuing partnership in making exceptional chamber music available in Toronto.

*Kathleen McMorrow, Vice-President of the WMCT, with files from Janet Bishop, Caldwell Securities Ltd.*

The next issue of NEWS & NOTES, March 2017, will be delivered to members by email. NEWS & NOTES is also published online at WMCT.on.ca.

To receive your copy on time please update your e-mail address with the WMCT office at [wmct@wmct.on.ca](mailto:wmct@wmct.on.ca).

Printed copies of the newsletter will still be available to members without e-mail.

## SPIRITUALS

*By Gabriela Jiménez*

**O**n October 6, 2016, tenor Issachah Savage inaugurates the WMCT's 119th season. He will end his concert with a series of spirituals: songs that establish the approachable divinity of the here and now.

Spirituals are a folk musical practice initially attributed to enslaved people in the United States. While it is unclear when spirituals originally materialized, they were documented in parts of the U.S. South as early as the second decade of the nineteenth century. They became more widely known across the United States after the Civil War.

As sacred folk songs, spirituals were sung in religious and secular spaces. Enslaved people sang them during camp meetings (religious services), as work songs in the fields, and at social gatherings. In part, spirituals coincided with the "Great

Awakening," a strong "wave of Protestant religious activity and conversion" (Starr and Waterman 2014, 19), which took place in the middle of the nineteenth century. Spirituals, then, were not just characteristic of black life and expressive cultural practices but were also central to the musical constitution of the United States more generally. With spirituals, enslaved people—men, women, and children—collectively shaped the United States through music.

Spirituals have generally been a communal practice. Up to the Civil War, spirituals were primarily an oral tradition passed down from one generation to the next, and songs were rarely, if ever, notated. What is more, spirituals were typically improvised: each rendition was unique. Singers neither attempted to replicate prior instantiations of a song nor did they seek to standardize future ones. Spirituals were not attributed to one particular individual but instead were the musical creations of many. As a result, spirituals were prone to and dependent on change. They were especially difficult to transcribe because their practitioners traditionally prioritized diverse interpretations in performance.

Before the Civil War spirituals were sung a cappella, although performances included accompaniment in the form of hand clapping, foot stomping, vocal affirmations, and/or work sounds (i.e., tools or chains hitting a surface like ground or wood). Spirituals were performed using call-and-response with a leader, sometimes a preacher-like figure, and a chorus/congregation. In particular, performers sang in the "lining out" style where the leader/preacher delivered a line and the chorus/congregation repeated it. At other times, the leader/preacher and chorus/congregation's voices would overlap, resulting in a thick and complex texture. Vocal embellishments were typical of spirituals, which added to the preferred raspy vocal timbres. "Blue" notes, the microtonal flattening or bending of a pitch, and vocal glides and slides were also common to performances. Syncopation and the layering of rhythmic patterns (polyrhythms) grounded spirituals as well. Another feature typical of performances was spirit possession—"a phenomenon in which participants fall under the sway of the Holy Spirit, achieving a direct, personal communion with a higher power" (Starr and Waterman 2014, 27).

After the Civil War, spirituals attained wider attention. Touring college choirs from the South, such as the Fisk Jubilee Singers of Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, and the Hampton Singers of the Hampton Institute in Virginia, popularized spirituals among white American and European audiences. These singing groups were composed of students of newly formed predominantly black colleges, many of whom were children of former

enslaved people. The Fisk Jubilee Singers introduced spirituals to the concert stage and consequently they underwent some changes: transcriptions were made, texts were standardized, four-part harmonies were added, performances were shortened to fit more traditional concert bills, and performance elements like hand clapping and foot stomping were eradicated. Texts of popular spirituals, such as "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "Steal Away Jesus," and "Down by the Riverside," became more or less fixed at this time as well.



Fisk Jubilee Singers

The spiritual's history of change is a musical testament of life in the antebellum South. Enslaved people used spirituals to overlay the sacred and the secular as an everyday experience. Spiritual performances were incantations that operated as implicit and explicit evaluations of and moral judgments against enslavement. More than that, spiritual performances testified to the ways in which enslaved people altered the world, as best they could, to their specifications. Spirituals were deliberately improvisatory and their texts flexible so that people, together and separately, could communicate, express sentiments, transmit knowledge and personal histories, record social relationships, and denounce enslavement in ways that slave masters would not or could not understand. Through spirituals, enslaved people demonstrated how collective performances and unconventional listening are creative and skillful art forms: "Swing low, sweet chariot / Coming for to carry me home / If you get there before I do / Tell all my friends I'm coming too."

#### References

Starr, Larry and Christopher Waterman. 2014. *American Popular Music: From Minstrelsy to MP3*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gabriela Jiménez is a Ph.D. candidate in Ethnomusicology at the University of Toronto.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

*By Diane Martello*

I am very proud to be the President of a volunteer club which has been supporting classical music locally, nationally and internationally since 1899. Here are some of the ways we do this:

We PRODUCE our concert series *Music in the Afternoon*, featuring the finest Canadian and international musicians, both established and up-and-coming.

We EDUCATE our audience with our *Program Notes* and *Tuning Your Mind* lecture series.

We PROVIDE free tickets to local high school and university students.

We COMMISSION new compositions from Canadian composers.

We COLLABORATE with the Canadian Music Centre to preserve, promote and distribute the commissioned compositions.

We PROVIDE a yearly Master Class for upper level music students. Master Classes are taught by one of our performers, usually the day following their concert and are open to the public.

We PARTNER with the CBC to choose a winner for our prestigious Career Development Award Competition, presented every three years.

We RENEW our mission, values and purpose through reflection and discussion.

#### The Strategic Review

This season we will continue the Strategic Review work begun in 2015 with money provided by the Pat Brodie bequest. Our aim is to support classical music and to value our heritage, but to modernize and stream-line our operations. To this end our next newsletter will be distributed mainly electronically, so please be sure that the WMCT office has your current e-mail address.

Some WMCT/Canadian/Norwegian History  
 On October 19, 1948, the Parlow String Quartet performed for the WMCT. Included in their program was the premiere of Quartet No. 1 in C for strings by the Canadian Composer Claremont Pépin. First violinist Kathleen Parlow was no stranger to premiering works. Born in Calgary in 1890, she had been a child prodigy and toured Europe extensively while still a teenager.



Kathleen Parlow, Canadian violin virtuoso

In 1909 she gave the world premiere, along with the Berlin Philharmonic, of a violin concerto written by the Norwegian composer Johan Halvorsen (1864-1935). This work, which incorporated Norwegian folk-dance tunes, was notoriously difficult for the soloist, but according to the critics of the day Miss Parlow played brilliantly. What they didn't like was the length of the piece, which seemed a bit short. The overly sensitive Halvorsen withdrew it from his repertoire and burned all the copies – or so he thought. Miss Parlow had kept her score and last year the "lost" Halvorsen Violin Concerto was "found" in the University of Toronto music library and was re-premiered this summer by Norwegian violinist Henning Kraggerud and the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra in Stavanger, Norway. I was at that performance and really enjoyed the piece. Many audience members were moved to tears as they recognized the Norwegian folk tunes imbedded in the music. Written a couple of years after Norway's peaceful 1905 separation from Sweden, the Norwegian people are so thrilled to have their "national" violin concerto back again. As conductor Bjarte Engerset said, "We do not know yet if it is a great work but we do know that it is among one of Halvorsen's very best compositions." For your information, violinist Kraggerud will be playing the Sibelius Violin Concerto with the Toronto Symphony in November.

And speaking of "national music" don't forget that the Canadian Opera Company will be performing

Harry Somers' *Louis Riel* at The Four Seasons Centre in April and May of 2017. Russell Braun, WMCT scholarship winner and popular performer at our concerts, will be singing the title role!

*Diane Martello, WMCT President.*



## WMCT SNIPPETS OF HISTORY THE WMCT AT ITS SILVER ANNIVERSARY – 1922-23

Once again we mine Robin Elliott's excellent history of the Women's Musical Club of Toronto, *Counterpoint to a City*, for interesting facts about our Club and its evolution.

The Women's Musical Club of Toronto was founded in 1899 with the dual purpose of fostering musical talent in Toronto, and creating a venue for music lovers to enjoy that talent. For the first 15 years of the Club's existence, most of the concerts were given by "active" members who were not paid for their performances, whether they were amateur or professional musicians; in 1900 their cost of membership was \$2. The concerts were attended by "associate" members who had paid a higher membership fee (\$3) for the privilege, a format which was apparently standard in the many popular women's musical clubs of the time. The general public was also invited to these concerts, which raised considerable revenue for the WMCT despite the fact that in the early days admission cost only 25 cents.

Over the years, however, an increasing number of professional artists were engaged to perform at WMCT concerts, artists who were paid appropriately for their performances. This gave rise, not unnaturally, to discussion about exploitation of the local talent and the inappropriateness of requiring them to perform without compensation. In 1914, Mary Henderson Flett Dickson, who served as President of the WMCT for 12 of the first 20 seasons, reorganized the Club to reflect these changing circumstances and views.

From that year on, there was only one class of adult membership, no longer distinguishing between members who might be engaged to perform and those who would be audience members only. The cost of this single form of membership became \$5, plus a one-time entrance fee of \$3. In subsequent years, only a few particularly talented members of the WMCT would perform at concerts as piano accompanists to visiting artists.

This change to hiring only professional musicians was

complete by the silver anniversary, in the 1922-23 season. The number of concerts was reduced to seven per season, instead of offering a programme every two weeks. In that year, The King Edward Hotel was the venue for WMCT concerts, and was particularly zealous in appealing to its female clientele. The entire 10th floor was reserved for women, with a separate drawing room and private parlour, and the hotel provided afternoon tea for 50 cents.

Robin Elliott tells us that WMCT members in the 25th season enjoyed an outstanding selection of both Canadian and international musicians, most of them just emerging as important members of the international musical landscape. As he notes, "The WMCT was clearly enhancing its reputation for finding and introducing important young musicians." Names such as Germaine Malepart (a Canadian pianist) or Emil Telmanyi (a Hungarian cellist "notorious for having recorded the Bach solo violin sonatas with the discredited 'Bach bow'", according to Robin) may not resonate with us now, but it is clear that one shining goal for the original WMCT has stood the test of time: to bring remarkable talent to an appreciative Toronto audience.

*Kathy Halliday is a member of the WMCT and the WMCT Foundation.*



## STRATEGIC PLANNING AT THE WMCT

As it enters its 119th season, the WMCT has undertaken its first-ever formal strategic planning exercise, which was made possible by a bequest from former member and volunteer, Pat Brodie. The strategic planning process was led by CS Arts Consulting Principal, Carey Suleiman, with facilitation sessions led by Lori Miller Pike from The Connected Brand. Members of the WMCT steering committee included: Annette Sanger, past president; Diane Martello, current president; Julia Smith, former president; and Bonnie O'Dacre, vice-president. The WMCT survey of audience members last November was an important part of this process, which has also included stakeholder interviews, facilitated board discussions, and many meetings between Carey Suleiman and the steering committee.

Issues at the forefront of our discussions included: time and place of our concerts, the name and "image" of our organization (valuing our heritage yet also finding a niche in the current classical concert scene in Toronto), programming, audience retention and expansion, role of the artistic director,

and further professionalization of operations in a mainly volunteer-run organization. The board will now move forward to the implementation of plans outlined in the final report, focusing on: governance and building volunteer strength; enhancing our professional skills and resources; branding, marketing and audience development; and the possible presentation of occasional concerts at Koerner Hall. The board certainly has much work to do!

In addition, though, we would also like to reach out to all our members who make the WMCT such an important and special organization. We need to build up our volunteer corps and are especially looking for people with marketing, organizational, fundraising or financial skills. Furthermore, the WMCT is looking for music lovers in the 50 to 69 year-old age base to replenish its membership, 75% of which is over the age of 70. We will continue to serve the more senior population, but as people age we need younger members to replace them.

### PLEASE CONSIDER VOLUNTEERING WITH THE WMCT

### PLEASE HELP US RECRUIT NEW MEMBERS

If you can help, phone us at 416-923-7052 or email us at [wmct@wmct.on.ca](mailto:wmct@wmct.on.ca).

*Annette Sanger  
Chair, Strategic Planning Steering Committee.*



## PROFILE: DAGMAR STAFL By Bonnie O'Dacre

When Dagmar Stafl escaped Soviet Czechoslovakia in 1949 she took few things – in two suitcases were five dictionaries and a tailor-made blue suit. Not knowing which country she'd end in, the dictionaries were in English, French, Spanish, German and Italian. English was the one she really needed. And the blue suit? It served well walking across the border, in immigration meetings, university admittance tests and job interviews. It no longer fits, but is a prized possession in her Toronto home.

Born in the "harvest time" of 1926, her story spans an idyllic childhood in Czechoslovakia through the tragic events of World War 2 when she was interned in a prisoner camp; then the Soviet invasion when she left her homeland and arrived in Canada as a political refugee. She tells the story in *Blue Suit and Dictionaries*, the book she wrote so her children and

grandchildren would know her story. Told in her positive and sprightly tone it captures one life story amid the tragic events of the 20th century.

Music plays a role in the tale. "Music was always around us", Dagmar says of her early life in Czechoslovakia. "Bands always played on Sunday; we would go out for dinner and end up singing; as well as classical music we had jazz and the American big bands". It runs as a theme through her story, so in 1989 when she retired it was a natural for her to join the WMCT and two years later become treasurer. It was a time of change and growth for the Club and Dagmar's skills were instrumental in placing the club on a sound financial path.



The blue suit that she wore out of Europe in 1949 is a keepsake in Dagmar Staffl's home.

But her story starts in the town of Hodonin, Southern Moravia. "It was not exceptionally pretty," she says, "but a small town is a wonderful place for a child to grow up." She describes life in an area where prosperous villages flourished within fertile farmland, and "the cultural life never stood still". As well as local people providing their own artistic events, groups of actors and musicians toured through town. Her parents owned two bookstores which provided a literary centre in hers and the town's life. Silent films were in their heyday and Tom Mix and his horse Trix were part of the scene. Newsreels were also shown but from 1933 on they began to portray troubling events - the turmoil about to overtake Europe.

On March 15, 1939 the German army crossed into Czechoslovakia. Dagmar describes life under Nazism vividly in her book. Her father was involved in "information gathering" and with the Gestapo at the door he escaped town and lived as a fugitive until the end of the war. Two months after her 16th birthday Dagmar and her mother, and grandparents at 75 were arrested as political prisoners, and imprisoned in an "intern camp". Chapters dealing

with the internment describe a life of despair: "In the years of 1942-43 we lived through the darkest day where no ray of hope could be found." People arrived in the camp and: "It did not take long before they were segregated and transported to an extermination camp." The book tells the story of a teenage girl in prison, crowded in rooms with older women but even there "a few women shone like pure diamonds". There was knowledge learned and skills gained. Housed among tailors and dressmakers she learned to sew and tailor, a skill that she's used throughout life.

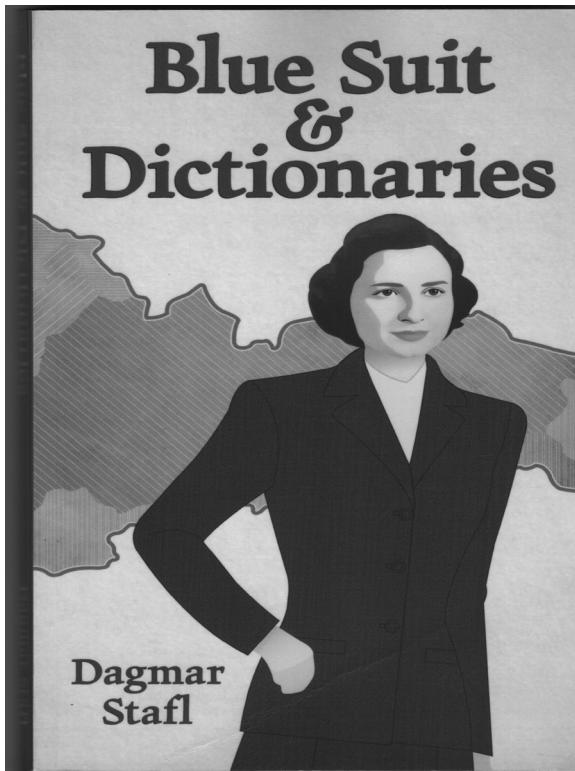
In 1945 - "returning home to nothing" - Dagmar had missed the last three years of high school, but after four months of study she and fellow students could apply for university. During her third year at Charles University in Prague political events once again changed her life as the Communists staged a coup d'état taking control of the government.

Aware that family friends were being imprisoned, Dagmar made the difficult decision to leave her homeland, packed her two suitcases and the blue suit. She writes: "I knew it would be a great companion and it truly became one. I wore it during the two border crossings, slept in it, was married in it and wore it at my three job interviews, which were all successful. It will be with me on my last crossing." She left Prague by train and from a small border village made the perilous trip, walking through an exhausting night, avoiding Russian patrols, and crossed the border into Austria.

Life as a refugee in Europe ended when she was accepted as an immigrant by Canada - her "experience" in the concentration camp convinced officials that she could, "adjust well and survive new challenges". She worked as a domestic in Rothesay, New Brunswick caring for five children. But Dagmar wanted to continue her studies. She applied and was accepted at U of T, but had to gain permission to transfer her domestic contract to Ontario. Asking a male colleague from Prague University days to vouch for her he said: "Well it would be much easier if I say you're my fiancé". So life moved ahead. She studied Political Science and Economics at the U of T, and in 1952 she was one of just eight women who worked as investment analysts with Canada Life in Toronto. Her "male colleague" did become her husband and in 1954 when his job took them to Montreal, she was fortunate to get a job with Sun Life as investment analyst. After raising her family she returned to work as an economist with the Ontario Ministry of Consumer and Corporate Affairs in Toronto. It was just the skill set the WMCT needed when Dagmar retired.

Esther McNeil, who was president then, explains that the role of secretary/ treasurer was divided

creating the job of Treasurer. Dagmar was an old friend from Sun Life and Esther prevailed upon her to take the position. "Not a moment too soon," says Esther, "we had paid the large expenses of the 90th anniversary concert in Massey Hall and had some money left. Dagmar had to start from scratch. She organized an investment committee, and instituted an investment regime which has lasted to the present time."



Dagmar Stafl's book *Blue Suit & Dictionaries*

Dagmar celebrated her 90th birthday this year and sitting in her sunny Toronto home is reflective. She wrote the book so her children and grandchildren would know her story and is surprised by a wider audience. It concludes with a list, the summing up of a life well lived and includes: "be self relying; never stop learning; make decisions and accept consequences". It's worked beautifully for her.

*Bonnie O'Dacre is a long-term member of the Marketing & Membership committee and the head of the WMCT Media Relations*

this season  
**Five Concerts for \$165**

416-923-7052, [wmct@wmct.on.ca](mailto:wmct@wmct.on.ca), [www.wmct.on.ca](http://www.wmct.on.ca)

*Artists and dates subject to change without notice*

## **TUNING YOUR MIND LECTURE SERIES 2016-2017 SEASON so far...**

*Presented by Robin Elliott, Professor of Musicology and Jean A. Chalmers Chair in Canadian Music, University of Toronto.*

October 6th, 2016: Darryl Edwards

*Voice teacher, tenor, Artistic Director of the Centre for Opera Studies in Italy and COSA Canada (Centre of Opera Studies & Appreciation), and Associate Professor of Voice at the University of Toronto.*

November 24th, 2016: Ryan McClelland

*Acting Dean, Associate Dean - Academic and Student Affairs, and Professor of Music Theory at the University of Toronto.*

## **LEGACY CIRCLE**

Planned giving – by will and similar means – to the Women's Musical Club of Toronto Foundation is an effective, tax-efficient way of supporting the development of emerging Canadian performers of classical music. The Legacy Circle recognizes those who support the Foundation in this way. A planned gift of any size will qualify you for the Legacy Circle. This year the Foundation welcomed three new members: Dianne Henderson, Julia Smith, and Nora Wilson.

If you have already planned a gift or bequest to the Foundation, you may of course keep this confidential. The Foundation asks, however, that you consider informing it of your gift so that your generosity can be recognized. By honouring its supporters, others will be encouraged to make planned gifts to the Foundation. Legacy Circle members receive recognition in all WMCT concert programmes and in the Foundation's annual report. Thank you for your support!



## **WOMEN'S MUSICAL CLUB OF TORONTO/WMCT FOUNDATION 2016-2017 RECORD OF AWARDS**

**The Women's Musical Club of Toronto and Women's Musical Club of Toronto Foundation Centennial Scholarship – \$10,000**

*Established in 1997-1998 as part of the WMCT Centennial Celebrations, it is awarded annually to a student in the Performance Program of the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto. The recipient must have attained an annual grade point average of 3.5 or above, have the intention to pursue a career as a concert musician, and be a Canadian citizen or landed immigrant.*

**2016-2017 Recipient: Myriam Blardone, harp and piano**



**The Women's Musical Club of Toronto and Women's Musical Club of Toronto Foundation Graduate Fellowship – interest on the \$50,000 endowment**

*Established in 2001 with a gift of \$25,000 from the WMCT and the WMCT Foundation, and matched by the University of Toronto, to create an endowment that will sustain an annual award in perpetuity for an outstanding graduate student in Performance in the Faculty of Music. The recipient must be a Canadian citizen or landed immigrant.*

**2016-2017 Recipient: Alexandra Bourque, conducting**



**The Women's Musical Club of Toronto and Women's Musical Club of Toronto Foundation 110th Anniversary Scholarship – \$10,000**

*Established in 2008 and awarded annually to a student who displays musical excellence and is enrolled in the Artist Diploma Program or Performance Diploma Program at The Glenn Gould School of The Royal Conservatory of Music. The recipient must be a Canadian citizen or landed immigrant.*

**2016-2017 Recipient: Milica Boljevic, soprano**



**Toronto Summer Music Festival The Women's Musical Club of Toronto and the Women's Musical Club of Toronto Foundation Scholarship – \$3,000**

*Awarded to a participant who has the best overall musical talent and performing potential, is in either a Performance Degree Programme or an Artist's Diploma Programme (or equivalent), and is a Canadian citizen or landed immigrant.*

**2016-2017 Recipient: Sophia Szokolay, violin**



**National Youth Orchestra of Canada The Women's Musical Club of Toronto and the Women's Musical Club of Toronto Foundation Scholarship – \$5,000**

*Directed to a NYOC Award of Excellence to reward and encourage a student who has outstanding musical talent and performing potential, is in a Performance Degree Programme or an Artist Diploma Programme (or equivalent), and is a Canadian citizen or landed immigrant.*

**2016-2017 Recipient: Danielle Green, violin**

*All scholarship winners were invited to perform at the WMCT Annual General Meeting on September 29, 2016.*