

GREETINGS from 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 anniversary celebration highlights these connections in contemporary format and explores the continuity of our committed approach in integrated and immersive style.

We continue our 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.

The achievement of 125 years of musical history will be divided chronologically into 5 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.

In keeping with this approach, the commissioned composer, Fjóla Evans, has curated a program around her new work. In the manner of the other anchor artists of the season, she has selected works and performers who have influenced her musical development, in this way expressing her past, present and future direction.

How fitting that our 125th season should be launched with a spectacular program from our most recent CDA winner, accordionist extraordinaire Michael Bridge. As our "anchor" artist, Michael has invited his mentor Joseph Macerollo to appear with him in the sultry Piazzolla work *Oblivion* – most certainly the first time that two accordions have ever appeared simultaneously on the WMCT stage! Michael demonstrates the depth of his artistry with Sofia Gubaidulina's *Et expecto* – the work that acts as our historical gateway for this program - and also brings his colleagues from Ladom. This ground-breaking group's musical identity is drawn from many sources and reflects a beautiful new world using a Western classical

toolset to express an authentically Canadian experience. A truly new route in the diversity of our musical journey.

With our second concert of the season, I am very happy to introduce Quatuor Despax to you. It is often said that a string quartet is like a marriage, but this is a family! Four siblings who, originally mentored by their father, have been playing together for most of their lives. The wonders of Haydn's Op.76 coupled with Shostakovich's epic 8th quartet lead us to this concert's gateway work: the super-intense romanticism of Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*. Here the quartet will be joined by two of their most distinguished mentors: violist, Milena Pajaro-van de Stadt – lately of the Dover Quartet – and cellist Brian Manker of the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal and New Orford Quartet. Music separated in time by two centuries but united by the friendship and respect of contemporary performing artists.

-Simon Fryer, WMCT Artistic Director

WMCT at 125

I am delighted to be writing about the WMCT's 125th season, having begun my association with the club by writing its centennial history, *Counterpoint to a City* (1997), then following that up with *Counterpoint Continued* (2008) to bring the story up to the 110th season. Later this season a further installment of the history will be appearing, covering the past 15 years.

For this special season, WMCT artistic director Simon Fryer has created an imaginative series that constitutes a reflection upon the past 125 years of the WMCT, of the city of Toronto, and of international music history. To accomplish all of this within just five concerts, he has divided that 125-year span into five 25-year blocks. As 25 years is the length of a generation, Simon had the additional creative idea of including, in each concert, musicians who are in a mentor/mentee relationship, thus reflecting the past, present and future of the invited guest artists, as well as of the WMCT itself. For each concert, an anchor work is drawn from one of the five 25-year blocks of time, which provides an opportunity to reflect upon that period in WMCT and world history.

-Robin Elliott

The October 6th, 2022, concert
Michael Bridge
with Ladom Ensemble and Joseph Macerollo
is supported by

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The WMCT also gratefully acknowledges
Dianne Henderson
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We acknowledge the land on which this Music in the Afternoon concert is performed is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land. We acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.

Today's concert is being recorded by CBC Radio 2, broadcast date TBA

Please turn off cell phones and other noise-making devices.
No photography or recordings of any type during the performance.

Please come and meet the artists on the stage following the concert.

PROGRAM for OCTOBER 6, 2022

Suite No. 1 in G for cello, BWV 1007 Prelude	J. S. Bach (1685-1750)
French Suite No. 5 in G major, BWV 816 Gigue	J. S. Bach (1685-1750)
<i>Et exspecto</i>	Sofia Gubaidulina (b. 1931)
<i>Tebi Majko Misli Lete</i>	Traditional Bosnian
<i>The Walls are Made of Song</i>	Pouya Hamidi (b. 1986)
<i>Trazo</i>	Edson Zampronha (b. 1963)
INTERMISSION	
<i>Tsaghkats Baleni</i>	Kachatur Avetisyan (1926-1996) (arr. Michael Bridge)
<i>Oblivion</i>	Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992)
<i>Weird Fishes</i>	Radiohead (1985-present)
<i>East Coast Medley</i>	Traditional
<i>Libertango</i>	Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992)

Tuning Your Mind Lecture:
1974 to 1998: Concert music and the WMCT's history through the lens of
Et exspecto by Sofia Gubaidulina
Robin Elliott, Professor of Musicology, U of T Faculty of Music
Open to all, 12.15 p.m. sharp, Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building

WMCT AT 125: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

1974-1998: ET EXSPECTO (1986)

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 resulted in a reshaping of the world order, the effects of which continue to reverberate to this day. The turmoil of this period is encapsulated in the life of Sofia Gubaidulina (b. 1931), whose *Et exspecto* (1986) is the anchor work for this time period. During her career in the Soviet Union, she was part of a small coterie of avant-garde composers whose work was barely tolerated by the powerful cultural apparatchiks of the Soviet state. Thanks to the reforms instituted by the late Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev, her music began to find increasing acceptance at home and abroad, and in 1992 she moved permanently to Germany. The WMCT weathered some significant financial and operational challenges during this period, but the move in 1985 to a new concert venue, Walter Hall in the University of Toronto's Edward Johnson Building, ushered in a period of stability and recovery. This 25-year era saw the creation of the "megacity" when the City of Toronto was amalgamated with its five surrounding boroughs by an act of the provincial government on 1 January 1998.

-Robin Elliott

To read more about this time in WMCT history, visit www.wmct.on.ca.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

MICHAEL BRIDGE, accordion
with
LADOM ENSEMBLE
JOSEPH MACEROLLO, OC, accordion

Michael Bridge is a 21st-century musical maverick—toppling popular expectations of what it is to be a professional accordionist.

He's a virtuoso performer on both the acoustic accordion and its 21st-century cousin, the digital accordion—an extraordinary piece of technological wizardry that imitates the sound of just about any instrument you can imagine. His concerts capture the energy and panache of stadium rock with the elegance and discipline of chamber music.

It all began when Bridge was five and growing up in Calgary. His mom bought him a \$5 accordion at a garage sale and Michael was hooked.

Since then he's won a slew of competitions in Canada and abroad and was named one of CBC's 30 under 30 classical musicians. He gives over 100 concerts a year as a soloist and as a member of both Bridge & Wolak and Ladom Ensemble. He offers lectures and masterclasses around the world, recently became a Rebanks Fellow at the Glenn Gould School, and is completing his Doctorate in Performance from the University of Toronto with Joseph Macerollo.

Bridge & Wolak also give back through an online Music Mentorship Program. After performing hundreds of concerts in schools, they are determined to build more meaningful relationships with musically inclined teens.

Bridge embraces a musical aesthetic that is alternatively irreverent, deadly serious, meticulously prepared and completely in-the-moment. He's at home with classical, jazz and folk music. He's premiered 53 new works. If pushed, he'll say he likes Baroque music best because of its unforgiving demand for clarity of intent and execution.

Ultimately, he aims to make your world more bearable, beautiful and human—even if only for the length of a concert.

www.MichaelBridge.ca

Instagram: @michael_accordionist

Facebook: www.facebook.com/MichaelBridgeMusic

YouTube: www.youtube.com/user/michael1bridge1music

Ladom Ensemble (Michael Bridge, accordion; Adam Campbell, percussion; Pouya Hamidi, piano; Beth Silver, cello) combines piano, cello, accordion, and percussion in a unique blend of acoustic, chamber, and world music that is passionate, sophisticated, and wild. Their all-original repertoire incorporates inspirations from Argentinean tango, Serbian folk and dance traditions, Persian classical repertoire, as well as music from the Classical (Bach, Prokofiev), and progressive rock worlds (Radiohead). Ladom doesn't pretend to represent any one tradition, but rather expresses an authentically Canadian fusion. Ladom's musical identity is combined from many sources and reflects a beautiful new world with a Western classical toolset. "Elegant and contemplative... rocking and fiery!" - *Errol Nazareth, CBC*

Joseph Macerollo, OC opened the door to acceptance of the concert accordion in Canada and around the world. A renowned performer, teacher and arts administrator, he pioneered acceptance of the concert accordion at the University of Toronto and Queen's University in Canada and has achieved a rare status as an icon of the concert accordion internationally.

He has performed with Canada's leading organizations such as the Toronto Symphony, Canada Opera Company, National Ballet of Canada, Winnipeg Orchestra, and chamber groups such as the Orford and the Purcell Quartet who have now embraced the instrument. He toured with the acclaimed Quartetto Gelato for 4 years, Royal Canadian Air Farce for 6 years, performed with Luciano Pavarotti, The Three Tenors, Teresa Stratas and has accompanied live film concert performances such as *Life of Pi*, *Ratatouille*, *Godfather* and *Lord of the Rings* with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

NOTES for OCTOBER 6, 2022

I wrote my first notes for the *MitA* concerts in 2004, and over the course of nearly ninety concerts I have researched a remarkably varied repertoire of solo and chamber music. There have been a few repetitions in that time – some Beethoven sonatas and the late Schubert sonatas, songs from Schumann's "year of song", an occasional duplicate Haydn or Mozart quartet – but in general we have been listening to an admirable range of music. Much of this has come from what we might call the core repertory, but our own commissioning program, and the adventurous nature of many of the musicians has leavened that with a substantial amount of music that is new. In the long run we seem to have achieved a reasonable balance.

Whether we have been listening to core repertoire or new compositions, however, we have remained within certain fairly predictable bounds, as far as the choice of instruments is concerned. Now, with the advent of Michael Bridge as the 2021 Career Development Award winner, we have been introduced not just to a new solo instrument, but to a whole new sound world and with it, some new repertoire along with some old works in new guises. Today's concert is no exception. Only two of today's composers have appeared before on WMCT programs. But there is no need to be uneasy; you are in safe hands.

We begin in familiar territory made new with two works by J. S. Bach. When he died in 1750, his music soon followed suit and it was the nineteenth century before it began to be revived, thanks to composers like Mendelssohn. Even then the works for unaccompanied violin and the cello suites proved incomprehensible; legend has it that it was only with the advocacy of Pablo Casals at the beginning of the 20th century that the latter were accepted as musical masterpieces and not simply practice room exercises. Now they are an essential part of every cellist's concert repertoire, and soon perhaps, that of every accordionist. "French" added to Suite in the title of the second Bach piece is not the composer's designation; for him a collection of dance influenced pieces would

have been inherently French. He wrote early versions of these keyboard compositions for his second wife, Anna Magdalena, no doubt intending to impress the twenty year old woman by using the most fashionable galant musical genre of the day. The Gigue is the concluding movement of the suite.

Sofia Gubaidulina is, according to her biographer, "one of the foremost Russian composers of the second half of the 20th century." She adds that "... religious ideas often serve as the impetus behind her works, and she considers that religion and music share a common goal." Accordingly, Gubaidulina believes that "there is no more serious reason for composing music than spiritual renewal." *Et exspecto* is a sonata for the Russian button accordion, the bayan, a favourite instrument of the composer; the title is a reference to the concluding words of the Christian creed "Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum ..." "I look for the resurrection of the dead ..."

In the traditional Bosnian song, *Tebi Majko Misli Lete*, a young man sings of being far from home and his mother; "I am in a foreign land now, the distance separates us. Will I ever see you again?"

Pouya Hamidi, the pianist of the Ladom Ensemble, is also the in-house composer, who "writes original music for the group inspired by Persian and classical fusion." *The Walls are Made of Song* exemplifies the ensemble's mandate which, as they explain on their website, "doesn't pretend to represent any one tradition, but rather expresses an authentically Canadian experience. Ladom's musical identity is combined from many sources and reflects a beautiful new world with a Western classical toolset."

Michael Bridge has written that the title of the Brazilian composer Edson Zampronha's *Trazo* "refers to the 'stroke' of a paint brush (and not to the medical variety, as one may assume from the dizzying speed of the notes). Yet despite the work's virtuosity, the composition techniques are quite minimalistic, relying on the development and reinterpretation of a limited number of brief motifs. *Trazo* also plays with the notion of the accordion as a stereophonic instrument and uses the left hand in two contrasting ways: first, to double and reinforce the right hand's gestures stereophonically, and second, to oppose and to dialogue with the right hand as an independent second voice."

The Armenian composer Khachatur Avetisyan combined work in conventional classical genres with an interest in "researching and developing the performance practice of Armenian folk music." In 1978, he founded the folk music department of the Komitas National Conservatory where, under his guidance, an entire generation of master instrumentalists was trained. Based on a poem by Lyudvig Duryan,

Tsaghkats Baleni is, according to one source, one of Avetisyan's most memorable songs.

Oscar Piazzolla is a name already known to WMCT patrons. Starting out in his native Argentina as a virtuoso bandoneon performer, he later studied composition with Ginastera and Nadia Boulanger and developed a "distinctive brand of tango, later called 'nuevo tango'." As Cliff Eisen explains, this initially met with resistance. "Including fugue, extreme chromaticism, dissonance, elements of jazz and, at times, expanded instrumentation, it was condemned by the old-guard. ... By the 1980s, however, Piazzolla's music was widely accepted even in his native country ... and his works began to be taken up by classical performers." Like much of his music, *Oblivion*, which was written in 1983, appears in multiple arrangements by other composers and for different combinations of instruments.

The English rock band Radiohead have always occupied the very fluid borderlands between alternative rock and experimental classical music. Tim Rutherford-Johnson, in his comprehensive study of musical culture since the fall of the Berlin wall, suggests that they ticked many of the same boxes for listeners as the minimalists Pärt, Tavener and Górecki. The song *Weird Fishes* is part of their seventh album, *In Rainbows*, which gained notoriety quite separate from any musical consideration. As one writer explains, the group self-released the album "as a download for any amount users wanted, including £0. This made headlines worldwide and created debate about the implications for the music industry." The album was downloaded an estimated 1.2 million times on the day of release. Talking about the whole album, one of the group said the songs are based on "that anonymous fear thing, sitting in traffic, thinking, 'I'm sure I'm supposed to be doing something else' ... It's in no way political, or, at least, doesn't feel that way to me."

Having travelled musically to some exotic locations, it is only right that we return to Canada; here we are presented with a selection of traditional East Coast songs, introduced into the group's repertoire by their percussionist who is originally from PEI: *Ou Vas Tu, Mon P'tit Garcon*, *Drowsy Maggie*, *St Anne's Reel*, and *The Rocky Road to Dublin*.

The title of the concluding music on today's program, Piazzolla's *Libertango*, suggests both tango and freedom, and was written and published in Milan in 1974. It was interpreted as his break from the traditional tango and his embrace of nuevo tango described earlier. It is one of his most performed works and an online database claims there are at least 500 different recordings of it.

John Mayo

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