

## 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.

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We begin 2023 with a concert dedicated to our featured composer Icelandic-Canadian Fjóla Evans. We explore Fjóla's musical journey from first awakenings, through instrumental study, to fêted composer. Enjoy the Icelandic songs that Fjóla heard in her home as a child, her connection with the cello growing up in Toronto, and her subsequent discovery of her vocation as composer and creator. Works important to this journey are brought to life by specific artists admired and requested by Fjóla: vocalist Krista Kais-Prial, pianist Talisa Blackman, cellists VC2, and the Aizuri Quartet. As the program unfolds, we hear music that influenced Fjóla's development, her already established and recorded work by VC2, and the première of the work specially commissioned by the WMCT for this occasion. I look forward to joining Fjóla as we experience a glimpse into her past, present, and future.

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Our April event returns mezzo-soprano Marion Newman to our stage. Marion prides herself on telling the Indigenous story through the Western canon and I am so grateful that she has agreed to perform as our 'anchor' artist for this anniversary season concert. As a dedicated mentor to young artists, Marion brings two celebrated new generation singers - soprano Melody Courage, and baritone Evan Korbut - to perform with her in a diverse program of huge variety. With Gordon Gerrard at the piano, music from Mozart through Berlioz and Puccini to Tomson Highway and Ian Cusson, as well as the late, great Bramwell Tovey, takes us on this journey. With what might seem something of a diversion we discover Loesser's *Guys and Dolls* as our portal into history!

-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 April 6th, 2023, concert

**Marion Newman**

with

Melody Courage,

Evan Korbut,

and Gordon Gerrard

is supported by

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The WMCT also gratefully acknowledges

Dianne Henderson

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

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

# PROGRAM for APRIL 6, 2023

<i>Or vienmi ad adornar</i> ( <i>Madama Butterfly</i> )	Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924)
<i>Indians on Vacation (scenes)</i>	Ian Cusson (b. 1981)
<i>Breakfast for Barbarians</i> 1. <i>A Breakfast for Barbarians</i> 2. <i>You Held out the Light</i>	Ian Cusson (b. 1981)
<i>Sit down, you're rocking the boat</i> ( <i>Guys and Dolls</i> )	Frank Loesser (1910-1969)
<i>The Sage, the Dancer and the Fool</i>	Tomson Highway (b. 1951)
<i>La Fraîcheur et le Feu</i> 1. <i>Rayon des yeux</i> 2. <i>Le Matin les branches attisent</i> 3. <i>Tout disparut</i> 4. <i>Dans les ténèbres du jardin</i> 5. <i>Unis la fraîcheur et le feu</i> 6. <i>Homme au sourire tendre</i> 7. <i>La grande rivière qui va</i>	Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

## INTERMISSION

<i>Ancestral Voices</i> 1. <i>In Arcady</i> 2. <i>The Last Bison</i> 3. <i>The Letter</i> 4. <i>Bring Light to the Truth</i>	Bramwell Tovey (1953-2022)
<i>Vous soupirer</i> ( <i>Béatrice et Bénédict</i> )	Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)
<i>Dunque io son</i> ( <i>Il barbiere di Siviglia</i> )	Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)
<i>Soave sia il vento</i> ( <i>Così fan tutte</i> )	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

*Tuning Your Mind Lecture:*  
1949 to 1973: *Concert music and the WMCT's history through the lens of*  
*Guys and Dolls* by Frank Loesser  
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

### 1949-1973: SIT DOWN YOU'RE ROCKING THE BOAT from GUYS AND DOLLS (1950)

Post-war recovery during the 1950s and 1960s saw significant growth in the city of Toronto; its population reached a million and a half by the time of the 1961 census. A new sense of civic pride was captured in concrete terms by the new City Hall building, completed in 1965, and the CN Tower, begun in 1973. The WMCT marked its 75th season with a gala concert in Eaton Auditorium in October 1972 and the publication of the first history of the club, *Look Back in Pride* (1972) by former president Helen Goudge. The anchor work for this era is a song from Frank Loesser's musical *Guys and Dolls* (1950), a reminder of the unstoppable rise of American pop culture during this period. In world history, these 25 years were dominated on the one hand by the geopolitical tensions of the Cold War, but on the other by the technological progress that led to the Apollo 11 moon landing in July 1969.

-Robin Elliott

To read more about this time in WMCT history, visit [www.wmct.on.ca](http://www.wmct.on.ca).

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

*The WMCT has been run primarily by volunteers for 125 years. We are always looking for new people to share the many tasks involved and are currently seeking those with skills in fundraising and non-profit governance to volunteer. If you, or someone you know, loves chamber music and could envision serving on a WMCT Committee, please contact us by calling the office at 416.923.7052, x.2 or writing to [wmct@wmct.on.ca](mailto:wmct@wmct.on.ca).*

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

MARION NEWMAN, mezzo-soprano  
with  
MELODY COURAGE, soprano  
EVAN KORBUT, baritone  
GORDON GERRARD, piano

A critically acclaimed mezzo-soprano of Kwagiulth and Stó:lo First Nations with English, Irish and Scottish heritage, Marion Newman was born in Bella Coola and grew up in Sooke, BC. She is one of Canada's most accomplished singers in repertoire from Vivaldi to Vivier. As Carmen, the *Irish Examiner* noted "she sparked an electricity which totally engrossed the audience with her superbly sinuous sexuality." Nominated for a Dora Award for her leading role in the world première of *Shanawdithit* (Nolan/Burry) with Tapestry Opera, Ian Ritchie wrote "she invests her character with towering dignity and courage".

In 2023, Marion debuts with Anchorage Opera as Dr. Wilson in *Missing* (Clements/Current), which gives voice, in English and Gitksan, to the story of missing and murdered Indigenous women. Marion created this role for the 2017 world première, co-produced by City Opera Vancouver and Pacific Opera Victoria.

Concert highlights for the 2022/23 season include Cantaloube's *Chants d'Auvergne* with Vancouver Island Symphony, *Messiah* with Vancouver Bach Choir, Bruckner's *Tè Deum* and the world première of Stephanie Martin's *Water: An Environmental Oratorio*, with Grand Philharmonic Choir and Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony.

Marion has sung many works that speak to her First Nations identity, including a Canada-wide tour of *Ancestral Voices* (Tovey) with the Vancouver Symphony and *Nuyamł-ìł Kulhulmx - Singing the Earth* (Höstman/Robinson) with the Victoria and Vancouver Symphonies and Continuum Concerts.

Marion created the role of Dawn with Welsh National Opera in the 2022 world premiere of *Migrations*, with stories by five writers based on their personal experiences of migrations and working with refugees.

In addition to her extensive performing career, Marion is a Co-Founder of Amplified Opera and the host of CBC's *Saturday Afternoon at the Opera*.

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Vancouver-based Métis soprano **Melody Courage**, of Dene, Cree and Chipewyan descent, is much in demand by composers, including Ian Cusson.

Melody gained national attention as The Native Girl "...played with ethereal grace ..." in the 2017 world premiere of *Missing* (Clements/Current), co-produced by City Opera Vancouver and Pacific Opera Victoria. In 2023, Melody reprises her role with Anchorage Opera for the US premiere of *Missing*.

Engagements for Melody in the current season include her debut as Chrissie in Calgary Opera's production of *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs, Messiah* with Vancouver Bach Choir, and Countess in scenes from Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* with Vancouver Symphony Orchestra.

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**Evan Korbut** is a Toronto-based Anishinaabe performer who is quickly garnering praise for his work in traditional and new opera. His lyric baritone has been called "beautiful" and his command of the stage "complete" (*Operaramblings*, 2019). Upcoming and recent credits include *Missing* with Anchorage Opera, a workshop of Ian Cusson's *Indians on Vacation* with Edmonton Opera, *The Mother of Us All* with VOICEBOX: Opera in Concert, and the premiere of Vancouver Opera and Pacific Opera Victoria's production of *Flight of the Hummingbird*. Korbut completed his studies at the University of Western Ontario and is the winner of the Stuart Hamilton Memorial Award through VOICEBOX: Opera in Concert.

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Conductor **Gordon Gerrard** is among the exciting new generation of music directors demonstrating new visions for orchestral leadership in Canada. Currently in his sixth season leading the Regina Symphony Orchestra, Gordon has distinguished himself as a leader in innovative and inclusionary programming. Trained first as a pianist and subsequently as a specialist in operatic repertoire, he brings a fresh perspective to the podium that endears him to audiences and musicians alike.

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## NOTES for APRIL 6, 2023

"First Nations Artists engage the Western canon," is the theme that appears in advance publicity for this concert. I have colleagues who would happily devote a whole-year seminar to that endeavour, but I am not qualified to do that. What I can do is re-phrase it slightly: First Nations artists challenge the WMCT to listen outside the box. Now, that we can do. Today, works from the Western canon, the music of Puccini, Berlioz, Mozart, and yes, Frank Loesser, are juxtaposed with Canadian works that have clear Indigenous themes. We are asked to reflect, through music on what one writer has called "the most complicated part of our shared Canadian legacy — the fraught relationship between First Nations and subsequent arrivals." But we are also asked, I think, to hear those more familiar works – the Western canon – in this new context. Outside our box.

Puccini's 1904 opera *Madama Butterfly* is based on a short story by the American writer John Luther Long that he fashioned out of the reminiscences of his sister; she had lived for some time in Japan with her missionary husband. The duet "Or vienmi ad adornar" occurs in the second act. Cio-Cio-San (Butterfly) waits for the return of the American lieutenant, Pinkerton whom she married three years before. She prepares herself and their child with the aid of her maid Suzuki, unaware that he has since married an American wife. "Now come and adorn me" she says to the maid; she wants to be dressed just as she was on the first day they met.

Ian Cusson is a composer of Métis (Georgian Bay Métis Community) and French Canadian descent, whose "work explores Canadian Indigenous experience and the intersection of Western and Indigenous cultures." *Indians on Vacation* is a short three scene opera written as part of Edmonton Opera's 2021 Wild Rose Opera Project. This was a series of short operas each exploring mental health issues through characters with ties to the Alberta landscape. Cusson's work "chronicles the Prague vacation of a contemporary Indigenous couple, Mimi and Bird, and uses three scenes to create a musical portrait of the protagonist, Bird, as he confronts his inner demons." Today you will hear the opening and closing scenes.

*A Breakfast for Barbarians* is a cycle of five songs on poems by the Canadian poet Geraldine McEwen. Today we hear the opening two songs, the first from the poetry collection of the same name, and 'You Held out the Light' from the slightly later collection, *The Shadow Maker*.



cultural tradition. The first song has a text by Keats, the second is a selection from *The Song of the Last Bison* by Charles Mair, a Scot who came to live in Canada — very anti-colonial, with enlightened attitudes to nature and the First Nations people. The third is from a letter discovered in the colonial archives dealing specifically with the disastrous policies of the residential schools. The fourth song is taken from texts by (Stephen) Harper and (Justin) Trudeau about the legacy of the schools, and from a United Nations text on the rights of aboriginal peoples."

In his Memoirs, Berlioz recalls the Grand Duke of Weimar questioning him about "Vous soupirez", the duet from *Béatrice et Bénédict*. "You must have written this, by moonlight in some romantic place" he said. "Sir," replied Berlioz, "I sketched the music of this duet one day at the Institut, while one of my colleagues was delivering a speech." A marvellous antidote to the Hollywood picture of how composers work: at the piano, fumbling for notes with their left hand and writing them down with their right.

Rossini's opera, *The Barber of Seville* is based on the first of a trilogy of plays written by the French playwright Beaumarchais. It received its first performance in Rome in 1816, and tells the story of the barber Figaro's schemes to bring together the young Count Almaviva and Rosina, a ward of Dr Bartolo. This duet between Rosina and Figaro occurs in the first act as Figaro encourages the young woman to write to the Count, who is nearby disguised as "Lindoro."

*Così fan tutte* is the third of Mozart's operas to a libretto by Lorenzo da Ponte, the Italian poet and later grocery store owner and first professor of Italian literature at Columbia University. The story revolves around the idea of two men testing the fidelity of their fiancées by appearing in disguise and attempting to woo each other's partners. The plot is set in motion by Don Alfonso - described as an "old philosopher" - who makes a bet with the two men, Guglielmo and Ferrando, that in their absence their women will not remain faithful. The two men pretend to have been called off to war and sail away – they will later return disguised as as "Albanians." In this trio the two women, Fiordiligi and Dorabella, with Alfonso wish the men a safe journey; "May the wind be gentle."

-John Mayo

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