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Women's Musical Club of Toronto



Sunday May 7th

Xenia Concerts Presents

Thalea String Quartet

in two family-friendly concerts that embrace neurodiversity and disability.

11 AM Sensory-friendly concert

2 PM Dementia-friendly concert

Meridian Hall

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Tickets: \$5

xeniaconcerts.com

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.

We close our epic anniversary season with a program featuring the immense talents and influence of favourite Canadian violinist Mark Fewer. Mark brings the Thalea String Quartet and pianist Jeanie Chung (winner of the WMCT's Career Development Award in 1997) to perform the magnificent Concerto for violin, piano and string quartet by Chausson, alongside a companion work commissioned by Mark from Yellowknife composer Carmen Braden. Our gateway work is the extraordinary string quartet by Erwin Schulhoff and we may find some unusually theatrical content courtesy of Mark and his former student Chris Whitley (of the Thalea Quartet) who demonstrate their shared eclectic musical tastes and "genre bending" abilities in the violin duo *Schattenwerk* written for Mark by John Rea. These elements of the unexpected always add excitement to live performance and I can't wait to hear what the brilliance of these performers will create!

-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. *Counterpoint Three*, covering the past 15 years, will be launched at the reception following this concert.

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 May 4th, 2023, concert
Mark Fewer
with the Thalea String Quartet,
Chris Whitley, and Jeanie Chung
is supported by

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

Please join us in the Boyd Neel room for a post-concert reception
to celebrate our 125th season, and the book launch of
Counterpoint Three by Robin Elliott

PROGRAM for MAY 4, 2023

Five Pieces for String Quartet

Erwin Schulhoff
(1894–1942)

Schattenwerk

John Rea
(b. 1944)

*You Know It's Coming,
You Just Don't Know When*

Carmen Braden
(b. 1985)

INTERMISSION

Concerto for violin, piano
and string quartet, Op. 21

Ernest Chausson
(1855-1899)

Décidé – Animé

Sicilienne: Pas vite

Grave

Très animé

Tuning Your Mind Lecture:

1924 to 1948: Concert music and the WMCT's history through the lens of
Five Pieces for String Quartet by Erwin Schulhoff

Robin Elliott, Professor of Musicology, U of T Faculty of Music

Open to all, 12.15 p.m. sharp, Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building

Visit the artists' websites

www.markfewer.com

www.thaleastrinqquartet.com

rcmusic.com/bios/jeanie-chung

WMCT AT 125: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

1924-1948: FIVE PIECES FOR STRING QUARTET (1925)

This period was dominated by the Great Depression, the rise of fascism in Europe, and the ensuing horrors of the Second World War, with its massive military campaigns in Europe and Asia. The anchor work for this era is poignantly appropriate: it is the Five Pieces for String Quartet by Erwin Schulhoff, a Jewish composer whose career was tragically cut short when he perished in the Holocaust. The WMCT was not unaffected by the trying events unfolding in the wider world; at the start of the Great Depression in 1929, the club had just \$8.95 in the bank. Somehow it managed to hang on, and it even enjoyed a significant recovery during the 1930s (though it did suffer a hiatus in its activities during the war years). A major figure on the local and national music scene was Sir Ernest MacMillan, who kept the Toronto Symphony going through the war years and beyond, and was closely involved with the WMCT during this era.

-Robin Elliott

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

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

MARK FEWER, violin

with

TALEA STRING QUARTET;

CHRIS WHITLEY, violin; **JEANIE CHUNG**, piano

Violinist **Mark Fewer** leads a multi-disciplined life in music. Violin soloist, chamber musician, orchestral leader, artistic director, conductor, arranger, teacher, jazz violinist, recording artist and occasional radio host, he has performed worldwide to great critical acclaim. Described as "intrepid" (*The Globe and Mail*), "genre-bending" (*National Post*), "profound" (*The WholeNote*), and "freaky good" (*The Gazette*), he has performed around the world in halls such as Carnegie, Wigmore and Salle Pleyel, and is equally at home in recital venues such as Bartok House (Budapest) to Le Poisson Rouge (NYC) to The Forum (Taipei).

As a soloist, he has performed with the symphonies of Vancouver, Edmonton, Toronto, Quebec, San Francisco and Melbourne, as well as with groups such as the Fodens-Richardson Brass Band (UK), the Zapp Quartet (Amsterdam), the McGill Percussion Ensemble, and as a featured guest with Stevie Wonder and his band. As a chamber musician he was a founding member of the Duke Piano Trio, has been a member of the Smithsonian Chamber Players for over 15 years, and was violinist with the St. Lawrence String Quartet at Stanford University, where he was Artist-in-Residence. As a conductor he has directed I Musici de Montreal, l'Orchestre Symphonique de Laval, the Newfoundland Sinfonia, the McGill Baroque Orchestra, the Guelph Symphony, the Vancouver Symphony and the choir Capella Antica.

Mr. Fewer was the Founding Artistic Director of the SweetWater Music Festival for 16 years, and in 2019 was appointed as the Artistic Director of Stratford Summer Music. He is currently Associate Professor of Violin and Head of the String Area at the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto. He is a Juno and Prix Opus winner.

The **Thalea String Quartet** brings their signature vibrancy and emotional commitment to dynamic performances that reflect the past, present, and the future of the string quartet repertoire while celebrating diverse musical traditions from around the world. Fueled by the belief that chamber music is a powerful force for building community and human connection, the Thalea String Quartet has performed across North America, Europe, and China, and has appeared at the Kennedy Center, Massey Hall, and Weill Hall at Carnegie Hall. They have shared the stage with luminaries of the chamber music world, including members of the Emerson, Borromeo and St Lawrence String Quartets, and they have performed alongside celebrated artists including Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Caroline Shaw, violist Lawrence Power, acclaimed Canadian band BADBADNOTGOOD, and visionary hip hop artist Jay Electronica.

Committed to shaping and contributing to the future of the string quartet repertoire, the Thalea String Quartet has premiered dozens of new works and have collaborated on new commissions with composers including Paola Prestini, Anthony R. Green, Akshaya Avril Tucker, and Tanner Porter.

Winners of the 2021 Ann Divine Educator Award from the Fischoff National Chamber Music Competition, the members of the Thalea String Quartet have been celebrated for their innovative approach to education and community engagement.

The Thalea String Quartet is the Doctoral Fellowship String Quartet at the University of Maryland. The quartet has also held fellowship positions at the University of Texas at Austin and the San Francisco Conservatory. They were top prize winners at the 2018 Fischoff Competition and 2018 Chamber Music Yellow Springs Competition.

Christopher Whitley (violin) is originally from Toronto, Ontario; Kumiko Sakamoto (violin) is from Medicine Hat, Alberta; Lauren Spaulding (viola) is from San Antonio, Texas; and Alex Cox (cello) is from West Palm Beach, Florida.

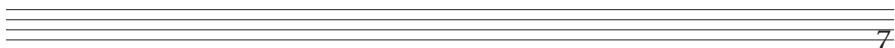
Pianist **Jeanie Chung** enjoys a rewarding performing and teaching life. She has given solo recitals, concerto performances and chamber music concerts throughout North America, Central America, Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Recent and long term collaborations include projects with Barry Shiffman, Andrés Diaz, Colin Carr, Rachel Mercer, Ian Swensen, Yehonatan Berick, Mayumi Seiler; Susan Hoeppner, Ian Clarke, Frank Morelli, Shalom Bard, YaoGuang Zhai; William Vermeulen, Michael Sachs; Alexander Dobson; Laurence Lemieux, Margie Gillis, and Ted Robinson.

Following her studies at The Glenn Gould School and the Young Artists Performance Academy at The Royal Conservatory in Toronto, she attended The Juilliard School where she obtained Bachelor of Music, Masters of Music, and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees. Her principal teachers have been Boris Lysenko, Leon Fleisher, John Perry, and Herbert Stessin.

Ms. Chung was the recipient of the Career Development Award from the Women's Musical Club of Toronto and numerous grants from the Canada Council and Chalmers Fund.

She is a faculty member of The Royal Conservatory Glenn Gould School and The Phil and Eli Taylor Performance Academy for Young Artists.



NOTES for MAY 4, 2023

For an organization that is 125 years old, the WMCT remains remarkably sprightly and inquisitive. Today, for example, following the opening piece for the conventional string quartet, we explore works for some more unusual chamber music combinations: a work for two violins, and then two works for string quartet with the addition of solo piano and violin. All of these pieces are new to WMCT programs and indeed, Chausson is the only composer we have heard before.

Erwin Schulhoff's tortuous career and the tumultuous world events surrounding it have been skillfully summarised in Robin Elliott's *Historical Perspectives* for today's concert. The *Five Pieces for String Quartet* date from 1923 when Schulhoff returned to Prague, the city of his birth, after a long period in Germany. That moment also saw a change in his musical style, which up to that point had, in Josef Bek's words, "moved between two aesthetically irreconcilable poles ... works inspired on the one hand by the Second Viennese School [Schoenberg and his followers] and on the other by the aesthetic of dadaism." Bek suggests that this new style was partly the result of his reconnecting with Czech music. The five pieces constitute a sort of Baroque suite, although the more modern dances used here are sometimes warped ironically almost out of recognition. For Kai Christiansen, they are a clear expression of an aesthetic position Schulhoff had outlined many years before: "music is never philosophy, it arises from an ecstatic condition, finding its expression through rhythmical movement."

After studies in Toronto and Princeton, the Canadian composer John Rea was associated with McGill University from 1973 until his retirement, first as a member of the faculty, teaching composition and theory and later as Dean. His compositional output is large and varied and he has twice won the Jules Léger prize for chamber music. The authors of the *Canadian Encyclopedia* article say that his music "encompasses a variety of styles and influences, but always shows a concern with structure and a quest for originality of language." They quote the composer describing his music as alternating "between a poetics related to the projection of an acoustic geometry and another associated with the projection of narratives or of a certain

theatricality." Elsewhere the composer has said of today's piece: "Schattenwerk is a German word that, all in one, refers to the work and play of shadows, silhouettes, images, even shades (ghosts), phantoms and spirits. In my composition, it also alludes to types of variation. Sometimes shadows are slow to react. And not all shadows are furtive; some even like to be heard!" The central idea of the work is "virtuosity, which is shared between the two musicians. One can say that they act as twins, doppelgängers." The work was commissioned by the Scotia Festival of Music, and was given its première performance in 2003, by Mark Fewer and Scott St John.

Ernest Chausson was another of the surprising number of French composers who studied law; one assumes that parental pressure to qualify in a less precarious profession was at work here, just as it is nowadays. In Chausson's case it doesn't seem to have been financially necessary since he is always spoken of as independently wealthy. Brought up in a culturally rich home, he was gifted as a writer and artist as well as musically. He studied composition first with Massenet from whom he learned, in the slightly peevish words of one scholar, "a style which, though sober, is more alive to pretty ideas than to depth of feeling." After failing in an attempt at the Prix de Rome, he stopped these classes and instead attended those of César Franck although never officially enrolled. This overlapped with a number of visits to Germany to hear Wagner's works and these had a profound effect on his musical language as did Franck's approach to formal construction. The Concerto for piano, violin and string quartet was written during the period from 1889 to 1891 when the composer was also working on a Wagnerian-scaled opera, *Le roi Arthur*, and not surprisingly progress was slow. The work was given its first performance in Brussels, in 1892, with Eugène Ysaÿe as the solo violinist. Chausson, never a self-confident composer was delighted by its reception and, according to Steven Whiting, wrote in his diary: "I must believe that my music is made for Belgians above all, for never have I enjoyed such a success ... I feel giddy and joyful, such as I have not managed to feel for a long time ... It seems to me that I shall work with greater confidence in future." This work fits perfectly the comment I made earlier about exploring the more unusual chamber music combinations. What genre is it? For Whiting it is by turns, a violin sonata, a piano solo, a string quartet or quintet, a piano quintet, or (when tutti) a piano sextet. Another

writer suggests it is more akin to a Baroque concerto grosso while still maintaining "a chamber-music framework in regard to textures and to the give-and-take between the solo duo and the quartet."

Carmen Braden is a composer and singer/songwriter who "hails," as she says, "proudly from Yellowknife NWT." Her creative work "draws on a life-time in the Canadian subArctic and increasingly focuses on themes of play, motherhood, and human/environmental relationships," and has been performed across Canada and internationally. On her website she says that her contemporary classical music is "tied to her northern soundscape. She draws from her environment by examining natural+human phenomena through sonic, visual, sensual and scientific ways of understanding. Her creative journeys have led her into deep study of lake ice, northern life, raven calls, bedrock." In addition to composing and performing she is "passionate about creative education, and teaches individual students in Yellowknife, as well as contributing to music education in the North." She very kindly supplied the following note for today's work, *You Know It's Coming, You Just Don't Know When.*

"Wait for it..... waaaaaiiiittttt.... NOW!

We've all got patterns in our lives. Repetitions, slight variations, routine, feelings of being stuck, or peaceful stasis. And then ... changes! Most of the changes in my life I've been able to see coming at me - pretty normal things that have normal changes. Doesn't mean they were easy, or that I had control over all of it. I knew that some time I'd have to move out from my parent's basement (sorry it took so long, mom+dad!). It was likely after I got pregnant that I'd go into labour - and sure enough I went into labour. And it was likely the baby was going to come out, somehow - and sure enough it did (eventually - thank you modern medicine!). And now I'm watching the kids grow, and every day has a ridiculous amount of repetition. And I feel a ridiculous amount of pride and surprise when they ALL OF A SUDDEN can reach the top of the counter so now all the sharp things have to move up on shelves and I bet they'll be able to open their bedroom door by themselves sometime soon..."

-John Mayo

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