

WOMEN'S MUSICAL CLUB OF TORONTO

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15

117TH SEASON

MUSIC IN THE AFTERNOON



TRIO WANDERER

Vincent Coq, piano; Jean-Marc Phillips-Varjabédian, violin; Raphaël Pidoux, cello

OCTOBER 2, 2014 | 1.30 PM



MUSIC IN THE AFTERNOON

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The Mary-Margaret Webb Foundation

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GREETINGS from Simon Fryer, Artistic Director Women's Musical Club of Toronto

Welcome to the opening concert of the 117th season of the Women's Musical Club of Toronto's Music in the Afternoon. This season the WMCT proudly presents some of the most sought-after musicians on the world stage as well as younger performers who will surely be in that position before too long. It is especially exciting to note that three of the five programmes feature Toronto debuts for the artists: our opening concert with the well-established, Paris-based Trio Wanderer, followed by the Dover Quartet which swept the board at the most recent Banff International String Quartet Competition, and, in 2015, much lauded Dutch mezzo-soprano Christianne Stotijn. These auspicious debuts are complemented by *Brassfire*, a performance from 2006 International Brass Personality of the Year, Canadian trumpet virtuoso Jens Lindemann. The WMCT's season closes with the dynamic Ensemble Made In Canada. As part of their programme the four young ladies of EMIC will première the latest WMCT commissioned work by Canadian composer Christopher Mayo – a collaboration sure to bear dazzling fruit. All these artists shine brightly in their field, and their music-making is sure to enchant and enthuse. Don't miss a single one of these events.

Trio Wanderer launches the season today. Acclaimed for extraordinarily sensitive style, almost telepathic mutual understanding and technical mastery, this is one of the world's foremost chamber ensembles. Today Vincent Coq, Jean-Marc Phillips-Varjabédian, and Raphaël Pidoux bring an extraordinary programme of late Fauré, Liszt, and the monumental Tchaikovsky Trio.

Thank you for subscribing to the 117th season of the WMCT – the essence of chamber music.

Women's Musical Club of Toronto

56 The Esplanade, Suite 203A, Toronto, Ontario M5E 1A7 www.wmct.on.ca

PROGRAMME

Piano Trio in D Minor, Op. 120

Allegro, ma non troppo

Andantino

Allegro vivo

Gabriel Fauré
(1845 - 1924)

Piano Trio "Tristia", S. 723, arr. from *Années de pèlerinage*,
S. 160, No. 6, *Vallée d'Obermann*

Franz Liszt
(1811 - 1886)

INTERMISSION

Piano Trio in A Minor, Op. 50

l. Pezzo elegiaco: Moderato assai - Allegro giusto

lla. Tema con variazioni: Andante con moto

Var. 1 L'istesso tempo andante con moto

Var. 2 Più mosso

Var. 3 Allegro moderato

Var. 4 L'istesso tempo allegro moderato

Var. 5 L'istesso tempo allegro moderato

Var. 6 Tempo di valse

Var. 7 Allegro moderato

Var. 8 Fuga: Allegro moderato

Var. 9 Andante flebile, ma non tanto

Var. 10 Tempo di mazurka

Var. 11 Moderato

llb. Variazione Finale e Coda:

Finale: Allegro risoluto e con fuoco

Coda: Andante con moto - Lugubre

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
(1840 - 1893)

Visit Trio Wanderer's web site at www.triowanderer.fr

Trio Wanderer is represented by Musicaglotz Artists Management, www.musicaglotz.com

Complimentary refreshments will be available at intermission.

Please come and meet the artists in the lobby following the concert.

The piano being played today is the Edith McConica Steinway.

NOTES

Fauré, Liszt, and Tchaikovsky: no unusual, or daunting names there as we start the new season. One could say that they are all old friends in the *Music in the Afternoon* concerts. And yet only the Tchaikovsky Trio has ever been performed before in a WMCT series, and that only once in over a hundred years. I know this, as you can probably guess, because I have been leafing through the programme listings in Hanna & Fred Feuerriegel's admirable *History of Concerts and Performers of the Women's Musical Club of Toronto*, which is on the WMCT's website. If you ignore a number of piano duo performances of Liszt – and a mammoth arrangement of his *Les Preludes for ten pianos*, yes, ten! – this is the first piece of ensemble music by the composer that the WMCT has ever presented. Even this is not particularly surprising since Liszt wrote very little chamber music, but that is not the only reason; the trio on today's programme remained hidden after Liszt's death in 1886 and only came to light one hundred years later. As I surf through these concert listings, I also note that the Elshuco Trio from New York, who opened the twenty-sixth season in October 1923, could hypothetically have included the Fauré Trio in their programme as their contemporary offering, since it was completed by May of that year.


Fauré as a contemporary composer, with all the baggage that word suggests nowadays, is a little hard for us to imagine, and yet Jean-Michel Nectoux has called him the most advanced composer of his generation in France, whose late works show an "increasing economy of expression, boldness of harmony and enrichment of polyphony [that] give his work of this period an authentic place in 20th-century composition." By the end of his career Fauré had become almost a national institution in France, and in 1922 he was honoured with a splendid public tribute at the Sorbonne, attended by all the most famous French artists and by the President. His work was not well known outside his own country, however, and in 1924 the American composer Aaron Copland wrote a long article which attempted to bring him to the notice of the American musical public. He subtitled the article, *A Neglected Master*. Referring to the trio he says, "What an extraordinary work it is, to come from the pen of a comparatively unknown composer." Certainly not unknown any longer, but perhaps still a little neglected?

The *Piano Trio* is a late work, indeed the last but one completed by Fauré. It is first mentioned in a letter that the composer wrote to his wife in January 1922 in which he says that his publisher Jacques Durand has asked him to write a trio for piano, violin, and cello. He tells her that he is going to think about it. In April he is reporting that he has done little composing, but by August he is writing to his son Phillipe from Argelès

and asking him to bring some sketches of a trio that he had left behind in Paris. In late September, now in Annecy-le-Vieux, he was able to tell his wife that he had been working on a trio for piano, clarinet (or violin), and cello, and had completed one important movement. The reference to the clarinet is curious. In spite of Durand's original request, Fauré seems initially to have thought, not of a conventional piano trio, but of a work using clarinet rather than violin. The fact that he mentions both instruments to his wife suggests that he was still uncertain of which it should be, or perhaps that he intended to present the work as one that could be played by either combination. In the end he settled for the version we hear today, although the piece is occasionally performed with clarinet in place of the violin. The first performance was sponsored by the Société Nationale de Musique on 12 May 1923, Fauré's 78th birthday, but this was eclipsed some seven weeks later by a performance at the École Normale de Musique by the famous Thibaud, Casals, Cortot trio. The work was praised unanimously by the Parisian critics, a group who rarely agreed about anything.

The background history of the Liszt trio on today's programme is a little tortuous. It is an arrangement of a piano piece – the sixth movement from Liszt's first *Années de pèlerinage* suite – which remained unknown until 1986 when a manuscript of the music was discovered in a Weimar archive by the German scholar Wolfgang Marggraf. It is not all in Liszt's handwriting, but in that of Eduard Lassen who was Liszt's successor as court music director in Weimar. Liszt seems to have taken Lassen's arrangement as the starting point for his own, and beginning with simple corrections of Lassen's work, he then experimented with a number of possible continuations of the opening material which he wrote on separate pages. The third version is the one to which he gave the title *Tristia*. According to Wolfgang Teubner, the catalyst for Liszt returning to his early piano work was the emotional reaction he had on hearing his pupil August Göllerich play the original in Rome in 1885.

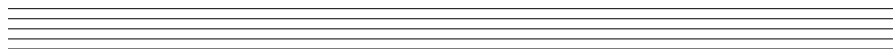
The piano work that Liszt titled *Années de pèlerinage* (*Years of Pilgrimage*) consists of three suites. Much of the music is adapted from earlier suites that he had written under the title *Album d'un voyageur*. The individual pieces have titles and often a short literary passage from writers like Byron and Schiller. *Vallée d'Obermann* is the sixth movement of the first suite and is inspired by the French writer Senancour's novel *Obermann*. Cast in the form of letters, the novel tells of the travels of the solitary, dejected Obermann as he searches for a lonely valley in which to settle. The world-weary traveler asks "What do I want? Who am I? What do I ask of nature?" and Liszt places these questions at the head of the movement,



along with a quotation from Byron: "...But as it is, I live and die unheard, With a most voiceless thought, sheathing it as a sword." What we have in the trio on today's programme is a work that spans Liszt's whole life. The original piano piece from the *Album d'un voyageur* was written in 1837-8 when he was himself travelling through Switzerland with his married lover Marie d'Agoult – the two had left Paris to escape possible scandal. As Alan Walker points out, many of the movements from this collection are in a sense, autobiographical, representing actual places visited by the couple. But at the end of his life, it is not to these that he returns, but to the fictional valley of Senancour's novel and Obermann's melancholy questions.

Tchaikovsky began composing his *Piano Trio* in December of 1881 and finished it a couple of months later. It is surprising that he undertook a work for this particular ensemble because he had often said that he detested this combination of instruments. Nadezhda von Meck, the somewhat curious patroness who supported him financially on the condition that they never meet, had asked him to compose such a work only the previous year. He had turned her down, explaining that no blend was possible between the instruments. "To my mind", he said, "the piano can be effective in only three situations....alone; in a contest with an orchestra; or as accompaniment." The event that changed his mind and which led him to overcome his objections to the genre was the death of Nikolai Rubinstein, with whom he had had a love-hate relationship. John Warrack aptly sums up the part played by Nikolai and his brother Anton in the composer's life: they "stood in a parental relationship to Tchaikovsky's career... and there is something in their friendship of the insecure child trying desperately to please his parents..." The words that Tchaikovsky used to von Meck when he told her of his change of mind regarding the piano trio as a viable combination are revealing: "now suddenly I am conceiving an idea of testing myself in this sort of music." From the memoirs of the Moscow music critic Nikolay Kashkin, who knew the composer well, we learn that the second movement was inspired by the memory of a spring day spent with Rubinstein who had ordered up drinks for a group of peasants who then entertained them with songs and dances.

Programme notes by John Mayo



Trio Wanderer, piano trio

Vincent Coq, piano; Jean-Marc Phillips-Varjabédian, violin;
Raphaël Pidoux, cello

Trio Wanderer quite deserves their stage name. Indeed, "Wanderer" pays homage to Schubert, and more widely to German Romanticism which is often imbued with the *leitmotiv* of the wandering traveler. These three French musicians are avid open-minded wandering travelers, who explore the musical world, spanning the centuries from Mozart and Haydn to now. Acclaimed for its extraordinarily sensitive style, almost telepathic understanding of each other and technical mastery, the Trio Wanderer is one of the world's foremost chamber ensembles.

Winning first prize for chamber music at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris, the Trio Wanderer studied from 1987 to 1991 with such masters as Jean-Claude Pennetier, Jean Hubeau, János Starker, Menahem Pressler from the Beaux Arts Trio, and the Amadeus Quartet.

Called a "Wandering Star" by *The Strad*, the Trio has performed on the most prestigious stages from Berlin to Paris to London and from Washington to Beijing to Rio de Janeiro. The Trio members are regulars at major festivals including Edinburgh, Montreux, and Salzburg, and have been awarded residency in Germany for the Accordate-Konzerte, Aachen society as well as in Copenhagen at Mogens Dahl Koncertsal. The Trio's debut at the Salzburg Festival in August 2002 was praised as "a triumphant success" by the critics and led to their return for the 2004 and 2006 Festivals.

Trio Wanderer has collaborated with artists such as Yehudi Menuhin, Christopher Hogwood, James Loughran, Fayçal Karoui, Marco Guidarini, François-Xavier Roth, Charles Dutoit and James Conlon, accompanied, in triple or double concerti by, to name a few, Orchestre Les Siècles, France's Orchestre National, Orchestre Philharmonique, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Sinfonia Varsovia, Das Grazer Philharmonische Orchester, Gürzenich Orchester Köln, and Stockholms Nya Kammarorkester.

With a particular affection for contemporary music, Trio Wanderer has premièred works by Thierry Escaich, Bruno Mantovani, Frank Michael Beyer, Marco Francescini, and Philippe Hersant.

The Trio Wanderer's recordings include trios by Chausson, Ravel, Haydn, Shostakovich, Copland, Saint-Saëns, Mendelssohn, Smetana, the complete piano trios of Schubert and Brahms, Schubert's Trout Quintet, Hummel's Quintet, Beethoven's Triple Concerto conducted by James Conlon, and pieces by Liszt and Messiaen. In 2005, a new CD dedicated to Martinů's Triple Concerti was issued by Capriccio. An auspicious meeting with the



Austrian baritone Wolfgang Holzmaier led the Trio to make a recording with him of the folksongs by Beethoven, Haydn and Pleyel, released by Cypres Records in 2009.

Trio Wanderer has won several awards and recommendations including Choc du Monde de la Musique, Fanfare's Want List, Critic's Choice of Gramophone, CD of the Month by the BBC Music Magazine, Klassik.com Empfehlung, CD des Monats im Fono Forum, Diapason d'Or of the Year, Midem International Classical Music Award. Besides numerous radio and television recordings (Radio France, BBC, ARD, Mezzo), the French-German television company ARTE made a film on the Trio Wanderer, broadcast in June 2003.

Jean-Marc Phillips-Varjabédian plays on a Pietro Guarneri violin (Venezia 1748). Raphaël Pidoux plays on a Goffredo Cappa violoncello (Saluzzo 1680).

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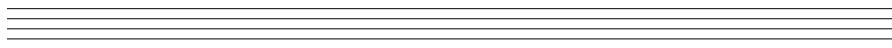
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Music in the Afternoon, a five-concert series, presents musicians who are on the threshold of international recognition, as well as established artists and ensembles. Both Canadian and international artists are invited to perform. The WMCT also commits to commission a new work by a Canadian composer. The series is presented to its members/subscribers, and single tickets are also available.

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