

The October 5th, 2017, concert is sponsored by

Women's Musical Club of Toronto Foundation



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Music in the Afternoon.

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The piano being played today is the Edith McConica Steinway.

ARTISTS for OCTOBER 5, 2017

Lara St. John, violin
Matt Herskowitz, piano

Canadian-born violinist **Lara St. John** has performed as soloist with the orchestras of Cleveland, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Seattle, Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, and with the Boston Pops, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, NDR Symphony, Zurich Chamber Orchestra, Camerata Ireland, Amsterdam Symphony, Brazilian Symphony, Sao Paulo Symphony, China Philharmonic, the Hong Kong, Tokyo and Kyoto Symphonies, and the orchestras of Brisbane, Adelaide and Auckland among many others.

Lara created her own label, Ancalagon, in 1999, and has recorded with the Royal Philharmonic, the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela and The Knights, with which she won the Juno award in 2011 for her Mozart album. Of her Bach Six Sonatas and Partitas for Violin Solo, American Record Guide wrote: "I simply don't know where else you can go to hear Bach played at this level of artistry. Once again she eclipses her competition".

Lara began playing the violin at two years old. She made her first appearance as soloist with orchestra at age four, and her European debut with the Gulbenkian Orchestra in Lisbon when she was 10. She toured Spain, France, Portugal and Hungary at ages 12 and 13, entered the Curtis Institute at 13, and spent her first summer at Marlboro three years later. Her teachers have included Felix Galimir and Joey Corpus.

"Lara St. John happens to be a volcanic violinist with a huge, fabulous tone that pours out of her like molten lava. She has technique to burn and plays at a constant high heat."

Los Angeles Times

Uniquely combining the superlative technique of a classical virtuoso with his prowess in jazz, world music and free improvisation, pianist, composer and arranger **Matt Herskowitz** has carved out a unique and personal voice in music. Over the course of the last decade, Matt has produced a series of critically-acclaimed recordings, premiered his works in settings from New York's Central Park to Germany's Köln Philharmonie, collaborated with top classical, jazz and pop artists, and has performed at music festivals across the globe.

A graduate of the Juilliard School in New York and the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, Matt is originally from Rensselaerville, New York, and has made Montreal his adopted home since 1999.

PROGRAMME for OCTOBER 5, 2017

Sonata in A major for violin and piano

César Franck
(1822-1890)

INTERMISSION

Shiksa

A selection of pieces from the following:

Czardashian Rhapsody (Hungary)

arr. Martin Kennedy

Variaiuni ("Bar fight") (Romania)

arr. Lara St. John

Cocek (Macedonia)

arr. Milica Paranosic

Naftule Shpilt Far Dem Rebn (Yiddish)

Lara St. John

Ah Ya Zayn (Palestine)

arr. John Kameel Farah

Misirlouri (Jewish Diaspora)

arr. Yuri Bogunia

Sari Siroun Yar (Armenia)

arr. Serouj Kradjian

Nagilara (Israel)

arr. Matt Herskowitz

Kolo (Serbia)

Lara St. John

Five Ladino Songs (Judeo-Spanish)

arr. David Ludwig

Oltenian Hora (Romania)

Lara St. John

Moscow (Russia)

arr. Gene Pritsker

The Pain Will Find Us (Greece)

arr. John Psathas

Ca La Breaza (Romania)

arr. Michael P. Atkinson

Tuning Your Mind lecture

Professor Anna Shternshis

Director of Anne Tanenbaum Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Toronto.

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

Visit the artist's website at www.larastjohn.com

Complimentary refreshments will be available at intermission.

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

NOTES for OCTOBER 5, 2017

César Franck spent most of his life, and certainly all his musical career, in France, but he was born in Liège in 1822. This allowed Percy Scholes, in the quirky old Oxford Companion to Music, to claim him for his roster of composers from Belgium and Holland. That book also has a picture of him sitting at the organ of Sainte Clotilde in Paris, the church he served as organist from 1858 until his death. He looks relaxed and contemplative and is probably improvising. This relatively peaceful appointment served as an escape from a career as a virtuoso pianist, for which he was temperamentally unsuited, but which was forced on him by an overbearing father. Not surprisingly a large amount of his compositional output was music for the church, or large oratorios on religious themes, many of the latter, poorly received, but he did receive encouragement for some of his chamber works from Liszt. In 1872 he was made professor of organ at the Paris Conservatoire and there gathered around himself a circle of students who were often drawn to him for the instruction he gave in composition, a fact that irked the officially appointed professors of composition. Franck seems to have been naively oblivious of the internal political upsets that swirled around him. From this period come a number of ambitious works: a couple of symphonic poems, the Symphonic Variations, and a piano quintet, all of them using an advanced musical language. In spite of this significant body of composition, when he was made a Chevalier of the Legion d'honneur in 1885, it was as professor of organ and not as composer. The Violin Sonata was written in 1886 as a wedding present for the Belgian violin virtuoso Eugène Ysaÿe, and it immediately became a part of his regular concert repertoire. Today it is one of Franck's most popular works, and not only for violinists. All the other string instruments, including the double bass, have appropriated it for their own use, and one can find on-line versions for flute, all sizes of saxophone, and even one for tuba.

The four movements of the sonata are unified by the use of similar thematic ideas which appear in varied form to produce a cyclical structure; the connections are sometimes clear, sometimes more subtle. It was surely this often elusive re-appearance of material that caught Marcel Proust's ear, and suggested the "little phrase" from the fictitious Vinteuil sonata that so enraptures both Swann and the narrator in his great novel *À la recherche du temps perdu*. Proust, like all authors who make use of recognizable models for their characters, insisted that his invention, Vinteuil was not one living composer, but an amalgam of many, and likewise the all-important violin sonata was not any particular work. Nevertheless César Franck's sonata has certain qualities that fit admirably with the role that music plays in the novel, and this is particularly true of the canonic writing in the last movement. A canon, in which a melodic idea chases a version of itself that has set out a little earlier, can sometimes be a bit academic

for the listener, but Franck's is not. With natural resting places built into the melody, the effect is more like a continual echo – an obsessive, hypnotic echo, perhaps for those of you who know the novel.

In an interview with *Violinist.com*, Lara St. John describes the evolution of *Shiksa*: her wide-ranging music collection from Eastern Europe, and her meeting with jazz pianist Matt Herskowitz providing a catalyst for her idea that some of these tunes might be reimagined and heard anew. *Shiksa* includes traditional folk songs from Armenia, Palestine, the Jewish Diaspora, Russia, Macedonia, Serbia, Greece, Romania and Hungary. Some are settings arranged by contemporary composers such as John Kameel Farah and Serouj Kradjian, some are partly improvised, but they are all tunes that Lara has known and loved. The album has received many rave reviews since its release in 2015.

*John Mayo
(with notes on *Shiksa* compiled separately)*