



# NEWS & NOTES

MUSIC IN THE AFTERNOON

Women's Musical Club of Toronto

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## AMY HILLIS JOINS WMCT AS ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

By Janet Murray

The WMCT Board of Directors is thrilled to welcome [Amy Hillis](#) as our next Artistic Director for the *Music in the Afternoon* concert series. Amy is a dynamic artist and a visionary thinker with a passion for chamber music and a strong connection to emerging Canadian talent. Her experience as a performer and her innovative approach to programming are an ideal match for the WMCT as we approach our 130th anniversary.

A celebrated violinist, educator, and advocate for Canadian music, Amy brings to the WMCT a deep commitment to artistic excellence, innovation, and community engagement. She succeeds Simon Fryer, who brought extraordinary chamber music artists to the Club since 2006, and whose final season - [WMCT's 128th](#) - begins October 9, 2025.



Amy Hillis (photo: Brent Callis)

Amy is known for her “rich, warm sound” and has been widely praised for challenging artistic norms and building community through music. As a soloist and collaborator, she has premiered numerous Canadian works and performed extensively across Canada and internationally. *MitA* audiences can experience her

artistry first-hand when Amy performs with VC2 Cello Duo as part of the upcoming season.

Amy is currently Assistant Professor of Community Music at York University's School of Arts, Media, Performance and Design in Toronto. She leads courses that explore music's ability to empower communities including her newly established course, “Performing Arts in the Community: Engaging New Audiences”.

Amy holds a Doctor of Music in Violin Performance from McGill University. She completed her Master of Music at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and her Bachelor of Music at McGill University.

As part of the [meagan&amy duo](#), Amy was selected as winner of the inaugural “Pan-Canadian Recital Tour” to perform 50 recitals across all thirteen Canadian provinces and territories. Her duo's debut album titled *Roots* demonstrates the connections between select Canadian compositions and works from the traditional canon of classical repertoire.

Amy grew up in Regina and is a founding member and manager of the prairie-based [Horizon String Quartet](#). During seven different tours, the HSQ has performed over 200 interactive concerts for more than 10,000 young people in 100 different Canadian cities.

This gives you a little insight into the artist and educator who is Amy Hillis!

*Janet Murray is the WMCT's President and Board Chair as well as the Chair of the Nominating & Governance Committee.*

Subscriptions for the next season of *Music in the Afternoon* are now on sale [online](#) or by phone (416-923-7052). Don't miss one of Toronto's most vibrant and well-established classical music concert series!

## A MAGICAL WORKSHOP

By Annette Sanger

On Monday, April 14 room 130 at the Faculty of Music, U of T, was alive with the sound of music – a group of high school students from RH King Academy in Scarborough attended a workshop by the WMCT’s most recent Career Development Award winner, soprano Midori Marsh, who performed her sisterhood-themed concert for *Music in the Afternoon* on April 3. Like the concert, the workshop was a truly magical occasion!



RH King student performs  
April 14, 2025 (photo: James Kippen)

Several students had the opportunity to perform solo and showcase their amazing vocal and acting talents while receiving a wealth of constructive feedback from Midori, whom they clearly loved! Her suggestions for improvements included working on breathing techniques, refining facial expressions, relaxing the head and neck, and maintaining one’s presence through to

the end of a song even if one has stopped singing. For the students it was their first time performing with a piano accompanist (the amazing Andrew Ball) and they clearly felt this was a very special occasion while still feeling completely comfortable and supported both by their peers and by Midori. The students felt honoured and privileged to be working with a professional singer, and Midori relished the opportunity to inspire and encourage young musicians with whom she had a great rapport.



RH King students with Midori Marsh, April 14, 2025 (photo: James Kippen)

Warmest thanks to everyone – the students, their teacher Heather Shaw, Midori and Andrew, and WMCT volunteers and donors who all made this wonderful musical gathering possible.

*Annette Sanger is the WMCT’s Vice-President and Chair of the CDA and DEI Committees.*

## IN MEMORY: KATHLEEN DAVIS

By Nora R. Wilson

As a young wife and mother, Kathy led a very busy life. When she married Bill Davis, a cabinet minister and later Premier of Ontario, she instantly became stepmother to four young children, soon to become five when her daughter, Meg, was born. But she always found time for music in her life. Opera was a life-long passion and she was a keen subscriber to the COC and later, a member of its Board. Kathy’s other great love was chamber music and Schubert was dear to her heart with his exquisite melodies. She loved the interplay of instruments in small groups of string players where you could follow each voice.

Although Kathy was an American from Chicago, her family had a cottage in Georgian Bay and we met as teenagers sitting on the dock and talking about life and music. I shared Kathy’s passion for both opera and chamber music. Later in life, we met regularly at the COC and the WMCT concerts and enjoyed comparing notes on the music and the musicians. Kathy was always positive and enthusiastic about the high caliber of WMCT concerts.



Kathleen Davis at her Georgian Bay cottage (photo: Ian Davis)

She will be greatly missed by her many friends in the musical world. I was thrilled that eight of Kathy’s family members came to the last concert of the 2025 season - Asitha Tennekoon on May 8th - and Kathy herself was at the Club’s last concert of 2024.

*Nora R. Wilson is a long-time member and supporter of the WMCT. She sponsored our May 8th Music in the Afternoon concert in Kathleen Davis’ memory. If you would like to become a WMCT concert sponsor, please email us at [wmct@wmct.on.ca](mailto:wmct@wmct.on.ca)*



(L to R) Yolanda Bruno, Aysel Taghi-Zada, Asitha Tennekoon, Amahl Arulanandam, and Laurence Schaufele, *Music in the Afternoon* on May 8, 2025 (photo: J. Kippen)



A musical interlude, March 12, 2025 (photo: J. Kippen)

## THANK YOU SIMON

*By Robin Sundstrom*

Much has been said about the contributions of Simon Fryer, our outgoing Artistic Director, whose final season as AD is coming up in 2025-26. He has been the WMCT's constant for almost 20 years, so it was only fitting that he and his accomplishments be celebrated in style at the Royal Canadian Yacht Club on St. George Street. Close to 40 board members, donors, volunteers, and members joined Simon there at a lovely musical cocktail reception on March 12.

WMCT Vice-President, Annette Sanger, and Professor Robin Elliott, among others, honoured Simon by recounting some of the highlights and successes of past seasons. The WMCT presented him with a dashing cap and scarf to add a little additional flair (and maybe comfort, given Saskatchewan weather?!) to his drives in his beloved MG.



Simon opens his gifts (photo: J. Kippen)

Some past, present, and future WMCT performers were brought together with the assistance of board member Daisy Leung for a wonderful musical interlude. VC2 Cello Duo, Amahl Arulanandam and Bryan Holt, were joined by pianist Katherine Dowling and our incoming Artistic Director and violinist, Amy Hillis. Given that Simon is a cellist, we felt the unusual cello presence was appropriate, as was the fact that all the string players had either worked with or been taught by Simon at some point!

We will continue to see Simon at a couple of concerts next season. Please do not hesitate to tell him how much you've enjoyed his concert choices, and wish him well in the future!

*Robin Sundstrom is the WMCT's Secretary-Treasurer.*

## ANGELA HEWITT RETURNS

*By Janet Murray*

On March 26, 2025 renowned Canadian pianist [Angela Hewitt](#) returned to Toronto, performing Mozart's Piano Concerto No.21 with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

This was a stop on Angela's *Mozart Odyssey*, performing the composer's complete piano concertos in engagements across nine countries. Her *Odyssey* began in March 2024 and continues until December 2026.

At the TSO concert, Esther McNeil, past President of both the WMCT and the WMCT Foundation, was able to reconnect and exchange pleasantries with Angela who remembers the WMCT fondly. Angela was the featured performer in our December 1985 concert and was part of our very special Centennial Celebration concert in May 1998.



(L to R) Angela Hewitt and Esther McNeil (photo: Loie Fallis)

# KING CHARLES III CORONATION MEDALS

By Janet Murray

In 2024, the King Charles III Coronation Medal was created to mark His Majesty's May 2023 Coronation as a visible and tangible way to recognize outstanding individuals of all ages and from all walks of life who have made a difference in their communities.

The WMCT was asked by its Honorary Patron, the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, Edith Dumont, to nominate individuals to receive the award. Each of the people below were selected to receive the medal for demonstrating exceptional qualities and outstanding service to our Province. Included below is just a sample of their many contributions.



Janet Murray with some of our medal recipients (clockwise from top left): Annette Sanger, Diane Martello, Robin Elliott and Jerri Merritt Jones, March 12, 2025 (photo: James Kippen)

Since 2006 **Annette Sanger** has volunteered in many roles and Board positions for the WMCT. Chairing the Career Development Award Committee, she assembles qualified candidates and respected jurors awarding the \$25,000 prize to exceptional young Canadian musicians.

**Diane Martello** leads numerous initiatives in the WMCT community. Most recently, she championed a policy to expand free concert access to all post secondary students and to care givers and providers accompanying their care recipient.

For over 20 years **Jerri Merritt Jones** used her superior organizational skills as a volunteer, Board member, Registrar, and Events Committee Chair for the WMCT. As the WMCT Registrar, she organized membership lists and ticket distribution - no easy task in the days before computerization!

**Kathleen McMorow** established semi-annual awards through the Ontario Arts Foundation to support the commission and performance of new Canadian compositions. A highly respected music librarian, she has provided accommodation and rehearsal space for many musicians visiting Toronto. Among many other roles, Kathleen manages the WMCT website.

A Professor of Musicology at the UofT, **Robin Elliott** has contributed greatly to Canadian music studies past and present. Robin's WMCT connection includes curation and presentation of the *Tuning Your Mind* lecture series. He also wrote the three books in the *Counterpoint* series covering the history of the first 125 years of the WMCT.

Over a 30-year period **Esther McNeil** built and led teams of volunteers who successfully raised funds for the 90th and 100th WMCT concert seasons. Excess funds raised were used to establish permanent awards and scholarships for music students studying in Toronto and for a Canadian chamber musician embarking on their professional career, the CDA. She was President and a Board member of both the WMCT and the WMCT Foundation for many years.

The WMCT is very much a volunteer-run organization, and we are always looking for help from among our members/subscribers for various tasks. Please do consider becoming a volunteer this season! We are particularly looking for assistance with marketing, governance and finance. If you're interested please call 416-923-7052 or email us at [wmct@wmct.on.ca](mailto:wmct@wmct.on.ca). You may also complete the volunteer questionnaire on our [website](#).

