



MUSIC IN THE AFTERNOON

Women's Musical Club of Toronto

# NEWS & NOTES

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## A NOTE FROM YOUR AD ABOUT NEXT SEASON

By Amy Hillis

Dear WMCT members and *Music in the Afternoon* listeners,

I write to you in anticipation of our 129th concert season and my first as Artistic Director. Our 2026/27 season will bring five unique musical experiences to our cozy, afternoon concerts. I have asked each performer to title their program to offer insight into the musical journey they will take us on. These titles will guide our listening experience, connecting the pieces on each program with a common theme.

Our season begins with the North American debut of **Trio Hélios** from France. Titled "**Light & Shade**", their program explores the relationship between hope and darkness. Their choice to perform Lili Boulanger's piano trio embraces this theme by beginning with music "of a sad evening" before transitioning to music "of a spring morning". The trio will also perform two of the most iconic piano trios ever written: one by French composer, Maurice Ravel, and another by Dmitri Shostakovich.

In December, we celebrate the magic of wintertime with a program called "**Yuletide: A Ceremony of Midwinter**" featuring a Montreal-based trio of soprano, lute, and recorder. You may even recognize the recorder player, Vincent Lauzer, a WMCT CDA winner and previous performer in our series! This time, Vincent teams up with **Ménestrel**, an ensemble known for producing alternative early music programs by mixing ancient repertoire with oral folk traditions. This concert weaves together the threads of Yuletide traditions and ancient customs and symbols still present in beloved seasonal carols.



Ménestrel: Kerry Burse, Janelle Lucyk, and Vincent Lauzer

"**Poetry of Dreamers**" is February's concert title featuring pianist and JUNO nominee, **Katherine Dowling**, and music by Chopin, Scriabin, and fellow Torontonians, Luis Ramirez. Katherine sees a concert as "an act of service, an opportunity to tell stories beyond words, to venture into - and share - every aspect of the human experience. It's the inspiration behind 'Poetry of Dreamers' - a collection of poetic beauty, seamlessly interweaving the Romantics with dreamers of today."

The **Goldmund String Quartet** visits us from Germany in March to perform Beethoven, Schubert and Bavarian folk tunes. They've titled their program, "**Dahoam**" which means "home" in German to reflect their program's exploration of their Bavarian background. For the Goldmunds, "Dahoam" is



Goldmund Quartet  
(photo: Gregor Hohenberg)

not just a place but "a sound and feeling: warmth, belonging." This concert is also an extremely special opportunity to hear live the "Paganini Quartet", four instruments made by Antonio Stradivari.

Our final concert will feature the [Canadian Chamber Orchestra](#), a group of 14 string players based here in Toronto. This program titled **“Her Stories: Experiences in the City”** is curated by the orchestra’s female members specially for the WMCT and features music by fellow Canadians alongside personal anecdotes from members of the ensemble.

I look forward to seeing you at these concerts and enjoying these five unique musical experiences together!

Sincerely,  
Amy

## DEAR LARA

*By Annette Sanger*

[Dear Lara](#) is a very powerful and important new documentary film about the darker side of the classical music world by acclaimed violinist Lara St. John – well-known to the WMCT both as a former laureate of the Career Development Award and performer in the 120th season of *Music in the Afternoon*. This film tells the story of her own and many others’ sexual abuse as teenage students at the hands of their much older, well-respected male teachers in prestigious music schools in the UK, Europe and North America. By going public, Lara hopes to break the pervasive silence and bring about acknowledgement, action, and cultural change. The Canadian premiere, which was preceded by a beautiful solo performance by Lara, was at a sold-out Isabel Bader Theatre on April 20, with several WMCT volunteers in attendance. Brava Lara!!

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



Lara St. John and Matt Herskowitz Meet-and-Greet with students  
*Music in the Afternoon*, October 5, 2017 (photo: James Kippen)

## LIONS AND TIGERS AND BEARS - PLAY ON!

*By Diane Martello*

Just as Dorothy in the *The Wizard of Oz* overcame obstacles to get home, the WMCT inevitably overcomes obstacles to produce *Music in the Afternoon*. This past season our lions and tigers and bears were elevators, subways and demolitions.

The main elevator to Walter Hall (WH) was unexpectedly out of service for our March 5, 2026 concert. Audience members were greeted at the front door by a team of volunteers and offered an escort to the back “freight” elevator, with WH access from the stage! The audience adjusted. The performance went on.

With year-long construction at the Museum Subway Station, the WMCT kept everyone abreast of the latest sidewalk and street restrictions. Our audiences detoured. The performances went on.



Demolition of the former McLaughlin Planetarium, May 12, 2026

For our final concert on May 7, 2026 the de-construction of the McLaughlin Planetarium, adjacent to WH, was well underway. The WMCT learned that WH is equipped with vibration sensors and a hotline to the de-construction team. During concerts, if vibrations (and noise) become noticeable, de-construction is halted. While this did not happen, we did hear the province-wide testing of the Emergency Alert on cell phones mid-concert! The performance went on.

Lions and Tigers and Bears? Play on!

*Diane Martello is Chair of the WMCT’s Fundraising and Membership, Concerts and Marketing Committees.*

# TORONTO SUMMER MUSIC FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT

*By Adair Hope*

Violinist Ashley Tsai (hometown Calgary, AB) is this year's recipient of a Toronto Summer Music Fellowship supported by WMCT. To see her perform, check the [TSM schedule](#) of ReGeneration Concerts, taking place at Walter Hall, which showcase the talents of gifted emerging artists like Ashley.



Ashley Tsai

Recognized as one of CBC Music's "30 Hot Canadian Classical Musicians Under 30", Ashley Tsai (b.2005) has been a soloist with several prominent orchestras, including the Jenaer Philharmonie, the Casalmaggiore Festival Orchestra, and the Calgary Civic Symphony. She is a recipient of multiple awards, including the 2024-25 Borromeo String Quartet Guest Artist Award and the Music Center of Los Angeles' Spotlight Award, and has been a prize winner at a number of competitions, including the Violons du Roy Concerto Competition, Kloster Schöntal International Violin Competition, and the Canadian Music Competition. Additionally, Ashley appeared on NPR's *From the Top* as a Jack Kent Young Artists Award Recipient, and was awarded Provincial and National Gold Medals from Canada's Royal Conservatory of Music.

An avid chamber musician, Ashley is a member of the Auréya Quartet, recent winners of the New England Conservatory's Honours Ensemble Competition, coached by Ara Gregorian. Ashley has also been awarded NEC's Community Performances and Partnerships Ensemble Fellowship, having the opportunity to provide interactive outreach performances to different communities around the Boston area.

Ashley is currently a Dean Scholar at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, MA, under the tutelage of Miriam Fried, previously also with Paul Biss. She plays on a Giuseppe Gagliano violin and a J. Jacques Millant bow graciously provided by CANIMEX INC. from Drummondville (PQ).

*Adair Hope is the WMCT's Awards Committee Chair.*

## MARION KINCH: A TRIBUTE

*By Giovanna Cavarra*

I don't know exactly when I first met Marion Kinch, but I know exactly how she made me feel every single time I saw her. That smile. Big, bright, and so completely her. The moment she walked through the door, you felt it. She had a way of making you feel seen and welcomed before she even said a word.

Marion was a proud and devoted member of the WMCT, and a familiar, beloved face at our concerts for years. She came because she loved the music, and she came faithfully. Everyone who had the pleasure of speaking with her adored her — she was the kind of woman who left every conversation a little warmer than she found it. That was simply who she was.

What I remember most is the quiet privilege of being the one to help her find her accessible seating. I say privilege because that is honestly what it felt like. Those small moments with Marion — walking her in, getting her settled, exchanging a smile — were never a task. They were a highlight. She never made you feel like you were helping her. She made you feel like you were her friend. And I suppose that's because you were.

In more recent times, after Karen retired, she began accompanying her mother to the concerts, making sure Marion could keep coming and keep doing something she truly loved. Watching the two of them together was quietly moving — a daughter stepping up so her mother's world didn't have to get smaller. Marion's world never felt small. Even when things got harder, she showed up. She smiled. She listened to the music. And she made the people around her feel like the luckiest ones in the room.

I was one of those people. And I am so glad I was.

*Giovanna Cavarra is the WMCT's Telephone Coordinator and a Front Of House Volunteer.*

# CELEBRATING WMCT

*By Robin Sundstrom*

If, as has been often said, chamber music is a conversation among friends, we continued that conversation after the concert on May 7th, our last of the season. For years it has been our tradition to celebrate both audience members and another successful season following our May concert, and the event offers a relaxed opportunity to chat with other audience members, get to know directors, volunteers, and board members, and greet our fabulous musicians.

We all gathered in the Boyd Neel Room off the concert hall lobby, where the WMCT supplied tea and coffee as well as sweets of various sorts, a bit of a treat to help power us through the rest of a long day.



Photos from end-of-season receptions over the past few years, including Robin Sundstrom, 2024 (top left); Janet Murray, 2026 (bottom right)

I heard discussions about people's summer plans, and was pleased to bump into someone I hadn't even realized was at the concert. When the artists arrived a little later, they immediately attracted an admiring circle and were kind enough to field questions. Oboist Caitlin Broms-Jacobs laughed when asked, "How many reeds do you go through in a performance?" – a question sparked by the sight of a case holding multiple double reeds (all hand-made by Caitlin herself). "Only one, this time, but I'm always prepared for the worst." Her case holds 16 reeds! At least Caitlin's collaborator, pianist Madeline Hildebrand, only had to worry about piano positioning!



(L to R) Madeline Hildebrand and Caitlin Broms-Jacobs of Fierbois *Music in the Afternoon*, May 7, 2026 (Photo: Duc Tam Nguyen)

To all those who joined the WMCT's working group after the concert, thank you. We enjoy having the chance to chat after the busyness of the performance, and hope we will see you all again next year. Perhaps even for a bite after the concert? But certainly for our final concert celebration!

*Robin Sundstrom is the WMCT's Secretary-Treasurer and Chair of the Finance Committee*

## THE CDA GROWS

*By Annette Sanger*

There is exciting news about the WMCT's prestigious [Career Development Award](#) (CDA): the prize money has been increased to \$30,000, making it one of the largest music awards in Canada! Presented every three years to an exceptional young Canadian musician embarking on a professional career, the next winner will be announced in early 2027 and they will perform as part of *Music in the Afternoon* the following season. As our winners have attested, it is incredibly helpful, even game changing, to offer young musicians this kind of financial support as they leave their music institutions and start building their careers in the very competitive realm of classical music performance. You may remember some of our brilliant and talented recent awardees – soprano Midori Marsh, accordionist Michael Bridge, and violinist Blake Pouliot.

The CDA is a project of the WMCT in partnership with CBC Radio Music and Société Radio Canada/Ici Musique and it is funded by the WMCT Foundation. And many thanks to the members of the CDA committee – Tamar Nelson, Adair Hope and Matthew Parsons (CBC) – who help organize and oversee the award process.