



2023 - 2024

38TH SEASON

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

JOAN BLACKMAN

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MUSIC OF THE HEART

Talisa Blackman - piano

Joan Blackman - violin

Zoltan Rozsnyai - cello

FRIDAY, JAN. 26, 2024 | 2:00PM
West Point Grey United Church

We would like to dedicate this performance to Marnie Carter as a thank you for her longstanding service on the Vetta Board of Directors!

SATURDAY, JAN. 27, 2024 | 7:30PM
West Vancouver United Church

with the support of the District of West Vancouver

SUNDAY, JAN. 28, 2024 | 2:00PM
Pyatt Hall

with the support of the Alan and Gwendoline Pyatt Foundation

MONDAY, JAN. 29, 2024 | 2:30PM ArtSpring

with the support of the Salt Spring Island Foundation



PROGRAM

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Romeo & Juliet Ten Pieces for Solo Piano:

- I. Montagues and Capulets (Dance of the Knights)
- II. Young Juliet
- III. Mercutio

Arno Babajanian (1921-1983)

Piano Trio in F sharp minor

- I. Largo-Allegro espressivo
- II. Andante
- III. Allegro

INTERMISSION

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Piano Trio No. 1 in B major, Opus 8

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. Scherzo: Allegro molto
- III. Adagio
- IV. Allegro

PROGRAM NOTES

Sergei Prokofiev **Romeo & Juliet: Ten pieces** **for Solo Piano Opus 75 (1937)**

I. *Montagues and Capulets*
(Dance of the Knights)

II. *Young Juliet*

III. *Mercutio*

Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* for solo piano is a transcription of the composer's own orchestral suite of the ballet. The suite consists of ten movements, each of which is based on a scene from Shakespeare's play of the same name. The suite was composed in 1935-36 and was first performed in 1937. The transcription for solo piano was made by the composer himself in 1937. Both versions of these pieces provide evidence of Prokofiev's genius for capturing character and mood.

"Montagues and Capulets," also known as "Dance of the Knights," is a striking and dramatic piece which describes the tension and conflict between the two feuding families in Shakespeare's tragedy. The orchestral version of the piece opens with a foreboding brass fanfare, establishing a sense of impending doom. Dark string melodies evoke a palpable atmosphere of strife and hostility. The relentless rhythmic drive and dissonant harmonies add an intensity that capture the emotional turmoil at the heart of the Montague and Capulet feud. In the solo piano version, the challenge lies in capturing the

grandiosity and intensity of the orchestration within the confines of a single instrument. The transcription requires the pianist to skillfully navigate the dynamic contrasts and maintain the dramatic tension with precision and expressive nuance.

While the orchestral suite version of "Young Juliet" envelops the listener in a lush orchestral landscape with delicate strings, woodwinds, and harp, the solo piano adaptation provides a more introspective exploration of Juliet's character. Prokofiev introduces Juliet at three different ages. In infancy, learning scales and arpeggios, in adolescence, embodied by a graceful clarinet melody, and at the cusp of adulthood with a nostalgic flute. Prokofiev's apparently simple musical ideas beautifully capture the innocence, tenderness, and youthful spirit of Juliet in the narrative.

Sergei Prokofiev's musical portrayal of Mercutio is characterized by wit, vivacity, and a sense of mischief. In the orchestral suite, Prokofiev employs a variety of instruments to capture Mercutio's spirited personality, often incorporating playful woodwinds, agile strings, and lively percussion, while the solo adaptation allows for a more focused exploration of Mercutio's character, emphasizing the percussive elements and dynamic contrasts inherent in the piano and relying on the technical virtuosity of the performer.

Vetta Chamber Music Society

acknowledges that we work, rehearse, and perform on the ancestral and unceded land of Indigenous nations.

We acknowledge and raise our hands to the Coast Salish Peoples including the Tsleil-Waututh (səlilwətaʔt), Kwikwetlem (kʷikwəɬəm), Squamish (Sḵwxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw), and Musqueam (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm) First Nations.

We also acknowledge the unceded territory and ancestors of Coast Salish First Nations of Salt Spring Island which include the Quw'utsun Tribes (Cowichan), Spune'luxutth (Penelakut), BOKÉCEN (Paquachin), MÁLEXEL (Malahat), SʔÁUTW (Tsawout), W̱JOŁELP (Tsartlip) and W̱SIKEM (Tseycum) First Nations.

Arno Babajanian

Piano Trio in F sharp minor (1952)

Arno Babajanian was born in Yerevan, Armenia. At the age of five he showed such promise on the piano that Armenian composer Aram Khachaturian, upon hearing the young talent, arranged for him to go to Moscow for proper training. By the time Babajanian composed this piano trio, he had returned to his native city and was teaching at the conservatory. The Piano Trio was dedicated to violinist David Oistrakh and cellist Sviatoslav Knushevitsky. First performed with the composer himself at the piano at the Moscow Conservatory, the performance's success brought instant fame to Babajanian in the Soviet Union, especially in his native Armenia.

The trio is a passionate three movement romantic piece with memorable melodies and virtuoso writing for all three instruments, especially the piano. In writing this trio, Babajanian sought to integrate Armenia's folk idioms and to pay homage to Khachaturian, his unique style eclipses these motivations. At times we hear Rachmaninov, at times Prokofiev, even Fauré. However, the exotic flavour of the scales and the mixed meter dance rhythms mark it unmistakably Babajanian.

The Piano Trio opens with an imposing Allegro in sonata form, establishing a dramatic atmosphere with a unison presentation of the main theme by the strings. This thematic leitmotif, an ever-present thread, reappears throughout the composition, contributing to its structural coherence. Babajanian's virtuosic writing for the three instruments, especially the piano, is immediately evident, as the movement unfolds with passionate intensity. It is hard to miss the harmonic minor feel and the rhapsodic and tempestuous Armenian temperament.

The soulful middle movement unfolds delicately as a sombre heartbeat in the piano introduces a timeless lament. Soon the

violin and cello intertwine in this poignant exploration of melody, and an increasingly passionate conversation ensues. Finally, the quiet melancholy returns, simple and heartbreakingly beautiful.

The energetic finale, marked Allegro vivace, is rhythmically captivating, alternating between an off-kilter 5/8 meter and 6/8. Here, Babajanian introduces two contrasting themes, one of aggressive character and the other, more lyrical. Near the end, we hear the return of the main theme of the first

movement which leads to a short, stormy coda.

Johannes Brahms

Piano Trio No. 1 in B major, Opus 8 (1854, rev. 1889)

Brahms completed his first piano trio in January of 1854 when he was just twenty years old. Brahms was often not happy with his compositions, and he produced a highly revised version of the work in 1889. He then wrote to his publisher, Fritz Simrock, and expressed his ambivalence about both versions, "With regard to the refurbished trio, I want to add expressly that, while it is true that the old version is bad, I do not claim that the new version is good! What you do now with the old one, whether you melt it down or print it anew, is quite seriously all the same to me." Despite Brahms' reservations about the later version, the revised Opus 8 is considered to be Brahms' greatest piano trio because it combines youthful inspiration with a mature perspective.

The first movement, a grand Allegro con brio, unveils Brahms' mastery in structuring large-scale compositions. The main theme, preserved from the original version, unfolds as a sweeping and serene melody spanning approximately forty measures. The first phrase is introduced by the piano alone. Then, the cello joins to take the sensuous conversation in a new direction. By the time the violin enters,

the theme is on its way to becoming a soaring and passionate hymn. Following the fiery adventures of the development section and recapitulation, the coda brings a moment of tender, celestial repose before rising to a final definitive cadence. Despite the removal of an extended fugal episode from the original 1854 version, the movement maintains its massive scale, emphasizing the delicate balance between the sweeping majesty of the piano with the simpler expression of the strings.

The second movement, virtually unrevised from the original, begins with the lightness and sparkle of a Mendelssohn scherzo. We hear the echoes of distant hunting horns. Suddenly, the music takes a ferocious turn. Filled with fortissimo outbursts, it takes on the earthbound weight of a rough, frolicking peasant dance. A shy new idea in the violin

appears which becomes the nostalgic theme of the middle section, reminiscent of a landler or Austrian country dance which rises into a sonorous climax.

In the restless final movement, Brahms

retains

the unpredictability of his youthful writing and his love for the Hungarian style. He has chosen the B minor key, and throughout the movement we keep waiting for him to return to B major. The cello introduces the main theme with a sweet-sad and an indecisive character, symbolizing its struggle to find a tonic resting place. The addition of a second pesante theme in the revised version effectively complements the youthful spirit of the original composition. We never do find rest in B major, instead, the tempestuous temperament wins out in the end.

Program Notes by J.B.

THE ARTISTS

Talisa Blackman PIANO

Talisa is an active keyboardist based in Toronto, specializing in orchestral performance. She performs regularly with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and has worked with the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra, Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony Orchestra, Esprit Orchestra, and the Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra under Valery Gergiev. She has appeared as a soloist with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa among other groups.

As a chamber musician, she has collaborated with noted vocalists and instrumentalists, including Scottish violinist Nicola Benedetti, baritone

Russell

Braun, and soprano Measha Brueggergosman. Talisa enjoys performing music of all genres, especially video game music, film scores and Broadway tunes, and has also performed with pop artists such as Carly Rae Jepsen, the Moody Blues, and Evanescence. In her spare time she loves reading, gaming, and playing with her two kittens Freddy and Samus.

Joan Blackman ARTISTIC DIRECTOR / VIOLIN

Artistic Director of Vancouver's Vetta Chamber Music Society, Ms. Blackman enjoys a vibrant and varied musical life. She served as Associate Concertmaster of the Vancouver Symphony for many years and has performed and recorded as soloist with the Vancouver Symphony, Victoria Symphony, CBC Radio Orchestra, Turning Point Ensemble and the Banff Festival Orchestra. She also teaches privately and has given masterclasses throughout B.C.

Ms. Blackman is known throughout Canada and the U.S. as a fine chamber musician and has performed with premier groups such as the Penderecki String Quartet, the Purcell String Quartet and the Gryphon Trio. Besides performing and curating the Vetta Chamber Music series in Vancouver, she works with the Canadian Music Centre in their Celebration concert series. Joan is also a member of the Sea and Sky collective which has released two CDs and performs throughout B.C.

Joan has appeared on numerous series including Music in the Morning, Music Fest Vancouver, the Jeffrey Concerts in London, Ontario, and the American String Project. She has also appeared at summer festivals including the Hornby Island Festival, the Pender Harbour Chamber Music Festival, Kaimera, and the Victoria Summer Music Festival.

“Your heart would need to be made of stone not to have loved Joan Blackman’s splendid solo “. “Shapelier phrases and sweeter tone would be hard to imagine”, “a ravishing tone”, “first rate soloist”, “exchanged lines meltingly in a flawless performance” “playing with lyricism, precision, and evident joy”, are some of the accolades that have graced Joan’s reviews.

Zoltan Rozsnyai CELLO

Zoltan Rozsnyai was born into a musical family. Both his parents and grandparents were professional musicians. He studied piano and violin, before taking up the cello at the age of six. He joined the Windsor Symphony at 15, then left to attend the University of Toronto two years later.

While in Toronto, he studied with Vladimir Orloff and Daniel Domb. Zoltan also took masterclasses at the Banff School of Fine Arts, studying with Aldo Parisot, Tsuyoshi Tsutsumi, and Janos Starker. He played for many years in the Canadian Opera Company and National Ballet orchestras, as well as performing as soloist and chamber musician throughout Ontario. Zoltan also spent a year in India with his electric cello, traveling and collaborating with musicians. In 1999 he joined the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, and has been the Assistant Principal cellist since 2001.



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Vetta's 2023 Matching Fundraising Campaign was a terrific success!

Your generous support means we can look forward to the New Year with renewed energy and excitement.

Thank you!

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MUSIC FOR ETERNITY

Featuring the return of Ariel Barnes, cello and Jose Franch-Ballester, clarinet, we bring you music that explores the edges of time with music by Brahms, Messiaen and American composer John Mackey.

FRI. MARCH 8, 2024 | 2:00 PM

West Point Grey United Church

SUN. MARCH 10, 2024 | 2:00 PM

Pyatt Hall

SAT. MARCH 9, 2024 | 7:30

PM

West Vancouver United Church

MON. MARCH 11, 2024 | 2:30

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West Point Grey United Church

SUN. APR. 28, 2024 | 2:00 PM

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