

Virtuosi Concerts Annual General Meeting, March 17, 2024
For the year ending June 30, 2023
Artistic Director Report: Jennifer Thiessen

Artistic Director Staff Position Overview

- Self-employed contract position: \$15 000/year + GST for 2021-22 season increased to \$20 000/year + GST for the 2022-23 season to recognize workload
- In 2022-23, these hours were informally defined by the Executive Committee as \$30/hour for 44 weeks (2 months off in summer) = 15.2 hours/week average. (This was adjusted for the current 2023-24 season to average 13.8 hours/week for 48 weeks).
- Initial 3-year contract ends June 30, 2024.
- Since I began working with Virtuosi in December 2021, the organization has been experiencing a period of transition into an independent arts organization with a fresh vision for the presentation of classical chamber music concerts. The 2022-23 season was an important time of maintaining and building our strengths through this process, including the quality and character of the artists and programming we are presenting, the relationships we are building with listeners, the collaborative connections we are developing with other arts organizations, and the support we are receiving through our successful funding applications, our connections with important sponsors, and of course with our valued individual donors and subscribers.

2022-23 Virtuosi Concerts “Roots & Branches” Season

The 2022-23 season was my first curated season for Virtuosi Concerts after joining the team in December 2021. I succeeded in programming most of the artists who were included in the projected season I had presented at the interview stage of applying for the position of Artistic Director, which was rewarding in terms of consistency of artistic vision and the realization of music that I hoped the Virtuosi audience would enjoy. The season also included two concerts that had been postponed from previous years due to the pandemic, which fit beautifully with the rest of the season: Ensemble Made In Canada and Maxim Lando.

Please see the 2022-23 season brochure included in this report for all details about the seven concerts of that season.

Some highlights in addition to the concert programs:

- Infusion Baroque presented a workshop on baroque performance practice attended by many local musicians interested in this area of musical interpretation.
- Marina Thibeault connected with composer Melody McKiver for a co-presentation at the University of Manitoba (where Melody is Professor of Indigenous Music) describing the creation process for pieces that were performed on our concert.
- Andriana Chuchman and Hoosli raised the roof, and brought out Virtuosi’s largest audience ever.
- Our first Mentorship Concert Project was supported with a MAC grant, and featured local performer-mentors Caitlin Broms-Jacobs, Madeline Hildebrand, Minna Rose Chung, Leila Roberts, and mentees Anica Warkentin and Hwan Gyu Cho.
- Ensemble Made In Canada was finally able to travel to Winnipeg and present their Mosaique Project after multiple postponements due to the pandemic.
- Didem Basar and Patrick Graham collaborated with local string players: Kerry DuWors, Momoko Matsumura, Leanne Zacharias, Marika Galea, and myself for this program. Virtuosi and Brandon University worked together to present a concert of this program in their Pro Series as well as composition masterclasses with Didem at BU.
- Maxim Lando amazed and charmed us all with his virtuosity and spirit in both his performance and his masterclass co-presented with the Manitoba Registered Music Teachers Association.

The Program Committee

The advisory Program Committee is a valued sounding board for ideas of artists and programs during the process of season development. Our board contains a wealth of members with programming and artistic knowledge, whose input I value immensely. The Program Committee has access to a shared document that I aim to update for their perusal at any time during the planning process. Feedback on the work of programming, and ideas of artists to include are welcome. However, final decisions remain at my discretion, and I enjoy and value the responsibility of curating the season according to my artistic vision and Virtuosi's mandates, in consultation with the ED for all factors that affect production and budget.

Elements considered in the creation of a Virtuosi season:

- Beautiful music that can be enjoyed by any curious listener
- Connection to Virtuosi's program mandate from 2020: continuing to present music rooted in the Western classical music tradition and widening to include music and musicians from a variety of cultures and communities and an array of voices of the past and present. (Please see Virtuosi's full Mandate, Vision, and Values document on the next page of the report.)
- Local and visiting artists
- Varied instrumentation: a piano solo recital, strings, singers, winds, brass, percussion
- One concert each season featuring an instrument and/or music from a non-European tradition
- Attention to representation of genders, cultures, races, physical abilities, and ages with the intention of equity, openness, access, inclusion, and awareness.
- Artist fees that respect musicians and are within our current means.

Skywalk Concerts Series 2022-23

Skywalk Concerts are free noon-hour concerts presented in collaboration with the Millennium Library. Sixteen concerts were programmed in the 2022-23 season:

- Please see the list of eight of Fall 2022 Skywalk Concerts included on the last page of this report
- The eight concerts scheduled for Winter 2023 were cancelled by the Millennium Library due to security concerns. (Most of those concerts were rescheduled to the current 2023-24 season).

YAP

- Please see co-directors Sydney Clarke and Katherine Mayba's report for details.

Grants

- Grant-writing is shared between AD and ED. Please find details in Heather Lewis's ED report.

VIRTUOSI CONCERTS MANDATE • VISION • MISSION • VALUES STATEMENTS

Mandate

The mandate of VCI is “the organization and presentation of musical performances and music education” as set out in its articles of incorporation.

Vision

VCI aspires to become the hub for diverse forms of chamber music and recitals in MB; where audiences have an aesthetic encounter with chamber music in a venue that serves as a destination for both artists and audiences. By presenting premier interpreters of chamber music in a salon setting, we desire to nurture our audience’s understanding and appreciation of the best of chamber music.

Mission

To be a portal to performances of chamber music in an intimate setting that:

- facilitates deeply personal aesthetic experiences nourishing both audience and artist.
- supports young and emerging artists.
- sustains patrons while developing the art form.
- seeks community partnerships that foster learning and participation.
- invites artists to explore progressive programming amidst maintaining pillars of the classical canon.

Values

Virtuosi Concerts believes that music is a universal form of human communication; that the interaction between performing artist and audience is indispensable to the mind and spirit; that the transformative power of live performance can embrace and unite individuals, communities, and cultures, thereby strengthening art and enriching society.

VIRTUOSI CONCERTS PROGRAM MANDATE

For three decades Virtuosi Concerts has presented an exceptional classical music series performed by internationally acclaimed artists for a discerning audience. Our primary goal has been to present programming that transcends, cathartic experiences that heal, and virtuosity that excites.

As we enter the third decade of the 21st century, we recognize that the classical music landscape is changing around the world. With that in mind, while we are committed to continue programming the highest standard of music that includes pillars of the classical canon, we are also now dedicated to presenting commissions, the unheard voices of the past and present, and composers who challenge the status quo. We are also striving to bring diversity in the musicians who perform on our stage. It is our belief that diversity and inclusion, both onstage and off, will ensure that this genre thrives and survives into the next century and beyond.

To that end, we are inviting our artists to think critically about programming that will fulfil our mandate.



VIRTUOSI CONCERTS • 2022-2023

VIRTUOSI CONCERTS

30
OCTOBER 2022
SUNDAY
3:00 PM



VIRTUOSA

INFUSION BAROQUE: SALLYNEE AMAWAT, baroque violin; ANDREA STEWART, baroque cello ALEXA RAINE-WRIGHT, baroque flutes & recorder; RONA NADLER, harpsichord

Virtuosi presents Virtuosa! Playing music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on historical instruments, Infusion Baroque enthral audiences across North America with their brilliant programming, creating a truly captivating concert experience with “polish, energy, and finely-honed style” (*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*). The Virtuosa program reawakens works by once-popular composers such as Barbara Strozzi, Ana Bon and Élisabeth-Claude Jacquet de La Guerre as well as works by W. A. Mozart and Antonio Vivaldi written for women who were famous instrumentalists of their day. Come discover these lost treasures!

18
NOVEMBER 2022
FRIDAY
7:30 PM



FROM FAR ABOVE: BRINGER OF LIGHT

MARINA THIBAUT, viola; JANELLE FUNG, piano

Celebrated duo Marina Thibeault and Janelle Fung delight international audiences with their spellbinding performances and engaging presence. They will perform a compelling, JUNO-nominated program for viola and piano which includes works from the classical canon by Clara Schumann, Nadia Boulanger and Rebecca Clarke and contemporary compositions by Alexina Louie, Anna Pidjorna and Manitoba-based violist-composer Melody McKiver. This program celebrates the great distance covered in the movement toward equality and respect for all as well as the hope required to continue working toward this goal, all through powerful works of incredibly beautiful music.

10
DECEMBER 2022
SATURDAY
7:30 PM



VINOK: THE UKRAINIAN WREATH

ANDRIANA CHUCHMAN, soprano; CRAIG TERRY, piano; HOOSLI UKRAINIAN MALE CHORUS

Canadian/Ukrainian soprano Andriana Chuchman has earned the highest acclaim for her international performances with such esteemed companies as the Metropolitan Opera in New York. She also calls Winnipeg home and has granted Virtuosi’s holiday wish by curating an extraordinary program for her hometown crowd. This concert celebrates a spectrum of Ukrainian music from traditional carols to contemporary film and concert music. Andriana will perform with the GRAMMY-award winning pianist and music director Craig Terry as well as Winnipeg’s beloved Hoosli Ukrainian Male Chorus who are a special feature of this exceptional concert.

15
JANUARY 2023
SUNDAY
3:00 PM



ROOTS AND BRANCHES

THE MENTORSHIP CONCERT PROJECT

Virtuosi presents our newest Young Artist Program initiative! The Mentorship Concert Project features exceptional professional musicians and serious pre-professional music students from Manitoba playing chamber music side-by-side. There is an element of surprise to this program because the students will be chosen through an application process in the fall and an ensemble will then be created with members of Virtuosi’s roster of world-class musicians. A cohesive concert program will be curated for this ensemble featuring classical works as well as a piece by a Manitoban composer. Join us in celebrating the bridge between current and future generations of chamber musicians in our province! This project is generously supported by the Manitoba Arts Council.

24
FEBRUARY 2023
FRIDAY
7:30 PM



CANADIAN ODYSSEY

ENSEMBLE MADE IN CANADA:

ANGELA PARK, piano; ELISSA LEE, violin; SHARON WEI, viola; TREY LEE, cello

Ensemble Made In Canada make their fifth visit to our stage! Virtuosi subscribers raved about their 2019 concert calling the performance an “appealing ... breath of Canadian air” and “Beautiful, thoughtful, passionate playing.” EMIC will perform works from their Mosaic Project which won a 2021 JUNO Award for Classical Album of the Year. Composed by fourteen Canadian composers, each representing a particular region of Canada, the suite takes us on a musical journey through the country. The program is rounded out with piano quartets by Camille Saint-Saëns and Canadian pianist-composer Stewart Goodyear. Come and welcome EMIC back to Manitoba!

26
MARCH 2023
SUNDAY
3:00 PM



CONTINUUM

DIDEM BAŞAR, kanun; PATRICK GRAHAM, percussion KERRY DUWORS & MOMOKO MATSUMURA, violins; JENNIFER THIESSEN, viola LEANNE ZACHARIAS, cello; MARIKA GALEA, double bass

Didem Başar is a virtuosic performer and composer whose primary instrument is the Turkish kanun, known for its elegant timbre and flourishing melodies. A masterful musician who loves to challenge her instrument’s boundaries, Didem has composed a program for kanun, percussion and strings, the product of a thirty-year journey synthesizing her Turkish and Western classical music backgrounds. She will be joined by percussionist Patrick Graham of Montreal and an ensemble of multifaceted string players from Manitoba. Do not miss this rare and enchanting experience!

30
APRIL 2023
SUNDAY
3:00 PM



MAXIMUM VELOCITY

MAXIM LANDO, piano

To close our season, multi-award-winning New Yorker Maxim Lando will take the stage. This young pianist has already been described as a “dazzling fire-eater” (ARTS San Francisco), a “pianist who dares to do things not considered by others” (ConcertNet, The Classical Music Network) and as “a total musical being” (*The New Criterion*). He was lauded by Anthony Tommasini in the *New York Times* as displaying “brilliance and infectious exuberance in his New York debut” combined with “impressive delicacy” and a “wild-eyed danger.” Maxim’s triumphant performances of the pillar classical works for the piano are matched by his innovative arrangements across genres. He is crafting a personalized program for Virtuosi to reflect the music that is important to him, paying tribute to the past and looking toward the future.

MEMBERS SAVE UP TO 20% OVER CASUAL TICKETS

This ‘Roots and Branches’ season honours history and celebrates growth, reaching for beautiful new perspectives from a deep commitment to art and society.



GREETING FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR JENNIFER THIESSEN

From October’s elegant overture to April’s final flourish, this season is inspired by deep beauty. Each program combines exquisite artistry with intelligent intention, celebrating current stories and perspectives while recognizing the power of history and ancestry. Each artist possesses that special spark in a performer, which illuminates a room full of listeners with joyful magic.

True virtuosity contains both skill and wisdom and this season is truly virtuosic! Together, we will foster emotional depth, social responsibility and artistic excellence through the experience of great music by an array of composers, interpreted by magnificent soloists and discussed in the intimate conversation of chamber music—the music of friends.

All curious listeners are welcome in the Virtuosi community. We value music as a universal form of human communication and believe that the transformative power of listening together can unite individuals, communities and cultures. Join us to celebrate the deep roots and strong branches of this beautiful music and the exceptional artists who bring it to life this season!

Skywalk Concerts Fall 2022
Jennifer Thiessen contact: artisticdirector@virtuosiconcerts.ca

October 6

Theresa Thor “Pastoral Piano Pop”

Theresa Thor performs traditional, remixed, and contemporary repertoire as a soloist and collaborative pianist; she also sings, synths, and writes pop music as one half of the duo Bicycle Face. Theresa will present original music in a journey through genres, from classical to pastoral pop, with piano and voice at its heart.

October 13

Elation Pauls “The Stones of Life”

Assistant Principal Second Violin with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra since 2009, Elation Pauls is in constant demand for her expressive solo and chamber music performances. She will present works for solo violin by Bach and Paganini alongside Canadian compositions.

October 20

Melody McKiver “Reckoning”

Melody McKiver is a violist, violinist, drummer/percussionist and composer, and is Assistant Professor of Indigenous Music with the Desautels Faculty of Music. Their musical work integrates electronics with Western classical music to shape a new genre of Anishinaabe compositions.

October 27

Savant Flaneur “resonances: trio in binary form”

Savant Flaneur is an avant-garde chamber collective based in Treaty 1 Territory. Composer-improvisors Nathan Krahn and Gage Salnikowski create approachable experimental orchestral music that subverts the composer/performer hierarchy through chance games and open forms.

November 3

Kwiat “Sophisticated Songstress”

Kwiat (kwai·uht) is a Métis Polish avant-pop artist heavily influenced by post-romanticism. With sophisticated vocals and elaborate piano melodies, the Winnipeg-based songstress captivates audiences through raw, intimate, and dramatic performances.

November 10

Southern Thunderbird Medicine Drum “Journey with the Drum”

Southern Thunderbird Medicine Drum is a woman's traditional big drum group formed seven years ago when a group of women came together and began their journey with the drum.

Christy Salwan and Meagan Salwan, who carry the drum, are members of the Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation, born and raised in the inner city of Winnipeg.

November 17

Victoria Sparks & Desautels Percussion Studio “The Marvellous Marimba!”

Join the University of Manitoba Percussion Studio and their director Victoria Sparks for a program called “The Marvellous Marimba!” The excellent percussion students of the Desautels Faculty of Music will perform a variety of works highlighting the warm and melodious sounds of this beautiful instrument.

November 24

Zohreh Gervais and Lisa Rumpel “Forgetting”

Soprano Zohreh Gervais and pianist Lisa Rumpel explore the concept of memory through songs by Schubert, Schumann, Copland and Faure. This program is inspired by the experience of Alzheimer's and the power of musical memories maintained in the mind even when all else has been lost.