

Strings

of St. John's
in concert



CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

Presenting works by
SCHUBERT, RESPIGHI, MARCELLO, BURGE, ELGAR
and **BARTOK**

MEHDI JAVANFAR, music director and conductor
NABEEL ANSARI, Oboe

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2023 AT 7:30 PM

Arnprior Public Library
(21 Madawaska Street, Arnprior)



Follow us on 

The Strings of St. Johns gratefully
acknowledges the financial support
of the City of Ottawa

www.stringsofstjohns.ca

PROGRAMME

Overture in C minor, D.8 (arr. Ernst Hess) Franz Schubert

Ancient Airs and Dances Suite no. 3 Ottorino Respighi

Italiana

Aria di corte

Siciliana

Pasacaglia

Oboe Concerto in C minor Benedetto Marcello

Allegro moderato

Adagio

Allegro

INTERMISSION

Flanders Field Reflections John Burge

Loved and Were Loved

We Shall not Sleep

Serenade for Strings in E minor, Op. 20 Edward Elgar

Allegro placevole

Larghetto

Allegretto

Romanian Folk Dances Strings Béla Bartók

Allegro moderato "Jocul Bâta"

Allegro "Brâul"

Moderato "Pe Loc"

Moderato "Poarga Românească"

L'istesso tempo "Măruntel"

Allegro Vivace "Măruntel"

PROGRAMME NOTES

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Overture in C minor, D8

The Overture in C minor D8, dated June 29, 1811, was Schubert's earliest chamber work, and being written, it seems, for the extended family group, sits right on the divide between chamber music and orchestral writing. The fact that it is notated for string quintet probably indicates that this was designed to be fitted into readings of transcriptions of orchestral works; indeed, there were far more transcribed orchestral works for double viola quintet available than there were original pieces. He dedicated the later string quartet version of it to his brother Ferdinand. This version, however, may actually be specifically for string orchestra, and, far from being a reduction, might have been intended for the larger orchestra. It is very clear, whatever the intention, that Schubert was deeply impressed by the new music that was available to him in Vienna; the school orchestra of the Stadtkonvikt, which Schubert led, had read through pieces by Cherubini, Mehul and Beethoven. The overture also makes direct reference to the completed (1-5) Beethoven Symphonies; indeed, these works returned to haunt Schubert constantly throughout his working life; the amazing Trio of the later String Quintet refers directly to the Funeral march of Eroica.

Ottorino Respighi (1857-1934)

Ancient Airs and Dances Suite no. 3

Italian composer Ottorino Respighi was born in Bologna. His early musical training came from his father, who taught him both piano and violin. He continued his musical studies at the Liceo Musicale in Bologna in violin, viola, composition and historical studies with Luigi Torchi, an early music scholar. Respighi had an active career as a violinist, violist and pianist, before turning primarily to composition after 1909. In addition to his activities as a string player and composer, Respighi was also a distinguished musicologist and conductor. His interest in early music had a considerable influence on his compositions. He was influenced by earlier composers such as Monteverdi, Bach and Vitali, but also by his contemporaries, Rimsky-Korsakov and Strauss. His best-known works are Fountains of Rome, Ancient Airs and Dances and the Pines of Rome, which are large orchestral pieces that reflect the composer's rich scoring of themes from earlier music. Respighi, because of his musicological interests, reflects a sense of history in his music, which is at once spare in theme and lush in treatment.

The Ancient Airs and Dances is a series of three suites composed between 1917 and 1932. Adaptations of music from the Renaissance and the Baroque eras, the suites capture and honour the verve and elegance of the music of the

period, while providing the broader spectrum and spice of a modern orchestration.

Suite No. 3 was composed in 1932 and is scored for strings alone. It is based on guitar music by Ludovico Roncalli (1654-1713), a lute song by Besard (1567-1625) and several lute works by Garsi da Parma (1542-1604). The work is in four movements: Italiana; Aria di corte; Siciliana; Passacaglia. Compared to the first two suites, which are lively, this third suite has a subdued and gently melancholic quality.

Benedetto Marcello (1686-1739)

Oboe Concerto in C minor

This lovely concerto is one of the best-known works in the oboe repertoire. There is some question however, as to which of the two well-known musicians from the same family composed it. Both Benedetto Marcello and his older brother Alessandro were skilled composers. The work for many years attributed to Benedetto, the more famous of the two brothers and a powerful political figure. However modern scholarship has put that attribution into question. Based on the work of two well-known musicologists Frank Walker and Albert Van der Linden it was determined that in fact Alessandro Marcello is the composer of the oboe concerto and in both the 1997 edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of Music* and the 2nd Edition of *The Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* recognize Alessandro Marcello as the composer of the oboe concerto and note the incorrect attribution to Benedetto.

Alessandro Marcello (1669-1747) was an Italian nobleman, philosopher, composer and mathematician. He was a contemporary of Vivaldi and composed, although fairly sparingly, in several genres. He wrote concerti, cantatas, arias, and violin sonatas. He was an extremely competent composer and an excellent violinist. The concerto for oboe is undoubtedly his most frequently played work today. Bach transcribed the work for harpsichord (BWV 974).

In its original form the concerto was probably in D minor, but was transcribed into C minor, possibly for a performance using a B \flat oboe. The C minor transcription will be used for today's concert. The concerto is characteristic of the Venetian style of concerto with three movements, two rapid outer movements with a slow movement in between. The thematic materials in the outer movements are developed sequentially alternating with connecting passages. The slow movement is a beautiful and sustained aria for the solo oboe.

-Adapted from program notes by Adele Finlayson

John Burge (1961 -)

Flanders Field Reflections

Flanders Fields Reflections was commissioned and premiered in 2006 by Sinfonia Toronto under the direction of Nurhan Arman, with the orchestra's subsequent recording of the piece being awarded 2009 Juno award for the Best Canadian Classical Composition. That virtually all Canadian citizens and most English speakers in the Western world will immediately know that this musical work draws its inspiration from John McCrae's poem, "In Flanders Fields," is a good indication that this is perhaps the most famous poem ever written by a Canadian. Born in Guelph, Ontario, in 1872, Dr. John McCrae died in 1918 at Wimereux, France of pneumonia while on active service as a medical officer with the Royal Army Medical Corps in World War I. The poem is remarkable in the way that it follows the fixed poetic form of the rondeau (which requires the repetition of the opening phrase at the end of the second and third verses) while expressing the extreme emotional gamut of loss, despair, sacrifice, obligation, and hope. When one hears this poem recited at a Remembrance Day service, the words resonate with a depth that is transcendental in its power to convey what Wilfred Owen, another World War I poet, described as, "...the pity of war." It is this resonance that the composer has tried to capture.

In Burge's musical interpretation of five of the poem's phrases, the music is often very literal in its approach, but the work's most emotional springboard and expressive music is found in the fourth movement's interpretation of "Loved and Were Loved." These few words represent so vividly, the individual tragedy that is contained within each and every death which is in stark contrast to the numerical tallies of war fatalities that can be summarized all too quickly. In this movement, a simple descending line of six notes is maintained throughout, as if to symbolically show that our search for love is perhaps humanities' most constant desire. As the poem makes clear, we cannot forget that we are alive and free today because of those who gave up their own lives or loved ones. The final movement draws on the words, "We Shall Not Sleep," and employs a kind of rocking bass line that has a lullaby-like effect in its consoling repetitions underneath longer melodic lines in the upper strings.

Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

Serenade for Strings in E minor, Op. 20

The Serenade for strings takes us back to some years before Elgar's breakthrough 'Enigma' Variations and is not only one of Elgar's earliest compositions to retain a place in the standard orchestral repertory, but also one of the most frequently performed of his orchestral works. The Serenade is a little jewel of a piece and the first of his compositions with which the composer was well satisfied. Indeed, later in life he professed it to be his own personal

favourite of his works. Completed in 1892, its origins lie in a suite written around four years previously, the final score and piano duet arrangement both bearing inscriptions in honour of his beloved Alice. The piece was formally dedicated to the memory of the philosopher, W. H. Whinfield.

The Serenade was first privately performed by the Worcester Ladies' Orchestral Class, a group Elgar was involved in training, but had to wait a further three years for a first complete public performance, in Antwerp, 1896. Ever close to his heart, it was one of the final works Elgar recorded for the gramophone in 1933, the year before his death.

-From notes by M Ross © 2008

https://www.hyperionrecords.co.uk/dw.asp?dc=W16049_134101

Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

Romanian Folk Dances Strings

Bartók and fellow composer Kodály collected over 6000 folk melodies in the early 20th century from areas now comprising Hungary and Romania and these short pieces are based upon such material from that collection. The unusual tonalities in these pieces arise from the use of different melodic scales, or modes. At least five different modes are used in these dances, sometimes more than one in the same piece. For example, both the Dorian and Aeolian modes are used in the first dance. The Lydian mode is used in the fifth dance, and the final dance uses Lydian, Mixolydian and Dorian.

It is no wonder that Bartók rarely used key signatures in his works! For all that complexity, the simple orchestration enhances the village folk dance mood that characterizes the original sources.

MEHDI JAVANFAR

MUSIC DIRECTOR & CONDUCTOR



Mehdi Javanfar is an active conductor and educator. He is a two-time recipient of the Graduate Merit Awards in Conducting at the University of Michigan, where he studied with Maestro Kenneth Kiesler. His other conducting mentor includes the late Gustav Meier. Mehdi has conducted the London Ontario Symphony Orchestra, Windsor Symphony Orchestra, Hamilton Symphonic Band, University of Michigan various orchestras, Hart house Strings, the Composers' Orchestra consisting of the members of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Kharkiv Philharmonic Orchestra in Ukraine, and the Toronto Sinfonia of Nations, which he founded. Also, he has held the position of the Music Director of the Pembroke Symphony Orchestra from 2017 to 2023.

Mehdi began his musical career as a violinist in Tehran Symphony Orchestra. Following immigration to Canada in 1994, while studying at the University of Toronto, he joined the Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra where he served as the Principal Second Violin. As a conductor, his first concert at the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto, in 1997, featuring Dvořák's Serenade in D minor, and Stravinsky's Histoire du Soldat was recorded and broadcast by CJRT FM. His conducting repertoire is varied and includes more than a hundred forty pieces from the standard repertoire, as well as pieces by contemporary composers of various nationalities, such as Behzad Ranjbaran, Arsalan Kamkar, Shahin Farhat, Reza Vali, Suad Bushnaq, Fikret Amirov, Vladimir Solyanikov, and Goulak Artemovsky. As an advocate for Canadian music, Mehdi has performed pieces by Gary Kulesha, Marjan Mozetich, Larysa Kuzmenko, Abigail Richardson-Schulte, Murray Schafer, Tawnie Olson, Maya Badian, Andrew Ager, Carmen Braden, Elizabeth Raum, André Gagnon, and John Weinzwieg to name a few.

As an educator, Mehdi is a senior member of the College of Examiners at the Royal Conservatory of Music. He has taught and prepared

countless students for RCM examinations in various subjects of Theory, History, as well as Violin, and Piano, from elementary to advanced levels. As a music writer, Mehdi's activities include participation in writing a textbook of fundamentals of music for the University of Tehran, Iran; translation of "The Story of Music" by Geoffrey Brace (Ladybird Books) into Persian; biographical writings on Tchaikovsky, Bartok, Prokofiev, and Mahler; correction of the list of errata published in the journal of the Conductors' Guild, for "Rite of Spring" by Stravinsky; essays on Iranian Traditional Music, and a variety of other subjects, published in various magazines.

Mehdi is a graduate of the University of Toronto with a Bachelor of Music Education, the University of Michigan with a Master's degree in Orchestral Conducting, and the University of Ottawa with an M.A. in Music Research, He is currently pursuing his PhD in Interdisciplinary Research in Music at the University of Ottawa.

NABEEL ANSARI, OBOE

Nabeel Ansari is playing for his third year as principal oboe of the Ottawa Youth Symphony Orchestra. He is in 12th grade at De La Salle High School in Ottawa where he made his solo debut with the school's string orchestra performing the Vaughan Williams oboe concerto. He is a student of National Arts Center Orchestra musician Anna Petersen. This past summer, Nabeel trained and performed with the World Youth Symphony Orchestra at the Interlochen Center for the Arts in northern Michigan. Nabeel's oboe playing has been described as having an expressive singing quality and he enjoys sharing his love of the oboe.



THE STRINGS OF ST. JOHN'S

Violin I

Mira Negovora,
Concertmaster
Rosalind Spencer
Sonia Dimitrov
Carolyn Phillips
Marg Macpherson
Carol Deaville
Lauren Phillips

Violin II

Margot Lange,
Principal
Katherine Tinkler
Jennifer Arrigo
Gabriella Csoti
Marko Yaniskevsky
Thérèse Durdin

Viola

Mary Young,
Principal
Laura Mennill
Shalva Chabukiani
Stephen Rouble

Cello

Catherine Campbell
Principal
Andrew Deaville
David Van Dine

Bass

Patrick Kline,
Principal

Sincere thanks to our 2023-2024 donors:

Church of St. John the Evangelist

Michael Hoffman

Front-of-house volunteers

Parker Prins Lebrano Chartered Accountants