

From the outset, the Vancouver Recital Society's 40th Season was programmed to be a celebration of 3 decades of debuts and discoveries, featuring exciting young artists at the beginning of their careers alongside established artists who've made appearances on our series and in the Vancouver Chamber Music Festival, since the VRS's humble beginnings at the Arts Club Theatre on Granville Island in 1980.

For forty years, the VRS has been delighting audiences from the Lower Mainland and beyond with the best in classical music. Performers and performances once only heard in the concert halls of Europe and New York, have been presented to eager audiences right here in Vancouver. And though the season was cut short by covid-19, the celebrations and performances we were able to enjoy between September and March, were without question, milestone markers.

Before I speak to the incredible performances that were (alongside those that weren't meant to be), I would like to acknowledge, on behalf of the Board of Directors, staff and audiences, our sincere and heartfelt gratitude to our sponsors and partners because without them, the VRS likely wouldn't have made it all these years. In particular, I would like to thank the **Peak Group of Companies** - our Season Sponsor since the 2018/19 Season. It's thanks to Peak,'s steadfast support that we have been able to confidently plan for the future during these most uncertain times.

The season began in September with the first concert on the Edwina and Paul Heller Next Generation Series, featuring an exciting performance by the **Chooi Brothers**, Nikki & Timmy, both on violin, joined by long-time VRS friend, pianist **Angela Cheng**. The trio performed a new work by **Marc-André Hamelin**, commissioned by the VRS to mark the occasion.

The Edwina and Paul Heller Next Generation Series continued its focus on siblings with performances by brothers **George & Andrew Li**, in a 2-piano recital, Dutch pianists, the **Jussen Brothers** in a 4-hands recital and the **Schumann Quartet** in what would end up being the final performance of the season.

Sadly, the season was cut short before we were able to enjoy recitals by brother and sister duo, **Pablo & Sara Ferrández**, who were to have been the first cello and viola recital for the VRS, and sisters **Beatrice & Ludovica Rana**. I know that Leila is working on future dates for both, so do keep your eyes (and ears) open for them in a subsequent season.

For their support of this series, which lies at the heart of the VRS, we are deeply grateful the **Estate of the late Edwina and Paul Heller**, **RBC Foundation**, and the **City of Vancouver**. We also appreciate our individual concert sponsors, all of whom stood by us, whether *'their'* concerts occurred or not: **The Martha Lou Henley Charitable Foundation**, **Elizabeth Arnold-Bailey**, **The John C. Kerr Family Foundation**, **Ann Harding**, **Lynn Kagan**, **Leon & Leila Getz**, and the **Quesnel Foundation**.

We were able to enjoy three of the four scheduled Classic Afternoons performances before the onset of the pandemic. The fabulous **Z.E.N. Trio**, comprised of pianist **Zhang Zuo** (aka Zee Zee), cellist **Narek Haknazaryan** (both of whom have made appearances on the Edwina and Paul Heller Next Generation Series), and violinist **Esther Yoo**. Following their performance in October, the Series welcomed the **Doric String Quartet with pianist Marc-André Hamelin** and the inimitable duo of **Steven Osborne and Paul Lewis** in a piano 4 hands recital.

The shutdown came upon us and the arts community with little warning. **Benjamin Grosvenor**, was to have been the final performance on Classic Afternoons and, sadly, the first casualty of the shut-down.

Concert sponsors for concerts on the Classic Afternoons Series included my colleagues on the **Vancouver Recital Society's Board of Directors** and long-time VRS friend and supporter, **Elaine Adair**.

While we were only able to enjoy fifty percent of the Peak Performances Series, it was an outstanding fifty percent and, as you'll soon hear, we'll be making up the balance in the not-too-distant future. The **Danish String Quartet** performed (another) sold-sold out recital at the Playhouse in November, followed in February by the **Faust Queyras Melnikov Trio**. We look forward to hearing violist **Tabea Zimmermann** & pianist **Javier Perianes** and the dynamism of cellist **Steven Isserlis** & Vancouver-born pianist **Connie Shih** at a later date.

We remain grateful to **Robert & Denise, Joyce & Tony, Ric & Lynda Spratley** and the **Estate of the Late Miss Denise Mara** for their sponsorship of concerts on this series.

It being a celebratory season, there were a number of Pop Out Performances, programmed to highlight the breadth of artistry featured on the series, dating back to our formative years.

Acclaimed Canadian soprano, **Measha Brueggergosman** who made her VRS debut in 2003, performed with pianist **Justus Zeyen** and members of the **Black Dog Quartet**. Though nearly two decades passed between her VRS performances, it was almost as if no time had gone by. We are most grateful to **Lakewood Developments** for its generous sponsorship of this performance, and to the **Chan Endowment at the University of British Columbia** for its support.

In December, brother and sister, **Sheku & Isata Kanneh-Mason** performed a duo recital at the Orpheum Theatre. That performance, sponsored by **London Drugs**, attracted a large and diverse audience with a record number of Youth and Ru35 patrons. The evening before their Orpheum concert, Sheku & Isata performed at a birthday fundraiser for the VRS at the **Vancouver Art Gallery**.

Pianist **Yuja Wang** performed to packed Chan Centre audience in February. Sponsored by **RBC Wealth Management: Canada Asia Centre**, and supported by the **Chan Endowment at the University of British Columbia**, it was truly a night to remember.

It is unfortunate that our grand celebration, '*Going for Gold*', **Sir Andrés Schiff's** Goldberg Variations, was not able to occur as planned. With the support of **Martha Lou Henley Charitable Foundation**, the **Peak Group of Companies** and each of the **individual variation sponsors**, we look forward to this concert



being rescheduled to the first available date, and extending our birthday celebrations.

Despite the challenges presented by covid-19, the VRS was able to celebrate a milestone birthday and continue efforts designed to attract young and diverse audiences – thanks to generous support from **John & Jean Hodgins**, pianist Angela Cheng gave a Music for Munchkins performance at the Vancouver Public Library, the **Jussen Brothers** performed for students enrolled in Lord Byng High School's 'Byng Arts' program, and London Drugs' generosity enabled us to provide hundreds of tickets to young patrons for Sheku & Isata's Orpheum performance.

We remain grateful to the **Province of British Columbia** for the funding we receive in the form of a Community Gaming Grant, the **Westin Bayshore**, which provides a fantastic and welcoming 'home away from home' for our visiting artists, and our media partners, the **Vancouver Sun** and the **Georgia Straight**.

We remain tremendously proud of the work we do in the community with our partners at the **Vancouver Academy of Music**, the **School of Music at the University of British Columbia**, and the **Vancouver School Board** and the **Vancouver Public Library**, and are grateful to the support of the **Diamond Foundation** and the **Allan and Gwendoline Pyatt Foundation** for their support of our youth-oriented activities.

There is an important group of people who remain largely behind the scenes, whom we would like to acknowledge and thank:

- Our auditors at **Baker Tilly WM LLP**, have been providing our annual audit since the VRS's inception in 1980.
- Our fantastic and committed staff: Founder and Artistic Director **Leila Getz**, General Manager **Sara Getz** and Marketing and Communications Manager **Niamh Small**, Box Office Manager **Alex Glynianyi** and **Melodie Corbett**, Fundraising & Special Projects Manager.
- The dedicated and devoted members of the VRS's **Board of Directors** who provide great support, guidance and leadership.

I would also like to acknowledge the enthusiastic support of our designer **Lydia Avsec** of **Copilot Design**, **José Verstappen** who lays out each of our concert programs, musicologist **Donald Gíslason**, whose notes and pre-concert talks inform and entertain, **Scott Harker** who takes outstanding care of our Steinway, and **Ewa Borkowska** of **Valiant Accounting**, who has been helping us keep an eye on the bottom line for more than 20 years. Thank you!

Finally, we are indebted to our loyal audiences, donors and sponsors whose support every year, but especially over this most difficult past year in particular, has meant so very much to the VRS. You all stood by us and your collective generosity of spirit and funds have kept us going with excitement and optimism for the future. We look forward to welcoming you back to the concert hall as soon as it is safe to do so, and to delighting you for decades to come.

