



WAWERS!

SPRING CONCERTS 2022

Stephen Waarts violin
Gabriele Carcano piano
Sunday March 27 2022

From the Artistic Director

Dear Friends:

Welcome to the Vancouver debuts of violinist Stephen Waarts and pianist Gabriele Carcano. These two musicians have burgeoning careers and we are lucky to have secured a date for them together in a place far away from where they currently reside.

Interestingly, they have something else in common... Stephen is currently working with Romanian-born violinist Mihaela Martin, who made her Vancouver debut for the VRS in 1983, and Gabriele Carcano has studied in Italy with Andrea Lucchesini, who made his Canadian debut at the Playhouse in 1986 and then returned in 1987 and 1988. Three decades later, Andrea appeared on our 2018-19 Season and will join us once again in 2023.

And, to carry this even one step further, Andrea had been a student of the renowned Italian pianist Maria Tipo, who performed for the VRS at the Playhouse in 1993.

Stephen and Gabriele have chosen a fascinating program for their Vancouver performance.

We would like to thank our Season Sponsor, the Peak Group of Companies, our Series Sponsor, the Estate of Edwina and Paul Heller, and our concert sponsor, Maryke Gilmore. We are also grateful to RBC and to the City of Vancouver for their support.

Enjoy the performance.

Sincerely,



Leila Getz



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Program

THE EDWINA AND PAUL HELLER
NEXT GENERATION SERIES

Stephen Waarts violin
Gabriele Carcano piano

Sunday, March 27, 2022 3:00 pm
Vancouver Playhouse

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1918)
Sonata for Violin and Piano in G minor L. 140
Allegro vivo
Intermède. Fantasque et léger
Finale. Très animé
[approx. 15 minutes]

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810-1856)
Violin Sonata No. 2 in D minor Op. 121
Ziemlich langsam – Lebhaft
Sehr lebhaft
Leise, einfach
Bewegt
[approx. 33 minutes]

INTERMISSION

JEAN SIBELIUS (1865-1957)
Four Humoresques Op. 89
Alla gavotta
Andantino
Commodo
Allegro
[approx. 18 minutes]

GEORGE ENESCU (1881-1955)
Sonata No. 3 in A minor Op. 25
Moderato malinconico
Andante sostenuto e misterioso
Allegro con brio, ma non troppo mosso
[approx. 27 minutes]

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Stephen Waarts violin

Early Life & Education: Stephen is currently a Fellow at the Kronberg Academy, having studied there under Mihaela Martin, and graduated in 2021. He graduated with a Bachelor's degree from the Curtis Institute, Philadelphia, where he studied under Aaron Rosand. Prior to this, he worked with Itzhak Perlman at the Perlman Music Program.

This Season: In the 2021/22 season, Stephen performs with the Münchner Symphoniker, Mozart-Gesellschaft Dortmund, Brandenburger Symphoniker, Orquestra Simfònica De Les Illes Balears, Folkwang Kammerorchester Essen, Camerata Schweiz, and at the Con Spirito Festival in Leipzig. As part of his association with the Kronberg Academy, he also appears at the Tonhalle Zürich with Sir András Schiff.

Recordings: In 2022, Stephen will release his first concerto recording for Alpha Classics: Mozart Violin Concerto No. 1 with the Camerata Schweiz under Howard Griffiths. 2020 saw the release of Hindemith Kammermusik No. 4 as part of Ondine Classic's Kammermusik cycle with Christoph Eschenbach, the Kronberg Academy Soloists and the Schleswig-Holstein Festival Orchestra. Stephen released his debut recital album for Rubicon Classics in November 2018 with pianist Gabriele Carcano, which features works by Schumann and Bartók.

Awards & Prizes: Stephen was awarded the International Classical Music Awards Orchestra Award by the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra in 2019. In March 2017 he was awarded a prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant. In that same year, he also won the Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern's soloist award and has performed at the festival every year since then. He was awarded the Mozart Gesellschaft Dortmund scholarship in 2015 following his appearance at the Krzyżowa-Music Festival.



Photo credit: Benjamin Ealovega

Stephen Waarts is represented by Harrison Parrott, London, UK.

Gabriele Carcano piano

Early Life & Education: Gabriele was born in Turin and began studying piano at the age of seven. He graduated from the Conservatory Giuseppe Verdi in Turin at the age of seventeen with the highest grades and honours. Gabriele continued his studies with Andrea Lucchesini at the Accademia di Musica in Pinerolo and with Aldo Ciccolini in Paris, followed by studies with Nicholas Angelich at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique as well as with Marie Françoise Bucquet. Since autumn 2015, he has taught at the Accademia di Musica in Pinerolo. Gabriele is a Steinway Artist.



Photo credit: Benjamin Ealovega

Performances: Gabriele is a passionate chamber musician and plays regularly with Stephen Waarts, Lorenza Borrani, Andrea Lucchesini, the Hermes Quartet, Eckart Runge, Viviane Hagner, Marie-Elisabeth Hecker, Enrico Dindo, Sergej Krylov, and Enrico Bronzi. At the invitation of Mitsuko Uchida, he participated in the Marlboro Festival four times and was featured on the Musicians from Marlboro tours, performing at venues such as Carnegie Hall, the PCMS in Philadelphia, the Gardner Museum Concerts in Boston, and in Montreal, Toronto, and Washington, D.C.

Recordings: In 2016 Gabriele released his first CD of early works by Johannes Brahms for the label OehmsClassics, followed by two albums in 2018 for Rubicon Classics: a solo album dedicated to Schumann, and a duo CD with violinist Stephen Waarts.

Gabriele Carcano is represented by Resia Artists, Milan, Italy.

Program Notes

Claude Debussy

Sonata for Violin and Piano in G minor L. 140

The sound of Debussy's music confounded many of his contemporaries. From a tonal point of view, it floated in stasis in a world of pastel sounds that arrived at their destination more by whim than by design. How, they asked, could what he composed actually be called music? After all, it had so little of what, since the 1600s, had been the operating principle of Western music: tonal tension. Tonal tension was the feeling that certain chords wanted, needed, felt the inner urge to proceed to other chords, and that when they did so, the music went from a state of tension to one of relaxation – in other words, that dissonance had resolved to consonance.

Debussy didn't just break the established rules of harmony. He ignored them. His use of parallel streams of identically structured chords blurred the distinction between harmony and melody. His textures seemed like lush exotic gardens of sound, with each melodic phrase a flowering plant swaying in the breeze, combining with others to create an overall *impression*. The comparison with the emerging school of Impressionist painters was all too obvious.

And yet, for all his painterly credentials as a musical pictorialist, we find Debussy at the end of his life writing *sonatas*, the most rule-laden form (apart from fugue) that Western music had produced, the genre most associated with the musical Establishment. The Sonata in G minor for violin and piano, Debussy's last major work, was composed in 1917 as part of a projected set of six sonatas for chamber instruments, of which only the first three were completed before his death.

We find Debussy's trademark sense of understatement everywhere in this sonata, which unfolds in a subdued atmosphere of soft to medium-soft dynamic levels, imbued nonetheless with considerable emotional warmth. Phrases tend to be short and often unpredictable, either coquettishly playful or tender and pensive. Textures are thinned out and made more transparent by the use of streams of parallel 5ths, especially in the bass, and melodic octave doublings throughout the texture.

There is little sense of 'stable' melody since Debussy's melodies are self-developing – they mutate as soon as they are announced – but to

compensate, the pace of harmonic rhythm is slow. Debussy thus inverts the normal relationship between melody and harmony.

It has been suggested that the title 'Sonata' for this work is equivalent to using 'Untitled' for a painting. The reference to visual art is quite appropriate, since Debussy treats melody and tempo like the eyeball movements of a viewer in front of a painting, and harmony like the moods that slowly melt into one another as the viewer gazes from one area of the canvas to another.

* * *

The *Allegro vivo* first movement opens in a manner strikingly similar to that of the Franck Violin Sonata in A major, laying down a reflecting pool of keyboard colour over which the violin enters with a melodic motive of slowly rocking 3rds. Elaboration of this melodic motion in 3rds, in 4ths, and then in 5ths is a major source of onward momentum in the more active sections of the movement, which on the whole is nevertheless warmly melodic in tone. Debussy also, however, makes frequent nods to the rhapsodic practices of gypsy fiddling, especially pronounced at the end of this movement.

The *Intermède* tips its hat to the traditional sonata scherzo in a playful movement of wide melodic leaps and their opposite: insistent patterns of repeated notes. The opening bars set the movement's tone of sly whimsy with a pair of 'oopsa-daisy' *portamenti* from the violin that nevertheless recover quickly enough to display an acrobat's sense of balance in a few showy arpeggios. Clownish as this nimble movement is, its sense of mischief is more hopping Harlequin than hapless hobo.

The *Très animé* finale is all about exuberance, expressed in relentless toccata-like chatter from the keyboard paired with swirling or swooping melodic figures in a violin line that extends over the entire range of the instrument. An introduction nostalgically recalls the opening melody of the first movement but then it's off to the races. The breathless pace continues throughout, relieved only briefly in its middle section by the appearance of what one commentator has called a "drunken waltz".

Robert Schumann Violin Sonata No. 2 in D minor Op. 121

Schumann's Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano, written in 1851, is an energetic work in four movements, some of them thematically linked. The piano scoring is luxuriantly rich but for most of the sonata the violin plays low in its register, so the timbres of the two instruments tend to merge rather than contrast. The neurotic irregularities that typify Schumann's compositional style – his avoidance of balanced periodic phrases and clear decisive cadences, his metrical 'wobbliness' – give this sonata a rhapsodic character. It seems to unfold as an unstoppable flow of musical ideas.

The abrupt "gunshot-echo" chords that greet the listener in the opening bars of the first movement land somewhat awkwardly in the ear with their duple groupings in triple metre, setting the stage for a sonata movement permeated with temperament and wilful passion. From this restless slow introduction emerges an exposition that boldly announces the movement's first theme in the violin on the pitches D-A-F-D, a reference to the dedicatee of the sonata, the German violinist Ferdinand David (1810-1873).

This theme, in even half notes on strong beats of the bar, is counterpointed by syncopated off-beats and skitterish chatter in 16ths in the piano to complete the line-up of motives – slow strong beats vs. quick off-beat patterns – that will characterize the ensuing musical discussion. The more lyrical second theme in even quarter notes has the same texture as well, adding an element of conceptual unity to this sonata-form movement.

The second movement scherzo has two contrasting trio-ish sections to give it a five-part form: A-B-A-C-A. Its serious forthright tone and rhythmic drive seem to presage the scherzo from Brahms' Piano Quintet in F minor, with which it shares many details in common. These include the incessant 'knock-on-the-door' triplet motive from the opening section and a melody paraphrasing the chorale tune *Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ* (May you be praised, Jesus Christ) that is delivered in long notes near the end of the final section.

The young Brahms did not meet Schumann for the first time until more than a year after this sonata was composed but after the composer's death in 1856 he helped Clara Schumann prepare the edition of Schumann's complete works, so he would evidently have known this sonata.

The rather eccentric theme and variations movement that follows is based on the chorale melody just heard near the end of the scherzo. The theme appears first in pizzicato multiple-

stops in the violin over an oddly restrained oom-pah accompaniment in the piano and then with utmost simplicity played *arco* (with the bow) before melting into a dreamy Viennese-style variation in 16ths. But things get a bit quirky when this daydream keeps getting interrupted by sudden reminiscences of the punchy triplet motive from the scherzo, like a Monty Python character bursting in to say: "There's trouble down at the mill!" In the end, though, even this triplet motive succumbs to the mood of reverie, bringing the movement to a quiet close.

The sonata-form finale is a bustling affair, its repeated exposition dominated by the headlong *moto perpetuo* drive of the movement's opening theme, which proceeds in a continuous stream of 16th notes. This theme, like Schumann himself, has a split personality, by turns obsessive, flighty and march-like. The development section begins by musing at a more leisurely pace, in 8th notes, over the dotted rhythms of the opening theme's march-y side but soon gets drawn, over and over again, into the 16th-note orbit of its *moto perpetuo* sibling. And the recapitulation, once wandering into the major mode, has so much fun that it stays there, to end this D minor work in a resolute D major.

Jean Sibelius Four Humoresques, Op. 89

Sibelius was a composer who loved the violin, having aspired in his youth to become a virtuoso solo performer on the instrument. His Four Humoresques Op. 89, along with two more from Op. 87, were composed in 1917 as a suite of six pieces for violin and orchestra and were premiered in Helsinki in 1919. When played in recital, performers have until recently had to use the arrangement for violin and piano by Finnish pianist and conductor Karl Ekman (1869-1947) – which Sibelius did not like at all – but just recently a new transcription, more faithful to the orchestral score, has come out from the pen of Jani Kyllönen.

While the name *humoresque* might suggest a kind of jocular flippancy, these pieces are all imbued with a Nordic sensibility that finds wistful sadness lying at the edge of every emotion, even happy ones. Sibelius himself said that these pieces reflect "the anguish of existence, fitfully lit up by the sun."

The first piece of the Op. 89 set is labelled *Alla gavotta* and indeed it has the strong-beat emphasis and courtly strutting quality of that dance. But mixed in, as well, is the harmonic vocabulary of the gypsy violinist. The mode shifts effortlessly from minor to major between phrases

and it is often the “Hungarian” minor scale, with its sharpened fourth scale note that captures our attention.

The *Andantino* second piece is the simplest and yet perhaps the most enigmatic of the set. Against an ever-so-discreet harmonic backdrop in the piano, the violin ruminates over and over again on a simple phrase structured around the notes of the minor triad, a phrase that ends with a cadential trill. Short playful episodes intervene but the opening phrase always returns – until in the final bars the melody line suddenly flies up to its highest register and just disappears.

The third piece in the set, marked *Commodo*, has a happy-go-lucky air about it, with its naively simple “Farmer John” melody that contrasts plodding quarter notes with bouncy buoyant off-beat accents to convey a mood of jollity and contentment. The tune is so gall-darn pleasant you just want to whistle it, which the violin *does* in the middle section – in harmonics.

The *Allegro* finale is an exhilarating chase up and down the fingerboard, dance-like in spirit and folk-like in its use of two different versions of the G minor scale: the natural minor with A as its second degree and the Phrygian modal version that uses A flat instead. Its many capricious mood swings suggest the gypsy violinist with a glint in his eye, winking at his audience as his showy routine comes to a soft and exquisitely delicate conclusion in the highest reaches of his instrument.

George Enescu **Sonata No. 3 in A minor Op. 25**

Enescu’s Third Sonata for Violin and Piano (1926) is subtitled “in the popular Romanian character”, a reference to the unique sound world and virtuoso performance style of gypsy music that the composer set out to imitate and to write down – a transcription endeavour that Enescu’s student Yehudi Menuhin called “the greatest achievement in musical notation” of its day.

Enescu knew this musical style well, having grown up hearing it all around him in his childhood. In his sonata the violin plays gypsy fiddler to the piano’s *cimbalom* (a kind of hammered dulcimer). The result is a musical texture of emotion-laden melodies in the treble over a sonic background that buzzes and dazzles with kaleidoscopic clouds of metallic overtones rising up from below.

This is music with highly decorated, highly chromatic melodic lines studded with augmented

seconds, lines shimmering with so much decoration that melody and embellishment merge into one. Enescu was a student with Ravel at the Paris Conservatoire and the French influence in his keyboard writing can be heard in the great washes of impressionistic tone colour that emanate at times from the piano, clarified harmonically by open fifths in the bass. At other times massive chord clusters turn the piano into percussion, adding punchy almost pitch-less drum-beat pulses to the texture.

The work is laid out in three movements, each in a standard form: sonata-form first movement, slow movement in A-B-A ‘song’ form, and a rondo finale. But a Western audience used to the neat and tidy layout of Viennese sonata form can be excused for not perceiving clearly the sectional divisions in these movements, given the rhapsodic sweep and improvisatory style of this music as a whole.

The first movement *Moderato malinconico* opens with a soft churning haze of tone colour, supported by drone tones in the bass, over which the violin intones a melancholy tune imprinted with the major motive of this movement: a filled-in descending minor third. The soulfulness of the violin melody is embodied in the singing quality of its many long-held notes, each preceded by a hurried run-up gesture of fast notes. Dance-like sections provide contrast to the wailing mournfulness of the principal melody.

The *Andante sostenuto e misterioso* slow movement that follows moves between expressive extremes. Its opening section begins softly and delicately, like a piece of night music, with the violin playing in flutey harmonics, like a pan-piper, over a patter of repeated notes and other drones in the piano. But gradually the expressive intensity grows, culminating in a massive climax in which the violin holds out in long notes over a piano part digging up shovelfuls of sound from one end of the keyboard to the other, after which the hushed mood of the opening returns to close out the movement in the mysterious calm with which it began.

The finale is a dance-like Bartókian romp with a march-like principal theme, bristling with spicy dissonances, spiky rhythms and stomping percussive effects. The metallic timbre of the cimbalom is astonishingly well portrayed in the scoring of the piano part while virtuosic display informs the violin part. The intensity builds steadily till the end, with both instruments playing *fff*, the violin shrieking out violently while the piano churns up massive clumps of sonic mud at the very bottom of its range.

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