



WAVES!

SPRING CONCERTS 2022

The Jerusalem Quartet
with Hila Baggio soprano

“Yiddish Cabaret”

Saturday May 7 2022

From the Artistic Director

Dear Friends:

This concert is dedicated by the family of the late Allen Zysblat to his memory. It celebrates two things in particular that were close to him: music and the Yiddish language.

We are both privileged and delighted that the Jerusalem Quartet is able to be a part of this occasion. They first appeared for the VRS in the mid-nineties shortly after their founding, and to our great joy have returned to our stage many times since. Their performance of all the Shostakovich Quartets at the Telus Theatre at the Chan Centre for Performing Arts at UBC in 2006 is one of the highlights in the history of the Vancouver Recital Society.

The Quartet's *Yiddish Cabaret* project with Israeli soprano Hila Baggio is a moving and original tribute to pre-war Jewish life in Central Europe. It seemed a perfect reflection of Allen's twin passions of music and Yiddish.

The Quartet agreed to add this special performance of *Yiddish Cabaret* — the first North American performance of this collection of music — to the end of their current tour, and with the generous assistance of David Lyons we have been able to bring Hila Baggio to join them.

With this evening of music-making and memories we celebrate the life of Allen Zysblat, a dear friend to many in Vancouver and a treasured member of our community.

The VRS is grateful for the support of its Season Sponsor, the Peak Group of Companies, and for the generosity of the Zysblat family in helping make this concert possible. We also appreciate the support we have received from Temple Sholom and, in particular, Rabbi Dan Moscovitz.

Enjoy the evening.



Leila Getz



CELLPHONES

The use of cellphones and recording devices is prohibited in the concert hall. Please take this opportunity to turn off all electronic devices.

音乐厅内禁止使用手机，禁止拍照，录音，录像。请观众关闭所有电子器材，谢谢您的合作。

Program

Jerusalem Quartet

Alexander Pavlovsky violin

Sergei Bresler violin

Ori Kam viola

Kyril Zlotnikov cello

with

Hila Baggio soprano

Saturday, May 7, 2022 7:30 pm
Temple Sholom

Season Sponsor



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Linda Zysblat and family
in memory of Allen Zysblat

Additional Support

David Lyons



ERWIN SCHULHOFF (1894-1942)

Five Pieces for String Quartet

Alla Valseviennese (allegro)

Alla Serenata (allegretto con moto)

Alla Czeca (molto allegro)

Alla Tangomilonga (andante)

Alla Tarantella (prestissimo con fuoco)

(approx. 15 minutes)

LEONID DESYATNIKOV (b. 1955)

Yiddish – 5 Songs for Voice and String Quartet

*An idea of the Jerusalem Quartet,
commissioned by harmonia mundi*

Varshe

In a hoyz vu men veynt un men lakht

Ikh ganve in der nakht

Yosl un Sore-Dvoshe

Ikh vel shoyn mer nit ganvenen

(approx. 21 minutes)

ERICH WOLFGANG KORNGOLD (1897-1957)

String Quartet No. 2, Op. 26

Allegro

Intermezzo. Allegretto con moto

Larghetto. Lento

Waltz (Finale). Tempo di Valse

(approx. 24 minutes)

The Jerusalem String Quartet

Jerusalem Quartet

Alexander Pavlovsky violin

Sergei Bresler violin

Ori Kam viola

Kyril Zlotnikov cello



The Jerusalem Quartet and Hila Baggio © Karina van de Broek

“Passion, precision, warmth, a gold blend: these are the trademarks of this excellent Israeli string quartet.”

Such was the New York Times’ impression of the Jerusalem Quartet. Since the ensemble’s founding in 1993 and subsequent 1996 debut, the four Israeli musicians have embarked on a journey of growth and maturation. This journey has resulted in a wide repertoire and stunning depth of expression, which carries on the string quartet tradition in a unique manner. The ensemble has found its core in a warm, full, human sound and an egalitarian balance between high and low voices. This approach allows the quartet to maintain a healthy relationship between individual expression and a transparent and respectful presentation of the composer’s work. It is also the drive and motivation for the continuing refinement of its interpretations of the classical repertoire as well as exploration of new epochs.

The Jerusalem Quartet is a regular and beloved guest on the world’s great concert stages. With regular bi-annual visits to North America, the quartet has performed in cities such as New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Washington, and Cleveland as well as in the Ravinia Festival. In Europe, the quartet enjoys an enthusiastic reception with regular appearances in London’s Wigmore Hall, Tonhalle Zürich, Munich Herkulessaal, Theatre des Champs-Élysées, as well as special guest performances at the Auditorium du Louvre Paris, the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg and festivals such as Salzburg, Verbier, Schleswig-Holstein, Schubertiade Schwarzenberg, Rheingau, Saint Petersburg White Nights, and many others.

The Jerusalem Quartet records exclusively for Harmonia Mundi. The quartet’s recordings, particularly the albums featuring Haydn’s string quartets and Schubert’s “Death and the Maiden”, have been honoured with numerous awards such as the Diapason d’Or and the BBC Music Magazine Award for chamber music. In 2018, the quartet released two albums, an album of Dvořák’s String Quintet Op. 97 and Sextet Op. 48, and a much-awaited recording of the celebrated quartets by Ravel and Debussy. In the spring of 2019, the quartet released a unique album exploring Jewish music in Central Europe between the wars and its far-reaching influence. Israeli Soprano Hila Baggio joined the quartet to perform a collection of Yiddish Cabaret songs from Warsaw in the 1920s. The quartet commissioned composer Leonid Desyatnikov to arrange these songs, all of which are sung in Yiddish.

The Jerusalem Quartet appears by arrangement with David Rowe Artists.

Hila Baggio soprano

With her crystal clear graceful soprano voice, Hila Baggio is one of the most successful, critically acclaimed and sought-after Israeli sopranos.

Prior to the pandemic in the 2019-2020 season, Hila sang the role of Gepopo/Venus in Ligeti's Opera *Le Grand Macabre* in a new production at the Semperoper Dresden, and she debuted two roles at The Israeli Opera: Violetta (*La Traviata*) in a new production with Maestro Dan Ettinger and as Ilia (*Idomeneo*) with Maestro Michele Gamba. In addition, she joined the Jerusalem Quartet in a CD tour of 'The Yiddish Cabaret' in prestigious venues including the Theatre des Champs-Élysées, Wiener Konzerthaus, Tonhalle Zürich, Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Gewandhaus in Leipzig, Dresden Philharmonie and more. She will sing Ayal Adler's 'Alone, I return from the night' with the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra and Maestro Omer Meir Wellber, Berg's *Sieben Frühe Lieder* with The Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra and Maestro Rani Calderon, a Concert series with Israel Camerata Orchestra, and Beethoven Mass in C with the Haifa Symphony Orchestra, among other concerts.

Hila has performed under the baton of such distinguished conductors as Daniel Barenboim, Frédéric Chaslin, Daniele Callegari, Rani Calderon, Dan Ettinger, Asher Fisch, Gabriel Feltz, Zubin Mehta, Daniel Oren, Speranza Scappucci, Karl-Heinz Steffens, Omer Meir Wellber, and Alberto Zedda, among others.

Hila was a member of The Israeli Opera Studio. Her extensive career has garnered her many prizes, including 2nd Prize in the Operetta category at the International Hans Gabor Belvedere Competition in Vienna, Israeli Minister of Culture Award, Rosenblum Prize for the performing arts, Silverman Prize, Grabov Award, Basser Award, America-Israel Cultural Foundation, and the Israel Vocal Arts Institute Foundation.

Yiddish – A new viewpoint

When we were approached by harmonia mundi to think of a concept for a 'different' album, an album that would challenge our standard repertoire, we took great care to find a subject that we had a natural connection with, but that would be interesting for the general public. Naturally we gravitated to Jewish music.

It is quite fashionable today to revive cabaret music from the Weimar Republic. But the Jewish connection to this music is rarely underlined. We feel that the irony, the word games and the interest in 'lowbrow' subjects reflect a direct influence of Jewish culture, which until 1919 was mostly barred from integrating with general German culture. This inspired us to create a project highlighting Jewish culture as an important influence on much of today's western culture as a whole.

Until 1939, Poland was the centre of the Jewish world. It housed the world's largest Jewish population, with a thriving cultural scene that included theatre, literature, music, opera, and even one of the biggest film industries of the time. After the Second World War, few Jews remained in Poland. Worldwide, Yiddish was replaced by Hebrew, and the few institutions dedicated to Yiddish culture now treat it mostly in a historical sense. For us, Yiddish is the language our grandparents spoke behind closed doors, and Yiddish music is something that exists in the deep background of our childhood.

This program sets out to show that Yiddish culture did not die in the Holocaust, but rather spread and influenced much of wider western culture. For example, Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe transformed Vaudeville into the Broadway we know today, and Hollywood was largely founded by Jewish immigrants and refugees.

To symbolize this, we chose five songs as the heart of our album. The songs were written by different composers/lyricists and would have been performed in Poland between the wars in a cabaret setting. Together, they come together to paint a picture of Jewish street life in Warsaw between the wars. We aimed to create a 'current' viewpoint on this music, not one through the lens of the calamity that followed. To set these songs for soprano and string quartet, we approached Leonid Desyatnikov, whose innovative writing for strings captured our imagination.

To frame these five songs in a broader context, we picked two wonderful pieces by composers who are emblematic of Jewish artists and their general cultural contribution. Erwin Schulhoff was Czech, but was highly successful in Germany between the wars. As a communist and a Jew, he was deported to a concentration camp where he died of tuberculosis. His Five Pieces for String Quartet is in its own way cabaret music. Erich Wolfgang Korngold perhaps represents German and Austrian Jews who chose to assimilate with the general culture. He was invited to Hollywood to write film scores and ultimately became the foremost film composer of his time, which saved his life.

We dedicate this program to our grandparents.

– Ori Kam

Program Notes

Erwin Schulhoff (1894-1942)

Five Pieces for String Quartet

Erwin Schulhoff was born to a Jewish family in Prague in 1894 and showed musical talent from an early age. The composer Antonín Dvořák advised him to pursue a career in music. Schulhoff began to study at the Prague Conservatory in 1904, continued to take piano lessons in Vienna from 1906, and from 1908 studied composition in Leipzig with Max Reger and subsequently in Cologne with Fritz Steinbach. In the meantime, he had laid the basis of a career as a pianist. In 1918 he was already known as a composer and received the Mendelssohn Prize for his Piano Sonata Op. 22.

His music up to the First World War had shown influences ranging from Brahms and Dvořák to Strauss, Debussy and Scriabin. Following his service in the Austrian army, he adopted a more radical stance both artistically and politically. In the next few years, he composed in a more expressionistic idiom he had learned from Schoenberg and the Second Viennese School. In addition, he was influenced by the radical style of the Dada school espoused by Georg Grosz, whose advocacy of jazz was to find its way into much of Schulhoff's music from that period.

During the late 1920s, Schulhoff managed to create a rapprochement between these competing aesthetics which can be seen in a number of his chamber works and concertos, the First Symphony, the ballet *Ogela*, the 'jazz oratorio' *HMS Royal Oak* and his opera about Don Juan entitled *Flammen* (Flames), which was a failure at its Brno premiere in 1932. In that year he also composed his Second Symphony in a clear-cut neo-Classical style. Soon after, he composed the cantata *Das kommunistische Manifest* (The Communist Manifesto), in which he expressed his political beliefs, setting texts by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels of the socialism and communism. Looking to the Soviet Union for a solution of the political and economic problems in central Europe, he focused on the symphony as the best medium through which to communicate his ideology and emotions. Schulhoff composed six more symphonies between 1935 and 1942, though the Seventh and Eighth remained unfinished. He lived in Prague during most of the inter-war period, working as a pianist in theatre productions and radio broadcasts, but found himself without any means of support after the German occupation of Czechoslovakia in early 1939. Having taken Soviet citizenship, he was arrested before he had completed the process of emigration to the Soviet Union and was then reported to a concentration camp in Wülzburg where he died in August 1942.

Schulhoff was no stranger to the string quartet medium, having written a Divertimento in 1914 and a full-length Quartet Op. 25 some four years later. His official String Quartet No. 1 was composed between the years 1920 and 1924 and was a great success. Schulhoff had been encouraged to write another work for string quartet. This is how the Five Pieces for String Quartet were composed in 1923. The work was first performed in Salzburg on 8 August, 1924. Although the work follows the outlines of a Baroque dance suite, each of the pieces is a self-contained miniature that emulates a particular dance style in a manner which unashamedly recalls the popular music of the era.

Leonid Desyatnikov (b. 1955)

Yiddish – 5 Songs for Voice and String Quartet

The Five Songs for Voice and String Quartet is a piece based on Yiddish songs that were performed in Poland between the two world wars. The composer Leonid Desyatnikov chose five songs representative of Yiddish cabaret style, which portray the lives of Jews in urban Poland, their joy, their suffering and hope. Jewish musicians and performers were dominant in popular music in Poland and collaborated in composing Polish and Yiddish songs. Their works influenced cabaret music throughout Europe as well as Hollywood film music and Broadway theatre music in the United States.

Desyatnikov chose these songs to commemorate the life of Jewish cities before the Holocaust. As he writes:

“Yiddish – 5 Songs for Voice and String Quartet – are based on the material of cabaret songs that circulated in Warsaw and Łódź between the two world wars. My cycle is a series of free transcriptions of such songs. Usually, this type of music is assigned to the ‘lowbrow’ area. It is the eclectic culture of the assimilantes, the lumpenproletariat and the outsiders, the culture of cheap chic, and at the same time – in its best forms – a brazen, talented culture full of self-irony and latent despair. The strict, staid sound of the string quartet transforms this music into an exquisite gravure.”

The first song is a nostalgic paean to the city of Warsaw, and the second a parody of an American song that relates the fate of a Jewish prostitute. The third and fifth songs are from the repertory of Yiddish ‘thieves’ songs’, reflecting marginal groups of the Jewish underworld. The fourth song is a duet between a man, Yosl, and a woman, Sore-Dvoshe, who live in poverty but dream of having a large family and enjoying life in the big city.

Yiddish was a vernacular and literary language of the Jews of Europe from the twelfth century onwards. We know of Yiddish folksongs as early as the fourteenth century. During World War Two, hundreds of songs were composed and sung, but many were lost forever. After the Holocaust, Yiddish did not continue to be a living language of Jewish communities in Europe, and became an academic, historic language. Thus the song cycle, in its new and sophisticated arrangement, brings together ‘lowbrow’ and ‘highbrow’ cultures of language and music with a bitter smile and humanity.

Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897–1957)

String Quartet No. 2, Op. 26

Erich Wolfgang Korngold was born in 1897 in Vienna, the second son of a high-ranking music critic, Julius Korngold, who wrote for the Viennese newspaper *Die Freie Presse*. Erich’s prodigious musical talent placed him and his family at the centre of high art society at a time when a parallel avant-garde society of cabaret, film and small theatre was growing in popularity and prestige. Both societies expressed disquiet over the future of their cultural heritage. The means of their expression would prove indicative of where the fissures within that culture lay.

Korngold’s life spanned the two world wars, which proved for some to be an undeniable force for radical change to the artistic idiom. Composers such as Schoenberg, Webern, Hindemith and Krenek became absorbed in creating and promoting new tonalities which could be aligned with older traditions. Korngold was one of many exceptions in that he remained true to his contemporary idiom, described by himself as an extension of natural evolutionary processes. Initially promoted by his father as the only truly natural use of tonality, Korngold’s musical style is attributed equally to his unique character and to his musical mentors, Gustav Mahler, Alexander Zemlinsky and Richard Strauss. Erich never wavered from his belief that music should cope with the horrors of his time by serving to elevate the soul rather than drag it down. When the possibility of delineating creative development into early, middle and late styles was still an officially recognized measure of the true artist, Korngold’s musical style merely matured while remaining intact, essentially romantic, effusive, luxuriant and, most significantly, harmonious.

In 1934 Korngold was invited by Warner Brothers to compose music for the film *A Midsummer Night’s Dream in America* – in retrospect, this proved to be the lifeline that saved him and his loved ones from the gas chambers in occupied Europe. Behind this invitation stood his friend the theatre and film director Max Reinhardt (1873–1943), who later also emigrated to the United States. Korngold went to America in 1934 but returned to Europe in 1937 to conduct and resume his career as an art music composer. However, within a few months he received another invitation to compose a film score; his acceptance of this offer actually saved his life and those of his family in 1938, just before the German occupation of Austria.

Korngold composed many film scores for full symphony orchestra and became one of the pioneers and leading exponents of film music. He won two Academy Awards. After the Second World War, in 1949, he attempted to resume a European career but this was not a success, and after a few concerts and premieres

he returned to Hollywood in 1951. He died a few years later, at the age of sixty, believing that he had been forgotten in Europe.

Korngold is most closely associated with large-scale works, his operas and film scores, but throughout his career he composed chamber music and an impressive collection of songs. In February 1933, following Hitler's rise to power, he began to look for a country of residence in Europe. During this year he conducted operas and composed chamber music, including his four-movement Second String Quartet Op. 26, which was premiered by the Rosé Quartet in Vienna on 16 March 1934, just before he left for America.

Though far less known than the First Quartet (1920-22), the Second presents a self-assured composer who knows how to combine Schoenberg's expressionism with Romantic sonorities, and a complex chromatic language reminiscent of Richard Strauss with his own confident handling of timbre, colour, and a broad emotional range which is characteristic of his musical language. In this quartet the music of the countryside of Korngold's native Austria is expressed in ripe Viennese sensuality.

- Gila Flam

Thank You!

Presenting exceptional artists is made possible by the generosity of our supporters, who make the journey with us throughout the year.

COVID-19 has changed a great many things about the way in which we move through the world and interact with one another. Over the last couple of years, our supporters have sustained us in ways that we couldn't have imagined, and never have we been more grateful.

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