

President's Report

The saying, 'Begin as you mean to go on' could well apply to the VRS's first full(ish) season in a post-pandemic world. The season began under pandemic restrictions, with social distancing measures in place, limiting audience capacity (and opportunities for ticket-revenue generation), but moved from strength to strength, signalling the beginning of a return to normalcy (whatever that may be).

The Danish String Quartet opened the season in October, with the first performance of their 4-concert Doppelgänger project, which pairs new compositions with Schubert's late major chamber works. The VRS is a proud co-commissioner in this project, alongside Carnegie Hall, Cal Performances, UC Santa Barbara Arts & Lectures, Flagey in Brussels and Amsterdam's Muziekgebouw.

Pianist Tony Siqi Yun made his long-overdue Vancouver debut at the Playhouse, followed in quick succession by performances from pianist Juho Pohjonen, violinist Augustin Hadelich and pianist Behzod Abduraimov. Guitarist Miloš made his highly anticipated return to the VRS stage in an electrifying performance with mandolinist Avi Avital.

One of the many things we've learned throughout the pandemic is that COVID-19 is anything but predictable, and the Omicron wave proved that in spades. The next three scheduled performances by trombonist Peter Moore & pianist James Baillieu, bass-baritone Gerald Finley & pianist Julius Drake, and accordionist Hanzhi Wang, were cancelled because of Omicron. However, things picked up once again in February with the return of the Castalian String Quartet.

March was a busy month, featuring performances by pianist Isata Kanneh-Mason, the Canadian recital debut of countertenor Jakub Józef Orliński with pianist Michał Biel, violinist Stephen Waarts' VRS debut with pianist Gabriele Carcano, and the return of pianist Yuja Wang.

April was to have begun with the VRS debut of pianist Mishka Rushdie Momen, but COVID-19 wasn't done with us (or her) just yet, and unfortunately, due to illness, she had to cancel. The Great Danes returned with the second concert of their Doppelgänger series, and pianist Evgeny Kissin wowed those who attended his Orpheum concert at the end of the month.

The cancelled concerts and pandemic-related delays were the impetus for our decision to push the season a little further into the warmer months, with concerts running throughout May and into early June. Cellist Nicolas Altstaedt blew the audience away with his solo performance at the Playhouse and pianist Daniel Hsu made his Canadian debut.

As you have probably read in our E-newsletters, there are often challenges with gaining access to performance venues in Vancouver, and as a result, the VRS has

started to look a little outside the traditional performance venue box. In early May, the Jerusalem Quartet and Israeli soprano Hila Baggio performed 'The Yiddish Cabaret' at Temple Sholom Synagogue. The sold-out performance was a huge success and highlighted for us the fact that there are some really wonderful non-traditional performance spaces around town.

Pushing into June, VRS audience favourite, pianist Steven Osborne gave a wonderful performance at the Orpheum, and South African soprano Golda Schultz made her Canadian debut with pianist Jonathan Ware.

The VRS has enjoyed a tremendously loyal family of sponsors, donors and supporters throughout its 42-year history, and over the past year they turned out in spades. For their steadfast support, we are deeply grateful. To the Peak Group of Companies, the Estate of Edwina and Paul Heller, the Martha Lou Henley Charitable Foundation, RBC Foundation, the Alan and Gwendoline Pyatt Foundation, the Deux Mille Foundation, Elaine Adair, Robert Bailey & Elizabeth Arnold-Bailey, Judith & Poul Hansen, Ann Harding, Ingunn Kemble (in memory of Michael Kemble), the John C. Kerr Family Foundation, London Drugs, the Estate of Denise Mara, Richard & Lynda Spratley, Joyce & Tony, the VRS Board of Directors, Victor, Linda Zysblat (in memory of Allen Zysblat), and an Anonymous sponsor, I offer, on behalf of the Board and staff, heartfelt appreciation.

Over the course of last season, several doors that had not previously been open to the organization opened. We must express our thanks to the City of Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia, and the Government of Canada for their support of our programming and recovery efforts through programs including the BC Arts Council's Pivot Program, the CEBA, and CEWS programs and the Festivals, Fairs and Events Recovery Fund.

There are a great many people who work behind the scenes to ensure that after 42 years, the VRS is standing strong and moving forward. They include (in no particular order):

- our auditors at Baker Tilly WM LLP
- Lydia Avsec of Copilot Design
- José Verstappen, who typesets our program notes
- Donald Gíslason, our resident musicologist
- Scott Harker, our piano tuner
- Ewa Borkowska of Valiant Accounting
- Our small but incredibly dedicated staff which in the 2021-2022 season, consisted of Founder & Artistic Director, Leila Getz; General Manager, Sara Getz; Marketing and Communications Manager, Niamh Small; Box Office Manager, Alex Glynianyi; and Fundraising and Special Projects Manager, Melodie Corbett.



I have had the privilege of chairing the VRS's Board of Directors for the past year. Initially, it seemed rather daunting to accept the role at a time when the Society was still adjusting to the aftermath of a turbulent pandemic season and the uncertainties of more Covid-related challenges. However, my trepidation was quickly alleviated thanks to the support and leadership of my colleagues: Mamie Angus, Casey Ching, Jared Dawson, Valerie Hunter, Susan Wong Lim, Jessica Macintosh, Yoram Minnes, Jim Salazar-Smith and Stephen Schachter. You are an outstanding collection of talent and dedication. I, and the VRS, owe you our deepest gratitude.

There will be considerable turnover on the board after this year's AGM, as a result of transition to the new Societies Act in 2017. In accordance with the term limits defined in our bylaws, directors are required to step down after six years. Accordingly, the following directors' terms are concluding:

- Mamie Angus
- Susan Wong Lim
- Yoram Minnes
- Stephen Schachter

We are indebted to you for your years of service. The Vancouver Recital Society has benefited tremendously from your guidance, advice and support over the years.

And finally, we have not forgotten about our extended VRS family – our patrons and donors. Without you, we would not exist. We are forever grateful, and we cannot wait to continue delighting you for years to come.

