



VANCOUVER
RECITAL
SOCIETY

VIVA VRS!

SPRING CONCERTS 2023

George Hinchliffe's Ukulele Orchestra
of Great Britain

Wednesday April 19 2023

From the Artistic Director

Dear Friends:

Welcome to the Vancouver Recital Society!

As a presenter, we very rarely step out of the “classical” music realm; when we do, it’s simply because we’ve come across musicians whose brilliance transcends genre. And that’s precisely the case with George Hinchliffe’s Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain. Not only is this our first ukulele presentation, it’s also the first time in our 43-year history that we’ve presented a show in the Queen Elizabeth Theatre.



In 1985, the founding brief of George Hinchliffe’s Ukulele Orchestra was to “have fun and not to lose money”. They’ve succeeded in spades. The Orchestra has performed for members of the British Royal Family, at the Houses of Parliament in London, at the BBC Proms at the Albert Hall in London, and they’ve travelled and played to audiences around the world.

Their appearance this evening marks their first performance in Canada in 10 years, as well as their Vancouver debut.

We’d like to thank our Season Sponsor, the Peak Group of Companies, and the Martha Lou Henley Charitable Foundation for its enthusiastic support of this event.

The Vancouver Recital Society is also grateful for the support of the City of Vancouver, and the Provincial Government of British Columbia.

We hope that you have a rollicking good time.

Sincerely,

Leila Getz
Founder and Artistic Director

Program

George Hinchliffe’s Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain

Wednesday, April 19, 2023 7:30 pm
Queen Elizabeth Theatre

**The programme will be announced
from the stage.**

There will be a 20-minute intermission.

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George Hinchliffe's

Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain

Jonty Bankes
Peter Brooke Turner
Laura Currie
Leisa Rea
Ben Rouse
Chris Walker
Ewan Wardrop

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The Ukulele Orchestra is a touring musical group which has been delighting audiences, raising the roof, selling out performances, and receiving standing ovations since 1985. This all-singing, all strumming group has been performing for 38 years using only a fistful of ukuleles and maintaining that all genres of music are available for reinterpretation.

The premise sounds astoundingly simple: instruments, voices, no gimmicks, no light show. Yet the New York Times exclaim that ‘they extract more than seems humanly possible from so small and so modest an instrument’ and millions have enthused over the years about the fact that the Orchestra tears the house down with a lively, touching, catchy, emotive, stomping show, threaded with humour and wit which inexplicably draws the audience in, to a joyous world beyond the conflicts of musical genres and transcending differences between a serious concert and entertainment.

As soon as the performers walk on stage, the audience feels that they are in safe hands, at home with friends who are totally in command of the art, craft, and magic of the stage. Sitting in chamber group format and dressed in formal evening wear (regardless of the time of day or the venue, whether Glastonbury Festival or Carnegie Hall), it uses the limitations of the instrument to create a musical freedom as it reveals unsuspected musical insights.

At this point, the audience may well sit back, all prior assumptions forgotten, and allow the Orchestra, which has sixteen-handedly changed the face of the ukulele world, to give what the Independent raved as “the best musical entertainment in the country”.

The first gig, intended as a one-off bit of fun was an instant sell out and led to national radio, TV, album recordings and international tours. Since then, the Orchestra has become what the Observer called “a muchloved institution” giving thousands of concerts, TV, and radio appearances all over the world. There have been tours in Britain, across Europe, Scandinavia, New Zealand, Australia, Japan, China, America, Canada and the North Pole. They also had the honour to perform, by invitation of The Prince of Wales, at the private 90th Birthday party of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

The Ukulele Orchestra have released CDs and DVDs on their own independent label. The orchestra’s music has been used in films, plays, and commercials. The Financial Times praised “The sophisticated sound they make – both percussive and melodic – is at once hilarious and heartfelt”

Musical Director: George Hinchliffe
Tour management: Viola Farrington
Sound: Verena Rogler

George Hinchliffe's

Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain

Performers' biographies

Peter Brooke-Turner

At over 2 metres tall, Peter Brooke Turner may well be the tallest ukulele player in the world – he is certainly the tallest in the Ukulele Orchestra. He was born in Portugal and grew up in the Soviet Union, Brazil, The United States, Finland and Italy. After false starts on the violin, trumpet and guitar, he finally discovered the ukulele and joined the Ukes in 1995.

He has released three albums under his pseudonym 'Tony Penultimate'. Has worked with many well-known showbiz names in the UK and has even lent his uke to Tiny Tim. He fronted his own 'Ukulele Kings' rock group in the 90s.

Peter has started the world's first high-altitude drama company – the ATTC (Airline Toilets Theatre Company), which has subsequently produced over twenty high-quality, low-budget songs, sketches and shows (all on Peter's iPhone) from this oft-neglected performance area. They can be viewed online.

Laura Currie

The youngest member of the orchestra, Laura was born in Dumfries, Scotland, and studied English Literature at the University of Edinburgh. She started playing the ukulele at the age of fifteen after seeing the Ukes in concert and used the instrument to front her first rock band at sixteen years old. She began performing with the Ukes in 2019, and has since toured with them across China, France and Switzerland.

When not touring with the orchestra, Laura performs under the solo stage name 'Ra'. She writes and releases original songs and covers, and one of her collaborative singles was recently featured in a Netflix show.

Laura has garnered an active online following for her eclectic mix of elaborately self-produced YouTube videos. During the Covid-19 lockdown in the UK, she used these video editing skills to produce the Ukulele Lockdown series that the Ukes released weekly on YouTube. Laura also plays piano, bass and guitar.



Photo credit: Allison Burke

Dominic Howles

Dominic grew up in Jamaica, Hong Kong and Somerset. He is a very experienced bass player, using double bass and electric bass, and has worked with many well-known jazz names and in classical ensembles. He has worked with Tommy Chase, Stacey Kent, Bobby Wellins, Don Weller, Julian Siegel and many others. He studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and has performed in Europe, the Middle East and Asia, on TV, Radio and Theatre. He has written and directed multi-media work and is well-respected as a composer and arranger. His own groups have performed successfully for many years. He is a first-class bass soloist and has an engaging sense of humour, which is ... ahem... always useful when working with ukulele players. He lives in London.

Leisa Rea

Leisa has a background in Theatre, Comedy, Writing and Music. She has worked as an actor and director, written for stage, television, and radio, and has played with the Orchestra for the past 15 years.

She's taught Stand Up Comedy, written for the BAFTA nominated series 'Miranda' (BBC), performed in her own critically acclaimed shows,

and was the winner of the inaugural Musical Comedy Awards in 2009.

Away from Orchestral duties, Leisa brings her considerable experience as a performer and artist to people all over the world through her online ukulele teaching and workshops. Recently, Leisa won an Arts Council of England grant enabling her to train as a digital audio producer.

Ben Rouse

Ben was born in Cornwall but grew up in Hampshire. At the age of 8 he began playing the drums, turning to the guitar at age 11. At 23, Ben formed the rock band 'Purple Monkey', which gained popularity along the South coast of England. At 25, he decided to learn the violin and mandolin and formed the folk duo 'Teapot Junkies', releasing two albums of original material. He went on to teach himself the saxophone, flute, trumpet and banjo.

At 30, Ben decided that a proper job might be necessary and earned himself an HND (Higher National Diploma) in electronics, but in 2007 was drawn back to music when he saw the Ukulele Orchestra perform on 'Jools Holland Hootenanny'. The next day he bought a ukulele and began performing and teaching workshops at festivals around the UK until, in 2014, he was invited to play with the Orchestra. He has since joined them on tours across America, China, Europe, Scandinavia and the UK.

Ewan Wardrop

Ewan started playing the ukulele in 1998 but also plays mandolin, guitar and the penny whistle. Ewan trained as a ballet dancer and appeared in a record-breaking run of Matthew Bourne's Swan Lake on Broadway. He has a long history of working in theatre on an international stage and has worked with companies such as the Royal Shakespeare Company and Kneehigh Theatre. He also has an experimental Morris Dance group called 'The Bo Diddlers'.

Chris Walker

Chris studied drama originally but has worked as a musician for many years, and has given a huge number of performances with his own skiffle group. He is an experienced ukuleleator, singer, raconteur, administrator and tea-chest bass player. Chris's experience in theatre and in venues of a bewildering variety means that he is comfortable bringing both a seriousness and a devil-may-care lightheartedness to performances with the Orchestra. Chris has performed on radio and TV, at the Cambridge Folk Festival, Singapore International Arts Festival, Glastonbury Festival, Linz International Street Festival, and many other venues in the UK and Europe. He lives in Cardiff, Wales, which, is useful for the Orchestra, and, like Scotland, is still part of the UK and Great Britain.

George Hinchliffe's
UKULELE ORCHESTRA OF GREAT BRITAIN
is represented by Arts Management Group, Inc. New York, NY



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Thank You!

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

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 few years, our supporters have sustained us in ways that we couldn't have imagined, and never have we been more grateful.

The Vancouver Recital Society acknowledges the following individual, foundation and corporate partners for their support throughout the season.

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There are many ways to support the VRS including making a philanthropic gift, sponsoring a concert and/or including us in your estate plans. If you would like more information, please contact us at 604.602.0363.

103 - 119 West Pender Street
Vancouver, BC
V6B 1S5

Telephone: 604.602.0363

Email: info@vanrecital.com

Web: vanrecital.com



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