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SPRING CONCERTS 2023

Kanneh-Mason Family Celebration

Friday May 5 2023

From the Artistic Director

Dear Friends:

At the VRS we like to think of all our concerts as extraordinary, and as we draw to the end of the 2022-23 Season (one more concert still to come), I'm sure that many of you who regularly attend our performances will agree that this has been a truly remarkable season, with some sensational debuts. But, in the realm of extraordinary, this performance by the Kanneh-Mason Family is indeed a remarkable event. Seven siblings, all musicians, all making waves in the international concert scene: Isata 26, Braimah 25, Sheku 23, Konya 22, Jeneba 20, Aminata 17, and Mariatu 13. Their instruments are piano, violin and cello.



Their talents and achievements are due in part to their remarkable parents, Stuart and Kadiatu. Sheku and Isata have already performed in Vancouver for the VRS, and now they're bringing their whole family with them for two North American engagements only, of which Vancouver is one!

How did we pull this off? With the help of some special organizations: Concert Sponsor, London Drugs, Season Sponsor, The Peak Group of Companies, and the Martha Lou Henley Charitable Foundation. We can't thank them enough for their support.

We would also like to thank the City of Vancouver and the Government of British Columbia for their assistance, and the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra for allowing us to use their Hamburg Steinway concert grand piano.

Enjoy the performance!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leila Getz".

Leila Getz

Tonight's Concert

Kanneh-Mason Family Celebration

Aminata Kanneh-Mason violin, piano

Braimah Kanneh-Mason violin

Isata Kanneh-Mason piano

Jeneba Kanneh-Mason cello, piano

Konya Kanneh-Mason violin, piano

Mariatu Kanneh-Mason cello, piano

Sheku Kanneh-Mason cello

Friday May 5 2023, 8:00 pm

Orpheum Theatre

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Additional Support



Program

JERRY BOCK (1928-1910)

Fiddler on the Roof

(arr. Kanneh-Masons)

(approx. 9 minutes)

Isata, piano

Braimah, Konya, Aminata, violin

Mariatu, Sheku, Jeneba, cello

FLORENCE PRICE (1887-1953)

Fantasie Nègre No. 1 in E minor

(approx. 10 minutes)

Jeneba, piano

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF (1873-1943)

Élégie in E flat minor Op. 3 No. 1

Moderato - Più vivo - Tempo I

(approx. 5 minutes)

Mariatu, cello

Isata, piano

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)

Piano Concerto No. 2 (2nd movement)

Andante

(approx. 6 minutes)

Konya, piano

Braimah, Aminata, violin

Sheku, Jeneba, Mariatu, cello

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

Piano Trio No. 2 in C major Op. 87 (1st movement)

Allegro moderato

(approx. 10 minutes)

Isata, piano

Braimah, violin

Sheku, cello

INTERMISSION

GASPAR CASSADÓ (1897-1966)

Suite for Solo Cello

Fantasia - Preludio. Andante

Sardana (danza). Allegro giusto

Intermezzo e danza finale. Lento ma non troppo

(approx. 16 minutes)

Sheku, cello

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Romance No. 2 in F major Op. 50

(approx. 9 minutes)

Aminata, violin

Jeneba, piano

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)

Scherzo from A Midsummer Night's Dream

(arr. Rachmaninoff)

(approx. 4 minutes)

Isata, piano

PABLO DE SARASATE (1844-1908)

Zigeunerweisen Op. 20

Moderato - Lento - Un poco più lento -

Allegro molto vivace

(approx. 9 minutes)

Braimah, violin

Jeneba, piano

BOB MARLEY (1945-1981)

Redemption Song

(arr. Kanneh Masons)

(approx. 4 minutes)

Braimah, Konya, Aminata, violin

Mariatu, Sheku, Jeneba, cello

Isata, piano

VITTORIO MONTI (1868-1922)

Czárdás

(arr. Kanneh-Masons)

(approx. 4 minutes)

Isata, piano

Braimah, Konya, Aminata, violin

Mariatu, Sheku, Jeneba, cello

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The Kanneh-Mason Family

Aminata Kanneh-Mason

Aminata is fifteen years old and attends Trinity Catholic School in Nottingham and the Royal Academy of Music, Junior Academy, in London, where she studies violin with Lorraine MacAslan and piano with Sarah Pickering.

Aminata has performed throughout the UK and the Caribbean, playing solo, chamber music and as a concerto soloist. She has upcoming concert tours to Australia and Antigua with her six siblings.

Aminata has appeared on several television and radio programmes with her siblings, including the BBC Four documentary 'Young, Gifted and Classical', and the BBC One documentary 'Imagine: This House is Full of Music'. She has also recorded on the album *Carnival* for Decca Classics.

Aminata is very grateful to The Nottingham Soroptimist Trust and to the Nottingham Education Trust for their support.



Photo credit: John Davis

Braimah Kanneh-Mason

Braimah has recently graduated from the Royal Academy of Music, and is currently taking lessons with Mateja Marinkovic. He was a scholarship student with Jack Liebeck at the Royal Academy of Music where he was the winner of the Harold Craxton Chamber Music Prize.

Braimah has performed as a soloist with orchestras throughout the UK. With the Kanneh-Mason Piano Trio he has played at venues such as Wigmore Hall, The Elgar Room at The Royal Albert Hall and St John's Smith Square. He has also given performances in Europe, the United States and the Caribbean.

Braimah has recordings with Atlantic/Warner and Decca Classics, including the Kanneh-Mason album *Carnival*.

Braimah currently performs on a Jean Baptiste Villaume, kindly lent to him by the Beare's International Violin Society.



Photo credit: John Davis

Isata Kanneh-Mason

Isata was the recipient of the 2021 Leonard Bernstein Award, a 2020 Opus Klassik award for the best young artist and, as a member of the Kanneh-Mason family, the 2021 best classical artist at the Global Awards.

Since studying with Hamish Milne and Carole Presland at London's Royal Academy of Music, graduating in 2020 with a Master of Arts in Performance and the Diploma of the Royal Academy of Music (awarded for outstanding postgraduate final recital performance), Isata has embarked on a successful and increasingly busy concert career as a soloist, with concerto appearances, solo recitals and chamber concerts throughout the UK and abroad.

Isata has performed several times on television and radio, including the BBC One documentary 'Imagine: This House is Full of Music', a feature for CBS Sunday Morning, and the Spanish TV show 'La Resistencia'. Isata made her debut as a television presenter for the coverage of the 2019 BBC Proms.



Photo credit: Jake Turney

Jeneba Kanneh-Mason

The third of the Kanneh-Mason clan to establish herself as a soloist, Jeneba recently made her BBC Proms debut with the Chineke! Orchestra, performing the Florence Price Concerto and was heralded by the press as “demonstrating musical insight, technical acuity, and an engaging performing persona”. (Music OMH).

Jeneba was a Keyboard Category Finalist in BBC Young Musician 2018, winner of the Murs du Son Prize at the Lagny-Sur-Marne International Piano Competition in France in 2014, and The Nottingham Young Musician 2013. She was also winner of the Iris Dyer Piano Prize at the Royal Academy of Music, Junior Academy, where she studied with Patsy Toh.

Jeneba holds the Victoria Robey Scholarship to The Royal College of Music, studying piano with Vanessa Latache. She is grateful to Lady Robey, The Nottingham Soroptimist Trust and The Nottingham Education Trust.



Photo credit: John Davis

Konya Kanneh-Mason

Konya holds The Gilling Family Scholarship at the Royal Academy of Music, studying piano with Tessa Nicholson.

As a soloist and a chamber musician, Konya has performed in concerts around the UK and Caribbean, including at Marlborough House and at the 2018 BAFTAs. Her concerto performances include Mozart K414, Shostakovich’s Piano Concerto No. 2, Schumann’s Piano Concerto and Mozart’s Triple Piano Concerto No. 7 (K242).

Konya has appeared with her siblings on numerous television and radio programmes, most recently on BBC Radio 3 and in the BBC One documentary ‘Imagine: This House is Full of Music’. Konya has recorded on the Decca Classics album, *Carnival*.



Photo credit: John Davis

Mariatu Kanneh-Mason

Mariatu attends Trinity Catholic School in Nottingham. She studies cello with Ben Davies, and piano with Fiona Harris at Primary Royal Academy of Music. She has Grade 8 distinction on the cello and Grade 7 distinction on piano. She is working towards Grade 8 piano.

Mariatu has performed with the Kanneh-Masons in a series of concerts around the UK and in Antigua and Barbuda. She has also joined her siblings for performances at the Belper and Bath Music Festivals, and in London, Nottingham, Southwell and Machynlleth. She performed with the Kanneh-Masons for The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall in March 2017, in a Kanneh-Mason concert at St. Johns Smith Square, London in 2018, and at Cheltenham Literary Festival.

Mariatu has appeared on several television and radio programmes with her siblings, including BBC World Service, Al Jazeera TV, Channel 4, BBC One’s The One Show and the BBC Four documentary ‘Young, Gifted and Classical’. She has also recorded for the Decca Classics album *Carnival*.



Photo credit: John Davis

Sheku Kanneh-Mason

Sheku is already in great demand from major orchestras and concert halls worldwide. He became a household name in 2018 after performing at the wedding of The Duke and Duchess of Sussex at Windsor Castle. His performance was greeted with universal excitement after being watched by nearly two billion people globally.

Sheku continues his studies with Hannah Roberts at the Royal Academy of Music in London as a Bicentenary Fellow. He began learning the cello at the age of six with Sarah Huson-Whyte and then Ben Davies at the Royal Academy of Music, Junior Academy. He has received masterclass tuition from Guy Johnston, Ralph Kirshbaum, Robert Max, Alexander Baillie, Steven Doane, Rafael Wallfisch, Jo Cole, Melissa Phelps, Julian Lloyd Webber, Frans Helmerson and Miklos Perenyi.

In February 2018, Sheku performed 'Evening of Roses' at the BAFTAs at the Royal Albert Hall. He was joined on stage by four of his six siblings, all of whom perform classical music to an exceptional standard. This was the first time any artist has been invited to perform during the ceremony two years running. It followed his memorable performance of Leonard Cohen's 'Hallelujah' at the 2017 BAFTAs, the subsequent recording of which went viral on YouTube.

Forthcoming highlights include performances with the Cleveland Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Barcelona Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Czech Philharmonic, and London Philharmonic orchestras, and on tour with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

Sheku was appointed a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the 2020 New Year's Honours List.



The Kanneh-Mason Family is represented by Enticott Music Management, London, UK.



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

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Program Notes

Jerry Bock

Fiddler on the Roof

(arr. Kanneh-Masons)

The musical *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964) by composer Jerry Bock, lyricist Sheldon Harnick and playwright Joseph Stein, won nine Tony Awards in its record-breaking run of more than 3,000 performances on the Broadway stage and reached an even wider audience through Norman Jewison's Academy-Award-winning film adaptation in 1971.

Based on the stories of Jewish life in the Russian Empire by Yiddish writer Sholem Aleichem (1859-1916), it relates the joys and struggles of Tevye the Dairyman, as he tries to find suitable husbands for his five daughters while keeping a wary eye out for the ever-present danger of anti-Jewish violence in his pogrom-prone land.

Hundreds of productions of *Fiddler on the Roof* have been staged around the world and many of its musical numbers are instantly recognizable even to the non-theatre-going public. Amongst the most popular of these are *If I Were a Rich Man*, *Matchmaker Matchmaker* and *Sunrise, Sunset*.

Florence Price

Fantasie Nègre No. 1 in E minor

Florence Price was born in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1887 and studied piano, organ and composition at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, graduating with honours in 1906. Life in the Jim Crow South was not easy for a well-educated African-American woman, and she eventually moved to Chicago in 1927 where her talents began to be recognized. In the 1930s she gradually rose to national prominence as a symphonic composer following the performance of her *Symphony No. 1* by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1933.

In all she composed over 300 works, including symphonies, works for piano and for chamber ensembles. She was especially well known for her art songs and arrangements of spirituals, many of which were sung by the most celebrated singers of her day, including Marian Anderson and Leontyne Price.

Her musical style is conservative, firmly planted in the late Romantic era, but permeated with elements drawn from her African-American heritage. This mixture of European 'high-art' and African-American popular musical styles is perfectly exemplified in her *Fantasie Nègre No. 1* (1929), which incorporates traditional spirituals and jazz dance rhythms into the structure of a typically 19th-century virtuoso piano fantasy. The work opens in the classic manner with a series of introductory flourishes offering tantalizing hints in the left hand of the principal theme to come.



This principal theme is the spiritual *Sinner, please don't let this harvest pass*, artfully harmonized with chromatic passing tones in the inner voices.



The piano textures spawned by this theme, with their multitude of countermelodies in the inner voices and melodically active bass lines, reflect the influence of Chopin's piano style.

The work's secondary theme comes in the major mode and evokes H. T. Burleigh's *Going Home* used by Dvořák in the *Largo* second movement of his *New World Symphony* No. 9.



As the work progresses it alternates restatements of these themes and non-thematic sections featuring scintillating – one might even say ‘flashy’ – piano figuration, at times inflected with harmonies we are more used to hearing in the music of George Gershwin. The piece ends, however, in a thunderous affirmation of the ‘flat-7’ melodic minor scale in which the work's principal theme is situated.

Sergei Rachmaninoff Élégie in E flat minor Op. 3 No. 1

The five short pieces of Rachmaninoff's *Op. 3 Morceaux de fantaisie* were the very first of his solo piano works to be published. Dating from 1892, when the composer was still studying at the Moscow Conservatory. They nonetheless convey the brand of warm pianistic lyricism, enveloped in dark brooding harmonies, that would come to characterize his mature compositions.

The first piece in the set, the *Élégie in E flat minor*, evokes the style of a Chopin nocturne, with its wide-spaced *pianissimo* chordal accompaniment in the left hand introducing a lonely distant solo voice in the high treble register.



The dreamy nocturne-like atmosphere is created not only by this rich carpet of deep-bass piano tone but also by the tentative, halting melody line above that persistently enters and moves forward on weak beats of the bar, as if unsure of where to go. This softly mournful melodic line is perfect for the cello to sing out in its high register.

A slightly more active middle section in the major mode provides temporary relief from the gloomy atmosphere of the opening. But all is not well in this section's heart of hearts either, as the piece's yearning climax, worthy of *Tristan und Isolde*, makes clear.



When the opening section finally returns it seems to have been affected by what has come before, and the work ends with a cascade of figuration to the bottom of each instrument's register.

Dmitri Shostakovich
Piano Concerto No. 2 - 2nd movement

Shostakovich wrote his Second Piano Concerto as a present for his son Maxim, who performed the piece at his graduation concert after completing his pre-Conservatory studies at the Moscow Central Music School on the day of his 19th birthday, 10 May 1957.

Written in an uncharacteristically simple style suitable for performance by young pianists, it typifies the well-known category of the 'youth concerto', a musical genre promoted in the Soviet Union for use in the nation's vast network of music schools and institutions.

The *Andante* slow movement is the simplest in terms of its style and texture. It begins with a chorale-like string introduction, shockingly direct and sincere to the ears of those used to the acerbic ironies and cryptic subtexts of Shostakovich's other scores.



Retained in this movement, however, is Shostakovich's penchant for surprising inflections of tone colour. The string introduction, for example, is in a solemn and reverential C minor but when the piano finally enters, it does so in a naively tender and childlike C major.



Transparently scored, delicate in sentiment, and softly pulsing with gentle cross-rhythms, this wistfully nostalgic movement could easily pass for the soundtrack to a French movie.

Johannes Brahms
Piano Trio No. 2 in C major Op. 87
Allegro moderato

Brahms' second piano trio is a deeply serious work, thickly scored for piano, and roiling with the rhythmic ambiguities that are a trademark of the composer's mature compositional style. Begun in 1880 and completed in 1882, it treats the piano very much in the grand style of his 'symphonic' Piano Concerto No. 2 in B flat from the same period. In both works he gives the instrument a massively wide field of play extending to both ends of the keyboard, the hands often separated by as much as four or five octaves. The violin & cello frequently play in unison or in parallel, pooling their sonic resources to provide a stable sonority in the mid-range of the texture, where the important thematic material is most often presented.

The first movement opens with a broad heroic theme laid before the listener by the violin and cello alone, doubled at the octave. Rife with bold melodic leaps, it has the air of a fugue subject, or a fanfare.



As if to compensate, Brahms' more intimate second theme, perfumed with the charm of the Viennese salon, is introduced by the piano and circles round a small patch of tonal space, curiously at odds with the downbeats implied by its bar lines.



A surprise comes in the development section when the aggressively bold opening theme waxes rapturously lyrical and a further surprise arrives with the movement's extended coda that almost sounds like a second development section.

Gaspar Cassadó Suite for Solo Cello

Gaspar Cassadó is hardly a household name, but he was one of the great cellists of the twentieth century, active as a performer, composer and transcriber for his instrument. Born in Barcelona in 1897, he was discovered at the age of nine by a young Catalan cellist just starting out on his career, the 21-year-old Pablo Casals, and was accepted to study with him in Paris on a scholarship from his native city.

Among the strongest influences on him, however, came from Casals' championing of the Bach suites for solo cello, which certainly influenced the composition of his own *Suite for Solo Cello*, composed in 1926. Cassadó's student Marçal Cervera, who studied the piece with him, says that it represents in its three movements three important cultural regions of Spain: Castilla-La Mancha, Catalonia, and Andalusia.

Like the Bach suites, Cassadó's suite is a collection of dances, introduced by a *Preludio*, which in the first movement of his suite turns into a *zarabanda*, related to the baroque *sarabande*.

Cervera suggests that the two presentations of the opening theme, one *forte*, the other *piano*, represent in turn Don Quixote and his beloved, Dulcinea. But other associations run through the movement as well, including quotations from Ravel's *Daphnis & Chloe* (the famous opening flute solo) and from Zoltan Kodaly's *Sonata for Solo Cello*.

PRELUDIO - FANTASIA

Gaspar Cassadó



The second movement is a *sardana*, the folk dance most closely associated with the Catalan nationalist revival of the 19th century. The *sardana* is a round dance accompanied by a *cobla* wind band comprising a high-whistling *flaviol* (wooden fipple flute), double-reed shawms and various brass instruments.

SARDANA (DANZA)



The opening, played entirely in harmonics, imitates the high whistling sound of the *flaviol* summoning the dancers to the town square. The *sardana* is a dance in three parts, the middle section being more lyrical and in a minor key. The frequent changes in register on the cello imitate the way that various sections of the band interact.

INTERMEZZO E DANZA FINALE



The last movement is the one in which the spirit of the dance is most evident, with the snap of castanets imitated in sharp, abrupt rhythms, the strumming of the guitar in flamboyant arpeggio patterns, and the harmonies of Spanish folk music in the distinctive pattern of the four-note descending bass line.

Ludwig van Beethoven
Romance No. 2 in F major Op. 50

Beethoven's *Romance in F major*, originally for violin and orchestra, was composed in 1798 and is thought perhaps to be the slow movement from an uncompleted violin concerto that Beethoven was known to be working on at the time.

The term 'romance' as an instrumental genre was a relatively new coinage, having previously been most often applied to vocal music. As an instrumental piece it implied a tender and innocently sentimental melody performed in a lyrical songful style.

Beethoven delivers on both counts in this work, which he structures as a rondo comprised of three statements of the opening refrain and two contrasting episodes. His opening melody sees the violin playing high above a discreet background accompaniment of simple chords set in a lower register in order to spotlight the violin's singing tone and bright timbre.

Adagio cantabile. ♩ = 50 - 63.

dolce

p

tr * *tr* *

The gracious quality of this melody is projected in the many small embellishments - turns, crush notes and trills - with which it is bejewelled on its first appearance. Subsequent statements will emphasize elaborate decoration of its underlying harmonies in smaller note values while the contrasting episodes will introduce an eye-brow-knitting shadow of minor-mode harmony, easily dispelled by the return of the opening theme.

Felix Mendelssohn
Scherzo from A Midsummer Night's Dream
(arr. Rachmaninoff)

Mendelssohn is known for his fleet-footed scherzos, and the Scherzo from his incidental music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, composed in 1842, is bang-on brand given that its subject is the mischievous race of light-as-a-feather fairies that inhabit the woodland setting of Shakespeare's play.

But structuring Mendelssohn's picturesque orchestration in a classical sonata form, with the opening hop-skip-and-jump motive in G minor as a first theme:



and a happy-go-lucky melody – cleverly hidden by the transcriber in the alto voice – as a second theme in B flat.



That transcriber is none other than Sergei Rachmaninoff, who in the 1930s, after writing his last work for solo piano – the Corelli Variations Op. 42 – created a series of transcriptions of other composers' works to use as 'toss-off' encore pieces at his own recitals. Mendelssohn's *Scherzo* is one of his most brilliant creations, forging an ingenious synthesis of Mendelssohnian scamper and Rachmaninoffian pianistic fireworks.

The late scholar and pianist Charles Rosen (1927-2012) believed that among the many transcriptions of this work, Rachmaninoff's shines far above the rest:

The sonorities seem to make their own accents, the arrangement between the hands seems to create the phrasing, and the orchestra is almost forgotten in the pianistic re-creation.

Pablo de Sarasate
Zigeunerweisen Op. 20

The 19th century was an era that exalted national musical styles with exotic tonal flavourings and, in this regard, the music of the Romani of the Austro-Hungarian Empire attracted composers as far apart aesthetically as Johannes Brahms, who wrote Hungarian Dances, and Franz Liszt, famous for his Hungarian Rhapsodies.

In 1877 it was the turn of Spanish virtuoso violinist Pablo de Sarasate, who visited Budapest and by his own account heard Hungarian Gypsy music there that he was inspired to incorporate into his soulful and dazzling *Zigeunerweisen* ("Gypsy Airs") for violin and piano – later elaborated into an orchestral version that has become a staple of the violin repertoire.

The melodies used were for the most part not authentic folk tunes but rather established Hungarian musical works that Sarasate mistook – perhaps disingenuously – for genuine 'gypsy music'.

Sarasate's *Zigeunerweisen*, like the traditional *czardas* music of Hungary, is characterized by variations in tempo, evoking the whimsical caprices of the improvising musician. It features an opening slow section followed by a brisk acrobatic finale.

The work begins with a lugubriously paced introduction in which the violinist channels a Romani fiddler enrapturing his campfire audience by seductively pulling them in to each phrase and then astonishing them with various dazzling feats of virtuosity on his instrument, as in the opening phrase:



Stereotypical semantic signifiers of the gypsy flavour of the proceedings are the use of the so-called 'Hungarian' minor scale with its sharp 4th degree, and the cadencing rhythm (much used by Liszt in his Hungarian Rhapsodies) 'DAH-dum-dump, dah-DAH'.

This stop-and-go progress continues throughout the following section in which the soloist lays his heart on his sleeve in a series of tearful glissandos and bewildering runs.



More sustained lyricism characterizes the following *Lento*, in which the violinist shows his emotional side by singing out an elegiac melody encrusted with 'reverse-dotted' rhythms (appearing as 16th-8th instead of 8th-16th) in imitation of sobbing.



But all is well in the finale, which begins with the opening theme of the final section of Liszt's 13th Hungarian Rhapsody, which in the original looks like this:



Sarasate's *Zigeunerweisen* is the ultimate showpiece, one that shows off the capabilities of the violinist in passages of double stops, rapid-fire harmonics, left-hand pizzicato and other virtuoso techniques meant to leave audiences with their mouths agape.

Bob Marley
Redemption Song
(arr. Kanneh-Masons)

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Bob Marley and the Wailers emerged as the authentic voice of Reggae, a genre of popular music that came to represent Jamaican musical culture on the global stage. Marley's adherence to the religious and social movement known as Rastafarianism gave his music a spiritual edge that fit well with his unstinting advocacy of political and societal change.

'Redemption Song', which appeared on the Wailers' album *Uprising* in 1980, best represents the activist commitment he felt towards the wider world. With its plangent chorus of *Won't you help to sing / These songs of freedom*, Marley expressed the hope that those hearing and admiring his music would act to bring about a better world.

In this arrangement by the Kanneh-Mason family, Sheku takes the lead melody on cello while relaxed syncopations and counter-melodies in the accompanying instruments evoke a uniquely Jamaican optimism about music's power to enact change in the world.

Vittorio Monti
Czárdás
(arr. Kanneh-Masons)

The Italian composer, conductor and violinist Vittorio Monti was another musician captivated by the emotional appeal and liveliness of Gypsy music. His popular violin *Czárdás* written in 1904 is the main reason he is remembered today.

Like Sarasate's *Zigeunerweisen*, Monti's *Czárdás* is structured in a series of sections with varying tempos, alternating between slow and fast. It differs, however, in that it is more a character piece than a virtuoso display vehicle and its range of expression is more compressed.

Having acquired his musical taste in Naples, where he was born and educated, Monti views the slow and fast sections like the *cavatina* and *cabaletta* in the accelerating pace of a Rossini opera aria. In the slow sections he emphasizes sustained pathos rather than astonishing drama. And the fast sections which alternate with them emphasize the exhilaration of endless strings of running figuration, similar to that found in Sarasate's finale but lacking the extreme acrobatic verve that incentivized the Spanish violinist to write his own "Hungarian" score.

Program notes by
Donald G. Gíslason 2023

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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
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Telephone: 604.602.0363

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