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RECITAL  
SOCIETY

Three vertical bars of varying heights and colors (orange, pink, magenta) are positioned in the top right corner.

2024<sup>YEARS</sup>  
2025  
SEASON



## FALL CONCERTS

Rachel Fenlon soprano & piano

Sunday September 8 2024

# From the Artistic Director

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Dear Friends:

Welcome to the Vancouver Recital Society's 45<sup>th</sup> Season.

What a wonderful journey of discoveries and great music making the past 44 years have been. In this exciting anniversary year, we are looking forward to a future in which we continue to be bold and take risks on new musicians...

We launch this season with the multi-talented soprano, Rachel Fenlon, singing Schubert's great *Winterreise* accompanied by her own two hands at the piano.

This is indeed a first for us, and needless to say, we are excited about it.

Rachel grew up on Vancouver Island, and studied under Nancy Hermiston at the University of British Columbia. Upon graduation, she left for Europe, and the rest, as they say, is history.

She currently resides in Berlin which is a hotbed for talented musicians and composers. She is involved in many different projects, and her career is growing by leaps and bounds.

I would like to welcome back our Season Sponsor, the Peak Group of Companies, to whom we are most grateful.

We also extend our thanks to the Edwina and Paul Heller Fund at the Vancouver Foundation and Royal Bank Foundation for their support of emerging artists, and to the City of Vancouver for supporting our concerts throughout the season.

And last, but certainly not least, we are deeply grateful to our concert sponsor, Alexandra Volkoff. Enjoy the performance, and do come back for more in our exciting 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season.



Leila Getz



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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.

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，感谢您的合作。

# Program

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Rachel Fenlon, soprano & piano

Sunday, September 8, at 3:00 pm  
Vancouver Playhouse

**This program will be performed  
without an intermission.  
The audience is kindly requested to hold their  
applause until the end of the program.**

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

## Die Winterreise

Gute Nacht (Good Night)  
Die Wetterfahne (The Weathervane)  
Gefrorene Tränen (Frozen Tears)  
Erstarrung (Numbness)  
Der Lindenbaum (The Linden Tree)  
Wasserflut (Flood Water)  
Auf dem Flusse (On the River)  
Rückblick (Looking Backward)  
Irrlicht (Will o' the Wisp)  
Rast (Rest)  
Frühlingstraum (Dream of Spring)  
Einsamkeit (Solitude)

\* \* \*

Die Post (The Post)  
Der greise Kopf (The Old Man's Head)  
Die Krähe (The Crow)  
Letzte Hoffnung (Last Hope)  
Im Dorfe (In the Village)  
Der stürmische Morgen (The Stormy Morning)  
Täuschung (Illusion)  
Der Wegweiser (The Sign Post)  
Das Wirtshaus (The Inn)  
Mut! (Courage)  
Die Nebensonnen (The Sun Dogs)  
Der Leiermann (The Hurdy-Gurdy Man)

(approx. 75 minutes)

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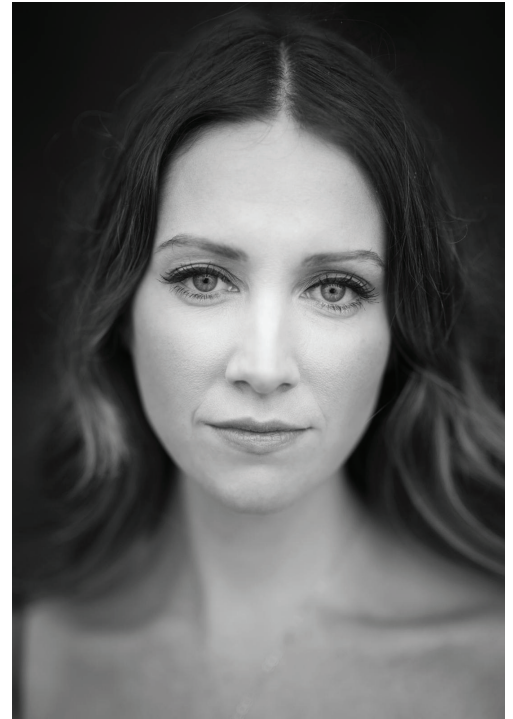
# Rachel Fenlon, soprano & piano

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**Early Life and Education:** Rachel was born in the UK, raised on the west coast of Canada and is now based in Berlin. Rachel's formal training was at the University of British Columbia, where she holds Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Opera Performance and studied voice with Nancy Hermiston.

As a pianist, Rachel completed her ARCT Diploma in Piano Performance from the Royal Conservatory of Music (Canada) and studied piano with May Ling Kwok. Rachel also studied composition at the Victoria Conservatory of Music with Stephen Brown and Robert Aitken, and did summer composition residencies with Dinuk Wijeratne and Marco Stroppa. As a young artist, Rachel was a member of the Vancouver Opera Young Artists Program and was a young singer/pianist at the Oxford Lieder Mastercourse and at the Crear Programme for Song in Scotland with Sir Malcolm Martineau.

**Performances:** Performing and commissioning new music is a core part of Rachel's artistic practice. Her most recent new creation is a song cycle, titled *Sing Nature Alive From My Insides*, which world-premiered at Ottawa Chamberfest in 2022. It is a 40-minute song cycle for self-accompanied soprano, piano and live electronics for Rachel as performer. It was composed and co-created by Matthias McIntire and set to poetry by Rachel.



**This Season:** Rachel performs self-accompanied recitals at Fundación Juan March, Piano Salon Christophori, BarokkiKuopio Festival, Klangwerk LIED, Lunenburg Academy of Music Performance, Scotia Festival of Music and St. James's Piccadilly, London, in varying programmes including Alban Berg's *Sieben frühe Lieder*, Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte*, her own transcriptions of Dowland/Purcell, Bach/Busoni chorales, Claude Debussy's *Ariettes oubliées* and George Crumb's *Apparition* and *Makrokosmos*. On stage, Rachel performs Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* with Vancouver Opera, Pacific Opera Victoria and Ne.Sans Opera and Dance Company.

Further collaborations this season include recording a new composition for self-accompanied soprano and orchestra by Stewart Goodyear with the BBC Symphony Orchestra/Jessica Cottis and releasing new compositions by Daniel Janke on Circle Records and her own self-accompanied version of *Die Winterreise* in 2024.

**Did you know:** In addition to her work as a performer, Rachel writes poetry — she has been awarded writing grants from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council for her poetry and will release her debut collection in the coming year. Rachel is the co-founder of the Berlin artist collective Crown The Muse — a production and commissioning body for musical projects, which has collaborations with stage director Bruno Ravella and the dance company Ne.Sans under the direction of choreographer Idan Cohen. Rachel is a founding member of the Canadian Artist Collective New Art/New Media.

Rachel Fenlon is represented by IMG Artists, New York, NY, USA

# Program Notes

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## Franz Schubert *Die Winterreise*

The art songs of Franz Schubert lie at the foundation of the lied genre itself, and at the pinnacle of Schubert's lieder output stands *Die Winterreise*, a song cycle remarkable for its vivid musical portraits of the human heart smarting from the pains of love lost and stoically resigned to the approach of death.

Conceived as a journey into the cold of winter, it sets to music a selection of poems by Wilhelm Müller published in 1823 and 1824 under the title *Seventy-Seven Poems from the Posthumous Papers of a Travelling Horn-Player*. Unlike the composer's previous song cycle, *Die Schöne Müllerin* (set to texts by the same poet), *Winterreise* presents more of a slide show than a plot, as all of the important action has taken place before the narration begins. The narrator-singer is heard in conversation with his own heart, by turns reflective, questioning, ironic and finally resigned. In this speculative frame of mind, he drifts fluidly between the world of his dreams and the bitter reality he faces.

At issue is a love affair gone wrong. The wanderer's beloved has broken off their relationship to marry a richer man, leaving him despairing and alone with his thoughts, which travel through dark territory as he traverses village and country settings after leaving her house.

The work was composed in two separate parts in 1827, the year before Schubert's death, making the terminal illness from which he was suffering one obvious point of reference. But the poems from Wilhelm Müller's collection provide apt imagery for such a presentation of moods, with their recurring themes of loneliness and isolation, watchwords of the emerging Romantic movement in art.

The cast of characters with whom the narrator interacts are elements of the natural landscape (sun, wind, trees and leaves, flowers, rivers and snow, crows and ravens), elements that form symbolic company for his journey. Schubert's achievement in setting these poems is to give musical life to these images, not only in the contours of the singer's melody, but especially in the pictorial vividness of the piano score. The piano serves as more than mere accompaniment: it often acts out the role of the external surroundings through which the singer travels.

And yet a paradox pervades this piano score. It is both richly allusive and unusually austere. Benjamin Britten, in discussing Schubert's artistry, outlines the performers' challenge in these terms:

One of the most alarming things I always find, when performing this work, is that there is actually so little on the page. He gets the most extraordinary moods and atmospheres with so few notes. And there aren't any gloriously wishy-washy arpeggios to help you. You've got to create the mood by these few chords. He leaves it all very much up to the performers.

## PART ONE

### GUTE NACHT (Good Night)

Our traveller's grim journey begins as he bids farewell to the house of his beloved, slipping off into the night accompanied only by the shadow of the moon. The piano introduction establishes his even walking pace but is punctuated by sudden off-beat accents emblematic of his inner turmoil.

The poetic theme tying the song cycle together – alienation from emotional fulfilment and earthly existence – is summarized in the very first line he sings: “*A stranger I came, a stranger I depart.*”

Fremd bin ich einge - zo - gen, fremd zieh' ich wie - der aus.  
Ich kann zu meiner Rei - sen nicht wäh - len mit der Zeit, r

The narration drifts between his present unhappy state (in the minor mode) and happier thoughts (in the major).

“*Love wanders willingly,*” he notes, with irony.

### DIE WETTERFAHNE (The Weathervane)

The piano imitates a weathervane spinning atop his beloved's house as the singer wonders about those inside. Do their affections also change with the wind? Why should they care about him, when their daughter is marrying a rich man?

Der Wind spielt mit der Wet - terfah - ne auf mei - nes schö - nen Liebehens Haus.

The musical texture is brilliantly evocative, with unisons between piano and singer making you feel the bitter chill in the air and trills evoking the wind blowing the weathervane around on its spindle.

## GEFRORNE TRÄNEN (Frozen Tears)

The text of this song mixes anger and irony.

Against an eerie backdrop of dainty drip-drip sounds in the piano, often punctuated by a sudden sforzando accent, the singer asks how his tears can have frozen to his cheek so soon.

Musical score for the song "Gefrorne Tränen" (Frozen Tears). The score is in G minor (three flats) and 3/4 time. It features a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Ge - fro - rne Tropfen fal - len von mei - nen Wan - gen ab:". The piano accompaniment is marked *pp* (pianissimo) and features a dainty, drip-drip sound pattern with occasional sforzando accents.

These tears were hot enough to melt ice when they poured from his heart.

Alternating major and minor harmonies evoke both the warmth of feeling and the chill in the air of this scene.

## ERSTARRUNG (Numbness)

Stunned by the loss of his love, our traveller searches frantically for any piece of green grass beneath the snow to remind him of happier times.

But all is dead around, like his frozen heart.

In this strange take on the classic Petrarchan figures of fire and ice, the agitated piano accompaniment

Musical score for the song "Erstarrung" (Numbness). The score is in G minor (three flats) and 3/4 time. It features a piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked "Ziemlich schnell.\*)" (Quite fast.\*). The piano accompaniment is marked *p* (piano) and features a rapid, agitated pattern of eighth notes with triplets. The score shows the first three measures of the piece.

portrays the protagonist's raging inner turmoil while the avoidance of cadence at the end paints his inability to let go of the memory of his beloved.

## DER LINDENBAUM (The Linden Tree)

We hear the first intimation of death in this song. As a chill wind blows through the fluttering leaves evoked by the piano,



the traveller passes by a tree into which he had carved words of love. Once the emblem of his happiness, it now offers him eternal rest beneath its branches.

English tenor Ian Bostridge has pointed out that the linden tree was a popular meeting place in German towns. With this resonance of German nationalism in the setting of its text, it is not surprising, then, that this simple, tuneful melody lives on outside of Schubert's song cycle as the well-known German folksong, *Am Brunnen vor dem Tore*.

## WASSERFLUT (Flood Water)

In this eerily calm, almost stately song, the protagonist muses on how the snow will absorb his tears, then thaw in the spring and flow with them into the stream. The flow of this stream will feel their warmth once again as it passes his beloved's house.



Man - che Thrän' aus mei - nen Au - gen ist ge - fal - len in - den Schnee;  
Schnee, du weisst von mei - nem Seh - nen, sag', wo - hin doch geht dein Lauf?

Here we find a classic example of the “pathetic fallacy” in Romantic poetry, in which Nature is imagined as reflecting and experiencing human emotions.



## AUF DEM FLUSSE (On the River)

The strange tiptoe pace of this song gives it an aura of mystery, or perhaps merely tentativeness. The ice covering the river, on which the wanderer has carved the story of his love affair, is like his heart: it rages with a torrent beneath.

Der du so lu - stig rauschtest, du hel - ler, wil - der Fluss,

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Auf dem Flusse'. It consists of three staves: a vocal line in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/8 time signature, and two piano accompaniment staves (treble and bass clefs). The lyrics are 'Der du so lu - stig rauschtest, du hel - ler, wil - der Fluss,'. The music features a slow, tiptoe-like pace with frequent rests and a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes.

Changes from minor to major and back again are chilling, and near the end, the piano pulses with signs of his inner torment.

## RÜCKBLICK (Looking Backward)

Pursued by crows as he breathlessly escapes, the wanderer casts a nostalgic glance back at the town he is leaving, once so pleasant to his memory.

And looking back, he still longs to stand in front of her house once again.

Es brennt mir un - ter bei - den Soh - len, tret ich auch schon auf

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Rückblick'. It features a vocal line in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (Bb) and a 3/8 time signature, and two piano accompaniment staves (treble and bass clefs). The lyrics are 'Es brennt mir un - ter bei - den Soh - len, tret ich auch schon auf'. The piano part includes dynamic markings 'p' and 'cresc.'.

Like many of the songs in this cycle, this one is divided clearly into major and minor-mode sections.

## IRRLICHT (Will o' the Wisp)

The flickering light of a will o' the wisp, imitated in the fast repeated notes in the piano,

Langsam.

The image shows the beginning of a musical score for the song 'Irrlicht'. It starts with the tempo marking 'Langsam.' and a key signature of two sharps (D#) in a 3/8 time signature. The score includes a vocal line in treble clef and two piano accompaniment staves (treble and bass clefs). The piano part features fast repeated notes in the right hand, marked with 'p' and 'p>'.

leads the protagonist astray into a mountain chasm. He has no worries, though, for as rivers lead to the sea, so human miseries, like will o' the wisp, are but a game, all leading to the grave.

## RAST (Rest)

A drowsy piano introduction finds the wanderer pausing from the fatigue of his journey.

Musical score for 'RAST (Rest)'. The score is in 3/4 time, key of B-flat major. It features a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Nun merk' ich erst, wie müd' ich bin, da ich zur Ruh mich le - ge;"

He shelters in a little hut, but this bodily respite from the cold and wind only allows him to feel more keenly the burning sting of jealousy in his heart.

The concentration of thought that has overtaken the singer is conveyed in an often speech-like, “un-melodic” vocal line.

## FRÜHLINGSTRAUM (Dream of Spring)

One of the happiest of Schubertian melodies is introduced by the piano.

Musical score for 'FRÜHLINGSTRAUM (Dream of Spring)'. The score is in 6/8 time, key of D major. It features a piano introduction. The tempo marking is "Etwas bewegt." (Somewhat moved).

In this song we find our protagonist lost in a dream of springtime, then awakened by the rooster's call and the shrieking of crows. Drifting between a dream state and harsh reality, he longs to feel once again the warmth of love.

The piano score paints in turn the sudden shrieks of birds and the torpor of his drowsy eyelids. The change of mode from major to minor at the very end conveys his hopelessness. When will the ice-flowers in the window turn green? When will he hold her in his arms? The answer to both questions is: never.

## EINSAMKEIT (Solitude)

The slow trudging pace of the piano's opening paints the protagonist's despair as he travels on his way, lonely as the cloud drifting overhead above the tops of the trees.

Musical score for 'EINSAMKEIT (Solitude)'. The score is in 2/4 time, key of B-flat major. It features a piano introduction. The tempo marking is "Langsam." (Slowly).

The stillness in the air, the brightness of the scene, are no help to his pain. When storms raged, he was less miserable than this.

## PART TWO

### DIE POST (The Post)

The gallop of horses' hooves and the triadic call of the post-horn

*Etwas geschwind.*

Musical score for 'DIE POST' in 6/8 time, key of B-flat major. It features three staves: a vocal line with a whole rest, a piano line with a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, and a bass line with a similar rhythmic pattern. The tempo is marked 'Etwas geschwind.' (Somewhat quick).

sets the second half of the song cycle in motion as our wanderer's heart leaps with the arrival of the mail coach. Does it bring a letter from her?

The upbeat tone of this song is an ironic set-up for emotional travails to follow.

### DER GREISE KOPF (The Old Man's Head)

Eeriness returns in a song shrink-wrapped around the text rather than arranged in stanzas.

*Etwas langsam.*

Musical score for 'DER GREISE KOPF' in 3/4 time, key of B-flat major. It features three staves: a vocal line with a whole rest, a piano line with a sparse accompaniment, and a bass line with a similar sparse accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'Etwas langsam.' (Somewhat slow).

The frost on the wanderer's head has made him look like an old man, a welcome thought. Then horror sets in as he realizes he is still young, with so very far yet to travel to the grave.

The sparseness of the piano part creates a chilling stillness as a sonic backdrop to these dark thoughts.

### DIE KRÄHE (The Crow)

Circling overhead, a crow has been following the wanderer. Is it waiting to feast on his carcass?

Will this crow, unlike his beloved, stay with him till he dies?

Musical score for 'DIE KRÄHE' in 3/4 time, key of B-flat major. It features three staves: a vocal line with the lyrics 'Hie und da ist an den Bäu - men manches bun.te Blatt zu seh'n,', a piano line with a sparse accompaniment, and a bass line with a similar sparse accompaniment. The piano part is marked 'pp' (pianissimo).

The piano, brilliantly imitating the circling path of the crow, twinkles and wafts high above the singer, creating a pictorial image in music of the two figures, one in the sky, the other walking below on the earth.

## LETZTE HOFFNUNG (Last Hope)

The traveller identifies with a lone leaf hanging on a barren tree, waiting to fall. If it falls, so too do his hopes fall to their grave.

Musical score for 'LETZTE HOFFNUNG' (Last Hope). The score is in G major, 3/4 time, and consists of two systems. The first system shows the vocal line with the lyrics: 'Ei - ne Krä - he war mit mir aus der Stadt ge - - zo - - gen,'. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand.

The piano paints a vivid picture of leaves falling all around him. There is so little rapport between the piano and the voice, the piano seems so convincingly exterior to the singer's concerns, that one thinks of the tone and texture of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*.

## IM DORFE (In the Village)

As the traveller passes through a village, dogs growl at him from the lower regions of the piano texture, rattling their chains.

Musical score for 'IM DORFE' (In the Village). The score is in D major, 12/8 time, and consists of two systems. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand. The dynamic marking *pp* is present.

Everyone is in their beds, dreaming. Why should he stay with these dreamers, when his own dreams are all over?

## DER STÜRMISCHE MORGEN (The Stormy Morning)

With the courage of desperation, the traveller faces an early morning storm that tears the heavens apart. Raging in the cold of winter, it is the very image of his own heart.

Musical score for 'DER STÜRMISCHE MORGEN' (The Stormy Morning). The score is in D major, 4/4 time, and consists of two systems. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand. The dynamic marking *f* is present.

Unisons between piano and singer again evoke the blowing of the wind and the bitter chill in the air.

## TÄUSCHUNG (Illusion)

The wanderer sees a light dancing in the distance, which might be a warm house with a loving soul inside.

Ein Licht — tanzt freundlich vor mir her, —

The musical score for 'TÄUSCHUNG (Illusion)' consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line in G major, 4/4 time, with the lyrics 'Ein Licht — tanzt freundlich vor mir her, —'. The middle staff is the piano accompaniment in the right hand, and the bottom staff is the piano accompaniment in the left hand. The music is in a simple, lyrical style.

In the dream world he inhabits, even an illusion brings him some comfort.

## DER WEGWEISER (The Sign Post)

Avoiding the busy byways, the traveller heads for wild and desolate places, ignoring every sign post but one.

Was ver - meid' ich denn die We - ge, wo die andern Wanderer gehn,

The musical score for 'DER WEGWEISER (The Sign Post)' consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line in B-flat major, 4/4 time, with the lyrics 'Was ver - meid' ich denn die We - ge, wo die andern Wanderer gehn,'. The middle staff is the piano accompaniment in the right hand, and the bottom staff is the piano accompaniment in the left hand. The music is in a more somber and foreboding style.

Here is another foreboding of approaching death: the path indicated to him is one "from which no one returned."

## DAS WIRTSHAUS (The Inn)

Liturgical solemnity, combined with a grim determination, pervades the scene as the traveller stops at a cemetery filled with garland-bedecked graves that beckon him like a welcoming inn.

The musical score for 'DAS WIRTSHAUS (The Inn)' consists of two staves. The top staff is the piano accompaniment in the right hand, and the bottom staff is the piano accompaniment in the left hand. The music is in a solemn and determined style, with dynamic markings *pp*, *cresc.*, and *p*.

All its rooms, however, are taken, and he is turned away, so he resolutely resigns himself to continue on his journey.

## MUT! (Courage)

A plucky spirit overtakes the wanderer as he dispels defeatism to face wind and weather, feeling like a god on earth.



Quick changes between major and minor tonalities from phrase to phrase embody the difficulties he faces and the courage he uses to face them.

## DIE NEBENSONNEN (The Sun Dogs)

The traveller sees three suns in the sky and stares at them.



He, too, had three suns once, but having lost the two he cherished most (her eyes), he now has only one, and he wishes that would go dark, too.

## DER LEIERMANN (The Hurdy-Gurdy Man)

A drone in the piano announces the forlorn figure of an old organ-grinder playing with numb fingers, barefoot in the cold, his begging plate lying empty as dogs growl at him.

Musical score for 'DER LEIERMANN (The Hurdy-Gurdy Man)'. It features a vocal line and piano accompaniment in 3/4 time. The piano part starts with a drone. The vocal line includes the following lyrics:

Drüben hin. term Dor. fe steht ein Lei. ermann,  
Kei. ner mag ihn hö. ren, kei. ner sieht ihn an,

This is the only human being the traveller meets on his winter journey. Shall he go with this strange man? Will the organ-grinder play his songs? The symbolic resonance of this final scene is quietly shattering.

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This list was created on Friday, August 30, 2024, and includes bequests, gifts of cash, donations of securities, sponsorships and ticket donations dating back to August 15, 2023. Should you discover any errors or omissions, please accept our sincere apologies and contact Sara Getz, General Manager, by email to [sara@vanrecital.com](mailto:sara@vanrecital.com) or by phone at 604.602.0363, so that any necessary corrections can be made.

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.

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