

President's Report

The 2023-2024 Season was, as Leila remarked throughout the season, one of the greatest we've ever presented. There were Vancouver and Canadian debuts, we welcomed diverse audiences who were attracted to some of the more 'out of the box' concerts, and we presented a rich program of outreach, an element of our programming which doesn't get as much public attention, but of which we are tremendously proud.

The season began in September with BC-born pianist **Jaeden Izik-Dzurko** at the Vancouver Playhouse. During the early days of the pandemic in 2020, Jaeden recorded what was the VRS's first ever virtual performance, which was made available to the public free of charge on our YouTube channel. Jaeden is a wonderful representation of what the VRS is most renowned for – spotting young talent at its earliest stages and offering an established and respected platform to showcase that talent. This past fall, Jaeden won the prestigious Leeds International Piano Competition and was recipient of the Dame Fanny Waterman Gold Medal.

October was a busy concert month during which we welcomed Swiss pianist **Jean-Sélim Abdelmoula** in his Vancouver debut, Canadian duo **Cheng²Duo** featuring siblings Bryan and Silvie Cheng, and the return of British cellist **Sheku Kanneh-Mason**, who made his sold-out Canadian debut for us in 2017 and has returned several times since, much to the delight of Vancouver audiences.

In November, violist **Timothy Ridout** made his Canadian debut alongside pianist **Jonathan Ware** (who has been to the VRS several times), and pianist **Tony Siqi Yun** returned, following his incredible VRS debut in 2021.

In the first part of 2024, we delighted in the return of a few artists we haven't seen in a good number of years. In January, the **Sitkovetsky Trio** returned to the Playhouse 11 years after their VRS debut, and, in February, we presented Spanish pianist **Javier Perianes**, who has visited the VRS several times since his debut in 2008, but whom we hadn't heard since 2017.

The spring was decidedly busy, with more debuts! Cellist **Jonathan Swensen**, whose father **Joseph Swensen** – a noted violinist and conductor who performed for the VRS in 1985 – made his VRS debut when he performed with violinist **Stephen Waarts** and pianist **Juho Pohjonen**, both of whom have appeared on our series before). Israeli pianist **Ariel Lanyi** made his Canadian debut in March, and Canadian-Macedonian mezzo-soprano **Ema Nikolovska** appeared alongside renowned Canadian pianist **Charles Richard-Hamelin**, marking VRS debuts for both. Australian violinist **Christian Li** rounded out the month with his Canadian debut at the Playhouse, with pianist **Rohan De Silva**.

April was filled with wonderful and diverse performances from the Manchester Collective, who appeared with South African cellist **Abel Selaocoe**, The **Danish**



String Quartet who, alongside Finnish cellist **Johannes Rostamo**, completed the 4th and final installment of their *Doppelgänger* series, countertenor **Jakub Józef Orliński & Il Pomo d'Oro**, violinist **Daniel Lozakovich**, who made his Vancouver debut with VRS favourite, pianist **Behzod Abduraimov**, and Italian pianist **Federico Colli**, who made his VRS debut.

The season ended on a high note in May, with **Paul Lewis's** 4-concert Schubert Sonata series.

In addition to all of the wonderful performances at the Playhouse and the Chan Centre in this season, we presented our most robust season of outreach, with two **Classics for Kids** concerts, one **Music for Munchkins** presentation in collaboration with the Vancouver Public Library, a workshop with students at Killarney Secondary and a performance for the residents of Crofton Manor retirement community.

Throughout our 44-year history (we're now in our 45th), the VRS has had a devoted family of sponsors donors and supporters, to and for whom we are deeply grateful. The season was generously supported by **The Peak Group of Companies**, our Season Sponsor, while support for Next Generation Artists was received from the **Estate of Edwina & Paul Heller** and **RBC Foundation's Emerging Artist Program**. Additional Support for outreach and online initiatives was generously provided by the **Alan and Gwendoline Pyatt Foundation**, the **Deux Mille Foundation** and the **Diamond Foundation**.

Our concert sponsors for the season included: **Elaine Adair, Robert Bailey & Elizabeth Arnold-Bailey** and **Kate Ker & Paul Cobban, Peter & Hilde Colenbrander, Robert & Denise, Colleen & Nick Filler, Jane Macdonald** and **Ann Harding, Lynn Kagan, the John C. Kerr Family Foundation, the Quesnel Foundation, Ric & Lynda Spratley, Joyce & Tony, Two Anonymous Concert Sponsors, the Board of Directors of the Vancouver Recital Society** and **London Drugs**.

I would like to, on behalf of the Board and staff, express our heartfelt appreciation for all you make possible.

We are also appreciative of the support we receive from the **City of Vancouver** and the **Province of British Columbia** through Theatre Rental Grants, Community Gaming, and the Festivals, Fairs and Events Recovery Fund.

Each season, there are more than a few people who work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that everything you see and hear from and around our stages goes off without a hitch... or, with as few hitches as possible. They include, in no particular order:

- **Lydia Avsec** of **Copilot Design** who makes our brochure and our ads stand out;



- **José Verstappen**, who typesets our programs and puts up with endless edits and last-minute changes;
- **Donald Gíslason**, our resident musicologist whose program notes have found a following all their own, beyond VRS concert-goers;
- **Scott Harker**, our piano tuner extraordinaire, who keeps our Steinway sounding amazing;
- **Gillian Hunter-Gibbs**, whose enthusiasm and commitment to music education ensures each of our Munchkins and School Concerts are exciting events for all those who attend;
- **Ewa Borkowska** of Valiant Accounting, who has worked with us for more than 30 years to keep our books in order;
- **Hamilton Lau**, our page-turner extraordinaire;
- Our auditors at **Baker Tilly WM LLP**;
- Our small but incredibly dedicated staff which in the 2023-2024 season, consisted of Founder & Artistic Director, **Leila Getz**; General Manager, **Sara Getz**; Marketing and Communications Manager, **Niamh Small**; Box Office Manager, **Alex Glyniany**; Fundraising and Special Projects Manager, **Arlo Spring**; and summer intern, **Lucas Hung**.

I am grateful to my fellow board members: **Valerie Hunter, Jeff Dresselhuis, Jared Dawson, Gloria Tom, Shiuman Ho, Jim Smith, Denis Walz** and **Jonathan Girard** for all their time, enthusiasm and support throughout the season. I think I can safely speak for myself, for the staff and for the broader community of VRS supporters when I say thank you for all you do for music in Vancouver.

And finally, I have not forgotten about our extended VRS family - our patrons and donors. Without you, the VRS simply would not be. I look forward to seeing all of you in the concert hall throughout the rest of this season and for seasons to come!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Arlo Spring'.