



concert programme

Selections from *The Merry Widow*, Lehar
The Lark Ascending, Vaughan Williams (Emma Vachon, violin)
Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Beethoven

Terry Kowalczyk, musical director

Orchestra News from the Board of Directors

A recently released document by the Police Services Board of Toronto indicates that Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Transgender, Queer & Questioning and 2 Spirit youth (LGBTQ2S) are the most marginalized of all youth in the city, but with notable exceptions, our community has minimal resources to respond to the multiple needs of disadvantaged or marginalized LGBTQ2S people.

What has become clear is there are great needs for the youth of our LGBTQ2S community which are being ignored by the statutory and mainstream agencies. Over the years, various individuals and organizations, and including the Community One Foundation (formerly the Lesbian & Gay Community Appeal Foundation) and the David Kelly Counselling programme of the Family Services Association have lead the way in support of our communities.

The COF has been a consistent supporter of our Orchestra over the many years of our existence. We are currently proposing an initiative to the Foundation that wants to give back for the years of financial and volunteer support by the many individuals who have made

our musical organization thrive and advance. It will humbly be remembered that the founders of our Orchestra were LGBTQ2S youth of an earlier generation and we want to pass on their contribution to our community to the next generations.

We see developing a partnership process with individuals, and other LGBTQ2S community music organizations, the Board of Ed, universities and other organized music programmes as a way of empowering the gay community through its talented, arts and musical youth.

We feel that by the production and wider distribution of Counterpoint Community Orchestra promotional material could serve to support improvement in the lives of our community and lead to further mainstream action.

Posters can be displayed in health clinics and other community areas where the service provider or merchant wants to indicate that our 'community orchestra' incorporates an awareness of the needs of gay clientele, especially our musical young persons.

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Franz Lehár (1870-1948) is one of the greatest composers of Viennese operetta, his fame and popularity rivaling that of Johann Strauss Jr. A very prolific composer, he wrote over 30 operettas, some of them still in the repertoire. He is also remarkable for having succeeded in keeping Viennese operetta as a viable and successful genre even after the Great War, when art underwent as dramatic an upheaval as the political world as people turned away from the pre-war frivolity.

The Merry Widow was Lehár's first major success; it went on to become his most popular operetta, and one of the most popular operettas in all times. This work also marks a turning point in the evolution of the genre in that it is not frivolity alone; the two main protagonists aren't stock characters. Rather, they have depth, their emotions are complex and they are realistically depicted. However, the popularity of The Merry Widow rests, naturally, on the quality of its lovely music; sparkling and witty, but also deeply lyrical (without ever becoming maudlin).

Orchestra News from the Board of Directors

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A pilot project to support at-risk gay youth

We have made a submission to the Community One Foundation to explore these objectives. We have expressed the wish that a core-funded strategy and developmental project can have a very significant effect in a relatively short period of time.

To this end, Counterpoint hopefully aims to

- a) research youth agencies and work alongside the Equity Department the Toronto Board of Education and other school boards and organized music programmes in the schools to promote the Counterpoint Community Orchestra as a safe and valuable space for LGBTTQ2S young people to participate;
- b) to provide two bursaries to either enable a music student to attend a music camp and/or formal music course, or study.

We look to your continued support especially in the form of spreading the word about the CCO and by donating generously when you can.

Counterpoint hopes this programme can contribute to combatting discrimination and build the capacity of youth to participate in our inclusive and historic LGBTTQ2S community.

Vaughan Williams: The Lark Ascending

Katya Diakow, violin



This piece may evoke the lyrical birdsong of a lark and be inspired by folk tunes rooted in the English countryside, but the composition of The Lark Ascending got Ralph Vaughan Williams arrested.

A boy saw Vaughan Williams writing while observing war ships on the English Channel and told the police he suspected the composer was jotting down secret codes. Though the end result convincingly sounds like a pastoral daydream, the work's true origin stems from a sense of nostalgia over the loss of innocence brought on by WWI.

The Lark Ascending is inspired by a poem by George Meredith which describes the unique circling ascent of the lark. The music is meant to portray the wonder of

watching a lark fly so high above the idyllic countryside that it becomes barely visible to the people below.

Written in 1914, and then revamped after WWI was over, the formal structure of the piece is straightforward. Yet within that configuration, the violin part is fluid – alternating effortlessly between soaring solo melody and blending with the orchestral landscape.

During his long career, Vaughan Williams sparked a new renaissance in English music. A true musicologist, he developed a knack for blending folk songs, hymns and baroque themes with modern impressionistic techniques. Critics have remarked how, listening to Vaughan Williams' music, "one is never quite sure whether one is listening to something very old or very new."

Beethoven: Symphony No. 5 in C Minor

Katya Diakow, violin



This piece begins boldly, announcing the four most famous notes in history, yet surprisingly little is known about the creation of Beethoven's fifth symphony. Popular legend has it the opening motif represents fate knocking at the door. During the four years it took Beethoven to write (and rewrite) this work, his own sense of fate took on new meaning.

He was already in his mid-30s and going deaf – to the point where, as Vienna was being bombarded by Napoleon, the composer hid in his brother's basement with pillows over his ears, terrified the noise would destroy what remained of his hearing. His personal life was troubled by a string of failed romances and a nasty custody battle over his nephew. Friends claimed Beethoven was "never out of love" and when composition was occupying his mind, he became oblivious to his surroundings, ignored his appearance, and forgot to eat.

Some of Beethoven's early life was marred by his father. Encouraged by Mozart's childhood fame and success, he attempted to exploit his son as a young prodigy. He even lied about Beethoven's real age on the posters for his first public concert. Then as a teenager, Beethoven's musical studies were interrupted when his mother fell ill and died, forcing him to move home and be responsible for his younger brothers while his father sank further into alcoholism.

Like many young artists seeking to establish themselves, Beethoven was not as interested in writing as he was in performing. He embarked on several concert tours around Europe to earn money playing piano.

As he matured, Beethoven eventually developed a style that bridged two major eras and philosophies: Classical and Romantic. His compositions respected tradition and form yet also shone with emotional eloquence. Beethoven saw himself as an innovator, saying, "Music is the mediator between intellectual and sensuous life."

Symphony No. 5 in C Minor embodies Beethoven's unique duality. Its message of victory through struggle touches the heart and the mind. Throughout its composition, Beethoven instinctively balances musical technique and passionate sentiment. But it was not always seen this way.

The premiere performance of the symphony in 1808 was dismal. The orchestra rehearsed the music only once and played poorly. Beethoven himself was the conductor and stopped the players at one point to make them start over after a mistake. It was December and the hall was unheated, so given the concert included eight pieces and took four hours to perform, the audience was hardly receptive to the symphony's debut.

Since then, the fifth symphony has established itself as one of the most important technical and emotional legacies Beethoven left to followers and fans. The progression from minor to major keys, the shift from dark to light, the transition from conflict to resolution all form the heart of the meaning behind the work. The final movement serves as a psychological progression. The finale presses on relentlessly, then culminates with a life-affirming sense of triumph and victory.

Beethoven's contemporary, author E.T.A. Hoffmann, put it best: "The soul of each thoughtful listener is assuredly stirred, deeply and intimately, by a feeling that is none other than that unutterable portentous longing, and until the final chord – indeed, even in the moments that follow it – he will be powerless to step out of that wondrous spirit realm where grief and joy embrace him in the form of sound."

Next Concert: Saturday, March 6, 2010
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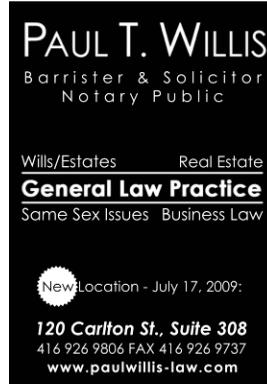
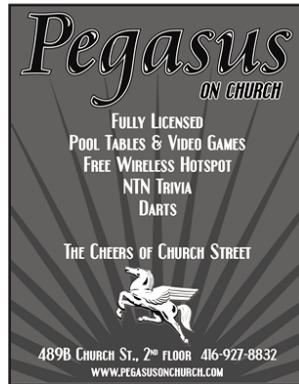
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