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# MOZART & DVOŘÁK'S NEW WORLD

**Oct 13 & 14 | 8pm**

Centre In The Square, Kitchener

Mei-Ann Chen, conductor  
Rémi Geniet, piano

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Calixa Lavallee (1842 - 1891) / John Fenwick O Canada	2'
Vivian Fung <i>Aqua</i>	5'
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791) Concerto No. 25 in C major for Piano & Orchestra, K. 503	30'
I. Allegro maestoso	
II. Andante	
III. Allegretto	
INTERMISSION	
Darren Fung <i>Toboggan!</i> Sesquie for Canada's 150th	2'
Antonín Dvořák (1841 - 1904) Symphony No. 9, op. 95, E minor (From the New World)	40'
I. Adagio - Allegro molto	
II. Largo	
III. Molto vivace	
IV. Allegro con fuoco	

Kathryn & David G. John

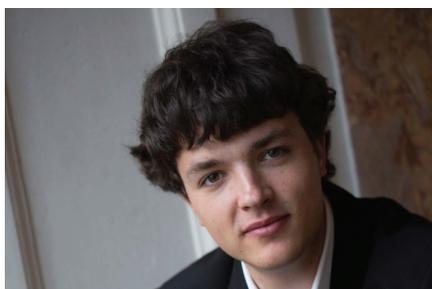
CONCERT SPONSOR



## Mei-Ann Chen

Conductor

Innovation, imagination, passion and dynamism are the hallmarks of conductor Mei-Ann Chen. Music Director of the MacArthur Award-winning Chicago Sinfonietta since 2011, and Artistic Director and Conductor for the National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra Summer Festival since 2016, Ms. Chen is acclaimed for infusing orchestras with energy, enthusiasm and high-level music-making, and galvanizing audiences and communities alike. A sought-after guest conductor, Ms. Chen's reputation as a compelling communicator has resulted in growing popularity with orchestras both nationally and internationally. Distinguished orchestras and opera companies with whom she has guested include the symphony orchestras of Atlanta, Baltimore, Cincinnati, Chicago, Detroit, Indianapolis, Oregon, Seattle, Toronto, Tucson, and Vancouver in North America. Amongst her overseas guesting credits are the BBC Scottish Symphony, Austria's Grosses Orchester Graz, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Finland's Tampere Philharmonic, Germany's Badische Staatskapelle Karlsruhe, Sweden's Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, Norrlands Opera, and Malmö SymfoniOrkester, Norwegian Radio Orchestra, and the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra. Her honors and awards include being named one of Musical America's 2015 Top 30 Influencers, a 2012 Helen M. Thompson Award from the League of American Orchestras, and First Prize Winner of Copenhagen's 2005 Malko Competition. Ms. Chen also holds the title of Conductor Laureate of the Memphis Symphony Orchestra.



## Rémi Geniet

Piano

Laureate of numerous international competitions, notably the second prize-winner at the 2013 Queen Elisabeth International Piano Competition at the age of twenty and the youngest prize-winner of the Bonn International Beethoven Competition, Rémi Geniet is fast establishing himself as one of the most prominent pianists of his generation. In 2015 he was awarded first prize at the prestigious Young Concert Artists International Auditions in New York.

Rémi Geniet performs internationally with orchestras including the St. Petersburg Philharmonic, St. Petersburg State Capella Symphony Orchestra, State Symphony Orchestra Novaya Rossiya, Ural Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Flemish Philharmonic, Luxembourg Philharmonic, Belgium National Orchestra, Sinfonia Varsovia, Orchestre d'Auvergne, l'Orchestre National d'Île-de-France and l'Orchestre national de Mulhouse under conductors such as Marin Alsop, Emmanuel Krivine, Edo de Waart, Alan Buribayev, Enrique Mazolla, Ernest Martinez-Izquierdo, Robert Trevino, David Niemann, Roberto Forés Veses, Eduard Topchjan, Volodymyr Sirenko, Michael Hofstetter, Stephan Blunier, Adrian Leaper and Pavel Gerstein.

A frequent guest artist in Asia, in spring 2017 he performed Beethoven Concerto no. 5 with the KBS Symphony Orchestra and Okku Kamu in Seoul and just prior to that was in residence with the Hong Kong Sinfonietta playing chamber music and Rachmaninov Concerto no. 2 under Yip Wing-Sie. The previous season saw him with Yoel Levi and the Hiroshima Symphony Orchestra performing Beethoven Concerto no. 3 and Schumann with the Kansai Philharmonic under Augustin Dumay, a regular chamber music partner.

Important 2017-2018 debuts include performing the Mozart Double concerto with Adam Laloum, Jérémie Rhorer and the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Tchaikovsky with the Saint Louis Symphony and Christian Arming, Mozart with Kitchener Waterloo Symphony and Mei-Ann Chan, Prokofiev with the Barcelona Symphony and Eduardo Portal as well as Liszt in Ekaterinbourg and a debut recital in Romania. He also gives his first performances at the Tokyo Bunka Kaikan, in Taiwan at the National Concert Hall and in Kaoshiung, before returning to the Philharmonie de Paris to perform the Ravel Concerto for the left hand and then going on to the U.S. for his second tour there.

Invited to the most important French series and festivals, Rémi appears regularly at the Auditorium du Louvre, Piano aux Jacobins, Piano à Lyon, La Roque d'Anthéron International Piano Festival, Festival de Radio France, Montpellier, La Folle Journée, la Grange de Meslay, Lille Piano(s) Festival etc. and opened both the "L'âme du Piano" series at the historical Salle Gaveau and the "New Generation" series in the inaugural season of the Fondation Louis Vuitton to enormous critical acclaim. During the 2016-2017 season he also performed with the violinist Daniel Lozaković at the Salle Molière in Lyon and at the Festival de Pâques in Aix-en-Provence.

Outside France he performs at Carnegie Hall (Zankel Hall), the Munich Gasteig, NDR Hanover, in Vienna, Geneva, Ghent, Brussels, Germany and Poland. Amongst the many prestigious international festivals that invite him are Verbier, Colmar, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, St Petersburg Arts Square International Winter Festival, La Folle Journée au Japon, Euricide Festival in the Netherlands, the Montreal Bach Festival and the Interlaken Classics Festival in Switzerland. In early 2016 Rémi was invited to participate at Les Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad at the invitation of Renaud Capuçon, winning the "Prix André Hoffmann."

Rémi Geniet studied at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris with Brigitte Engerer, at the École Normale de Musique Alfred Cortot in the class of Rena Shereshevskaya and has also worked with Evgeni Koroliov in Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Hamburg. He also studied orchestral conducting with George Pehlivanian.

## PROGRAM NOTES

### **VIVIAN FUNG (b. 1975) Aqua (2012)**

Edmonton-born Vivian Fung has a busy start to the season with an orchestral première by the San Jose Chamber Orchestra earlier this month and a clarinet quintet première by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center next month. She lives in California and is on the faculty of Santa Clara University. Her 2012 five-minute tone poem Aqua is multi-layered, with pulsing waves of sound inspired by Chicago's magnificent 82-storey Aqua Tower. "The building's design juxtaposes horizontal waves, created by a rippling array of balcony slabs, with a vertical landscape of pools, hills, and valleys," Fung writes. "Based on those conceptual elements, my work is structured in two parts. Grand Wave No. 1 – Liquid Balconies represents the horizontal ebb and flow with divisi string parts that weave in and out of a colourful texture of undulating harmonies, starting gently and quickly becoming increasingly urgent and violent. Following a powerful climax, Grand Wave No. 2 – Vertical Pools ensues, with a solo harp line interjected with musical gestures depicting the dips and swells on the façade of the building. The work culminates in a complex chord that begins with a hum from nothingness and swells into a pandemonium of sound before disappearing into the ether of the stratosphere."

### **WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-91) Piano concerto No. 25, in C, K. 503 (1786)**

Vienna in the 1780s was the musical capital of Europe. From his elegant apartment in the Domgasse, Mozart threw himself into the social whirl of his newly adopted city. For a few years, he was in tune with what the public needed and moved easily in fashionable circles. His name was soon on everyone's lips and his success was spectacular. In 1784, he began to write an astonishing sequence of piano concertos, six in 1784 and three for each of the next two years. At the same time, he was working on many other compositions, including chamber music, orchestral music and opera. He completed K. 503 on December 4, 1786, a few months after the première of The Marriage of Figaro, the first full-scale Italian opera he would write for Vienna. As with its companions, Mozart

designed the concerto to display his skill as a pianist and planned its first performance for an Advent subscription concert that year. The concert, however, appears to have been cancelled and the next documented concert Mozart would give, almost two years later, featured Mozart's symphonies rather than the piano concertos.

Where its predecessor, the great C minor concerto, K. 491, composed earlier in 1786, is angular and agitated with a vein of inner disquiet that is dark and brooding, tonight's C major concerto is bright, ceremonial, festive and powerful – altogether one of Mozart's most out-going, public concertos. Trumpets and timpani help establish an imposing, assertive tone from the outset. But, as a mark of the work's exceptional expressive range, its confident, almost military character is immediately challenged by bassoons and oboes. They initially question the magnificence and certainty of direction and soon (by the seventh bar) take us into the minor key and into emotional ambiguity. An insistent rhythm emerges and is not easily displaced as the concerto's musical material is tautly developed in a symphonic manner. The piano enters only after a long orchestral ritornello and does so modestly, creeping into the texture in what soon evolves into a constantly shifting relationship with the orchestra. The broad, unhurried span of the opening movement is complemented by the slow movement's eloquent aria, in which piano and orchestra are intimately woven together, and by a graceful rondo finale that is rich in contrasting episodes.

### **DARREN FUNG** **Toboggan!**

Though unrelated to Vivian Fung, Darren Fung is also Edmonton-born. He is well-known as a writer of film and television scores and the most recent arrangement of our 'second national anthem' – the 'Hockey Theme'. He wrote this short two-minute 'Sesquie' as one of a series of pan-Canadian fanfares in celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the Confederation of Canada. *Toboggan!* explores what Fung describes as "the pure magic of going recklessly fast down a hill with no brakes – a time-honoured tradition that every Canadian child goes through (or at least should go through!) . . . It starts off exuberant and

exciting, only to turn quickly into a fear of the unknown . . . The crowd goes wild with your triumphant return, until you realize that there is no crowd and the return is not as triumphant as you once thought it to be."

### **ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)** **Symphony No. 9, in E minor, op. 95 (From the New World) (1893)**

In Dvořák's Carnegie Hall box for the première of the *New World* symphony on December 16, 1893 were his wife, the eldest of his six children and two favourite American composition students. They were there to see how the spirit of American indigenous music could be woven into and inspire a symphonic work from the European tradition. "The country is full of melody, original, sympathetic, and varying in mood, colour and character to suit every phase of composition," Dvořák had written in a letter to the *New York Herald* a few months earlier. The American newspapers had been full of anticipation as to what the Czech composer could accomplish. Also present in Dvořák's box was Jeanette Thurber, a wealthy philanthropist, often viewed as the first American patron of music, who had chosen the acclaimed Czech composer to head her new National Conservatory of Music. The première was a triumph, arguably the crowning point of Dvořák's career. Every movement was applauded. The *New York Evening Post* called Dvořák's Ninth "the greatest symphonic work ever composed in this country." Once published, conductors performed it throughout the world. Its popularity has continued to this day.

Many years before his three-year stay in the States, Dvořák had read Longfellow's *Hiawatha* in Czech. He said that the scherzo movement of the symphony was suggested by an episode from the poem. The slow movement is traditionally said to have been associated with the forest funeral of *Hiawatha's* bride, *Minnehaha*. But Dvořák was a confirmed cultural nationalist and his curiosity in the music of the *New World* went deeper than the indigenous American music he may have heard during his first eight months in New York City. In New York he listened to black spirituals and plantation chants sung to him by Harry Burleigh, a black baritone, then a student at the Conservatory. He also listened to plantation songs by Stephen Foster. As they made use

# BIOGRAPHIES & PROGRAM NOTES

of modal (pentatonic) scales with which he was familiar, they had the dual attraction of strangeness and familiarity, arousing both curiosity and homesickness. So, it is perfectly possible that the first movement's G major flute theme could sound to a later generation like a part-remembrance of Swing low, sweet chariot (which Harry Burleigh first pointed out) and a Czech folk tune, at the same time. Similarly, the slow movement, whether a funeral lament for Minnehaha, a long journey, or an echo of something else, could also be heard as an expression of longing for the composer's homeland. Its beautiful cor anglais melody, the loveliest of many original melodies that abound in the symphony, has even been mistaken for the 'folk' song Goin' Home – which is doubly ironical since the song's folk status arose only after one of Dvořák's pupils added words to Dvořák's original melody and published it as Goin' Home.

Dvořák had already added fuel to the debate, in an interview with the New York Herald May 21, 1893, by saying that black melodies must be the foundation of any school of composition to be developed in the United States. Then

he unwisely compared black spirituals with indigenous American native music and found them similar. Boston composers criticised his views of the New World as naïve. But Dvořák intended the felicitous title From the New World (Z Nového světa), which he added to the score just before he delivered it to the Philharmonic, as an homage to his host country. "I should never have written the symphony I have if I hadn't seen America," he later reflected. What saves Dvořák's masterpiece from becoming a victim of its time and charges of stereotyping and cultural appropriation are its glorious tunes and natural symphonic flow. He gives the work unity through numerous thematic cross-references between its four movements, none of which needs to be observed consciously. They work effortlessly to fulfil their function and contribute to one of the glories of romantic symphonic writing.

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Comments welcomed: khnotes@sympatico.ca

## A DAY OF MUSIC AND MEMORIES

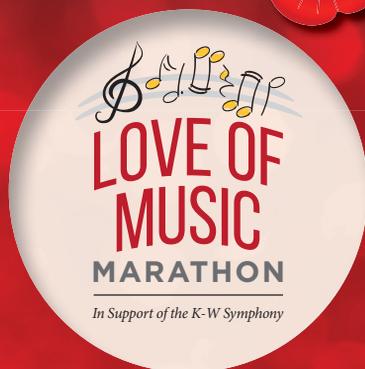
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