

RECITAL SERIES THREE

ATLANTIC STRING QUARTET



NSO

NEWFOUNDLAND
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Marc David, conductor

Presented by

ideafactory

June 6, 2021 | 7:30PM

Online from the
St. Mary the Virgin Church

RECITAL SERIES



Message from the Premier

Welcome to the Newfoundland Symphony Orchestra's winter season. A cultural institution in our province, this orchestra promises to deliver a memorable and outstanding experience that you will not soon forget. Like so many organizations across the province, and around the globe, the NSO is reimagining this season's repertoire. Through the NSO website, residents across Newfoundland and Labrador and beyond will be able to watch this year's brand new NSO concerts, for the first time ever, in the comfort of their own homes. As you continue to be one of our province's most important educational, musical and cultural resources, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is proud to be a supporter. I commend your tireless efforts to make this season a success. Best of luck on a spectacular winter program.



Hon. Andrew Furey, Premier



Message from the Mayor

As Mayor of our Capital City, it is my distinct pleasure to extend a warm welcome to all music lovers and Newfoundland Symphony Orchestra followers. I congratulate the NSO on another great season in 2019-2020. The City of St. John's is a proud supporter of the arts and the talented artists who contribute to the life and vibrancy of our city. The Newfoundland Symphony Orchestra is the only orchestra and the largest arts organization in Newfoundland and Labrador. They perform more than 25 times each year and offer educational and concert experiences to more than 15,000 Newfoundlanders & Labradorians of all ages. Their concert programs will undoubtedly soothe, invigorate and warm your heart! This season promises to entertain us in the new norm, with digital concerts, presented via the brand new NSO Digital Concert Hall, and featuring all new music recorded with concert-quality sound and audio. St. John's is extremely fortunate to have very talented musicians as the heartbeat of our musical community and who are there to share their talent and love of music. The NSO board, staff, volunteers and sponsors work diligently each and every year to bring these shows to our community. Allow me to express my appreciation for your hard work and dedication and thank you for the significant contributions you make to the truly unique culture of our City.

ST. JOHN'S

Danny Breen, Mayor

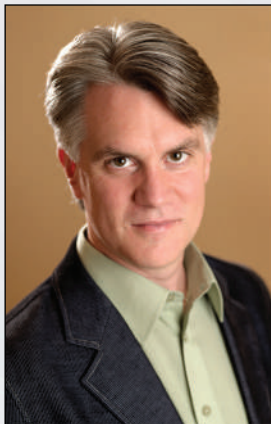


Message from the Lieutenant Governor

As Patron of the Newfoundland and Labrador Symphony Orchestra (NSO), I welcome you to the 2020-2021 season called "*Reimagining*". The NSO is known for high caliber productions that showcase some of the best and brightest talents. This year will be no different despite COVID-19 which has meant the presentations will look a little different. Creative thinking, and *reimagination*, have ensured the performances this upcoming season can be enjoyed anywhere as digital concerts, which recreate the in-person experience through the innovative NSO Digital Concert Hall. Congratulations to those behind the scenes and all performers who will make the 2020-2021 season a success. Thank you for continuing to lift our spirits with the arts while we stay safe.



Judy M. Foote P.C., O.N.L.
Lieutenant Governor



Join us before the concert for our digital pre-show featuring **Listen Up!** hosted by **Dale Jarvis**.

Listen as we go behind the scenes with interviews of the artists, musicians and composers behind our concerts.

This week's guests will be:
Heather Kao, violin and **Vernon Regehr, cello**



Get ready to unwind with a pre show cocktail! This week's feature is:

PHANTOM POTION

Makes 1 drink:

- 8 oz. lemon-lime Kool-Aid, prepared
- 2 oz. Triple Sec
- 2 oz. Vodka

1. Add ingredients to a cocktail shaker and combine

2. Pour over crushed ice.

Atlantic String Quartet

Heather Kao, violin **Nancy Case-Oates, violin**
Kate Read, viola **Vernon Regehr, cello**

Programme

Trio for 2 Violins and Viola in D major, op 21 – S. Taneyev (19 minutes)

- I. Allegro giocoso e semplice II. Menuetto. Allegro ma non troppo
III. Andante IV. Vivace

Phantoms – H. Schmidt (5 minutes)

String Quartet in D major, K.575. – W.A. Mozart (25 minutes)

- I. Allegretto II. Andante
III. Menuetto. Allegretto - Trio IV. Allegretto

Special thanks to our rehearsal and accommodations partner:



ATLANTIC STRING QUARTET

About the Atlantic String Quartet: Formed in 1985, the Atlantic String Quartet (ASQ) is a versatile and professional chamber ensemble comprised of the principal string players of the Newfoundland Symphony Orchestra (NSO): Heather Kao, first violin; Nancy Case-Oates, second violin; Kate Read, viola; and Theo Weber, cello. In addition to their work with the full orchestra and NSO Sinfonia, the quartet produces its own Recital Series each season, presenting a broad selection of works from the rich quartet and small ensemble repertoires. The ASQ is an integral part of the creative life of its community and is known for its versatility and ability to work with music and musicians from all styles and genres. Having shared the stage with such international classical musicians as Anton Kuerti, André Laplante, and Martin Beaver, and local artists such as jazz artist Duane Andrews and renowned songwriter Ron Hynes, the members of the quartet also teach privately, and coach and conduct other ensembles. In 2014, the ASQ was offered a placement at the prestigious St. Lawrence String Quartet Music Seminar in Stanford, CA. In 2020 the quartet released its first self-titled debut album featuring works by Arthur Bliss and Maurice Ravel.

PROGRAM NOTES

Sergei Taneyev (1856-1915) is considered one of the greatest Russian composers in his home country but is relatively unknown in the western world. He studied composition at the Moscow Conservatory as a protégé of Tchaikovsky. A gifted concert pianist, he presented the Moscow premiere of his mentor's Piano Concerto No. 1. He later became a professor at the Conservatory, and eventually director, where his students included Rachmaninoff and Scriabin among others. Taneyev admired Mozart's music for its clarity and balanced forms. He also loved Renaissance and Baroque counterpoint, especially the works of Ockhegem, Palestrina and J.S. Bach. He composed symphonies, concertos, an opera and choral works but his preferred genre was chamber music. His string trios, quartets and quintets provided him good opportunities for contrapuntal writing.

Sergei Taneyev's Trio for 2 Violins and Viola, Op. 21 (1907) combines classical tonalities and forms with Baroque counterpoint and a touch of Romanticism. The *Allegro giocoso et semplice* opens with a dulcet melody followed by a dotted theme. After a gentle pizzicato punctuation, a truly Mozartean tune in first violin is accompanied by the other strings. Independent melodic lines in each part create a rich texture. Strong accents and unexpected pauses lead back to the opening materials. The *Menuetto and Trio* is in textbook Classical form. A dance melody in violin with a bouncy accompaniment moves from one instrument to the other while each instrument plays separate lines. The theme modulates to various keys while the expanded motives are treated chromatically. The dramatic *Trio* section features forceful drones, double stops, syncopations and overall busyness until a charming pizzicato descent heads back to the *Menuetto*. The ethereal *Andante* movement alternates poignant melodies with rich textures and long "solo" lines for each instrument accompanied by the other strings. The warm tones of the viola add lush Romantic sonorities to the ensemble. An energetic sinuous theme starts the *Vivace* movement. Pizzicati

(Program notes, cont'd.)

and odd pauses precede a more dramatic, dotted note melody which interacts with the first tune. The movement exploits these materials by combining them contrapuntally, breaking them into fragments, and changing textures. Relentless energy and increasing intensity become almost orchestral in scope. The mood changes and the work finishes on a playful note.

From early childhood, Canadian composer **Heather Schmidt** (b. 1974) showed a precocious interest in music. Born and raised in Alberta, she began to study piano when she was four years old and composition at five. Heather pursued her studies at the University of Indiana where she was the youngest student ever to obtain a Doctorate in Music. She then honed her piano and compositional skills at the Juilliard School of Music.

Heather Schmidt has composed numerous works for large and small instrumental and vocal ensembles. In 1995, the CBC asked her to write the required test piece for the Banff International String Quartet Competition. The composer describes her work, **Phantoms**: *In this piece, the word “phantoms” is meant to be understood at a variety of levels. In some rare crystals, there are smaller inclusions within the crystal called phantoms which indicate the evolution of the crystal. These internal mirrors reflect images both within and outside the crystal. The variety of reflections and continual transformation and evolution of the phantoms are similar to the structure and development of materials in my piece.* The single movement composition begins with shimmering reflections, mysterious trills and razor-sharp pitches. Short motifs are transformed into long expressive melodies first in cello then in other strings. Increasing turmoil, eerie glissandi, and extremes of register lead to an energetic section with all kinds of virtuoso techniques and complex writing for the ensemble. All musical materials evolve just like the phantoms in a rare crystal.

The CBC went on to commission Schmidt's Piano Concertos and her Cello Concerto which was nominated for a Juno award in the category “Best Classical Composition” in 2003. The composer has collaborated with a number of Canadian musicians, among them the Gryphon Trio, cellist Shauna Rolston and violinist Scott St. John. Following her move to Los Angeles in 2008, she started a new career of writing music for video games and short films. Composer, pianist and ardent animal lover, Heather and her husband share their home in L.A. with an eclectic assortment of rescued pets.

Not long after **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** (1756-1791) moved to Vienna, he became acquainted with Franz Joseph Haydn. Their mutual influence on each others' work is uplifting. Mozart acquired more proficiency in motivic development, contrapuntal textures and sophisticated structural development while Haydn learned about longer phrase melodies and thematic contrast. In 1785, Mozart dedicated six string quartets (K.387-K.465), “The fruits of a long and laborious endeavour,” to his mentor. Haydn was greatly impressed by his younger colleague. Four years later, Mozart met Frederick Wilhelm, the King of Prussia, a generous supporter of the arts and an avid cellist. The king commissioned six quartets from Mozart, but only three were completed. Mozart's **String Quartet No. 21 in D major, K.575** is the first of these “Prussian” Quartets.

(Program notes, cont'd.)

The opening *Allegretto* features a lyrical melody in first violin with a light accompaniment, answered by a short motive of quickly descending triplets. The cello then joins in to accompany the viola. Other features include an impish interruption, a descending scale in repeated notes and an outburst of cascading triplet arpeggios. The scale changes direction and is developed thoroughly along with “less important” ideas; this is a trait peculiar to Mozart, who tended to favour the underdog. The movement ends on a high note with a whimsical rising scale and closing chords.

A gentle atmosphere pervades the elegant *Andante* movement. Beginning in four-part choral style, a soaring violin melody is answered by the cello, and moves throughout the ensemble. A new chromatic melody with dotted rhythms is accompanied by countermelodies, especially noticeable in the high-pitched cello. Even with continual melodic variations complemented by subtle grace notes and chromatic triplets, the mood remains serene. Delicate rising scales in first violin followed by cello lead to a bittersweet dissonance and a gentle resolution.

The *Menuetto* begins with a 16th note turn motive in violins followed by staccato melodic lines. The middle section is marked by syncopations, chromatics and tutti unisons. A witty rising and falling exchange in upper strings closes this section. In the charming *Trio*, reduced textures allow the cello to stand out. A unison violin opening is followed by a singing melody in the high register of the cello. The bumptious staccato accompaniment in first violin is a reminder of the *Menuetto*.

The expansive opening melody of the *Allegretto* is derived from the beginning of the first movement. Presented by the cello with a countermelody in viola, this version is taken over by unison violins accompanied by lower strings. A burst of descending triplet scales in cello leads to overlapping triplet passages in all strings. The entire movement is concisely organized from these materials. Motivic fragmentation, frequent key changes, complex textures, and intense counterpoint are some of the methods Mozart absorbed from Haydn a few years earlier. Throughout the effortless interaction of such intricate proceedings, lyrical melodies carry on in conversational style amongst all four strings. This music can be appreciated on many levels. In true Mozartian fashion, there's something for all ears!

Mary O'Keeffe, musicologist/harpsichordist

THANK YOU

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