

Six events scheduled for upcoming subscription series

# White Rock Concerts plans expanded season

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White Rock Concerts has been around for some 66 years – but it’s still one of the Semiahmoo Peninsula’s best kept secrets.

Not that South Surrey-based artistic directors Elizabeth and Marcel Bergmann (also known as the Bergmann Piano Duo) – and the organization’s board chair John Leighton – aren’t trying their best to change that.

“It’s amazing to me that people will still say ‘we had no idea that you existed’,” said Leighton, who along with the Bergmanns is spreading the word about the organization’s six-concert classical music series for 2022 to 2023.

“And the other thing we hear all the time is that there is such a long waiting list,” he said.

“Even though we haven’t had one for six years,” noted Marcel Bergmann.

In truth, White Rock Concerts, founded in 1956 by internationally noted bassoonist and impresario George Zukerman (still very much involved as artistic director emeritus), has often been a victim of its own success.

Conceived as a subscription series



The Bergmann Duo, pianists Elizabeth and Marcel Bergmann, are both artistic directors for White Rock Concerts and performers in one presentation of the upcoming subscription series (Contributed photo)

(subscribers become members of the society for a year, receiving a series of concerts as a benefit) it quickly became a win-win, attracting international-calibre touring performers and meeting their fees, while presenting them for local audiences in our

own backyard at a highly competitive per-season price.

But that meant that, for decades, an ultra-loyal subscriber list left little room to add – or seek – new members, filling venues (currently White Rock Baptist Church at 1657 140 St.)

to capacity.

Over the last decade, however, natural attrition, including the general aging of the population – and the fact that classical music has become, increasingly, a niche market – have combined to ensure that those who want to become WRC members, and who act quickly enough at the launch of the season, can enjoy all the benefits of subscription without being placed on a waiting list.

Among the treats in store for subscribers this fall is the presentation *Concerti de Duo Rendezvous* (Friday, Sept. 30). In it Duo Rendezvous (violinist Jasper Wood and guitarist Daniel Bolshoy) will be joined by the versatile eight-piece John Avison Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Leslie Dala).

On Saturday, Nov. 5 *Opera Galore!* will present the skills – and the irresistible youthful energy – of singers from Vancouver Opera’s Yulanda M. Faris Young Artists Program, representing selected graduates from opera programs across North America, in a cross-section of favourites from the operatic repertoire.

On Friday, Dec. 2, Brahms’ sublime *Clarinet Quintet* will bring together Canada’s

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# Drawing younger audiences an ongoing challenge

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most celebrated clarinetist, James Campbell and the members of one of the more recent arrivals on the classical scene, the Rolston String Quartet, formed in 2013 and first prize winners of the 2016 Banff International String Quartet Competition. Also featured will be two equally exquisite string quartets, one by Haydn, and the other Beethoven's last string quartet (Op. 135).

More pleasures are in store for subscribers in the new year, starting with *From Bach to Piazzola* (Friday, Feb. 10), combining the Bergmanns' dynamic twin piano virtuosity with the exceptional musicality of the Borealis String Quartet.

Highlighting the work of the great Argentinian tango composer, the concert will also trace the huge influence that Johann Sebastian Bach had on his work by featuring such pieces as Bach's *Concerto for two keyboards in C major*.

On Monday, March 13, one of the world's leading pianists, Angela Hewitt, will return to White Rock Concerts for the first time since a highly regarded performance during the 2011-2012 season. Featured in her dazzling recital will be Brahms' *Sonata in F Minor, Op. 5*, Bach's *English Suite No. 6* and several sonatas by Scarlatti.

And on Friday, April 28, another star of the Canadian and international classical scene, pianist Jon Kimura



**Canadian pianist Angela Hewitt, one of the world's premier concert artists, performs in London in 2016. She'll return to the White Rock Concerts series for a special concert in March 2023 featuring works by Brahms, Bach and Scarlatti. Keith Saunders photo**

Parker, will join with his partners in The Montrose Trio (The Tokyo String Quartet's former first violinist Martin Beaver, and cellist Clive Greensmith.)

The stellar ensemble will perform everything from Mendelssohn's romantic Trio in C Minor to music inspired by horse riding in the Andes to even a little jazz.

"I think we're as excited about this season as anybody," said Elizabeth Bergmann. "We're still catching up with some of the artists who were scheduled to perform in 2020 (the last two

scheduled for the spring of that year were cancelled due to COVID)."

She noted that the organization is only doing six concerts this year, as opposed to the usual seven. But that's still better than last year, she added.

"We could only organize four concerts because we started so late," she said.

"But a lot of organizations are having trouble getting back to their previous level of activity – I think we're doing really well."

Part of the ongoing problem is still

trying to second-guess what will happen with COVID variants and whether local venues will have to deal with another wave of cases going into fall.

Leighton said White Rock Concerts is trying to meet uncertainty about the coming months with cautious optimism, although it's more than likely they will ask all members to wear masks during the upcoming performances to help reduce potential spread of the virus.

Noting that much of the season turns on collaboration between highly experienced musicians and younger talents, Marcel Bergmann said that part of the challenge for White Rock Concerts is to appeal to younger audiences.

"The repertoire crosses all age groups and cultures," he added.

"But we also have a lot of classical music students in the community who go through Royal Conservatory training, but then stop after they take their ARCT exams, because they're going into other fields. But there's still a great potential there for them to continue to attend concerts just as a way of continuing their appreciation for music.

"One of the elements that is lacking is that that age group doesn't always go to concerts – a lot of students still don't have any real idea what a concert is, or what it can sound like."

For more info on season subscriptions, visit [whiterockconcerts.com](http://whiterockconcerts.com).