

# arts & entertainment

...on the Semiahmoo Peninsula

Subscription series explores the imagination-sparking, cinematic quality of the music

## White Rock Concerts highlight classical works

Alex Browne  
Staff reporter

It's a myth that people's ears aren't trained to hear classical music anymore – or that listening to it is somehow a stamp of elitism.

Just visit the local movie multiplex. You'll hear classical music – lots of it – issuing like a tidal wave from the sound systems in each theatre.

If you've paid for a ticket to see any superhero epics, action adventures, intergalactic fantasies or animated features over the last 30 years, your ears are already well-schooled in music composed and played by classically trained-musicians.

Even though film composers have shown a tendency to pillage the 19th and early 20th century repertoire of such composers as Dukas, Ravel, Holst, Richard Strauss and Mussorgsky – their work still is a testament to the sheer power of classical music to inspire emotion and support imagination.

What does this have to do with White Rock Concerts – a six-performance subscription series of Saturday evening concerts at White Rock Baptist Church (1657 140 St.) that begins its 2023-24 season on Oct. 21?

A great deal, actually. For Semiahmoo Peninsula residents – particularly students 25 years old and younger who are increasingly open to experiencing the emotional impact of live classical music – membership in the White Rock series offers the best opportunity for a “toe-in-the-water” sampling of some of the most brilliant works in the classical repertoire, played by some of the finest professional exponents in Canada and beyond.

For adults and seniors it works out to a very reasonable just-under-\$30 per concert, while, for students, the rate falls dramatically to \$10 per performance – and all, conveniently, in our own backyard, without having to spend more for a trip to Vancouver, or even further afield.

As another plus, in the hands of White Rock Concerts president John Leighton, and artistic directors Elizabeth and Marcel Bergmann (The Bergmann Piano Duo), the upcoming program continues to explore some of the most relatable music in the classical repertoire – with at least one of



**Above:** Members of the Buzz Brass who will play the final concert in the White Rock Concerts six-performance subscription concert season. **Right:** Cameron Crozman, named 'Canada's next big cello star' will be among guest soloists in the 2023-24 season, supported by the John Avison Chamber Orchestra conducted by Leslie Dala. (Contributed photos)

the performances this year, featuring the Bergmanns, enhanced by the projection of “dazzling visuals.”

They're following a tradition established by late series founder George Zukerman, who died early this year.

“It's going to be our first full season without George, but his influence is there through the whole season,” said Marcel Bergmann.

Leighton and both Bergmanns recalled the internationally-revered South Surrey bassoonist was never averse to programming the adventurous, the experimental and the little-known, while also ensuring that the audience was always provided with an ample selection of more readily accessible music.

Well in keeping with this is the first concert in the series (Oct. 21) featuring world-acclaimed U.S. trio *Intersection*, a virtuoso piano, violin and cello combination accustomed, as their name suggests, to frequent crossovers between the worlds of classical and contemporary music,



presented in an atmosphere of playful banter.

“They do a blend of trio, duo and solo pieces,” Elizabeth Bergmann said, noting that the program for the upcoming concert includes Ravel's 1914 piano trio, plus a suite from Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story* score.

“John Novacek is a fantastic pianist, and also an improviser and composer.”

“He's a great guy and a lot of fun,” said Marcel – who added that Novacek is also known, outside of the trio, for his interpretations of classic ragtime.

“This will make a great kick-off for the season.”

The Nov. 18 concert spotlights another

internationally renowned virtuoso, pianist/composer, Stewart Goodyear, who will perform all of Beethoven's ‘monumental’ *Diabelli Variations*, as well as his own, most recent, work, *Mending Wall*.

“He's become a Canadian phenomenon,” said Elizabeth, noting that Goodyear is also celebrated for the feat of performing all 32 Beethoven sonatas in one day.

On Jan. 27, *Cellismo!* will present the possibilities of the cello – a beloved instrument even in the realms of folk and alternative pop – as represented by Cameron Crozman, named “Canada's next big cello star” by CBC Music, in combination with the John Avison Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Leslie Dala.

A program of concerti by Boccherini, Haydn and others, it's probably the most traditional concert of the new program, Leighton said.

“It's our one orchestral concert of the season and a very classical concert,” he said.

On Feb. 17, the Vancouver Cantata Singers, conducted by Paula Kremer, will draw the connection between a visual theme and the musical arts with the concert *Blue*.

Selections will reflect the many shades of blue found in nature, from water to sea to sky, with matching compositional moods – including Stanford's *The Bluebird*, Gorecki's *Wislo Szara* and a brand new piece commissioned for the ensemble by Marcel.

The concept of juxtaposing visual elements with highly evocative music will continue March 9 with a performance of Gustav Holst's famous *The Planets*, by Percussiano 3 – both Bergmanns at the pianos, complemented by dynamic percussionist Rod Thomas Squance.

The tremendously varied, almost cinematic suite, inspired by the astrological character of each planet, was written by English composer and instrumentalist Holst in 1916, during the dark days of the First World War, and is a perfect showcase for the many moods, from exuberant to somber that classical music can portray.

A flurry of brass notes will usher in the season closer, *Famous Inspirations*, April 27, with the five-member strong Canadian ensemble Buzz Brass (Sylvain Lapointe,

Continued on A47

---

# It's time for concert season

*Continued from A46*

trumpet; Frederic Gagnon, principal trumpet; Pascal Lafreniere, horn; Jason De Carufel, trombone and Sylvain Arseneau, bass trombone).

All White Rock Concerts performances will be at 7:30 p.m., with doors open at 7

p.m. – although an even earlier arrival is recommended to ensure best places in the festival seating plan.

For more information on the concert series, and about how to purchase memberships, visit [whiterockconcerts.com](http://whiterockconcerts.com)