



# Laura Altenmueller

Friday | May 10 | 7:30 pm

THE Valley  
Concert  
Society

OUR 41<sup>ST</sup>  
SEASON  
2023-2024

World Class Music

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*The Valley Concert Society supports a scent-free environment for the enjoyment and well-being of everyone in the audience.*

*No unauthorized photography or electronic recordings are allowed during today's performance.*

# Programme

## **Lyrica Nova, Op. 59**

Sergei Bortkiewicz  
(1877 – 1952)

1. Com moto affettuoso
2. Andantino
3. Andantino
4. Com slancio

## **Préludes pour piano**

Olivier Messiaen  
(1908 – 1992)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. La colombe                            | 5. Les sons impalpables du rêve          |
| 2. Chant d'extase dans un paysage triste | 6. Cloches d'angoisses et larmes d'adieu |
| 3. Le nombre léger                       | 7. Plainte calme                         |
| 4. Instants défunts                      | 8. Un reflet dans le vent                |

Intermission

## **24 Preludes, Op. 28**

Frédéric Chopin  
(1810 – 1849)

- |                  |                   |                  |
|------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. C major       | 9. E major        | 17. A flat major |
| 2. A minor       | 10. C sharp minor | 18. F minor      |
| 3. G major       | 11. B major       | 19. E flat major |
| 4. E minor       | 12. G sharp minor | 20. C minor      |
| 5. D major       | 13. F sharp major | 21. B flat major |
| 6. B minor       | 14. E flat minor  | 22. G minor      |
| 7. A major       | 15. D flat major  | 23. F major      |
| 8. F sharp minor | 16. B flat minor  | 24. D minor      |



# Laura Altenmueller

Pianist Laura Altenmueller has performed in England, Austria, the United States, and across Canada. She holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Western University, which she completed on full scholarship under the tutelage of Stéphan Sylvestre. At Western University, she was a two-time Ontario Graduate Scholarship recipient for her research and performance of Ravel's *Le tombeau de Couperin*. She currently works in London, ON as the music director of Oakridge Presbyterian Church, in addition to performing as a collaborative pianist and teaching. She also directs several choirs, and sings in Chor Amica in London.

Laura is from Abbotsford, BC, where she began her piano studies at the age of 4. She completed her ARCT in Piano Performance at the age of 18, receiving first class honours with distinction. She completed her Bachelor of Music degree at the University of Victoria, where she studied with Michelle Mares. During her time at UVic, Laura performed in masterclasses for Angela Hewitt, Julian Bliss, Colin Tilney, and others. She was also active as a chorister, singing in Philomela Women's Choir, UVic Chorus, and UVic Chamber Singers. She received many scholarships and awards, including the Musical Arts Scholarship, Betty and Gilbert Kennedy Scholarship in Music, and the 2015 Strauss Foundation Scholarship. In 2015, she spent four weeks studying piano in Salzburg, Austria at the Internationale Sommerakademie Mozarteum, with Frank Wibaut, Siegfried Mauser, and Robert D. Levin.

After completing her BMus at UVic, Laura completed her Master of Music in Piano Performance at the University of Ottawa, studying with David Jalbert. In summer 2017, she received a full scholarship to participate in PianoFest in the Hamptons, a prestigious 4-week program, where she studied with Paul Schenly, Pierre van der Westhuizen, and David Jalbert. In 2018, she had the opportunity to perform Beethoven's *Piano Trio in D major, Op. 70 No. 1* at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. She has also received scholarships to attend numerous summer music programs, including Orford Musique, Adamant Music School, and Tuckamore Music Festival.

## Programme Notes

**Sergei Bortkiewicz**

1877 – 1952

*Lyrice Nova, Op. 59*

Given the troubles that Sergei Bortkiewicz endured in his life, it is hard to believe that he would compose music of such charm and beauty as *Lyrice Nova*. Born in Kharkov, Ukraine, in 1877, life began well for him. He studied in Leipzig, Germany, was awarded the Schumann Prize, and settled in Berlin. He married and enjoyed a life of music and travel until World War One began. Then everything changed for him.

Being a Russian, he was forced to leave Germany and return home. The Russian

Revolution followed, and he was forced to flee his family estate. After some back and forth in Russia, he finally fled the country with his wife and arrived penniless in Constantinople. With help from the court pianist to the Sultan, he resumed a life of performing and teaching.

Longing to live in Central Europe he was able to reach Vienna and obtained Austrian citizenship in 1925. Four years later he returned to Berlin, but the rise of the Nazi regime drove him back to Vienna. It was there in 1940 that he composed this work.

The Second World War struck another blow to Bortkiewicz. Russian music was prohibited under the Nazis. Most of his compositions, which were held by German publishers, were destroyed in the bombing of Leipzig, resulting in the loss of income from sales. He faced severe financial difficulty and had to borrow often from friends.

With the end of the war, he finally found stability again. He was given a position at the Conservatory and later an honorary pension. Bortkiewicz died in Vienna in 1952.

Bortkiewicz described himself as a romantic and styled his music after Chopin and Liszt. That comes out clearly in *Lyrical Nova*. The first movement flows effortlessly. A descending line gives the second movement a melancholy mood. The third movement is gentle and dreamy. Big chords drive the short final movement forward energetically.

**Olivier Messiaen**

1908 – 1992

*Préludes pour piano*

Olivier Messiaen was twenty years old when he published this set of eight preludes in 1929 while he was still a student at the Conservatoire. His mother, with whom he had been very close, had recently died. She was clearly much in his thoughts while he worked on these pieces. Another important influence on this music was Claude Debussy who published his preludes roughly twenty years earlier.

Messiaen experienced chromesthesia—he saw colours when he heard musical chords. So besides giving titles to each of his preludes, he added a colour description.

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. The Dove                           | <i>Orange, with violet veins.</i>   |
| 2. Song of Ecstasy in a Sad Landscape | <i>Gray, mauve, Prussian blue at the beginning and end; diamond and silver at the middle.</i>   |
| 3. The Light Number                   | <i>Orange, with violet veins.</i>   |
| 4. Dead Instants                      | <i>Smooth gray with reflections of mauve and green.</i>   |
| 5. The Impalpable Sounds of a Dream   | <i>Polymodal, consisting of a blue-orange mode with a chordal ostinato and cascades of chords, and a violet-purple mode having a copper timbre. Note the pianistic writing, composed of triple notes, rapid passages in chords, canon in contrary motion, hand crossing, various staccatos, brassy <i>louré</i>, gem effects.</i> |

6. Bells of Anguish and Tears of Farewell *The bells combine several different modes: the “hum” (deep bass) and the upper harmonies of the bells sound with luminous vibrations. The farewell is purple, orange, violet.*
7. Calm Plaint *Smooth gray with reflections of mauve and green.*
8. A Reflection in the Wind *The small storm which opens and concludes the piece alternates veins of orange, and green with black stains. The central development section is more luminous. The second theme, very melodious, and wrapped in sinuous arpeggios, is blue-orange in its first occurrence, and green-orange in its second one. Violet, orange and purple dominate the entire piece.*

**Frédéric Chopin**

1810 – 1849

**24 Preludes, Op. 28**

The word prelude would suggest that it is an introduction to something that follows. That’s what preludes were for many years. One of the most famous sets is by J.S. Bach who followed each prelude with a fugue in the same key, a pattern followed by other composers of the time.

With his Opus 28 Preludes, Chopin freed the prelude to stand alone as a work that does not introduce anything else. Each contains an entire world of feelings. This approach was taken up by many composers after him, including Messiaen.

Chopin worked on these preludes in Paris in the second half of the 1830’s. He finished them in Majorca where he had gone in the winter of 1838-39 with the poet George Sand in order to escape the damp winter weather of Paris.

He had a copy of Bach’s *The Well-Tempered Clavier* with him as he worked. Like Bach, he created a complete cycle of preludes in all twenty-four major and minor keys. Unlike Bach, who organized his in chromatic order (moving up the black and white keys of the harpsichord in order), Chopin organized his using the circle of fifths (C and its relative minor A followed by G, the fifth note in the C scale, and its relative minor, and so on).

Chopin never played all his preludes as a complete set. In fact, he never played more than four at any given performance. It was only twenty-five years after his death that a pianist performed the entire set in a concert. These preludes are now a key feature in the repertoire of most serious pianists.

Chopin never gave names to his preludes, although others have suggested names for them. The most famous is No. 15, known as *Raindrop*, a name that Chopin hated. Chopin requested that No. 4 be played at his funeral.

Many musicians have showered compliments on these preludes. Franz Liszt said that “...they are poetic preludes, analogous to those of a great contemporary poet, who cradles the soul in golden dreams...”

# About the Valley Concert Society

## ***Beginnings***

The Vancouver Symphony Orchestra was key to creating the society. They had been performing outreach concerts in Clearbrook with the help of some Abbotsford residents taking care of local arrangements. The symphony suggested that this group form a local society that would present programs offered by the symphony for a fixed fee.

On July 12, 1983, a group gathered in the home of Paul Moritz and elected an organizing committee with Paul as its president. On August 31, 1983, the BC Government issued the Certificate of Incorporation that made The Valley Concert Society a reality.

An intense campaign of mailing and phoning as well as advertising and fund-raising followed, all of it intent on procuring an audience and sufficient funding for their opening season. They achieved their goals with little time to spare, and the season opened with a chamber group from the VSO playing the program you will hear today. The rest of the first season consisted of two performances by the full symphony and a concert featuring the VSO's concertmaster Gerald Jarvis on violin and pianist Linda Lee Thomas.

A similar season was planned for the next year, but the society was not able to sell sufficient subscriptions, and the season was cancelled. They did receive a grant for \$500 and were able to present one concert featuring the Vancouver Cantata Singers.

A period of grappling with various organizational and promotional ideas resulted in a new beginning with a new format. Instead of relying exclusively on the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, the society presented a variety of small-group performers. The Purcell String Quartet opened the season on November 1; they were followed by programs featuring the Vancouver Chamber Choir, pianist Robert Silverman, and the quintet A Touch of Brass. The VSO did perform once to close the season.

## ***Forty Years of Outstanding Music***

The Valley Concert Society has brought over 200 remarkable musical experiences to the residents of Abbotsford. The most frequent performer has been the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, which performed sixteen times in the first nineteen seasons. The Victoria Symphony and the North Shore Sinfonia also played three times each. Smaller chamber orchestras made frequent appearances including such outstanding groups as I Musici de Montreal, Tafelmusik, and the Pacific Baroque Orchestra.

Choral groups were often booked. They came from near—the Vancouver Chamber Choir, the Vancouver Cantata Singers, and Chor Leone—and from far—the Soweto Choir of South Africa, the Cuban National Choir, and the Little Eagles of Siberia. Smaller vocal ensembles included

Chanticleer, QuintEssence, and Gesualdo Six. Some of Canada's greatest singers made solo appearances: Maureen Forrester, Isabel Bayrakdarian, and Ben Heppner.

Solo piano recitals included such transcendent talents as Robert Silverman, Janina Fialkowska, Charles Richard-Hamelin, and David Jalbert.

Classic chamber music repertoire held an important place in the society's history. The Shostakovich, Minguet, and St. Lawrence String Quartets all made memorable visits to Abbotsford. The Gryphon Trio played in Abbotsford three times, and the recent performance by Ehnes, Tsang, and Armstrong was unforgettable.

Other diverse strings made an appearance. Guitars came in solo, trio, and quartet combinations. Rita Constanzi performed on a solo harp while harp ensembles brought several varied programs, as did the Langley Ukulele Ensemble.

There were some definite favourites among the many brass groups that performed. A Touch of Brass, Foothills Brass, and Cosmos Brass played here a combined fourteen times. Less common were woodwind ensembles such as the Prairie Winds from Chicago and the Winds of the Southern Cross from Brisbane, Australia.

The diversity of performing groups was endless. The Sidestreet Strutters were a Dixieland combo, Acclarion came with a clarinet and accordion, Sal Ferreras performed twice with a percussion ensemble, Trio Voronezh brought Russian music, there was a concert featuring only a bassoon and a guitar. Chris Jarrett performed a piano accompaniment to the silent film classic Battleship Potemkin. The actor Colin Fox narrated a program based on letters between Robert and Clara Schumann along with music by a soprano and piano.

### ***People to Remember***

George Zukerman was never a part of The Valley Concert Society, but he looms as an enormous figure throughout the history of the organization. He was a critical contributor during the restructuring of the society in its third year by providing performers who were touring in the area. He himself performed in Abbotsford more than once on his bassoon as part of varied groups. He came to the rescue on one occasion when the Kiev Symphony Orchestra did not come as scheduled, and he filled in with a program entitled The Great Mozart Hunt. He also narrated programs, including his last one in April of 2022 less than a year before his death at age 95.

Paul Moritz was the founding president of The Valley Concert Society and provided effective leadership for that intrepid group that had the vision to bring this kind of music to our city. He served intermittently in that position until 1997. The society recognized his important contribution by naming a bursary in his honour.

Lorna Keith was the longest serving president in the society's history. She assumed that position after Paul Moritz stepped down until her retirement in 2014. She guided the organization through the transition from the Abby Arts Centre to the Matsqui Centennial Auditorium as performing



venues. The society named the endowment fund that it holds at the Abbotsford Community Foundation in her honour, a fitting tribute as she played a key role in establishing that fund.

Liz Carter was the last remaining charter member of the board when she passed away during the season in 2015. While not very visible publicly, she was enormously valuable behind the scenes. She chaired the committee that programmed each season. She was the Volunteer Coordinator. She was the House Manager. Liz had her hands on most of the organization's key functions. It was a considerable challenge to replace her many roles on short notice. The society honoured her memory by giving her name to its pre-concert talk.

### **VCS Contributes to the Community**

The Valley Concert Society has two key elements in its mission statement. Providing concerts and other musical performances is the obvious one. The second is to support the musical education of young people in the community. The organization addresses this goal in several ways.

#### ■ *Bursaries*

The Valley Concert Society has created two bursaries to be given annually to deserving music students in the community. They are named in honour of two founding board members, Paul Moritz and Marjorie Nixon. The value of the awards has increased over the years and currently stands at \$500. The society also provides a scholarship for the Abbotsford Music Festival named in honour of former board member Rudy Baerg at a value of \$200.

#### ■ *Master Classes*

Since 2016, The Valley Concert Society has been holding master classes which give talented young music students the opportunity to work on a prepared piece of music with some of the artists that we bring to our stage. Piano students have had the privilege of working with such luminaries as Jane Coop and Charles Richard-Hamelin. In alternate years, string students have worked with the likes of Bryan Cheng, Nancy Dahn, and are working with violist Molly Carr this year.

#### ■ *Performances*

The society has provided several opportunities for local music students to perform publicly. At its 25th and 35th anniversaries, it presented a concert of former bursary winners. This gave the audience the opportunity to experience the talent of these remarkable young people. The society has also programmed two past bursary winners in its regular season, recognizing their growth as musicians.

#### ■ *Community Outreach*

In the season just past, The Valley Concert Society has initiated a new venture aimed at allowing various members of the community to enjoy the wonderful artistry of our performers. Axiom Brass played for seniors in a high-rise complex, and for children participating in a Day Camp at The Reach. This year the society is presenting an outreach concert to the community served by the Salvation Army. These concerts come at no cost to the audience.

# Sponsors

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And generous donations from  
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## Valley Concert Society Membership

Valley Concert Society (VCS) is a not-for-profit society incorporated in BC.

We invite you to become a member of the society.

**COST:** \$10 per person annually

**BENEFITS:** Vote at General Meetings.  
Invitations to special events.  
Reserved seating at concerts.

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# Coming Up Next Season



OUR 42<sup>ND</sup>  
SEASON  
2024-2025

## musica intima

Friday, September 20, 2024



Vancouver's brilliant choral ensemble **musica intima** will open our season with a flourish. These twelve professional singers, known for their creative and dynamic programs, perform a wide range of musical styles from standard classical repertoire to contemporary works.

## Jarred Dunn

Friday, February 21, 2025



Yamaha Artist Jarred Dunn, pianist, has an international reputation as a recitalist, educator, and scholar. Having studied in Poland with the daughter of composer Henryk Gorecki, Dunn's concert will highlight the music of Chopin.

## Butter Quartet

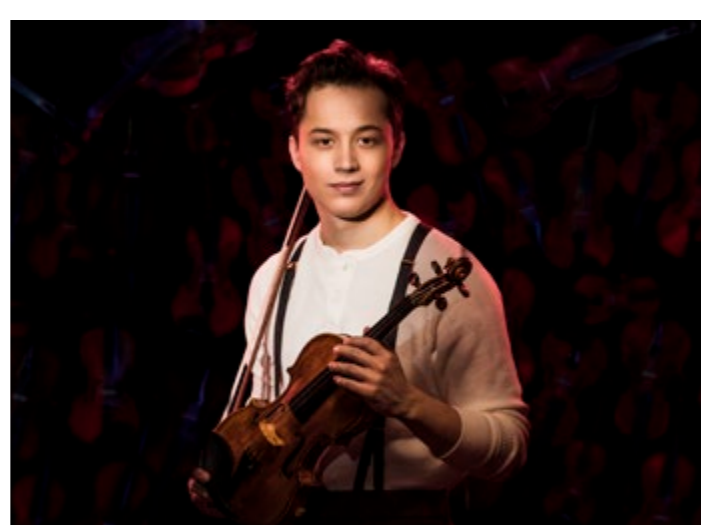
Friday, November 8, 2024



Based in the Netherlands, this outstanding young string quartet will bring a program featuring the music of Haydn and Mendelssohn. They have made a name for themselves with their research and their performances on historically-setup instruments.

## Johan Dalene

Friday, March 21, 2025



A rising star in Europe, Norwegian violinist Johan Dalene was named Gramophone Young Artist of the Year in 2022. His diverse and captivating program will include works by Schumann, Ravel, and Edvard Grieg.

## Romantic Gems

Saturday, January 18, 2025



The wonderful violinist Stefan Jackiw has assembled American colleagues Yoonah Kim, clarinet, and Henry Kramer, piano, along with Calgary's Arnold Choi, cello, to perform the music of Brahms and Smetana along with a recently uncovered gem from Walter Rabl.

## Quartetto Gelato

Friday, April 11, 2025



Combining classical virtuosity with comedy, this ensemble plays on everything from violin and cello to oboe, accordion, and musical saw. Classical and pop tunes, romantic and gypsy music make for a lively and entertaining evening.