



Jeneba Kanneh-Mason

Friday | 20 February | 7:30 pm



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OUR 43RD
SEASON
2025-2026

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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.

JENEBA KANNEH-MASON

Partita No. 5 in G major, BWV 829

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685–1750)

Praeambulum

Tempo di Minuetta

Allemande

Passepied

Corrente

Gigue

Sarabande

Piano Sonata No. 17 in D minor, Op. 31, No. 2 “The Tempest”

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770–1827)

I. Largo – Allegro

II. Adagio

III. Allegretto

INTERMISSION

Summerland

William Grant Still
(1895–1978)

Préludes

La fille aux cheveux de lin

Bruyères

Claude Debussy
(1862–1918)

Fantasie Nègre No. 1 in E minor

Florence Price
1887–1953)

Ballade No. 3 in A flat major, Op. 47

Frédéric Chopin
(1810–1849)

Ballade No. 4 in F minor, Op. 52

Frédéric Chopin
(1810–1849)

Artist Profile



Jeneba Kanneh-Mason is already captivating audiences with her “maturity in performance and interpretation” (Fraser). She made her debut on the international scene at the BBC Proms, performing the Florence Price Concerto and was heralded by the press as “demonstrating musical insight, technical acuity, and an engaging performing persona” (Music OMH). The piece was then recorded with Chineke! and Leslie Soganandarajah, released on Decca Classics in Summer 2023. The Guardian hailed her performance, stating that ‘Price could have no more persuasive an advocate’.

Now an exclusive Sony Classical Artist, Jeneba’s debut solo album ‘Fantasie’ was released in March 2025, to wide acclaim. It was named Classic FM’s Album of the Week and Gramophone praised Jeneba as ‘a pianist of enormous technical resources in service of an uncommonly rich and versatile musical imagination’. The album was notably nominated for a prestigious Edison Award.

In 25/26, Jeneba will be making her debut with the





Los Angeles Philharmonic and Gemma New for the Hollywood Bowl, as well as the Philadelphia Orchestra with Marin Alsop at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center. She is also working with the Florida Orchestra and North Carolina Symphony, and making her solo debut recital tour, performing for the Vancouver Recital Series, Baltimore's Shriver Hall and Washington's Dumbarton Concerts. An avid recitalist, she will be returning to London's Wigmore Hall, as well as performing at the Bergen International Festival, Antwerp's deSingel, Dublin's Royal Academy, amongst many others.

Other recent and forthcoming highlights include debuts with the Oslo Philharmonic, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Orchestra Sinfonica di

Milano, Britten Sinfonia, Metz National orchestras, working with conductors such as Andrew Manze, Dinis Sousa, and Emmanuel Tjeknavorian; an extensive UK tour with the Hungarian Radio Symphony and Riccardo Frizza; and other performances with the Orchestre National de Lyon, Detroit Symphony, Philharmonia, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and Belgrade Philharmonic orchestras.

Jeneba was a Keyboard Category Finalist in BBC Young Musician 2018, winner of the Murs du Son Prize at the Lagny-Sur-Marne International Piano Competition in France, 2014, and The Nottingham Young Musician 2013. She was also winner of the Iris Dyer Piano Prize at The Royal Academy of Music, Junior Academy, where she studied with Patsy Toh.

Jeneba was named one of Classic FM's 'Rising Stars' and appeared on Julian Lloyd Webber's radio series in 2021. She has also been featured on several television and radio programmes, including Radio 3, In Tune, The BAFTAs, The Royal Variety Performance, the documentary for BBC4, Young, Gifted and Classical, and the Imagine documentary for BBC1, This House is Full of Music. With her siblings, she has recorded two family albums for Decca Classics, Carnival (2020) and River of Music (2025).

Program Notes

Partita No. 5 in G major

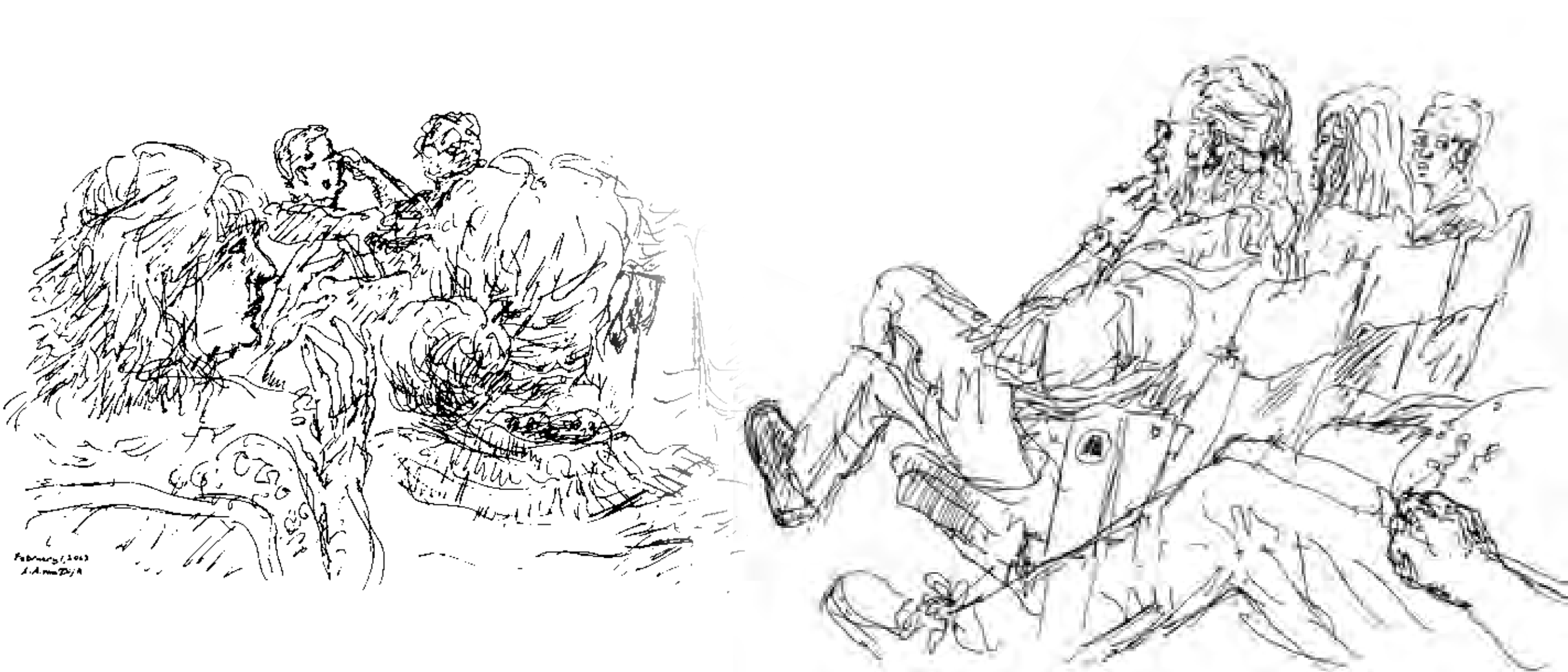
Bach's six partitas are the last of the keyboard suites that he composed but the first that he published. Partita No. 5 was written in G major, a key that often inspired Bach to compose radiant music of joy and technical display. It consists of seven dances common in the Baroque period.

The opening Praeambulum is a playful version of practicing scales. Where the Corrente is relatively simple, the Sarabande is highly ornamented. The Tempo di Minuetto appears to break rules with its two-beat rhythm instead of the expected three-beat rhythm. The Gigue is the most complex and most difficult of the movements demonstrating Bach's mastery of fugal writing.

Sonata No. 17 in D minor, "Tempest"

According to an early biographer of Beethoven, the composer was asked to explain two sonatas, including this one. His response was "Read Shakespeare's Tempest." Whether this is true or not, the name has stuck to this work. Any musical or thematic connections to the play are not immediately obvious.

The unusual opening of the first movement is a brief tentative arpeggio followed immediately by an intense, stormy passage. This pattern recurs frequently throughout the movement. The second movement again opens with an arpeggio, but this time it leads into a gentle, meditative passage with beautiful melodies. The third movement brims with energy which continues unabated, punctuated by passionate outbursts. This movement, like the first two, ends quietly, this time with a descending arpeggio to mirror the opening of the sonata.





Summerland

Summerland is the second part of a trilogy entitled *Three Visions* in which Still depicts the story of the human soul after death—judgment, heaven, and progress toward godly perfection. Summerland is the most popular of the three parts and is often played as a separate work. It depicts a peaceful heaven, much like a beautiful summer day.

La Fille aux Cheveux de Lin

The Girl With the Flaxen Hair is one of twelve preludes in Book 1 by Debussy. It was inspired by a poem of the same name written by Leconte de Lisle. The poet gazes with love and longing at a girl sitting in a field of alfalfa, a picture of beauty and innocence.

Bruyères

Bruyères translates as heather. This short work is from Book 2 of Debussy's preludes. It is an uncomplicated, gentle depiction of a landscape of heather.



Fantasia Nègre No. 1

A performance by Margaret Bonds of this piece thrust Florence Price onto the classical music scene in America in 1930. The composer dedicated it to Bonds, her friend, student, and fellow pianist-composer. Price was recognized and appreciated in her day. She became the first Black woman to have a work performed by a major American orchestra, the Chicago Symphony. After her death, she fell out of the public eye until a chance discovery of her music during a home renovation led to a revival of her works on the stage.

This fantasia is based on the spiritual *Sinner, Please Don't Let This Harvest Pass*. Price captures the rhythmic energy characteristic of African American music, but as a talented classically-trained composer, she invests it with the romantic sensibilities of Chopin and Brahms.

Ballade No. 3, Op. 47

It is believed that this ballade draws on the poetry of Chopin's friend Adam Mickiewicz. It was said to be inspired by *Undine*, the tragic story of a water sprite who falls in love with a human. The music has a rocking motion suggesting the watery theme. It is the brightest, the most optimistic of Chopin's four ballades.

The piece has two main themes. The first is sweet and charming. It is based on six notes moving up the scale. The second is more dance-like and more complex. It is based on six notes moving down the scale.



Ballade No. 4, Op. 52

Once again, the poetry of Mickiewicz is the inspiration, this time a poem entitled *The Three Budrys*. It tells of three brothers sent by their father to seek treasure, but each came home with a Polish bride.

The longest and most complex of Chopin's four Ballades, this one is considered by many to be the pinnacle of the composer's entire life's work. After a tentative opening, Chopin introduces his first theme built on a five-note motive. The second theme is a barcarolle with its typical rocking rhythm marked "piano e dolce" (soft and sweet).

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.



Season Calendar

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Subscription can be purchased for all 6 concerts at \$140 for adults, \$130 seniors and \$60 for students. The Tickets for individual concerts will be available online at \$32 for adults/seniors and \$20 for students.

Pocket Symphonies

Thursday, October 2, 2025



Pianists Marcel and Elizabeth Bergmann will be joined by violinist Jasper Wood and cellist Sungyong Lim to bring arrangements of works written for full orchestras including Beethoven's 5th Symphony and Mendelssohn's Hebrides Overture.

Jeneba Kanneh-Mason

Friday, February 20, 2026



A member of Britain's most famous musical family, this young pianist is captivating audiences with her maturity in performance and interpretation. She brings a program that includes Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, and Florence Price, among others.

Gryphon Trio

Friday, November 14, 2025



A Canadian musical treasure and one of the world's foremost trios, the Gryphon Trio is entering its fourth decade of performance. We are thrilled to welcome this much-loved prize-winning ensemble back to Abbotsford.

Buzz Brass

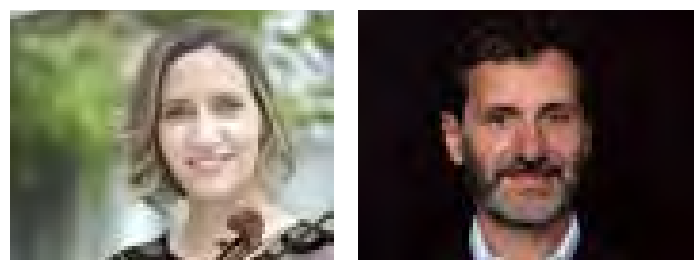
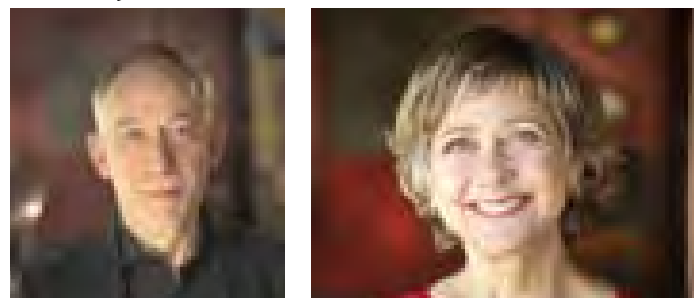
Thursday, January 22, 2026



With a name that denotes both excitement and the technique of blowing into brass instruments, this Montreal-based quintet has delighted audiences worldwide. They will bring a varied program entitled Famous Inspirations.

Suzie LeBlanc

Friday, March 27, 2026



Beloved Canadian soprano Suzie LeBlanc will be joined by Alexander Weiman, harpsichord, Chloe Meyers, baroque violin, and Grégoire Jeay, traverso and percussion to bring a program of Purcell, Bach, and traditional tunes.

Cheng² Duo/James Campbell

Friday, April 24, 2026



The brilliant



young duo of cellist Bryan Cheng and his sister Silvie, piano, will partner with the dean of Canadian clarinetists James Campbell to perform classics by Beethoven and Brahms along with contemporary klezmer music and other works.



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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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