

Alexander  
Weimann  
Harpsichord

Suzie LeBlanc  
Soprano

Chloe Meyers  
Violin

Grégoire Jeay  
Flute



# WISH YOU WERE HERE

A LOVE LETTER TO BACH, MONTEVERDI, PURCELL, AND MORE...

THE **Valley**  
Concert  
Society

WORLD  
CLASS  
MUSIC

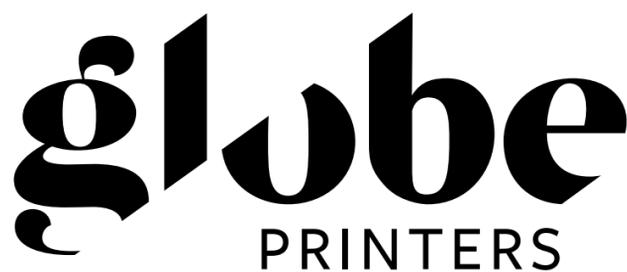
OUR 43<sup>RD</sup>  
SEASON  
2025-2026

Friday | 27 March | 7:30 pm

# Program Guide

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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.*

# WISH YOU WERE HERE

**La Musica (Prologue from Orfeo)** *Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643)*

**Since from my dear Astrea's sight** *Henry Purcell (1659–1695)*

**Sonata in G major, BWV 1038** *J.S. Bach (1685–1750)*

**Ich folge dir gleichfalls (St-John Passion)** *J.S. Bach*

**Viens Hymen (from Les Indes Galantes)** *J.P. Rameau (1683–1764)*

**Sonata in C-major** *J.G. Goldberg (1727–1756)*

*Adagio*

*Gigue*

## INTERMISSION

**Quand j'ai parti du Canada/** *Acadian/Irish Trad.*

**Curious Murphy's Jig**

**Wish you were here!** *Harold Rome (1908–1993)*  
*arr. By Grégoire Jeay*

**Ciaccona** *Bernardo Storace (fl. 1664)*

**Accenti queruli** *Giovanni Felice Sances (1600–1679)*

**Sonata in C major** *Tarquinio Merula (1595–1665)*

## Artist Profiles

### **Suzie LeBlanc** | soprano

A charismatic and tireless champion of early music and Acadian culture, LeBlanc is an internationally celebrated Canadian soprano, an early music specialist. Her international performing career has included recitals and performances with orchestras, opera companies, and early, traditional, and new music ensembles. She lived in Europe between 1987 and 1999 where she performed with leading ensembles in main stages and festivals. Her return to Canada gave birth to recordings *La Mer Jolie* (2004), *Tout Passe* (2007) and *La Veillée de Noël* (2014), Mozart lieder with Yannick Nézet-Seguin and *I am in need of music*, for which she won a ECMA award. She was the protagonist in Rodrigue Jean's 2008 film *Lost Song*, which premiered at the at the Toronto International Film Festival, where it won the award for best Canadian feature film. An enthusiastic educator, Suzie LeBlanc was early vocal music coach and Artistic Director of Cappella Antica at McGill University from 2017 to 2020. She is now the Artistic and Executive Director of Early Music Vancouver.



### **Grégoire Jeay** | flute

Baroque flute specialist Grégoire Jeay performs regularly throughout Quebec and Canada, and has played in France, Belgium, Mexico, Turkey, England, and the United States. He is recognized for his musicality and expressiveness, and for his sense of ornamentation and improvisation. He also brings his virtuosity on the transverse flute to the recorder and to flutes from various other cultures. He performs and records regularly with internationally renowned musicians and conductors, including Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, Clavecin en concert, La Nef, Theatre of Early Music, L'Harmonie des saisons, and Les Voix humaines. He is the co-founder of Ensemble Mirabilia with soprano Myriam Leblanc. In addition to his regular activities as a flutist, Grégoire Jeay composes and arranges for various ensembles such as Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra; he also produces music for European and Chinese circuses.



## Chloe Meyers | violin

Violinist Chloe Meyers performs with early music ensembles across North America as leader, orchestra member, and chamber musician. She is the concertmaster of the Pacific Baroque Orchestra and has led or appeared as soloist with groups including the Victoria Baroque Players, Pacific MusicWorks, Arion Baroque Orchestra and Les Voix Baroques, of which she was a founding member. Chloe's playing may be heard on many award-winning disks, including the 2022 Juno award winning recording "Solfeggio" in which she leads the orchestra L'Harmonie des Saisons. In 2023 she was nominated as Best Musical Director for her work in Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater* with the Edmonton Opera. As adjunct professor at the University of British Columbia, she trains young artists in the Baroque Orchestra Mentorship Program, chamber music and solo lessons. She is also an active teacher in the summer Victoria Conservatory teaching programs, as well the UVic Collegium orchestral program.



## Alexander Weimann | harpsichord

The internationally renowned keyboard artist Alexander Weimann has spent his life enveloped by the therapeutic power and beauty of making music. Alex grew up in Munich. At age three he became fascinated by the intense magic of the church organ. He started piano at six, formal organ lessons at 12 and harpsichord at university (along with theatre theory, medieval Latin and jazz piano.) He is in huge demand as a director, soloist and chamber player, traveling the world with leading North American and European ensembles. He is Artistic Director of the Pacific Baroque Orchestra in Vancouver and teaches at the University of British Columbia where he directs the Baroque Orchestra Mentorship Programme. Alex has appeared on more than 100 recordings, including the Juno-award-winning album *Prima Donna* with Karina Gauvin and Arion Baroque orchestra. His latest album series THE ART OF IMPROVISATION (Volume 1: *A Prayer for Peace*; Volume 2: *Ad libitum*; and Volume 3: *Caravan Variations*, released on Redshift, 2024) unites his passions for both baroque music and improvisation on organ, harpsichord, and piano.



# WISH YOU WERE HERE

## Program Notes

### **Wish**

A wish, scribbled on postcards or held in the hearts of those far away from home, cuts across the space that separates and brings us together in the world of our shared imagining. “Meco trarrotti a riveder le stelle,” Orfeo will sing when Euridice is killed by a snake bite on their wedding day: “I will bring you back with me to see the stars again.” Music is the means by which Orfeo crosses the infinite distance between the worlds of the living and of the dead, and in Monteverdi’s *L’Orfeo* (1607), one of the first essays in the new genre of opera, *La Musica* herself—a transformative agent who can “make peaceful every troubled heart” and “inflame the coldest minds”—introduces the drama.

For Giovanni Felice Sances, a generation younger than Monteverdi, song remains a medium of connection with the absent (and reluctant) beloved. The singer sends sorrowful *accenti*, sighs and laments, out on the wind to intercede for him with Lydia. In spite of his protestations, the jaunty ciaccona bass of “Accenti queruli” (shared with Bernardo Storace’s party piece for keyboard) doesn’t exactly paint a picture of grief; some wishes, maybe, are relished as much in the anticipation as in the fulfillment.

### **You**

“I will follow you with joyful steps”: the soprano in Bach’s *St. John Passion* expresses Peter’s desire to stay close to Jesus whatever comes, the flute obbligato chasing after the voice as if afraid of being left behind. Here, the favourite texture of baroque music—two treble parts sharing the same space above a bass—plays out this dynamic pattern of distance and proximity with a beloved “you.”



This trio sonata texture appeared early in the seventeenth century in love songs both sacred and secular, and set the template for instrumental chamber music for a century to come: from Tarquinio Merula, riding the first wave of trio sonata writing in the 1630s, to Bach's masterpieces in the genre, to Johann Gottlieb Goldberg, the talented young harpsichordist whose name history has given to Bach's Aria with thirty variations, and whose almost Romantically expansive C major trio sonata has sometimes been attributed to Bach himself.

## ***Were Here***

"Here" is desolate without you. Henry Purcell's "Since from my dear Astraea's sight" dwells in this place of bereavement, its supple text-setting and plangent dissonances spinning the simple lyric into a trance of despondency. Astraea, in Greek mythology, is daughter of the dawn and a goddess of justice, distinguished by poets such as Hesiod and Ovid as the last of the divinities to live on earth among humans. In response to the world's corruption, she left "Our orb of Earth" (in seventeenth-century poet Hester Pulter's words) and can be seen only among the stars, a cipher for any profound and constantly present loss. Perhaps, in Pulter's case, Astraea embodied the most wrenching of losses; "Sweet maid" is a phrase Pulter also uses to address her daughters, few of whom outlived her.

How different is that moment of plenitude when Rameau's Phani, an Inca princess, calls Hymen, goddess of marriage, to tie the "knots" that join lovers for all their lives to come. Hymen is in such moments "more lovable than love," and Rameau's sparse texture of flute, soprano, and violin creates an atmosphere of extraordinary dream-like delicacy. *Les Indes Galantes* (1735), the popular *opéra-ballet* from which this aria is drawn, celebrates the grand theme of love as displayed in four exotic (to Rameau's Paris audiences) corners of the world: Turkey, Peru, Persia, and North America.

"Wish You Were Here" is Harold Rome's hit song for Arthur Kober and Joshua Logan's 1952 musical of the same name, a screwball comedy set in a summer camp. Rome's lyrics, with their obsessive refrain, point out the mismatch between a recurring cycle of the seasons and the ragged ends and interruptions of our human connections; summer can return to the same place, but one vital absence colours everything, makes (to quote William Wordsworth) all "[t]he difference to me!"

*Wish you were here!*

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# 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

**OUR 43<sup>RD</sup>**  
**SEASON**  
2025-2026



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 5<sup>th</sup> 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.

### 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.

### 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.

### Cheng<sup>2</sup> 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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