

## A Warm New Zealand in Canada Evening Carol Lutes Racine-- Diplomatic Liaison, FNACO

As the soundscapes resonated throughout the high-ceilinged main salon of the contemporary-designed residence of H.E. Excellency Martin Harvey, New Zealand's High Commissioner to Canada, it channelled thoughts of other times and far different spaces.

The evocative music transported the mind to 1890s America and to a special period in the life of Czech composer Anton Dvorak, his productive America sojourn. In particular, to a vacation trip which took Dvorak away from bustling New York to the expansive mid-west to visit with Czech friends who had recently migrated to the open spaces and burgeoning fields of Iowa corn --the New World. Refreshed and inspired by his surroundings, Dvorak, in a 13-day creative burst, completed and debuted while in Iowa his joyous 12th String quartet in F major, Op.96, which has become known as "The American".

As happened also, the F major string quartet was a warm and most fitting program choice for urging on thoughts of spring with snow still very much visible around Ottawa on the mid-March Friends of NACO concert evening. The Dvorak string quartet's four movements were engagingly performed by four Ottawa-based musicians with international backgrounds and a growing list of world class credits: cellist, Gabriela Ruiz; violinists, Adam Nelson and Oleg Chelpanov; and violist, Olivier Philippe Auguste. Collectively they play as Canto Sentimento.



The quartet followed their main work in the program with a change of pace – a gentle segment of Mozart's Eine kleine nachtmusik; then encores with Piazzola's Libertango to rousing applause from the more than 60 Friends of NACO members and guests of High Commissioner Harvey and his wife Sarah.

Following the concert the Harveys warmly hosted a reception which featured New Zealand inspired hors d'oeuvres, smoked salmon, mushroom canapés and other taste temptations, all accompanied by wines representative of their country at home and abroad.

The New Zealand evening, was one of the events in the Friends of NACO embassy concerts series in support of the National Arts Centre Orchestra's education programs for aspiring young musicians.

The Friends of NACO wish to express our appreciation to New Zealand's High Commissioner Martin Harvey and Mrs. Sarah Harvey for their distinguished patronage of this event.

## Concert Highlights

### Kimball Sykes Principal clarinet NACO

I would like to share with you my recollections of some memorable concerts with NACO.

In February the Orchestra played for the National Ballet's production of Romeo and Juliet in Southam Hall. It is my favourite ballet score, and I felt the same excitement that I had on first performing it, nearly 40 years ago.

I also recall the feeling in the pit of my stomach when I first heard the opening of Stravinsky's Rite of Spring, in my first year of music school at the University of British Columbia. I could not believe what I was hearing. I felt a sense of awe on experiencing this remarkable composition. In my career I have had many similar experiences through my discovery of the great works of the classical music canon. Now, in the twilight of my career, I have played most of the "masterpieces", but am not awed with every single performance. However, an inspiring interpretation that allows me to hear a work anew brings back the excitement I felt as a teenager.



Franco Mannino was the Orchestra's music advisor in the mid to late 1980s who excelled in the Italian repertoire. In 1989, he conducted an in-concert version of Madame Butterfly. I had performed the work twice before, and expected it be an uneventful week. It was anything but. Under Mannino's direction, the performance was electric, and I felt like I was hearing it for the first time. In the same period, former music director Gabriel Chumra conducted an in-concert opera, Debussy's opera Pelleas and Melisande. My experience of this opera was quite different. At first, I did not understand the musical language. The dynamic range spans a narrow range, from pianissimo to mezzo forte. The music is subtle, and has hidden meaning. The greatness of the work was revealed to me only after repeated listenings of this masterpiece.

Trevor Pinnock is a masterful interpreter of the Baroque and Classical repertoire. I recall a performance of Mozart's Symphony 40 under Trevor's direction. It was the best Mozart 40 I have played. Trevor allowed the music to flow, carried by an inner propulsion where nothing is ever static.

You can hear this in all his music making. I particularly enjoy his recordings of the Scarlatti harpsichord concerti. I was fortunate to perform the Mozart Clarinet Concerto under Trevor, and I am proud of the CBC archival recording..

In 1990, the NACO toured Europe for three weeks under the baton of Pinchas Zukerman. The tour was memorable for many reasons. We visited shortly after the fall of the Berlin wall. Pinchas' magnificent interpretation of the Beethoven violin concerto, an oft-performed work, caused me to hear it "anew" on that tour. Pinchas gave a particularly inspired performance in the Gewandhaus

in Leipzig. He was playing and conducting at the same time, and when he finished playing the more intense solo sections, he would whirl, with fire in his eyes, to conduct the orchestra, and we responded accordingly. It was a thrilling experience.

More recently, the Orchestra performed Elgar's "In the South" under Alexander Shelley. This work was new to me, and I regard it as a wonderful but neglected near-masterpiece. In that week, I discovered a great work and under Alex's direction the performance was terrific. Our performance of this work may be heard on NACO's "Home Delivery" series. I have also been impressed by a new work, debuted recently by NACO. The critics are to it as a masterpiece, and I agree with them. The song cycle "Songs for Murdered Sisters" was composed by Jake Heggie, with text by Margaret Atwood. I would recommend a listen to the piano vocal version on YouTube.

These are but a few of many memorable concert experiences for me. I look forward to many more to come with you in Southam Hall.

## EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHILE: MUSICAL WELCOMING OF SPRING

Michel W. Drapeau FNACO Board Member

**W**edged between the Andes and the Pacific Ocean, Chile is the southernmost country in the world. It is the very definition of a rich multi-national cultural diversity. It is geographically blessed for grape growing (nicknamed the "Bordeaux of South America") and a cuisine as varied and unexpected as the country's astounding geography (with a whopping 2,000 volcanoes). A decade ago, my spouse Nicole and I travelled through this landscape of contrasts. We found it to be an exceptionally rich reservoir of natural beauty and untouched nature. On Tuesday, April 11, 2023 we were more than pleased to reconnect with Chile when we joined 30 other Friends of the National Arts Centre Orchestra (FNACO) and approximately 15 members of Ottawa's diplomatic missions to attend a Violin and Flute Duet at the residence of the Ambassador of the Republic of Chile, in Rockcliffe. Guests were cordially hosted by the very affable, His Excellency Raúl Fernández Daza.



The beautiful and inspirational Music Program was performed by the duo of **Erica Miller** (violin) who plays regularly with the NACO and is also the concertmaster of the Ottawa Symphony Orchestra and **Stéfanie Morin** (flute) who is an up and coming flutist on the Canadian music

scene now acting as the Second Flute and Piccolo with the NACO. The duo played one hour of uninterrupted beautiful, gentle and soothing flute and violin instrumental music. They played *en rafale* works featuring the following composers: Georg Phillip Telemann, Johann Christian Schultze, Richard Rodney Bennett, Joseph Bodin de Boismortier and Sergie Prokofiev. Felt like riding on waves on a quiet lake. It was both captivating and enchanting. A wonderful piece of art throughout. Many thanks to our talented musicians for sharing their talents. It was a real joy to listen. It was music for the soul and warmth for the heart. Fantástico. Moreover, the experience was made even more memorable by the fact that the performance was staged in a room which can only be described as being an '*acoustical gem*', in my opinion, an ideal room for chamber music.

After the concert, guests mingled to partake in a reception where wines (drawn from the famed Chilean wine region); the breadth and character of a rich diversity of culinary offerings each a typical dish of Chilean cuisine (catering was done by Tonka Saaved and her husband, Alvaro Drouillas, a Chilean couple who came to Canada a year ago). Excellent and attentive service; and, a most convivial atmosphere were all part of an exceptional and memorable experience. The multiple finger food appetizers, particularly the melt-in-your-mouth 'empanadas, were pretty much heaven on a plate guaranteed to produce smiles and sticky fingers. On a Michelin scale, a delightful 3 star evening which we will long remember.

A special note of thanks for this most pleasant and charming musical evening to the two FNACO organizers, our esteemed directors, Melina Vacca-Pugsley and Carol Lutes Racine who, as usual, went to great lengths to create another outstanding evening to remember. Muchisimas gracias.

## Obituary

- ❖ We are sad to announce John Horvath a FNACO member and the husband of Madeleine Aubrey our membership director died suddenly on April 13<sup>th</sup>.

We send our sympathies and condolences to Madeleine and his family. We shall miss John.



## CON BRIO

Christine McLaughlin Editor; Gisèle Lamontagne Translator; Carol Lutes Racine Coordinator;  
Juan Molina and Jim Burgess webmasters <http://www.friendsofnaco.ca>