

# Appassionato



## Peter Lang Gifts Chamber Music Collection to VAM

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## From the President & CEO

Welcome to the Spring 2021 edition of Appassionato that recognizes the accomplishments of our students, faculty, and alumni. With everyone staying the course, taking all necessary precautions, music has remained a constant that has brought people together one way or another. In this edition, we focus on chamber music and in particular, the spirit of collaboration and connection when we gather to make music with one another be it online or in physically distanced, regulated conditions. So inexplicably valuable it is to experience the musical expression and conversation amongst players that the distance we all have become so accustomed to seems lessened, if only for those few minutes.

I would be remiss if I did not extend a sincere note of thanks to you, our readers, and to our faculty, students and their families for the unwavering support and encouragement. Music has the astounding capability of bridging cultures and people. Even though restrictions persist, innovation and originality stem from such circumstances and is evident in the dedication to which VAM's faculty and students engage in their continued pursuit of musical excellence.

Musically Yours,  
Joseph Elworthy, VAM President & CEO

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### APPASSIONATO

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*Pictured on cover: Peter Lang (submitted)*

# From the Board Chair

Dear Members of the VAM Community:

Welcome to the Spring 2021 edition of Appassionato. The past year has been challenging for all of us in so many ways. I am grateful that our President & CEO and his amazing team have been able to help the Academy navigate through stormy seas. On behalf of the Board, I offer our heartiest congratulations for their exemplary work.



It goes without much saying that ensuring quality music education is a team sport. As John Donne said, “No man is an island...” and nurturing the collaboration between teacher, student, and parent within the confines of a safe school environment remains our highest priority.

Accordingly, this issue of our newsletter highlights many facets of VAM’s Chamber Music Program. I remain in awe of the harmony demonstrated by our many ensemble groups. I am of the firm belief that music serves as a driver for our wellness, as individuals and as a community.

Despite the pandemic, I wish to paraphrase Sir Elton John: “I’m/WE’RE still standing, yeah, yeah, yeah.” I thank you for your support as we forge ahead in 2021.

Kindest regards,  
Raymond Dong, MD,  
Chairperson, VAM Board of Directors

We acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia and the following partners:



VAM’s Orchestral Program is supported by:



Edith Lando  
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# Peter Lang Chamber Music Library Finds a New Home at VAM

Peter Lang donates what is believed to be the largest independent collection of chamber music in the world

“We are thrilled!” Joseph Elworthy is speaking about the Peter Lang Chamber Music Collection, which has recently been gifted to VAM. “This is purported to be the largest independent collection of chamber music in the world. It is absolutely mouth-watering what we can do with this!” The collection – Peter Lang himself estimates it to contain some 25,000 works – is the work of a lifetime filled with an immense love of playing and discovering chamber music. “Peter has not only collected this music, but he has performed a substantial amount of it. Pretty much every professional musician in Vancouver has had the pleasure of playing chamber music with Peter in his Point Grey home; he would open his doors for sight reading sessions, catalog all the feedback. It was a great synergy.”

Peter Lang has led an extraordinary musical life. “That is the key, falling in love with music,” he says. Born in Germany in 1943, Peter began his violin studies at age 6, “because my cousin had started violin lessons, and whatever my cousin did I had to do. I was raised by my grandmother, because my mother, who spoke some English, worked as a secretary for the American military government, met my

stepfather and went to America to make sure it would be a good place for us. I got to study violin for about half a year until my grandma decided that the money being spent on lessons would be better invested in better food (things were pretty tough back then) but it gave me a foundation. When I arrived in the States at the age of 9, I started at a school in the suburbs of New York that was just starting a music program. I was the only one who had ever held a violin, and I was exceedingly lucky that I had a teacher who taught me almost immediately how beautiful it is to play music. We moved to another city, and there I was again lucky with another teacher who brought me into the orchestra that he was leading, and convinced my mother that I needed private lessons. He also instilled in me, in spades, the love for playing chamber music that has lasted all these years. He created a string quartet for us in the high school, and we performed for the school and all sorts of venues, and I just loved it.”

“I got into a fine college, Amherst, where I studied Economics. They were also just starting a string program, so I created the Amherst String Quartet, based on what I had



learned in high school, and continued to learn. They gave me a scholarship to study with a very fine teacher at Smith College, a women's college about 10km down the road. Now, I accepted the music scholarship, but I made them disguise it so that it would not appear on my transcript. My father didn't approve of my falling too deeply in love with playing music! So it was a hidden thing that I did because I loved it. By the time I got into my 20s I had been exposed to a lot of chamber music, I had played most of the standard literature, sight read it, and prepared and performed quite a bit with various groups and friends."

"I played the standard literature for many years, and then quite by accident – I was maybe 45 years old – I ran into a musician, a doctor of medicine, Dr. Whitby, who had collected one of the largest collections of original print chamber music in the world. I met him at a chamber music workshop, and he had a full case of this original rag paper, copper-plate-printed music, and that was my introduction to non-standard chamber music. Dr. Whitby enjoyed the fact that I was absolutely overwhelmed by discovering that there was more than just Haydn and Mozart and Schubert and Brahms, that there are literally thousands more, and some of this music is magnificent. So he permitted me, over four week-long visits, to borrow these exceedingly valuable

documents, and photocopy them! A good chunk of the library that is now going to VAM consists of these copies."

"Another big part of my collection came through a cello professor at UBC, Eric Wilson. I had to go to New York on a trip, and he mentioned that his cello teacher had died, and the widow had a huge collection of unusual chamber music. He said, 'there's some really good stuff there, a composer named George Onslow, you'll really love him.' I set up a meeting with the widow to discuss her husband's library, and she was very clever. I think she was warned by Eric Wilson that she should get some chamber music going on, so she had invited four professionals to play some George Onslow string quintets with me. I was kind of overwhelmed – these players were far beyond my abilities – but Onslow I could handle, and it was sight reading, and it was absolutely glorious music. So I fell in love with Onslow, and I felt a little sorry that the wife of this wonderful cellist was trying to sell this music, and keep it all in one place, but nobody seemed to want it. I had just concluded a good business deal, and so I bought the collection. She sent it to me in Vancouver in 50 boxes!"

"I discovered that in many cities in the world there are marvellous music libraries. For example, the free library

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Peter Lang performing with Vancouver Chamber Players



*I was absolutely overwhelmed by discovering that there was more than just Haydn and Mozart and Schubert and Brahms, that there are literally thousands more, and some of this music is magnificent.*



#### PETER'S PICK:

## Robert Fuchs

1847-1927, AUSTRIA

“The composer that stands out that I love most of those I’ve discovered is Robert Fuchs. He wrote some glorious string trios, piano trios, quartets. They are a bit of a challenge, there’s a touch of Richard Strauss, but not quite as convoluted. This is the kind of sound that I grew up with; my grandma loved the Viennese style music, she loved Richard Strauss, and it was always on the little radio we had. That’s why I love him so much; it’s in my soul from a very early age.”

-Peter Lang

*Fuchs is a splendid musician, everything is so fine and so skillfull, so charmingly invented, that one is always pleased.*

-Johannes Brahms

of Philadelphia has an enormous collection from the scion of a wealthy industrial American family; the son loved music and before and after WWI he travelled all over Europe and bought up an enormous collection with quite a lot of chamber music. My wife and I spent a week going through a handwritten card catalog, six to eight hours each day. I made a donation to the library, and then over about ten years they would send me three or four of the works at a time, of this rare and unusual chamber music. It is sad that even great musicians have not discovered that there is such a thing as non-standard chamber music. You could tell that what they sent me had never really been loaned out. I continued doing this with libraries in London, Paris, Munich, Prague. In essence what you have at VAM is a collection of the most unusual library collections, the rarest, that I could find in the world.”

“I came to Vancouver in 1982 for work. I started taking violin lessons again with a professor at UBC, Andy Dawes, a wonderful person, great musician. He told me that in order to improve, at my age – because I still lacked the basic training of someone who had really intensely studied music – I would have to force myself to play concerts in public. Because of my business skills I’m a fairly good organizer and administrator, and have had some success raising money, so I created my own public chamber music series, called the Vancouver Chamber Players. The structure was based on having paid professionals in town joining me for two three-hour rehearsals, then two warm-up concerts, at care homes or hospitals, and then a final concert which was for a paying audience, held at Hycroft, the University Women’s Club. So over 15 years I played roughly 600 public concerts, and I based them almost exclusively on my library. The subname of the series was, ‘Rediscovered Treasures of Chamber Music’. Much of the music of the time was commissioned by the nobility of Europe on the basis of, ‘I want to be able to play it, I’m the nobleman, but my children who have been taught how to play instruments should also be able to play it.’ So much of the unknown pieces are accessible to people who have learned to play well; they don’t need to be at a professional technical level. So there’s an incredible world out there to be discovered.”

VAM will be embarking on a voyage of discovering the treasures of the Peter Lang collection this summer: Joseph says, “We are launching Sea-to-Sky Chamber Fest, a week-long chamber music festival. The groups will play a complete

work, and along with their chamber music ‘chestnut’ (a known work) they will be assigned a piece from an analogous period in history from the Peter Lang Chamber Music Collection. So it will be a composer that they will not have the luxury of looking up on YouTube, and having numerous recordings to refer to; almost like giving a premier. They can look up the historical context, figure out where they fit in, and the students and the coach are on equal footing here. I think it will be a fascinating, invigorating process that will be eye-opening for audiences as well. This is only the tip of the iceberg. We’re definitely going to be incorporating new works throughout the year, and exploring the repertoire, really rolling up our sleeves and learning more about the collection.”

Peter and his wife are relocating from Vancouver to Nanaimo this spring. Peter has retired from his Vancouver Chamber Players group, now playing only a small number of concerts each year. However, he has for the past five years been working on a whole new branch of music: arranging works for chamber music. “I’ve never had formal training in

musical arranging, but after doing my first few, and playing them with friends, we decided this is a lot of fun, so we’d start most chamber music sessions playing one of my Bach arrangements. Maybe just to make me happy, who knows, but I think they enjoyed it.” To date Peter has arranged vast amounts of Bach, as well as symphonies by Schubert, Brahms and Shostakovich, and in the last year or so has concentrated on Renaissance music. “All of this will eventually wind up at VAM,” he says.

The Peter Lang Chamber Music library at VAM is still in boxes, out of order, a bit ‘discombobulated’, says Peter. “After the pandemic is over, I hope within six months or so, I’ll go help put it on shelving.” Above and beyond! Thank you so much for this amazing trove, Peter!



# Sea to Sky Chamberfest

**AUGUST 16-22, 2021**

VANCOUVER ACADEMY OF MUSIC | KAY MEEK CENTRE

- A week-long intensive chamber music experience for advanced music students
- Prepare complete chamber music masterworks in a fast-paced environment
- Play side-by-side with members of Chamberfest faculty
- Featuring visiting artist Jonathan Crow

**Audition deadline: May 18**

**Visit [vam.ca](http://vam.ca) for audition details**

# Congratulations!

## COMPETITION WINNERS & SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

MARCH 2021

### 2021 EDITH LANDO GIFTED YOUTH COMPETITION

Name	Award	Teacher
Justin Junwoo Ha, violin	Edith Lando Gifted Youth Scholarship (\$1,000)	Ji Eun Jenny Lim
Phoebe Fang-Ying Lan, cello	Eugenie & Edward Yeung Scholarship (\$250)	Joseph Elworthy
Elim Yu, violin	Eugenie & Edward Yeung Scholarship (\$250)	Nicholas Wright
Jocelyn Zhang, cello	Malcolm G. Aikman Scholarship (\$250)	Joseph Elworthy
Jae Park, violin	Ann Lesley Bain Memorial Scholarship (\$250)	Lawrie Hill
Merett Khamis, violin	Joseph & Frances Cohen Scholarship (\$250)	Domagoj Ivanovic
Forest Benson, piano	Harold & Florence Morris Scholarship (\$250)	Bogdan Dulu
Justin Er Da Yin, piano	Yashwant & Tarun Kamji Sidpra Memorial Scholarship (\$250)	Gaye Alcott
Robbie Akehurst, piano	Seymour & Janet Vineberg Memorial Scholarship (\$250)	Ian Parker

### 2021 JEROLD GERBRECHT WOODWIND & BRASS COMPETITION

Name	Award	Teacher
Victor GyuBin Lee, clarinet	First Prize, \$500 VAM Scholarship	Christopher Lee
Christy Hung, flute	Second Prize, \$300 VAM Scholarship	Paul Hung
Trevis Wong, saxophone	Third Prize, \$200 VAM Scholarship	Trevis Wong

### 2020/21 SUZUKI VIOLIN & CELLO SCHOLARSHIPS

Name	Award	Teacher
Kristen Lee, violin	Marian Schreiber Memorial Scholarship (\$600)	Nicki Stieda
Zen Liu, violin	Chua Tiampo Memorial Scholarship (\$600)	Robin Wenham
Adrian Lee, cello	VAM Suzuki Cello Scholarship (\$150)	Mary Thomson



# Cello Ensemble Inauguration Honours Pedagogical Legacy

The Aldo Parisot Cello Ensemble  
brings together members of VAM's cello  
community

There have been some good vibrations happenin' at VAM this past year, as the newly-minted Aldo Parisot Cello Ensemble breaks out from the classical mold to attempt some more pop-oriented pieces and arrangements. "I didn't realize that there are so many cellists in the group that are latent arrangers and composers," says Joseph Elworthy, conductor of the group. We are playing an incredible arrangement of Ennio Morricone, who did the iconic spaghetti western scores, made for us by Julian Lee De Vita which sounds just unreal for cello ensemble. Robert Choi did an arrangement of the Beatles' *Yesterday*, and also *Good Vibrations* by the Beach Boys." Choi, an Engineering student at Waterloo currently on COVID furlough, says, "at the end of last year Joseph mentioned that anyone who wanted to try their hand at arranging something should go for it, so I did that. We played my arrangements at the rehearsal in February. I'm pretty happy with how they turned out. Working on pop songs isn't something you



Aldo Parisot

get much experience with. I really enjoy it because it is so different."

The idea of a cello ensemble at VAM had been germinating in Joseph's head for many years. "The genre of cello ensemble

*(Continued on next page)*



*Everyone is focused, playing to the best of their ability, the younger ones learning to lean on the senior players, and that makes it a great experience.*





Joseph Elworthy with members of the Cello Ensemble.

Front row, left to right: Allan Crawford, Joseph Elworthy, Olivia Cho, Lucas Guo

Back row, left to right: Charles Lim, Elias Tso, Qiuzi Nini Lu, Timmy Zhang, Allen Ding

was pretty much invented by Aldo Parisot; the Yale Cellos were world famous, Grammy nominated. In my years in New Haven, we played in Carnegie Hall every year, did incredible collaborations, tours, had composers like Dave Brubeck write for us, and so these genre-bending doors opened up. It all speaks to the incredible complexity and diversity of the cello as an instrument that can do so much. The catalyst for starting up this year was really the disappointment at having to postpone the Parisot Cellofest last June; we had wonderful artists that were going to come together, as well as members of the Parisot family, to convene and have a great festival and musical educational celebration. So it seemed like if ever there was a time to do something bold and make up for this disappointment, now was the time. I was very touched to have the blessing of the Parisot family to use Mr. Parisot's name, to honour his legacy, and to be permitted to use one of Mr. Parisot's designs on our APCE t-shirts."

The ensemble consists of 35 cellos – the maximum number for the hall under COVID protocols – ranging in age from about 8 to mid 20s. The group meets on the last Sunday of

each month for an extended rehearsal and masterclass. The ensemble is divided into four sections, much like a string quartet. "The major challenge with a cello ensemble is that everyone is playing the same instrument, so you have to maximize the broadest spectrum in terms of the register and the timbre of the different voicings, otherwise it will just sound like a big cauldron of soup. This is an incredibly important skill for all of the students to learn: What role do they play? Are they a secondary voice, or underlying rhythmic material? The fun thing though is that the roles are frequently switched around. The arrangements we choose are very democratic in terms of how they are distributed. As to the age and skill level challenges, I think the bar is set high. I look at some of the young members of the ensemble, and have such admiration and respect because they don't think to question whether they can keep up, they just do it. They are so resilient, just like, 'OK, I guess this is how it's done'. Everyone is focused, playing to the best of their ability, the younger ones learning to lean on the senior players, and that makes it a great experience."

*(Continued, p. 12)*

# Featured Student Achievements

## RCM Exam Results

### Gold Medal

Hii, Miles (Cyrena Huang), Grade 2 Cello  
Mantle, Miles (Hanh Nguyen), Grade 7 Classical Guitar  
Jin, Eric (A.K. Coope), Grade 10 Clarinet

### First Class Honours with Distinction

Tung, Candace (Joy Yeh), Grade 2 Harp  
Wong, Bonnie (Daniel Marshall), Grade 6 Theory

### First Class Honours

Hope-Goldsmith, Erin (Robyn Driedger-Klassen), Grade 6 Voice  
Fattetad, Chloe (Monica Lee), Grade 8 Piano  
Fattetad, Paige (Monica Lee), Grade 5 Piano  
MacLachlan, John (Daniel Marshall), Grade 8 Theory

## Suzuki Achievement Levels

Borins, Eva (Mary Thomson), Level 2 Cello  
Borins, Zoe (Nicki Stieda), Level 2 Violin  
Chan, Kara (Djina Stojkov), Level 3 Piano  
Chan, Marcus (Mary Thomson), Level 6 Cello  
Chuah, Audrey (Nicki Stieda), Level 3 Violin  
Cooper, Emma (Mary Thomson), Level 2 Cello  
Couch, Oliver (Mary Thomson), Level 2 Cello  
Cui, Adele (Kristl Armstrong), Level 1 Cello  
David, Shira (Kristl Armstrong), Level 5 Cello  
Duric, Aria (Yumiko Van Rooi), Level 1 Piano  
Friesen, Avery (Ashley Plaut), Level 1 Violin  
Gnam, Finn (Kristl Armstrong), Level 2 Cello  
Hii, Miles (Cyrena Huang), Level 1 Cello  
Hii, Miles (Cyrena Huang), Level 2 Cello  
Ho, Hyden (Ashley Plaut), Level 7 Violin  
Ho, Michael (Audrey Nodwell), Level 4 Cello  
Ho, Michael (Audrey Nodwell), Level 5 Cello  
Ho, Michael (Audrey Nodwell), Level 6 Cello  
Hui, Audrey (Audrey Nodwell), Level 1 Cello  
Lahiffe, Evan (Mary Thomson), Level 2 Cello  
Lahiffe, Evan (Mary Thomson), Level 3 Cello  
Lahiffe, Evan (Mary Thomson), Level 4 Cello  
Lahiffe, Evan (Mary Thomson), Level 5 Cello  
Lee, Adrian (Mary Thomson), Level 7 Cello  
Lee, Benjamin (Audrey Nodwell), Level 6 Cello  
Lee, Kristen (Nicki Stieda), Level 8 Violin  
Li, Felicia (Juan Wang), Level 2 Piano  
Li, Joanne (Juan Wang), Level 1 Piano  
Lin, Frank (Mary Thomson), Level 1 Cello  
Lin, Frank (Mary Thomson), Level 2 Cello  
Liu, Zen (Robin Wenham), Level 7 Violin  
Martins, Paloma (Mary Thomson), Level 1 Cello  
McDiarmid, Ben (Kristl Armstrong), Level 2 Cello  
Meire, Ethan (Audrey Nodwell), Level 1 Cello  
Mok, Gillian (Audrey Nodwell), Level 6 Cello  
Song, Isaak (Mark Luchkow), Level 2 Violin  
Sorbo, Mika (Kristl Armstrong), Level 1 Cello  
Van Jaarsveld, Leo (Audrey Nodwell), Level 2 Cello  
Wang, Albert (Yumiko Van Rooi), Level 1 Piano  
Wang, Alina (Yumiko Van Rooi), Level 1 Piano  
Yeh, Elizabeth (Nicki Stieda), Level 3 Violin  
Yip, Zoie (Audrey Nodwell), Level 2 Cello  
Yip, Zoie (Audrey Nodwell), Level 3 Cello  
Yu, Michi (Ashley Plaut), Level 7 Violin  
Yuan, Kingsley (Audrey Nodwell), Level 2 Cello



“We’ve been very fortunate (talk about turning lemons into lemonade) in having Olivia Cho and Robert Choi return to Vancouver because of the pandemic. They have been such a blessing in launching this new initiative. They are both ‘VAM kids’, their formative years were at the academy, and their desire to be part of this has been really touching.” Olivia Cho, the ensemble ‘concertmistress’, was pursuing her studies at the University of Michigan, and had been studying overseas in Germany when COVID-19 required her to return to Vancouver. Olivia recalls, “I was a very young cellist during the first Parisot Cellofest at VAM, and I remember sitting in the cello ensemble with all these really distinguished cellists and playing Villa Lobos, feeling what an honour it was to be included in such a group. I think during the pandemic, having the opportunity to play together, in person, is incredibly important.”

The middle portion of each monthly rehearsal is given over to a mini-masterclass. Joseph says, “It is such a great opportunity, when you have 35 cellists that gather, that’s a ready-made aficionado audience, built for a masterclass. I quickly realized that we have to capitalize on this. It is quite special about cellists that our repertoire is comparatively small, and so everybody knows every piece, and has very strong-held opinions about how it should be played, from a technical and an execution point of view. Now we’ve got mixed ages, mixed levels, so it is a fertile learning environment, because the younger kids are listening to repertoire that they are going to tackle eventually, and it is already embedding the learning process that will unfold. And often the older players will come up to me and say, ‘it was so beneficial to hear that young cellist play, what I was able to glean from what was discussed in the class, and what they observed.’ I want the masterclass to be focused on the art of performing. We’ll talk about technique as necessary, but I don’t want it to feel like a public private lesson. It should be more about how effective the cellist’s presentation was, how successful they were at projecting their musical ideas, what steps they could make to improve that. Too frequently instrumentalists become obsessed about perfection in their craft, and they lose that idea of ‘how is my music being received? How is it affecting people?’ Every student will have an opportunity to play. It is a flexible process, the students can say when they are ready. Carrie To does a great administrative job in monitoring who’s played, makes sure everyone has an opportunity who wants it, and it works out well.”

“For the masterclasses we have a marvellous pianist, Aslan Aslanov, who is a recent graduate from VAM’s Artist Diploma program, where he studied with Amanda Chan. He is doing his Master’s degree at UBC with Amanda Chan. VAM has been really fortunate to have a notable lineage of collaborative pianists who have decided that this was their special calling, notably some like Robert Koenig, who has gone on to be the pianist for Midori, for Sarah Chang, heavy hitters, and I feel that Aslan is in that mold, continuing that tradition.”

The Aldo Parisot Cello Ensemble will do a recording at the Orpheum Theatre at the end of May, performing from their repertoire which ranges from Brahms to Wagner and way beyond! The VAM community can look forward to many shared good vibrations from the cello ensemble for years to come.



ALDO PARISOT  
CELLO ENSEMBLE  
AT VANCOUVER ACADEMY OF MUSIC 

In addition to a legendary cello performer and pedagogue, Aldo Parisot was an accomplished visual artist. The Ensemble’s logo features a cellist that also appears in one of Mr. Parisot’s paintings, pictured above.



# PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Compositions *Cerebro (Brain)* for oboe by **DARÍO ACOSTA** (College composition, Edward Top) and *Leaves* for English horn by **HENRY FROM** (YACP composition, Edward Top) have been selected for performance by Beth Orson during the 2021 Sonic Boom Festival on March 27, 2021.

*Scattered Light* by **JAVIER CANSECO** (VAM alumnus composition, Edward Top) was performed by Rachel Kiyo Iwaasa, piano, on March 23, 2021 during the Sonic Boom Festival.

**HENRY FROM** and **LUCAS O'BRIEN** will be participating in the Merriman Young Composers Workshop this spring, collaborating with members of the Seattle Symphony Orchestra.

**LEONARD GAO** (YACP composition alumnus, Edward Top) started his composition studies at UBC under the tutelage of Professor Dorothy Chang.

**SOPHIA MYLES, LUCAS GAO, and LUCAS O'BRIEN** (YACP composition, Edward Top) participated in the Compocon workshop with ensemble Standing Wave. Sophia Myles was the youngest participant.

**LUCAS O'BRIEN** (YACP composition, Edward Top) released his solo album *Simple* on Spotify.

**FRANCIS SADLEIR** and **HENRY FROM** (YACP composition, Edward Top) participated in the First Annual Elliot Weisgarber Workshop of the Piano and Erhu Project (PEP) with Nicole Li, erhu, and Corey Hamm, piano.

**KARL SCHMIDT** (composition, Edward Top) has been selected for participation in the East Vancouver Community Music School Celebrate Young Composers (CYC) masterclass.

Video recordings by the Pacific Baroque Orchestra of *Ocean Rush* by **KAMRAN SHAHROKHI** (VAM alumnus, composition Edward Top, Benton Roark), *Dances at the End of Time* by **HENRY FROM** (YACP composition, Edward Top), alongside *Clairvoyant* by Edward Top, were broadcast on YouTube on March 24, 2021 during Vancouver Pro Musica's Sonic Boom Festival.

Recordings of compositions by **EDWARD TOP** (composition faculty) are now available for listening on Spotify.



## VAM Welcomes Nancy DiNovo as Head of the Chamber Music Department

Nancy DiNovo, the newly-appointed Head of VAM's Chamber Music Department says, "For the last year I've been learning more and more stuff about playing the violin. I haven't been bored for a second!" Her voice projects energy, enthusiasm, and a love of playing that permeates the whole conversation. "Pre-pandemic, back in 2019, I adjudicated the strings at the newly-established VAM Performance Exams; it was meant to be run like a usual music festival, and somebody would play, and I would write. But I don't enjoy that experience; I wanted to talk to the kids, and Joseph [Elworthy] said it was very successful, and that there was a lot of extremely good feedback. Then he called me and asked me to come to lunch, and I thought 'something's afoot!' He said that, although there has been chamber music at VAM there hasn't been a formal structure, and he wanted somebody to be the 'face' of chamber music, to tie it all together."

Joseph began observing that chamber music was, to some extent, developing a life of its own at VAM. He says, "It was great to see, in the last couple of years, as all the orchestras shifted to Saturdays, that there was a plethora of activity through the orchestral program on Saturdays, and then people were looking for other things to do between their lesson and their orchestra rehearsal, and chamber music became almost a logistical by-product. It kind of took off on its own. A lot of people who have gone through formal musical training frequently echo the disappointment that chamber music opportunities were few and far between. I'm looking back at my pathway at Yale and Juilliard. Sure I was involved in chamber music in classes, but it rarely becomes an experience that goes beyond fulfilling an academic requirement. Why is that? Everyone is so busy focusing on solo playing, and administratively it is a Gordian knot to put together, and so chamber music is slightly marginalized.

I feel like the salient chamber music experiences are the ones where musicians are catalysts themselves rather than waiting for the institutions to do it for them. It became clear to me that for the chamber music program at VAM to flourish it needed someone to take that pastorship role, to oversee the program, liaise with the coaches, be part of the formation of the groups, give it some vision. It became clear that the role of department head needed addressing.”

Joseph says, “Nancy is one of the most respected members of Vancouver’s musical community and has been a staple of that community for many decades now. I have always had huge respect and admiration for her, because she is one of the most innovative and diverse musicians that I know. She is able to pivot from being a fabulous educator to being a concert soloist to being an orchestral violinist, chamber musician, she is able to do it all and I’ve always been intrigued at her own journey through music. It was something that was an internal fire that she fuelled. She has leadership qualities, she has musicianship in spades, and is one of the most inspirational educators I have ever seen. This became evident to me when one of our young chamber

music string quartet competition groups was going up to Banff two summers ago as young ambassadors representing VAM. Nancy was involved in preparing them for this, and it was marvellous to see how she honed them, and then she took it upon herself to come up to Banff because she wanted to hear how they performed, how they were received by the fabulous musicians who were teaching them, like Joel Krosnick from the Juilliard String Quartet. Nancy is an incredibly generous, big-hearted person who loves to teach and impart her knowledge to anyone who is hungry to receive it.”

Nancy started playing the violin at age 13 in a public school music program, which instilled in her a great fondness for public school music, because “it’s a place where kids who wouldn’t have a chance to experience playing an instrument get to be exposed to that, and you never know who’s gonna spark on it,” she says. Her family had recently moved from the Bay area to Portland, Oregon, and she felt ‘a little bit at sea’, having given up friends and connections. “The string teacher came into my grade 8 classroom and asked if

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Left: Nancy and her husband, Steve, with many layers of clothing at Glacier Bay in July 2019  
Right: Nancy and a group of 7 wonderful students at Marrowstone Music Festival in August 1991, after performing the Mendelssohn Octet together.



*My hope is that we can get people playing chamber music from 6 to 80. It's one of the greatest gifts we can give ourselves.*



anybody wanted to start in the beginning string class. I had already tried this a little bit about a year earlier, played for a few months, and then we moved, so I started completely fresh. It was the week of my 13th birthday. In those days, what is now the Oregon Symphony was the Portland Symphony. Everybody in the orchestra had a day job, and most of them were teaching in the public school system, so we had a very high level of public school music teachers. My teacher was the principal violist of the orchestra, and he was a wonderfully generous person. He took me aside one day and said I should get a private teacher, and take a summer course before high school, and then definitely sign up for the high school orchestra. So the private teacher I ended up with happened to be the assistant conductor of the Youth Orchestra, and he wanted all his students to play there. Once I got there, I discovered this remarkable side venture that students could do, and that was playing string quartets. I first played quartets when I was 15 – started off with early Haydn – and by the time I graduated from the Youth Orchestra at age 21 I was playing Bartok. I got a reputation of being the go-to person if you wanted a quartet for an event, a reception, a wedding whatever. It was the focal point of my social life. All my friends were musicians, we wanted to play quartets, so that's what we did. We were mostly self-coached, but we attended summer programs, and I've worked with some pretty great people. The youth orchestra, of which I eventually became concert master, was also the youth orchestra of Robert Mann, founder of the Juilliard Quartet, and they would come to town, and we would be assigned a coach. So there is a tradition in Portland, it's in the water or the air or something, of playing chamber music."

"When Joseph asked me if I wanted to do this, I liked the idea of coaching chamber music but there wasn't

really a job description. So since I've been here I get to come up with ideas and it's wonderful to present these ideas for consideration, for example how can we get more performance going during a pandemic? It is after all a performance art; it's not enough to sit in a room and learn something and then learn something else. It is the experience of sharing it that makes it really valuable. All the chamber music has been in-person; we are all masked, and play in different rooms, with distancing. We couldn't do chamber music any other way. But the issue that was fairly clear was that there was no completion through performance. So I proposed that each group could present something that they had done in the first term, and they could be recorded in the recital hall. I knew the orchestras were doing this, so I thought, hey we can do that too. Each group was given enough time to do their piece two or three times. So they get to have the experience of what it is like to record, which is quite different from performing in public, but there was no editing, so it was a virtual live performance. We are going to put them all together on one video to share with the VAM family."

Participation levels for the new chamber music program are strong, with almost 25 different ensembles, in groups starting around ages six to eight, all the way up to adult learning participants. Nancy says, "My hope is that we can get people playing chamber music from 6 to 80. It's one of the greatest gifts we can give ourselves. Chamber music is the great leveller. You could sit down with a group of people your own age, and if you are all at different skill levels you will probably all have a miserable time. You can sit down as a person of 35, with a child of 11. What connects you is not your age but your skill level. If the skill levels are compatible you can play music. The differences between us drop away, and it is our ability to address ourselves to the moment."





风雨走遍了世界的角落  
Wind and rain visited everywhere on the earth

# Singing the Same Song

VAM Symphony Orchestra  
Collaborates with Poly WeDo  
Children's Chorus in China for a  
Digital Performance

Last fall, a wonderful activity took place: the Vancouver Academy of Music Symphony Orchestra and the Poly WeDo Youth Choir of China, together apart, collaborated across a geographic and cultural distance, in a time of global

isolation, to create a musical synergy of young people to make music full of hope, power and triumph.

This collaboration represents several years of planning, interrupted abruptly by a global pandemic. Says Ian Parker, Music Director and Conductor of the VAMSO, "It was Joseph [Elworthy's] planning over two or three years to make this happen for VAM. It speaks to Joseph's incredible creativity that he navigated the incredible change of events throughout the pandemic. This momentum that Joseph had created, and then the sudden cancellation of the VAMSO tour to China, precipitated the use of the online process."

Ye Yuan, Project Manager for Poly Culture North America, outlines the history of the project: "As the North American headquarters of Poly Culture Group, Poly Culture North America is committed to promoting Poly Culture Group's main business sectors in the North American market, including performance management, art business and auction, as well as film investment, strengthening bilateral arts and cultural exchanges between China and

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Canada. Poly Culture North America was introduced into Vancouver by HQ Vancouver [a public-private partnership that promotes British Columbia as a location for head offices of international companies]. When Poly Culture North America was officially established in the autumn of 2015, the Honourable Yuen Pau Woo, who was the former President of HQ Vancouver, and is on the Board of Directors of the Vancouver Academy of Music, invited us to watch an excellent performance of the VAMSO in the Orpheum Theater. At the reception after the performance, which was also the official welcome party of our company, Senator Yuen Pau Woo introduced Poly Culture North America and VAM to get to know each other, thus opening a friendly and cooperative relationship between our company and VAM.”

Says Ye Yuan, “Since establishing contact with VAM, we had hoped to bring the VAMSO to China for a tour. In 2019, the two organizations signed a long-term Memorandum of Understanding and confirmed the plan to realize the VAMSO China tour in 2020. However, due to the pandemic, the tour had to be postponed. We knew that the VAM members had been rehearsing very hard for the

## Music in the Air: A Digital Show

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### Featuring:

- VAMSO performing collaboratively with Poly WeDo Children’s Choir (pictured, p. 17)
- Performances by Gao Can, violin; Joseph Elworthy, cello; and Ian Parker, piano (pictured left to right, above)
- And more!

China tour, and the tour postponement would be a great disappointment for the VAMSO members and Chinese music fans. Therefore, we invited the Poly WeDo Youth Choir to “represent” the VAMSO performing at the Forbidden City Concert Hall stage, which was supposed to be the first stage of the VAMSO China Tour, to cooperate with the VAMSO online. In this way, the virtual performance enabled audiences from China, Canada, and even all around the world to enjoy the show without leaving their homes and to see how the VAMSO has overcome all the difficulties and hardship in the rehearsal and preparation for this show, making up for the regrets resulting from the delayed tour. Such online collaborations can also inspire people who have to work and be quarantined at home because of the pandemic, spreading love and hope.”



*Music knows no borders and can break through cultural boundaries and language barriers. Through the virtual collaboration, we can overcome spatial and temporal limitations, spreading hope and love in the time of a pandemic.*



The award-winning Poly WeDo Children’s Chorus, featured in *The Same Song* collaboration, is one of the most prominent children’s choruses in China today. Under Artistic Director Yang Li and Conductor Ma Ding they have participated in major national-level events, and have represented China at international youth choral competitions, including being awarded the Gold Medal in the world folk song group and the Silver Medal in the children’s voice group at the Florence International Choir Festival in Italy (July 2018), and collaborating with the Mädchenchor der Sing Akademie zu Berlin (April 2019).

Poly WeDo is a new brand developed by the Poly Culture Group which represents and embodies the highest quality

of Poly Culture Group in Arts & Culture Education. Poly WeDo is committed to cultivating a new generation in China with the qualities of global citizens. It also aims to create a high-quality music & art community not only for musicians, but also for families where music can be integrated across generations. The children, who are students of different schools from Grade 1 to Grade 9, attend school on weekdays and get instructed by Poly WeDo on weekends. Trained by the Poly WeDo chorus teaching system, they are offered opportunities to participate in competitions and performances during holidays. Additionally, Poly WeDo provides a multitude of courses including Music Initiation Class, Basic Music Theory, String Orchestra, Traditional Chinese Painting, Piano, Violin, Chinese Music, and Percussion among others. The headquarters of Poly WeDo are located behind the Canadian Embassy in Beijing, with branches in Suzhou and Shenzhen. Participants in the collaboration are students from the Children’s Chorus of Poly WeDo Beijing headquarters.

“*The Same Song* is quite a famous piece of music in China”, says Ian Parker. “It was arranged for orchestra and choir, and I recorded the orchestral part with our musicians of VAMSO. Then the choir then took the orchestral recording and sang along to complete the composition. So it was a cross-pacific project done by click track and recording on our end, and singing along with our recording on their end. And this piece was then played to celebrate the New Year of 2021, to be a more triumphant and happy year – although of course we are still not out of the pandemic – but at the time it was positive hopeful outlook for the storm being over. It was a very emotional experience when I saw the video of their choir director conducting the choir in their hall, with our music playing along. It was really quite special ... for us to celebrate music, and youth, and the New Year.”

The biggest challenge in producing the collaboration, says Ye Yuan, was being unable to communicate in person, relying on online communication, and working with the time difference. In spite of this, he says that “music knows no borders and can break through cultural boundaries and language barriers. Through the virtual collaboration, we can overcome spatial and temporal limitations, spreading hope and love in the time of a pandemic.”





Campaign Goal

**84%**  
complete!

**50**

The **Spirit** of 50

A CAMPAIGN TO CELEBRATE VAM'S 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

We are uplifted by the deep care and generosity of all who have stepped forward in support of our initiatives to keep our students learning. The challenges of the current times have forever changed channels of interaction, learning, and creativity, and VAM will emerge as a transformed institution while steadfast in its pursuit of excellence in education.

**Your gifts to the Spirit of 50 Campaign**, now at 84% of its goal, will enable our students to re-enter our doors into revitalized spaces for learning and exploration, building a lasting legacy in the new world of music education. Because of your enduring commitment to the success of our students and their musical journey, VAM's future is bright. Thank you.

**[vam.ca/spiritof50](http://vam.ca/spiritof50)**