



# Kettering Concerts

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## A difficult year

2022 has proven to be more of a challenge to the Kettering Concerts committee than was the first half of 2020 when all concerts were cancelled. Planned concerts by the Jennifer Marten-Smith and Karen Smithies piano duo in April, and later by one by Sue Collins and Alexey Yemtsov were made impossible by COVID-19 infections. Alexey agreed to do a solo recital but that had to be rescheduled on short notice by part of the Kettering Hall ceiling collapsing. In October the planned concert by the Spina & Benignetti piano duo was cancelled due to some problem with an airline not allowing them to board their flight in Paris. While Jennifer and Karen were willing to fill in, this required a date change. Just when we hoped things had settled down we learned that Yue-hong Cha, the first violinist of the Chrysantha Quartet, had badly cut a finger of her left finger and was in doubt for their November concert. In the event that Yue-Hong cannot play, Elinor Lea who was first violin in the Huon Quartet has agreed to replace Yue-Hong.

## Concerts Well Received

Despite all the changes in performers, programmes and dates, the concerts have been well received. Two were reviewed by Peter Donnelly.

### 18 September 2022 - Viola and Piano Duo - Jennifer Marten-Smith (piano), William Newbery (viola)

The main attraction here was the world premiere of a new work by Elena Kats-Chernin AO, commissioned by the performers and friends. The viola has always been a Cinderella instrument in terms of the relatively meagre number of solo and concertante options available to it. This new one will almost certainly enter the repertoire, as it is light, accessible and great fun for both audience and players. The whimsical titles for each of the four brief movements of 'A Life in a Day of a Viola' - Waking up, Work, Wandering and Wondering, With a Twist of a Twist - reflect the mood and tone. The second movement manages to poke gentle fun at the sometimes humdrum passages assigned to the instrument in its normal orchestral role while the third movement is contrastingly gently reflective. William Newbery and Jennifer Marten-Smith, always a mutually understanding and supportive duo, played the new composition with great affection and aplomb.

The program opened with Carl Stamitz's delightfully Mozartian 'Sonata in B flat Major for Viola and Piano', and it was given with elegance and style. For me though, the highlight was a beautifully judged rendition of Schubert's 'Arpeggione Sonata in A minor D. 821'. It is the only major piece still heard today for the extinct 'bowed guitar' styled instrument that is now most frequently replaced by the cello. Newbery provided affectionate legato phrasing on viola with notably warm and attentive work from Marten-Smith, especially in the sensitively achieved central Adagio movement; Schubert's richly memorable lyricism was here lovingly expressed throughout. The brief encore provided a contrasting shift to the Baroque with the first movement from Benedetto Marcello's (1686-1739) 'Sonata No 6 in G major'.

### 23 October 2022 - Four Hands, One Piano - Jennifer Marten-Smith & Karen Smithies

This one was a hoot, featuring two marvellous pianists - each accomplished recitalists with backgrounds that include extensive experience in repeteur and accompanying roles. There was total rapport, risk-taking, and the ability to bounce musical responses off one another in a seemingly spontaneous way. Of course this does not happen by accident. Only the most skilled musicians can do this, and on the basis of a bedrock of careful preparation. For this performance they took turns in undertaking the treble (primo) and bass (secondo) roles.

The opening Mozart (Jennifer's favourite composer!) Sonata for Piano Four-Hands K 358 was unalloyed delight - spirited and sensitive. The humour in Beethoven's 8 Variations on a Theme by Count Waldstein, WoO 67 was played for all its worth along with refinement and virtuosity of execution.

In a departure from the printed program, there were welcome short pieces by three additional composers. Cécile Chaminade (1857-1944) was represented by her charming and very French-sounding Nos. 1 and 2 from 6 Pièces romantiques Op. 55. Brisbane-born Stephen Cronin wrote his Perihelion Rag in 1988 for the then resident University of Queensland ensemble of friends of the same name; 'perihelion' implying an orbit 'closest to the sun' and being a reference to the large number of sunny days experienced in Queensland (in normal

years!). Accessible and witty, the piece was arranged for piano 4-hands in 2014.

The fun continued with 3 Brahms Hungarian Dances and the delightful Petite Suite L 65 by Debussy. A hair-raisingly thrilling and technically challenging performance of Khachaturian's Sabre Dance (from the ballet 'Gayane') completed the official program. Greg Anderson's 'Papageno!' based on Papageno's arias in Mozart's Die Zauberflöte, K. 620 was a considerable bonus as the encore.

Thanks to Peter Donnelly for his excellent reviews.

### What's in a name?

Our final concert for 2022 includes a work by Juan Crisóstomo Jacobo Antonio de Arriaga y Balzola. He was born in 1806 in Bilbao, a town in the Basque part of northern Spain. He showed great aptitude as a musician such that at age 15 he was sent for studies at the *Paris Conservatoire* in both violin and music theory. He was so successful that he quickly became a teaching assistant and an established composer. The string quartet to be performed in Kettering is one of three he wrote at age 16. Tragically he died just short of his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Subsequent to his death he gained the nickname "The Spanish Mozart". There are a number of reasons for this: that like Mozart he was a child prodigy; he was born on what would have been Mozart's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday; like Mozart, he died young; he made a great impact on Basque culture and that of Spain itself; and he shared his first baptismal names with Mozart. "That's not right" I hear you say - "Mozart's first names were Wolfgang Amadeus". Well... not quite. Mozart's baptismal name was Johannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus Mozart. The plot thickens - there's no Amadeus in there.

So the claim about first names is true to the extent that you accept *Juan Crisóstomo* and *Johannes Chrysostomus* are equivalent. The equivalence of the Spanish *Juan*, the German *Johannes*, and indeed the English *John* are simple. Less obvious is that the Spanish *Crisóstomo* and Mozart's *Chrysostomus* are both derived from the Greek *Χρυσόστομος* (meaning "golden mouth"). Q.E.D.

So what about Amadeus? That's again a case of translations. The name Theophilus is from the Greek *Θεόφιλος* meaning "friend of god" or "loving god" which in Latin is *Amadeus*. Seems the adoption of "stage names" goes back a while.

### 2023 Concerts

Here are the concerts planned for 2023. Let's hope 2023 is a bit more stable than 2022.

- Mar 5  
Piano recital - Francesca Khalifa (N.Y.)
- Apr 23  
Bliss Quintet - Dinah Woods (Oboe) & string Qt.
- May 21  
Cello recital - Jonathan Békés
- Aug 20  
Piano recital - Luke Frost
- Sep 17  
Piano & viola duo - Jennifer Marten-Smith & William Newberry
- Oct 8  
Piano Trio - Sue Collins and colleagues
- Nov 12  
Hartz Trio - Alexandra Békés, Natalya Bing, Dianne Legg

### Reminder - A Commission

If we can raise sufficient funds, Kettering Concerts will commission a new string quartet to be written by Elena Kats-Chernin, and to be premièred by the Tasmanian String Quartet in Kettering. Elena is keen to do this. Why not help with a donation to the fund. You can do this by following the Commissions link on our website. At the moment we have reached 37% of the target. Donations are tax deductible.