McGill
Schulich School of Music
École de musique Schulich

Salle Tanna Schulich Hall

527, rue Sherbrooke Ouest, Montréal, QC
www.mcgill.ca/music

Le dimanche 14 decembre 2025
à 17 h

Sunday, December 14, 2025
5:00 p.m.

Récital de maîtrise

Master's Recital

Jane Mockus

alto/viola

with Alex Shafirov, piano

classe de / class of
Victor Fournelle-Blain

Desafio I for viola and orchestra/ pour alto et orchestre — Marlos Nobre (1939 – 2024)

Sonata in a minor, D. 821, “Arpeggione”/ Sonate en la mineur, D. 821, “Arpeggione” — Franz Schubert (1797 – 1828)

I. Allegro Moderato
II. Adagio
III. Allegretto

Elegy/Élégie — Gabriel Fauré (1845 – 1924)

Ce concert fait partie des épreuves imposées aux étudiantes et étudiants pour l’obtention de leur diplôme respectif.
Ce programme a été préparé par l'interprète du récital.
This concert is presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree or diploma programme of the student listed.
This program was prepared by the student performing in the recital.

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Desafio I - Marlos Nobre

Marlos Nobre was one of the preeminent composers of Brazil in recent decades, and was most known for his philosophy of utilizing traditional elements of Brazilian and Latin American music in his compositions without compromising his culture. He strongly resisted the idea of putting these Brazilian musical themes to the "classical music framework". He described this style of adaptation as, "the same repetitions of basic rhythmic formulas, constructed in absolutely symmetric frameworks, in predictable measures, and with very ordinary harmonic progressions." The idea of carrying cultural music forward, without imprisoning it in a static European tradition, had been present for much of his life. In an interview, he describes his first encounter with the restrictive possibilities of classical music, as he played and improvised traditional music he'd overheard, while at conservatory in his youth. "When I entered the Pernambuco Music Conservatory, I, who always improvised a lot, naively played a *frevo* (a type of Brazilian dance) I composed at the piano during one of my classes. The Director of the Conservatory passed by the classroom and soon after I was called to his office: 'This is a serious Conservatory, boy, and here you cannot play this street music.' This was the warning I received, right from the beginning. The shock was enormous, because I could not understand why the music that fascinated me the most was not music appropriate for the Conservatory! Later I would understand: the own name of the institution gave me the answer: Conservatory means clearly 'to conserve' the past and not re-create the future." Nobre also felt it was time for traditional Brazilian music to join the musical advancements of the earlier twentieth century, and he embraced techniques such as polytonality in his many works. He challenged the norm of formulaic, stagnant "cultural" music in all of his works, including in the *Desafio I* that I will play today.

In Brazil, a *desafio* is a singing challenge. Two country or folk singer-guitarists, with improvised lyrics and self-accompaniment on their guitars, spar verbally with quick, alternating verses. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a *desafio* literally translates to a dare, provocation, or challenge. Nobre's *Desafio I* for viola and piano is a part of a number of *desafios*, written for a wide variety of instruments, that Nobre created throughout his lifetime. His *desafios* often begin with cadenzas to highlight the solo instrument, and throughout the piece, include aspects that evoke the strumming nature of the guitars present in the original singing tradition. I was introduced to this work, and the composer, by a graduate student instructor leading my ear-training classes at University of Michigan, Carlos Perez Tabares. He was invested in using examples for ear training material that diverged from the European tradition. I found that to be an extremely important experience in my music education, as we are often mired in the habit of preserving the past, as opposed to expanding our worldview- just as Maestro Nobre found in his youth. Please enjoy this excellent composition.

Arpeggione Sonata/ Sonate Arpeggione - Franz Schubert

Franz Schubert lived a rather short, extremely musically productive, and often rather unfortunate life. He wrote an unprecedented amount of music, mostly songs, despite his short life and the almost constant inconvenience and disappointment that tended to trail him. He was a prodigy, and his initial music training came from family; lessons came from both his father and his brother, which allowed him to become quite capable at violin and piano before the age of ten. After studies and experiences in choir and composition in Vienna's Imperial Seminary, he taught younger students at his father's school. During this time, he found himself limited in his enjoyment and his capacity to be creative, especially whilst living with his father. In addition, Schubert was unable to marry the woman he loved due to laws at the time, which forbade marriage if the suitor was unable to prove he had the means to support a family. Respite from the disappointment and frustration came from invitations from friends to spend time with them at their residences, freeing him from his routine and allowing for more creative inspiration. Schubert's group of close friends met fairly frequently and provided an alternative to what was described as an "often intense solitude", though in which he was known to write his most profound works. At one point he was briefly arrested, along with a few other of his friends, for gatherings which sparked suspicion of "revolutionary ideas" from the Viennese government. The list of inconveniences to Schubert continues: he was nicknamed "Schwammerl" by his friends because of his diminutive stature, which in certain German dialects translates basically to "little mushroom". All twenty of his attempts to break into stage writing seem to have failed. Many historians believe he was depressed, if not also afflicted with a personality disorder. He died of illness at the young age of 31, and it is still debated of which illness he suffered. Though the theory of syphilis is common, it isn't supported by the typical symptoms; there was no long-term decline in his mental health or physical capacity, as evidenced by his fondness of taking long walks and by his ability to compose up until just before his death. With the plethora of examples of unfortunate events listed- and many more I didn't delve into- it is easy to see the Arpeggione sonata as heavy and rather depressing; yet, there is a great amount of playfulness, cheeriness, and light in this piece that shows Schubert's capacity for positivity and perseverance.

Several editions of this sonata exist, each slightly unique, and due to the decline of the piece's intended instrument. Similar in structure to the bass viol and with strings like a guitar, the arpeggione's design allowed for many jumps, quick runs, and double stops. The instrument was invented in the early 1820s, and despite a brief period of popularity, it declined in favor by the time Schubert's sonata was published in 1871 (though he wrote the sonata in 1824). The piece is dedicated to Vincenz Schuster, who the IMSLP Petrucci Music Library describes as "probably history's only professional arpeggione player." Because of the lack of modern arpeggione players, the piece has been transcribed for cello (and viola) particularly. Because of this, octave changes are common in these transcriptions. This particular version, the International edition, attempts to stay true to the instrument's capability for jumps from low to high ranges. Despite the inherent athleticism, violist Antoine Tamestit describes the personality of the piece as "not a showpiece, it's an intimate piece." Modern arpeggione player and professor Peter Yates' experience with the instrument corroborates this interpretation, concluding that the politeness of the

instrument's sound likely contributed to its inability to hold popularity. "Music was moving in the direction of bigger orchestras, bigger halls, louder sound … the more delicate, more poetical soft-voiced instrument wasn't fitting in." He also notes that the instrument is difficult to hold and play, and that "you can't set a degree of pressure on one string because you'd get two strings instead of one." Aside from Yates, there are very few arpeggione players, and none of them dedicated solely to the instrument. Schubert's sonata has been transcribed for a number of modern instruments in addition to the aforementioned cello and viola versions, including flute, guitar, clarinet, and oboe.

Elegy/Élégie - Gabriel Fauré

Gabriel Faure is known as one of the most important French composers of history, bridging the gap between Romanticism and the 20th century with his numerous and impactful compositions. He was born to a non-musical family, and his training began with self-led playing of the harmonium in a chapel attached to the school his father taught at. An elderly blind woman heard his playing and advised his family to invest in his musical talent, as did other colleagues of his father. Eventually he was sent to Paris, where he studied under Louis Niedermeyer and Camille Saint-Saens, the latter of whom remained a long-term mentor and friend.

The Elegy was initially conceived as a slow movement to a cello sonata that Faure was in the process of writing. When the rest of the sonata never came fully to fruition, he published the Elegy as a separate work. He was inspired partially by the success of his violin sonata, an encouragement to continue composing chamber works. The Elegy begins with a march-like, somber piano introduction, and a similarly melancholic solo cello (or in this case, viola) line. I particularly like the piece's description in the Music@Menlo program notes by Patrick Castillo. "The theme's melodic contour traces a slow descent, as if insisting on its own dignity as it approaches its nadir. A contrasting middle section modulates to A-flat major, but the music retains its melancholia, as if offering a tearful remembrance of better times. A sudden anguished eruption heralds the return of the opening melody, transformed now from a somber dirge to a piercing cry." This vivid description fits the composition well, encompassing the wide range of expressions of grief that Faure encapsulates in this brief piece. Faure's writing was greatly influenced by his mentor, Camille Saint-Saens; the Elegy was first performed privately at Saint-Saens' residence. With this work and others, Faure aided in the transition from the lush Romantic compositions of his predecessors to the Impressionist style, which became particularly associated with Faure's student Ravel. Positive reception of the Elegy led conductor Edouard Colonne to request a version for solo cello and orchestra. This arrangement for viola is by Varun Soontornniyomkij, who has completed a number of arrangements for viola of popular pieces initially for violin and cello. Soontornniyomkij is a graduate of the University of California, San Diego. More of his arrangements can be found on IMSLP, or on his personal website.