

Waterloo Chamber Players Explores the Bohemian Landscape

Anita Brooks Kirkland

The Waterloo Chamber Players is pleased to present the third and final concert of the 2022-23 season, *Bohemian Landscape*, on Sunday May 7 at 3 pm, in the Rotunda at Kitchener City Hall. Joining us for this concert will be guest conductor, Kira Omelchenko.



This has been a season of exploration for the WCP as we work with three wonderful guest conductors, all of whom are interested in becoming the orchestra's principal conductor. We started our journey with Ian Whitman sharing *Fantastic Sounds* in November, and continued with Andrew Chung's *Sherwood Legend* concert in February.

As a member of the orchestra, I am pleased to share a recent conversation with our third and final candidate, Kira Omelchenko, Associate Dean of Performance and Recruitment, Associate Professor of Music, and Conductor of the Symphony Orchestra at Wilfrid Laurier University's Faculty of Music. Dr. Omelchenko has had a distinguished career as a conductor, music educator, and academic, and holds a doctoral degree in orchestral conducting from the University of Iowa.

A Passion for People and Making Music Together

Throughout our conversation, Kira's passion for connecting with people was very apparent. She sees the conductor's role as that of a collaborative artist, connecting with people on a human level. Music brings people together, she says, and as a conductor she loves learning about people's passions and finding common ground. "I can't make music by myself as a conductor! Making music together is an opportunity to create magic. An orchestra has the power to bring people together with a common goal, and gives us the ability to make a positive and influential impact on the world."

Mentorship is an important part of Kira's interest in people. As an advocate for diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility, she serves on the orchestra panel for *And We Were Heard (AWWH)*, an organization that brings quality recordings of works by underrepresented composers, and is a mentor for *Girls Who Conduct*, a program that encourages the upcoming generation of women, women-identifying, and non-binary conductors.

The Beautiful Sounds an Orchestra Can Create

Of course as a member of the orchestra I was very eager to discuss the repertoire that Dr. Omelchenko has selected for the May 7 concert; Georges Bizet's *Carmen Suite No. 1 Selections*, Cécile Chaminade's *Callirhoë Suite, Op 37*, and Anton Dvorak's *Symphony No. 8*.

As the concert theme implies, the music in the program takes inspiration from the landscape. Dvorak in particular was inspired by the land and by nature, and how nature can tie into identity and into music. The composers are connected through their musical approach to using the rich variety of beautiful sounds that the orchestra can create. There is something for everyone on this program, from the very familiar *Carmen Suite* by Bizet to Cécile Chaminade, a female composer whose orchestral works are not performed as frequently. Chaminade was, in fact, a neighbour and family friend of Bizet, who encouraged her parents to let her study music formally. Recognizing her talent from a very young age, Bizet called her "my little Mozart".

The WCP in a Community of Music Making

Our conversation found its way to this opportunity to work with the Waterloo Chamber Players. As it turns out, community engagement is an area of particular academic and musical interest for Dr. Omelchenko. Working with the WCP would mean getting to know the local musical community a bit better. "What's out there? What's the Kitchener-Waterloo community like now?" Kira is eager to get to meet and work with the WCP musicians, to get to know the board, and to help the organization with its vision. She is very interested in talking with the musicians about their goals, emphasizing the importance of listening first. "It is a collaborative effort, and something to share with the greater community."

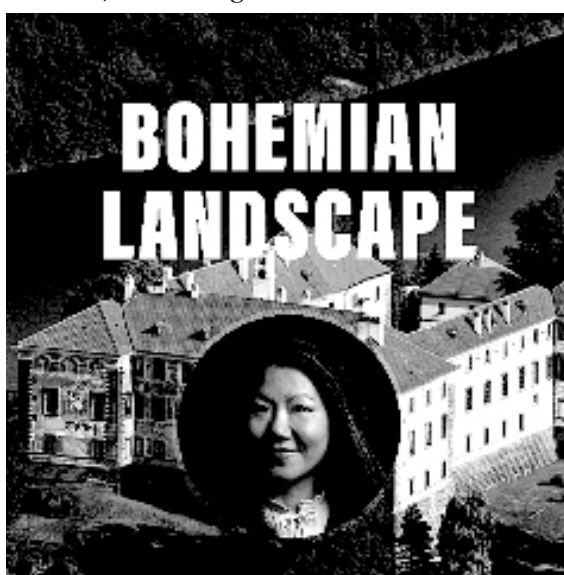
High Expectations Reap High Rewards

Dr. Omelchenko's biography as a conductor, music educator, and academic is extremely impressive, and she makes the connection between striving for excellence and inspiring others to have similarly high expectations for themselves. "As an academic and musician, it is important to keep growing and to have high expectations of oneself. I need to be the best role model I can be in this regard."

Kira is certainly a fine role model, gearing up to guest conduct at Carnegie Hall and Vienna, and having recently been selected for a prestigious Fulbright Scholar Award. She will be spending five months in New Zealand conducting, teaching, mentoring students, collaborating with local composers, and conducting research in the National Library of New Zealand. Her research will involve connecting with contemporary composers and exploring the work of potentially unknown composers from New Zealand's past. "The orchestral canon has been limited traditionally to European and Western music. One of my goals is to help expand the orchestral repertoire and give time and space for new voices, like New Zealand's Indigenous composers. Looking to the future, Kira hopes to apply her experience and lessons learned in New Zealand back to her work here in Canada.

Explore the Bohemian Landscape with the WCP

Kira Omelchenko's inspiring attitude to music, musicians, and the potential of the orchestra promise to make our upcoming collaboration particularly exciting. We look forward to working with her as our guest conductor this spring, and invite you to explore the Bohemian Landscape with us on May 7.



Kira Omelchenko Guest Conductor

Bizet: *Aragonaise, Intermezzo,
Les Torreadors from Carmen Suite No. 1*
Cécile Chaminade: *Callirhoë Suite*
Dvorak: *Symphony No. 8*

Sunday, May 7, 3:00 p.m.
Kitchener City Hall Rotunda
200 King St., W.

Tickets at the door: Pay-what-you-can
519-830-1627 waterboocp@gmail.com
waterboochamberplayers.com

COVID precautions:
for the safety of our players and guests,
please self-screen and wear a mask.