

September 2016
Purple-Rooted Ensemble Goes Global

On the heels of Canada's Olympic effort in Rio, classical music ensemble Magisterra Soloists stormed the concert halls of Brazil in a showcase of Canadian talent. The professional chamber music ensemble, spearheaded by Professor Annette-Barbara Vogel from Western University, exists to fill a gap in the Canadian and International artistic landscape.

Magisterra Soloists seeks out lesser-known works and actively champions Canadian compositions, while launching young Canadian musicians onto the concert stage. Although the ensemble was formed only in the Fall of 2015 and has been active for less than eight months, in August they embarked on their first international tour: a six-city trek across South America's largest country. The tour program featured Sapling a brand new work by Canadian composer Emily Doolittle. Vogel, who has received grants for previous artistic projects at Western totalling in the six-digits, created the complete tour plan and coordinated the logistics. She was assisted by Western alumnus Mikela Witjes and Don Wright Faculty of Music (DWFOM) graduate student Jordan Clayton.

When Vogel began forming her "dream team" last summer for this project which she had been incubating for nearly ten years, her eyes were already firmly set on Brazil. While her career as a chamber musician and soloist has flown her across the globe many times over, the German-born violinist has developed a special relationship with this country. She has been there over a dozen times to perform with Brazil's finest and intends to continue her frequent visits.

As tour planning unfolded, Magisterra Soloists evolved into a permanent, grassroots not-for-profit organization. The ensemble provides an intense, meaningful, professional experience to young graduates and artists, along with student fellows in training. They also perform to school-aged groups and demographics with less access to the arts through their outreach program, "Magisterra in Schools." Having recently been granted not-for-profit status, they are now seeking charitable status in order to grow the scope of their work.

In step with their outreach work in Canada, Magisterra Soloists made a trip to São Paulo's famed Instituto Bacarelli in the former favela low-income suburb of Heliopolis. There they captivated an audience of bright-eyed young apprentice musicians, who delighted in their exchanges with the Canadians. Since many of the young Brazilians intend to pursue higher education in the arts, they were eager to discuss music, school, career opportunities, and of

course, football, despite the language barrier.

These students, who might otherwise have had no chance at completing secondary school, are now reaping the fruit of an educational success story. The Instituto Bacarelli provides free comprehensive musical training to over 1,200 young people, all of whom must be enrolled in a local public school. Some spoke of their desire to study abroad at Canadian universities. For Magisterra Soloists, this experience further confirmed their conviction that music can transform a country's cultural landscape, and strengthened their commitment to being active agents of such transformation at home and abroad.

Of course, the main reason for the trip was the performances, which reached their climax in Rio de Janeiro at Sala Leopoldo Miguez. The evening concert was particularly significant because it had been supported by the Canadian Consulate General in Rio de Janeiro. The venue's regular attendees were joined by enthusiastic Canadians working for the embassy and consulate. After the concert, the consulate's liaisons greeted the members with high praise for their dynamic delivery and expressed their sincere wishes to see them back in Brazil soon.

Now that Magisterra Soloists are back on Canadian soil, they are seeking out new venues, concert programs and outreach projects. Thanks to the support of TD Canada Trust, they will be providing free musical outreach at select local schools in the coming year. On November 5 at the Hassan Law Community Centre at 142 Dundas St., London, they will celebrate their successful tour by holding their first annual fundraising gala, "From Rio with Love." All are welcome!

For more information and ticket sales, visit www.magisterra.com or add Magisterra Soloists on Facebook.