

London-based Classical Music Ensemble Puts Canadian Music on the Map

On the heels of the 2016 Rio Olympics, Canadian ensemble, Magisterra Soloists, stormed the concert halls of Brazil during what they proudly say is but the first of many international tours featuring Canadian composers. The group, which is a professional chamber music ensemble founded and guided by the artistic vision of violinist Prof. Annette-Barbara Vogel from Western University, exists to fill a gap in the Canadian and International artistic landscape.

The ensemble seeks out lesser-known works, lesser-heard instrumental groupings, and actively champions Canadian compositions, while providing young Canadian musicians with a professional launching pad onto the concert stage. Although Magisterra Soloists has only been active for just shy of eight months, this August, Vogel and her team managed to orchestrate a tour which brought the 12-piece group to six major cities across South America's largest country...without cutting a single corner. The tour program featured a brand new work, *Sapling*, for solo violin and strings by Canadian composer, Emily Doolittle, as well as Mendelssohn's String Octet and Bacewicz's Violin Quartet, which was doubled.

Last July, when Vogel began forming her dream team for this project—which she had been incubating for nearly fifteen years—her eyes were already firmly set on Brazil. While her career as a chamber musician and soloist has brought her across the globe many times over, the German-born violinist has developed a special relationship with this country in particular over the years: she has now been there over a dozen times to perform with the country's finest and has no intention of slowing down her visits there. As planning for the tour unfolded, what may have at first been intended of as a touring ensemble evolved into a permanent, grassroots not-for-profit organization whose intentions are to play a singular role in Canada's musical fabric. The ensemble not only provides intense, meaningful, professional experience to young graduates and artists, along with student 'fellows' in training, but also reaches out to school-aged groups and unreached demographics through its educational outreach program, *Magisterra in Schools*. The group is awaiting charitable status in order to grow the scope of its educational work.

In step with their outreach work in Canada, Magisterra Soloists made an afternoon detour to perform at São Paulo's famed Instituto Bacarelli. Many of the ensemble's musicians report this as having been a key highlight to the tour. Not only were they able to perform to an audience of bright-eyed, captivated young aspiring artists, but they were also able to tour what has become one of Brazil's most significant music education successes whose social impact cannot be underestimated. The institute serves the youth of Heliópolis, a low-income suburb of the city, and began decades ago as a social experiment teaching violin lessons to 30 of the area's toughest students in an old jam factory. The institute now provides free comprehensive musical training to over 1,200 young people, all of whom must be enrolled in a local public school. It has five orchestras and nine chamber ensembles for the students to perform in and those who continue through to play in the senior-most ensemble, the Heliópolis Symphony, are granted a stipend which allows them to earn money while continuing their studies. This was yet another experience which confirmed for the Magisterra Soloists the significant role music can play in transforming the cultural landscape of a country.

The penultimate hall featured on Magisterra's tour list was Rio de Janeiro's Sala Leopoldo Miguez at the Federal University. The evening's concert was particularly significant

because it had been sponsored and facilitated by the Canadian Consulate General in Rio de Janeiro. Along with the university's regular faithful concert attendees, several Canadians working abroad for the Canadian Embassy and Consulate were in attendance with great enthusiasm. After the concert, the Consulate's liaisons wrote the group's artistic director to extend an open invitation for the group to return with their support and praised the ensemble's dynamic delivery.

Now that Magisterra Soloists has returned home, the group is turning its mind to new venues, new concert programs, and to new outreach projects. The ensemble has received support from TD Canada Trust in order to provide free musical outreach to select local schools in the coming year. Magisterra will be celebrating its return from Brazil with its first annual fundraising gala on November 5th, 'From Rio, with Love' at the Hasan Law Community Centre. For more information on the ensemble's upcoming concerts and for ticket sales, please contact the group at info@magisterra.com, add them on Facebook or visit their website at www.magisterra.com.