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Festival Stella Musica

March 23, 2017

The third edition of the [Festival Stella Musica](#) is on March 23 and 24, 2017. The mission of the two-day festival is to expose and cultivate the talent and contribution of women in music and the arts. Katarzyna Musial, a Canadian pianist with Polish roots, founded the festival on the premise to empower women in the musical and artistic spheres. Her primary aim is to provide a platform for women musicians and artists and expose their talent to a broader mainstream audience. This year marks the third edition of the Stella Musica Festival and already there appears to be significant momentum driving the event.

Musial's musical talent was discovered at the age of six. "It was a wonderful surprise that they placed me in music school," she says, given the fact that she was not from a family with a long line of musicians. After being enrolled in primary and secondary music school she continued her studies at the *Academy of Music in Kraków*. Although she had initially anticipated of pursuing graduate studies in Vienna, several fortuitous events led her to pursue her studies in Vancouver and later in Montreal under the tutelage of Anna Schilberg and Philippe Cohen, who remain her mentor.



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Katarzyna Musial
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I discussed with Musial about the festival, how it came to be and what its goals are.

What is the Festival Stella Musica?

The festival was primarily established to promote women in music. Stella Musica seeks to expose and cultivate the talent and contribution of women in music and the arts. The objective is to increase awareness of the contributions and accomplishments of outstanding women instrumentalists, composers, conductors and ensembles. The festival also serves to provide positive female role models and to support musicians in their professional development. The intent is to focus attention on women in music across all genres and to integrate their achievements into music history. The festival also functions as a platform for cross-fertilization of experiences between burgeoning artists and established artists.

Why did you want to create a festival focusing on women?

Festivals or concerts which primarily celebrate women in the arts are quite rare. Historically speaking, as in most other fields, the role and contribution of women has not been very prominent. I wanted to create an event which

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elevated the contribution of women, I also wanted to create an environment where like-minded artists could easily collaborate without any imposed restrictions.

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Nadia Labrie, Katarzyna Musial, Mary-Elizabeth Brown & Annie Labrie
© Stella Musica

Why is it important to promote women artists?

We all struggle as artists, both men and women, and it's very hard to breakthrough. Especially these days, with so many different forms of media that is easily accessible. In the case of women, the situation is further

exacerbated with the presence of the glass ceiling. To overcome these barriers, I want to give the opportunity for women musicians to perform. The concert on the 24, accomplishes this objective by showcasing a wide array of musicians with a very rich program, spanning from romantic to modern music.

What does the program for the festival look like?

For the first time, we'll have a round-table discussion, which will give the opportunity for young musicians to come and listen to established women from the arts, sports, music, law and business worlds. The hope is for the event to provide insight into their lives and experiences and also provide an opportunity to have an exchange as well as discussion on how we may improve and help the challenges facing women. There's always something we can do to improve. An as in many other aspects in life, to be successful in music a multi-pronged approach is necessary. So the first day of the festival will include a round table discussion might learn something interesting either in music or in different professions. There will be a solo performance afterwards by Annie Labrie and Mary-Elizabeth Brown.

In our program, we will have music from Jocelyn Morlock, a Composer-in-residence for the *Vancouver Symphony Orchestra*. We will also play Lili Boulanger. Each year, we showcase past or living female composers. We had Isabelle Panneton, Marie-Claire Saindon and Vania Angelova in past editions.

This year, Mary-Elizabeth Brown is a concertmaster at the *Ottawa Symphony Orchestra* and the *McGill Chamber Orchestra*. She will be also in our panel, not that she's an amazing musician, she was able in a quite early age to handle positions, which are not often or easily given to women. In most orchestras, there will be a man in this position.



Concert during first edition in 2015
© Stella Musica

How did the festival start?

I wouldn't do it without Anne-Marie Trahan, a retired judge. When I first talked to her about it when the idea was growing in my head, she encouraged me. She is a wonderful mentor who has guided me in putting the many pieces of the festival. She has been a tremendous help since the beginning. Now, she's the Honorary Ambassador of the Festival. With five members and growing, everyone in the festival strives to their best in trying to support the event. I'm not the only person involved and without the help of the many kind souls, we couldn't possibly survive. It's impossible to name everybody who has contributed something from their side to help me and the festival. I am deeply grateful to everyone who has helped and it is precisely because of their combined effort that that the festival has been a success over the last two years.

Bachtrack Stats 2016

Women in music are still struggling, except Maria Alsop who is 8th of all concert conductors in 2016.

In the list of busiest musicians in 2016 amongst conductors, cellists, pianists and violinists, only one woman made it as number 10, pianist Yuja Wang. Female contemporary composers who made it on the list are Kaija Saariaho as no. 17, Sofia Gubaidulina as no. 22 and Judith Weir as no. 29.



Second edition in 2016 featuring OUM
Lori Antounian – conductor &
Katarzyna Musial – pianist
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