



Hitting the Right Notes with Matinee Musicale

Two highlights of the 2024-25 arts calendar at St. Scholastica included concerts brought to campus by the College's longtime community partner, Matinee Musicale. Matinee Musicale is one of the country's oldest presenters of classical music, celebrating its 125th season this year.

For over three decades, St. Scholastica's Mitchell Auditorium has been a regular venue for Matinee Musicale concerts. However, the College's connection to the organization dates much further back than the 1993 building; Sister

Martina Hughes, OSB — a music chair, College president and prioress for the St. Scholastica Monastery — hosted meetings of Matinee Musicale's Manuscript Section for local composers from the 1940s to the 1970s in St. Scholastica's iconic Tower Hall.

In 2025, the College continues to play a major role at Matinee Musicale. Dr. Jeremy Craycraft (Music) serves as College Representative. Faculty members Dr. Andrew Taylor (Theology and Religious Studies) and Dr. Jessica Schroeder (Music) are members of the

governing board. Additionally, Brad Snelling (Library) serves as historian and chair for the organization's Artist Committee, on which faculty emerita Dr. Penny Schwarze is also a member.

Both of Matinee Musicale's 2024-25 concerts at Mitchell Auditorium were part of the College's Spotlight series: renowned cellist Ifetayo Ali-Landing's Nov. 10, 2024, recital and Canadian pianist Angela Hewitt's deeply moving April 1, 2025, recital in honor of Dr. LeAnn House.

A FITTING "VESPER WALTZ" DEBUT

Renowned cellist Ifetayo Ali-Landing's November recital with pianist Teresa Vaughan was a vibrant celebration of artistic expression that highlighted unique connections between music, nature, the Twin Ports and the St. Scholastica community.

An afternoon highlight was the inaugural performance of "Vesper Waltz," a piece commissioned from Duluth composer Wendy Durrwacher. This composition draws inspiration from the song of the Vesper Sparrow, a bird known for its evening melodies. These melodies parallel the evening prayers, or vespers, sung by the Benedictine Sisters of St. Scholastica.

Durrwacher's waltz deeply resonates with the College's history, reflecting this elusive bird's song. Notably, the Vesper Sparrow was first identified in spring 2024 in the St. Scholastica Library's Catalog of Birds, a list of campus bird species started in 1978 by faculty emerita Sister Donna Schroeder and her students.

The event attracted members of the St. Scholastica community, including Sister Donna herself, demonstrating a deep commitment to the arts and education. The premiere of "Vesper Waltz" holds special significance for the St. Scholastica Library as the piece was funded by its Friends of the Library program, aligning with the interdisciplinary project dedicated to celebrating the rich bird presence on campus.

A MASTER PIANIST PERFORMS BACH

Canadian pianist Angela Hewitt's deeply moving April 1, 2025, recital at Mitchell Auditorium was given in honor of Dr. LeAnn House, a longtime chair of music at St. Scholastica who served for many years as the College's representative to Matinee Musicale. Ms. Hewitt, who has been described by the BBC as "one of the great interpreters of Bach of our age," performed the composer's masterpiece "The Goldberg Variations," a composition she played in public for the first time 50 years ago this spring.

This was Ms. Hewitt's first appearance at St. Scholastica since 2015, when she gave a program organized by the CSS Library, CSS Archives and Dr. House to honor pianist and scholar Jan Chiapusso, an early faculty member and biographer of Bach who was brought to the College by Sister Martina in the early 1930s. Shortly after her 2015 recital, Ms. Hewitt embarked on a "Bach Odyssey" during which she performed all of the composer's major keyboard works in London, New York and Tokyo.

At her April recital, Hewitt's mastery of this music was evident from the first notes of the famous "Aria" which appears both at the beginning and conclusion of the hour and twenty minute "Goldberg Variations" which she plays from memory. Several concertgoers remarked on the audience's rapt silence at the end of the performance before breaking into a prolonged, standing ovation, which brought Ms. Hewitt back for three stage calls. After the recital, St. Scholastica voice instructor Dr. Jennifer Lien (Music) offered an eloquent summation of the evening:

"I don't have too many words to describe Angela Hewitt's rendition of the Goldberg Variations tonight that are not trite platitudes. I'll just note that Bach requires such restraint and discipline from the artist, but this restraint paradoxically draws the audience into a spectrum of experiences from exquisitely delicate to acutely intense. The sounds I heard tonight, her gorgeous flowing arm action, and her reverence for this musical journey all took me to a place of psychological clarity I don't know that I've ever experienced from a work of instrumental music. For 90 minutes tonight, time stood still, the world was beautiful, and all was well. May art continue to bring us moments like these to sustain us in these challenging times."



DR. LEANN HOUSE



SISTER MARTINA