

## WHAT'S ON

### CLASSICAL MUSIC

# Feast for the eyes, ears and taste buds

**JOHN TERAUDS**  
CLASSICAL MUSIC CRITIC

The way pianists Boris Zarankin and Inna Perkis greet a guest for lunch is a metaphor for how they have charmed a growing number of Torontonians at their annual series of music salons.

Even on a busy weekday, there are no quick sandwiches or convenient takeout on offer at their Riverdale dining table, placed an arm's reach away from the black semi concert-grand piano where they do most of their work.

Perkis has prepared four mouth-watering courses from scratch — all Italian, inspired by a month husband and wife spent learning the language in Calabria this summer. This lunch is a feast for the eyes as well as the taste buds.

Their five annual Off Centre Music Salons at the Glenn Gould Studio get the same kind of meticulous preparation, as the couple and guests serve each themed program on a bed of cultural context — a helping of history, a dash of gossip and a touch of poetry and prose.



Husband and wife team Inna Perkis and Boris Zarankin are set to reprise their popular Off Centre Music Salons.

Intermission always features slices of central European tortes and coffee — a nod to the year the Russian-born couple spent in Vienna before emigrating to Canada 30 years ago.

On Sept. 27, the enterprising duo kicks off their 15th anniversary series with an "eco-salon," focused on all things green — linking the broad iconography of that colour across a broad, pan-cultural narrative.

"Did you know that green is the colour of paradise for Muslims?" asks Zarankin rhetorically, as he describes its cultural significance beyond the environmental movement.

"You know how surgeons wear green?" the pianist continues. "It's a tradition that goes back to the Middle Ages."

Perkis pipes in with an anecdote about Franz Liszt's ability to see

colours when he heard music — a phenomenon known as synesthesia. "He would rehearse an orchestra and tell them that he wanted them to play in a more rosy colour," she relates. "They never could figure out what he was talking about."

Despite the fascinating digressions, Perkis and Zarankin's first salon of the season is mostly about the green that Western culture knows best — a symbol for the love

of nature, a theme dear to the hearts of 19th- and early-20th century Europeans.

On the program are piano and vocal works by Johannes Brahms, Franz Schubert, Béla Bartók, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and American iconoclast Charles Ives.

Classical 96.3 FM host Alexa Petrenko is the engaging on-stage host. Guests include former Toronto Symphony Orchestra concertmaster Jacques Israelievitch and three promising young singers: soprano Lindsay Barrett, tenor Ryan Harper and baritone Vasil Garvanliev.

Zarankin and Perkis don't stint on quality, but they do have a tight budget, which means they have to focus on singers who are just starting their careers. Fortunately, they have a good ear for talent — they gave Isabel Bayrakdarian her first professional stage gig. Measha Bruegggosman was another early standout.

The Off Centre Music Salons continue Nov. 29 with the 15th annual Schubertiad, which includes two great, established Toronto singers: soprano Carla Huhtanen and mezzo Krisztina Szabo.

Video showing what they do: <http://bit.ly/4fJliO>

### Just the facts

**WHAT:** Off Centre Music Salon

**WHERE:** Glenn Gould Studio, 250 Front St. W.

**WHEN:** Sept. 27 @ 2 p.m.

**TICKETS:** \$40-\$50 @ 416-466-1870 or [offcentremusic.com](http://offcentremusic.com)