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Heavenly Nooner

Shelley Arnusch

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The historic downtown churches have really stepped up as music venues in recent years. This is a good thing because their superb acoustics can now be appreciated all week long and not just on Sundays. Knox United has drawn big-name folk and roots musicians such as Lyle Lovett and Sarah Harmer. Central United has become a Sled Island Festival staple, hosting buzz bands like Grizzly Bear and Deerhoof. Then there's the Cathedral Church of the Redeemer. The seat of Calgary's Anglican Diocese, located just across the LRT tracks from Olympic Plaza, is where the PROARTS @ NOON concerts are held every Wednesday.

The concerts are usually short recitals by classical musicians and singers. While the featured artists are indeed "pros," the society is actually named after the host venue. Built in 1905, the church was originally known as the "Pro Cathedral," as it was intended to be the first stage of a larger, more elaborate cathedral. But the plans for a grander structure fell by the wayside on account of the Great Depression and the Second World War, and eventually the "pro" designation was dropped, only to be resuscitated decades later by the non-profit society that recognized the church's potential as a performing-arts venue.

I'd been aware of the ProArts series for a while, but I finally took it upon myself to check things out a few weeks ago, when pianist Cody Obst was the featured performer, with a guest appearance by esteemed thespian Duval Lang on Franz Liszt's "Lenore," a melodrama for piano and actor. I came for the music but what I didn't expect was the lovely effect of the sun streaming in through the stained glass windows on the south side of the building. This happy coincidence cast a peaceful glow over the proceedings-- not a bad way to mark the midpoint of the average workweek. Performances run 12:10-12:50 p.m. Admission is by donation (\$7 is suggested). Next up is musical-theatre trio SO FINE on Nov. 17 and mezzo-soprano ANGEL LYN MCNEIL on Nov. 24.

ProArts has a special presentation this Saturday, Nov. 13.

FLAMENCO AT THE CATHEDRAL features dancers Rossana Terracciano and Marnie Regnier with vocalist Marni Benavides, guitarist David Matyas and violinist Jonathan Lewis. Showtime is 3 p.m.; tickets are \$18 for adults (\$15, students and seniors) and are available via ProArts (403-269-1904) or at the door. For more info check out proartssociety.ca.

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