

## **Meet the SSO musicians: Miriam Stewart-Kroeker**



The SSO's new principal cello, Miriam Stewart-Kroeker, though only in her mid twenties, has been playing for 22 years. When she was a five-year-old in Hamilton, Ontario, she thought she'd like to play the flute, but her mother thought her too young for that instrument and started her on the cello. It was the right thing to do, Ms. Stewart-Kroeker now firmly believes.

Not only is she principal cello with the SSO, she also holds the principal cello position with the Georgian Bay Symphony Orchestra, based in Owen Sound. She is in her first year with both orchestras. Ms. Stewart-Kroeker recently received her master's degree from McGill University. She has an undergraduate Honours Bachelor of Music in cello performance as well as a diploma in chamber music performance from Wilfrid Laurier University. She speaks French, Spanish, Italian and German, in addition to English.

Ms. Stewart-Kroeker's chamber ensembles were recipients of the Penderecki String Quartet Chamber Music Prize for two consecutive years (2009-10), and won the Canadian Music Competition in 2011 with the Zwickau Piano Quartet.

Though now she is making a living with her music performance (as soloist and as orchestral musician) and teaching (she has 10 cello students), Ms. Stewart-Kroeker went through a period of uncertainty about her future while at McGill and took time off to work in a bakery for about six months. "I took a break from my master's because I wasn't sure it was the right program," she says. Then she went to Banff Centre for a residency, where she discovered that "most people have gone through this awkward transition; talking to other people about it gave me a sense of what the process is."

Looking back, she says “it was good to get away and get that degree. And now, being back [in the Kitchener-Waterloo area], my playing has developed and I’m more confident. I feel very fortunate that I can make a living performing and teaching; it’s been really nice.” She lives in Kitchener.