

**University of Toronto  
University Arts Women's Club (UAWC)**

**NEWS – EVENTS**  
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On March 21, 2019, at our third General Meeting, Christine McClymont, our Programme Convenor, introduced Cynthia Macdonald, a journalist and broadcaster who was recently appointed as a communications specialist at Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR). Christine had read her very interesting article in the *University of Toronto Magazine* on computer-generated music – "Alexa, Compose Me a Song." She was intrigued, found out that Cynthia is an award-winning science writer and invited her to speak to us. (Christine recently discovered that Alexa is a robotic "servant" that looks like a curling stone, and is readily available for household use!)

Cynthia MacDonald's presentation title was "Artificial Intelligence: Creating the Future." She first reviewed the history of artificial intelligence (AI) development. It was founded as an academic discipline in the 1950's and Alan Turing was one of the pioneers. There were cycles of great interest in AI in the 1960's, followed by an "AI winter" in the 1970's with cuts in funding; resurgence in the 1980's, then cuts in the 1990's. Currently there is much interest and progress. In 2017 the Canadian government appointed CIFAR to develop and lead the Pan-Canadian Artificial Intelligence Strategy, the world's first national AI strategy for the development of deep learning. As a leading example, Emeritus Professor Geoffrey Hinton at the University of Toronto is currently involved with researching deep learning techniques of AI at Google. Cynthia made the point that AI machine systems are able to carry out cognitive tasks associated with human beings, which computers cannot. She cited examples such as facial recognition, comprehension of the actual meaning of language that allows for computers to converse, and the ability to interpret large amounts of data. An exciting example is the development of self-driving or robot car technology. Cynthia concluded by speculating about the technical and ethical questions AI poses for society.



Cynthia Macdonald, Freelance Journalist

On Thursday, April 25, 2019, at the University Arts Women's Club Spring Luncheon and the Annual Meeting at The Faculty Club, University of Toronto, Eva Stachniak was our guest speaker. Christine McClymont introduced Eva, the award-winning author of five historical novels. Eva was born in Poland and came to Canada to study at McGill University, where she obtained her Ph.D. When martial law was imposed in Poland she was prevented from going home. She became a #1 international best seller with her two fascinating novels about Catherine the Great.

Eva spoke on the writing of her last novel published in 2017, *The Chosen Maiden: Nijinsky's Brilliant Sister*, inspired by the art and life of Bronislava Nijinska, Vaslav's Nijinsky's brilliant sister and one of the dance-greats of Ballets Russes. The novel grew out of archival research and the author's fascination with Bronia Nijinska and with the women of the Nijinsky family. Proud and strong, steadfast, nurturing and fiercely loyal, the three generations of the Nijinsky women have stood by each other, through thick and thin, making both life and art possible. *The Chosen Maiden: Nijinsky's Brilliant Sister* is not just a story of one brilliant woman, but a tribute to strong women everywhere.

After a lively Q & A period, Kirsteen McLean thanked the author for an insightful well-researched, exciting presentation.



Eva Stachniak, Canadian Novelist



Christine McClymont, UAWC Programme Convenor, and Eva Stachniak, Canadian Novelist

Anyone interested in joining UAWC is invited to contact Kathy Imrie, Vice-President of Membership, at 416-920-9153 or [kathleen.imrie@utoronto.ca](mailto:kathleen.imrie@utoronto.ca)

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