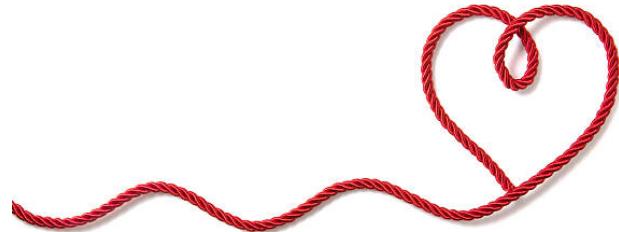




VIVA VOCE!

Choral Series 2017-2018

presents



With Strings Attached

AVANTI CHAMBER SINGERS

Rachel Rensink-Hoff, Artistic Director

Lesley Kingham, Pianist

with guests

Walker String Quartet

Saturday, February 17, 2018

St. Thomas Anglican Church

St. Catharines ON

Welcome to our second concert of the 2017-2018 season, *With Strings Attached*. As the title suggests, we welcome the Walker String Quartet to help us bring to life the sounds of love, longing and loss. We open our program with a range of early works by Lassus, Hassler, Telemann and Pearsall as well as a setting of *Ubi Caritas* by Niagara composer John Butler. Closing the first half is the dramatic *Dark Night of the Soul* by Ola Gjeilo, a somewhat unusual setting in that it features the voices in a more instrumental capacity than is typical of most choral compositions. Another work by Gjeilo will open the second half and we are pleased to be performing a version of this piece with improvised piano interludes. What follows are Whitacre's *Hebrew Love Songs*, a short choral cycle that offers glimpses into special moments shared between Whitacre and his wife, Hila Plitmann. We will change the pace with a set of jazz tunes, showcasing some of the solo talent from within our choir. The final set of our program features three works by Canadian composers. Laura Hawley and Jared Tomlinson are both residents of Ontario and are enjoying more and more performances of their choral works across Canada. Jonathan Quick's energetic arrangement of *Loch Lomond* will be our final farewell...

Rachel Rensink-Hoff
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



The image shows the Avanti Chamber Singers logo on the left, featuring the word "Avanti" in a stylized script and "CHAMBER SINGERS" in a smaller, sans-serif font. To the right, a blue rectangular poster for the 2017-2018 Concert Season is displayed. The poster includes the text "2017-2018 CONCERT SEASON" and "ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | RACHEL RENSINK-HOFF". Below this, the title "BOUNDLESS" is written in large, bold, red capital letters. Underneath, the text "APRIL 28, 2018 7:30 PM | ST. THOMAS ANGLICAN CHURCH" is in a smaller, dark font. Further down, the text "BASK IN THE WONDER AND MYSTERY OF THIS WORLD AND BEYOND" is in bold, dark capital letters. Below this, a list of featured works is provided: "FEATURING LUX AETERNA BY MORTEN LAURIDSEN, CHRISTINE DONKIN'S IN PARADISUM, TRENT WORTHINGTON'S AND EINSTEIN SAID, WITH OTHER ETHEREAL WORKS BY ĒRIKS EŠENVALDS, DANIEL ELDER, URMAS SISASK & MORE."



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or visit us at

www.avantichambersingers.com

*The Avanti Chamber Singers wish to thank
St. Thomas' Anglican Church for use of this beautiful venue.*

PROGRAM

Bonjour, mon cœur
Orlande de Lassus
(1532-1594)

Tanzen und Springen
Hans Leo Hassler
(1564-1612)

Laudate Jehovam (Psalm 117)
Georg Philipp Telemann
(1681-1767)

Ubi Caritas
John Butler (b. 1944)

NOTES

We open our concert with this cheerful greeting by Franco-Flemish composer Orlande de Lassus. Arguably one of music's first international stars, he was capable of bringing to his employers (mostly the Duke of Bavaria) music from across the continent. Lassus was a master of many styles, including Latin motets and masses, Italian madrigals, German *Lieder*, and French *chansons*. This chanson is a short love poem written by Lassus' contemporary, the French poet Pierre de Ronsard.

*Good day, my heart
Good day, my sweet life;
Good day, my eye;
Good day, my dear friend.
Good day, my beauty, my sweetheart;
Good day, my sweet one, my love, my sweet spring,
my delicate new flower, my sweet pleasure,
my gentle little dove, my sparrow, my turtledove.
Good day, my sweet rebel.*

Of the next generation was Hassler, born in Nuremberg in northern Bavaria. He studied in Venice and later returned to Germany to work as composer, organist and instrument-maker in a number of cities and courts. *Tanzen und Springen* is a short light-hearted dance that celebrates dancing, leaping, and music-making over any amount of silver and gold.

*Dancing and leaping, singing and ringing,
Lutes and violins are not expected to be silent;
playing my instrument and singing joyfully is all my wish.
Lovely maidens on green meadows,
strolling with them and conversing with them,
dallying gallantly delights my heart more than silver and gold.*

In the following century, Telemann emerged as one of the most popular composers in Germany of the late Baroque era. The story goes that when the position for Music Director at St. Thomaskirche opened up in the 1720s, Telemann was the unanimous choice of the elders for the position. He turned it down, and it eventually went to their third choice: J. S. Bach. This three-part setting of Psalm 117 demonstrates Telemann's numerous strengths: strong melodic writing combined with superb text setting and rhythmic vitality.

*Praise God, all nations!
Bring forth praises, all peoples!
For on our behalf
is his mercy carried out,
and his love is forever. Hallelujah!*

We close this set with a 5th century text put to music by Niagara-region composer, John Butler, composer, organist and music director of St. George's Anglican Church.

*Where charity and love are, God is there.
His love has gathered us into one.
Let us rejoice and be pleased in him.
Let us fear, and let us love the living God.
And may we love each other with a sincere heart.*

||

Willow Song from *Othello*

William Shakespeare
(1564-1616)

READING

Lay A Garland

Robert Pearsall
(1795-1856)

Pearsall takes the text of his most well-known choral composition from Act 2, Scene 1 of *The Maid's Tragedy* (written in 1608-11), a play by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher. Aspatia is betrothed to Amintor, a nobleman, but discovers that the King has canceled the wedding. The King has ordered Amintor to marry his secret lover Evadne, in order to cover up their affair. Aspatia, heartbroken and believing that Amintor has broken his vows, sings the words below. You will hear in our performance that Pearsall revised the narration to read in the third-person.

*Lay a garland on my hearse of the dismal yew.
Maidens, willow branches wear, say I died true.
My love was false, but I was firm from my hour of birth.
Upon my buried body lie lightly, gentle earth.*

Dark Night of the Soul

Ola Gjeilo
(b. 1978)

Melissa Shriner, *soprano*

Written in 2010, this compelling work by American-based Norwegian composer, Ola Gjeilo, features three stanzas of a passionate poem *Dark Night of the Soul* by St. John of the Cross, 16th century Spanish priest, reformer and mystic. Although he was canonized in 1726 and is now named as one of the 33 Doctors of the Church, he was dismissed from the Church hierarchy in 1577 by those who opposed his reforms to religious order. He was imprisoned in deplorable conditions for nine months, yet spiritual visions during that time led St. John to some of his most exquisite poetry. *The Dark Night of the Soul* was written soon after his escape, and describes the journey of the soul as it leaves its earthly prison and travels toward reunion with God.

*One dark night,
fired with love's urgent longings
— ah, the sheer grace! —
I went out unseen,
my house being now all stilled.
In darkness, and secure,
by the secret ladder, disguised,
— ah, the sheer grace! —
in darkness and concealment,
my house being now all stilled.
On that glad night,
in secret, for no one saw me,
nor did I look at anything,
with no other light or guide
than the one that burned in my heart.*

INTERMISSION

|||

Ubi Caritas

Ola Gjeilo

Inspired by the very well-known *Ubi Caritas* of Maurice Duruflé, Gjeilo uses the same chant-based approach to this composition. It was published in 2007 as an unaccompanied piece, but some years later, Gjeilo began collaborating with choirs to provide improvised piano interludes. Today you will hear a transcription of one such improvisation, played by our accompanist, Lesley Kingham.

Hebrew Love Songs

Eric Whitacre
(b. 1970)

Temuná
Kalá Kallá
Larov
Eyze Sheleg!
Rakut

Natalie Watson, *soprano*

Carmen Witten, *alto*

Aron Hoff, *tenor*

Paul Miller, *bass*

Emese Zaduban, *soprano*

Janice Slade, *tambourine*

In 1996, Whitacre was invited to write a set of troubadour songs for piano, violin and soprano. Whitacre asked his wife to write a few 'postcards' in her native tongue, and a few days later she presented him with these exquisite Hebrew poems. Each was meant to capture a moment they had shared together. For example, "Kala Kalla" (meaning 'light bride') was a pun that Whitacre devised while Hila was first teaching him Hebrew; the bells at the beginning of "Eyze Sheleg" are the exact pitches that awakened the couple each morning from a nearby cathedral during a snowy winter in Germany. The piece has since been arranged for chorus and strings.

Temuná | A Picture

*A picture is engraved in my heart;
Moving between light and darkness:
A sort of silence envelopes your body,
And your hair falls upon your face just so.*

Kalá Kallá | Light Bride

*Light bride, she is all mine,
And lightly she will kiss me!*

Larov | Mostly

*"Mostly," said the roof to the sky,
"the distance between you and me is endless;
But a while ago two came up here,
And only one centimeter was left between us."*

Eyze Sheleg! | What Snow!

What snow! Like little dreams falling from the sky.

Rakut | Tenderness

*He was full of tenderness; she was not so.
And as much as she tried to stay thus,
Simply, and with no good reason,
He took her into himself, and set her down in the softest, softest place.*

IV

Someone to Watch Over Me

George Gershwin
(1898-1937)

Liz Bonisteel, *alto*

Gershwin originally approached this song as an up-tempo jazz tune, but his brother Ira suggested it be revised as a ballad. George ultimately agreed. It has since been performed by countless artists, emerging as a jazz standard and a key work in the Great American Songbook.

Pretend

Lew Douglas & Dan Belloc

Melissa Shriner, *soprano*
Majid Hassas Roudsari, *bass*

Written in 1952 and later recorded by Nat King Cole, *Pretend* reached the *Billboard* Best Seller chart in 1953. Tonight, you will hear this charming ballad sung in both English and Farsi. The Farsi lyrics are written by famous controversial modernist poet of her time, Forough Farrokhzad (1934-1967), an advocate for women's liberation and independence. The song was eventually renamed *Silence of the Shore* and performed by Iranian singer, Mohammad Nouri (1929-2010) in the late 1970's.

*Disheveled, the night strolls along in the silence of the shore
My beating heart inside my chest because you'll be here, you'll be here
That scattered scents of kiss from the red rose of your lips
That spark of your eyes, o what a beauty, o what a beauty
You open those curtains of mystery that are covering your shying eyes
And I'll sing of my sorrows in your ears.
In the silence of the shore, I'm all alone, slumbering in the arms of
dreams, o what a dream, o what a dream*

'Till There Was You

Meredith Willson, arr. Kirby Shaw
(1902-1984 | b. 1942)

'Till There Was You was written in 1957 by Meredith Willson for the very popular musical, *The Music Man*. It reached the U.S. *Billboard* Hot 100 in 1959 and was covered again in 1963 by the Beatles.

V

Sonnet 43

Laura Hawley
(b. 1982)

Two settings of Shakespeare sonnets follow, both written by Ontario-based composers. Laura Hawley has created this fresh, exuberant setting of *Sonnet 43*, successfully capturing a feeling of infatuation and enchantment. Since its publication in 2013, it has become a favourite with choirs across Canada.

How Do I Love Thee (Sonnet 43)

Elizabeth Barrett Browning
(1806-1861)

READING

How Sweet the Moonlight

Jared Tomlinson
(b. 1990)

How Sweet the Moonlight is a text taken from Act V of the *Merchant of Venice*. This setting by Jared Tomlinson was commissioned by Toronto's Pax Christi Chorale for their 2014-15 season and premiered under the direction of Stephanie Martin.

Loch Lomond

arr. Jonathan Quick
(b. 1970)

Tim Stacey, *tenor*

This Scottish folk song is believed to tell the story of two imprisoned soldiers of the Jacobite Uprising of 1745, one who is to be executed, and the other set free. According to Celtic legend, the spirit of one who dies in a foreign land travels home by "the low road" - the route for the souls of the dead. In this song, the spirit of the dead soldier is to arrive first, while the living soldier embarks on the "high road" across fields, rivers and mountains. The song is sung from the point of view of the soldier to be executed: The words "ye'll tak' the high road and I'll tak' the low road" suggest that while the other soldier will return alive, he too will return in spirit. In this, he remembers his happy past: "By yon bonnie banks ... where me and my true love were ever wont to gae [to go]" and accepts his death "the broken heart it ken nae [knows no] second Spring again." Quick's unique setting of this well known Scottish tune begins traditionally, moving from solo to men's to women's to mixed voices before a spirited closing section featuring a march-like cadence characterizing the long journey home.



AVANTI CHAMBER SINGERS

**current or former Brock University students, staff or faculty*

Soprano

Carol Dohn*, Sharree Eidt*, Mary-Teresa Franceschini*, Shelley Griffin*, Pat Hartman*, Nancy Lang, Gisela Reimer, Melissa-Marie Shriner*, Natalie Watson*, Emese Zaduban

Alto

Liz Bonisteel, Janice Coles, Carol Gaspari*, Rachel Janecek, Krystyna MacKay*, Karen Orlandi, Janice Slade*, Jan Venema*, Carmen Witten

Tenor

Casey Heemskerk, Aron Hoff, Michael Sinton, Tim Stacey*, James van den Brink*

Bass

Paul Miller, Jim Reynolds*, Majid Hassas Roudsari*, Tim Slade*, Henk Vanden Beukel

LESLEY KINGHAM, PIANIST

Lesley Kingham graduated with a Masters in Pipe Organ Performance and Literature from the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana in 1996, studying under Dr. Craig Cramer. Throughout the program she served as the liturgical assistant at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart. She received her Bachelor of Music from the University of Western Ontario in 1994, at which time she was awarded the gold medal for pipe organ performance. During her studies Ms. Kingham was the assistant organist at St James Westminster Anglican Church and accompanist for the Amabile Boys' Choirs. From 1996 to 2011 she was the staff accompanist and keyboard harmony instructor at Brock University. She now primarily coaches and performs for vocal students at the university in addition to serving as the choir accompanist. Lesley is currently the organist and music director at St Thomas' Anglican Church. She is in demand as an accompanist across Niagara and operates a private teaching studio.

RACHEL RENSINK-HOFF, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Dr. Rachel Rensink-Hoff is Director of Choral Activities and Assistant Professor of Music Education at Brock University and Artistic Director of the Avanti Chamber Singers. Former conductor of the McMaster University Choir and founder of the McMaster Women's Choir, Dr. Rensink-Hoff completed her Doctorate and Master of Music degrees at Western University, pursuing additional studies at the Eastman School of Music Conducting Institute, the Voice Care Network of St. John's University, Minnesota, and the University of Toronto. She has engaged in masterclasses under conductors Helmuth Rilling, Joseph Flummerfelt, Anton Armstrong, Dale Warland and the late Sir David Willcocks. Vice-President of Programming for Choral Canada, Rachel Rensink-Hoff is the 2014 winner of the prestigious Leslie Bell Prize for Choral Conducting awarded by the Ontario Arts Council. In 2015, her McMaster Women's Choir was awarded first prize in the National Choral Competition for Amateur Choirs of the CBC and Choral Canada. That same year she was nominated for the Excellence in Teaching Award at McMaster University. She publishes regularly in the *Choral Journal* of the American Choral Directors' Association as well as in Choral Canada's *Anacrusis* and *The Canadian Music Educator*. Rachel works frequently as guest conductor, adjudicator, conference presenter and workshop clinician. Most recently, she presented at the 2017 national conference of the American Choral Directors' Association and the World Symposium on Choral Music in Barcelona, and served as guest conductor of the Nova Scotia Provincial Youth Choir.

GUEST ARTISTS

VERA ALEKSEEVA first studied violin at the Perm Music School in Perm, Russia, then at Moscow Gnessin High State College and finally at the M. Glinka Nizhny Novgorod State Conservatory where she received a Diploma of Orchestra Artist, Artist of Chamber Ensemble and Teacher, as well as Diploma of Quartet Performance Artist. She was assistant concertmaster of the State Academic Symphony Orchestra of Nizhny Novgorod Philharmonic and both principal second violin and resident soloist in the Moscow Chamber Orchestra "The Seasons." Vera has toured extensively throughout Europe as a soloist and chamber musician, was a member of the State Bolshoi Theatre of Russia Orchestra, and is currently a member of the Niagara Symphony Orchestra.

ANNA HUGHES has a Bachelor of Music Degree in violin performance from the Cleveland Institute of Music. She has performed as a chamber and orchestral violinist in Canada and in England, as well as working as a sought-after Suzuki violin teacher. Anna has been a member of the Niagara Symphony, the Niagara Sinfonia, and Orchestra Da Camera and has played with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, and the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra. She works as a freelance violinist, playing in orchestras and ensembles around Ontario, and is a member of the violin faculty at the Suzuki String School of Guelph. She has been the second violinist in the Walker String Quartet since it was formed.

Violist **FAITH LAU** has played with the Walker String Quartet since 2017, and is an active freelance violist, violinist, and conductor throughout Southern Ontario. She performs regularly with the Niagara Symphony Orchestra, the Cambridge Symphony Orchestra, the South Ontario Lyric Opera Company, and most recently, the Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Orchestra. A frequent guest conductor with the Peninsula Orchestra, Faith conducts and teaches students with the Niagara Elementary Instrumental Music Program while also maintaining a large private studio at Suzuki Niagara and the Bethany School of Music and Arts. Originally a native of Toronto, Faith began her violin studies at the age of 5, and later studied with David Zafer through her high school years. She completed her BM in Violin Performance at Wheaton College in Illinois, taking private lessons with Paul Zafer and studying chamber music with Sharon Polifrone and violist Rose Armbrust Griffin. She has performed in Chicago's Orchestra Hall, toured Florida and Texas with the Wheaton College Symphony Orchestra, and performed at Camp Musical des Laurentides in Quebec. In her free time, Faith enjoys racquet sports, camping on the shores of Lake Superior, and pondering life with dear friends over a cup of tea.

Growing up in Ancaster, **MARK RUSSOM** had a poster of Garfield on his bedroom door, in which the cherubic cat, bedecked as a one-man band, proclaims "music is my life." Although not quite a one-man band, the similarity is evident today. Mark's musical studies have included the organ, cello, piano, and clarinet. Since the late 80's, Mark has also been putting his vocal cords to great use as both a tenor and a baritone. Mark has been performing with the Niagara Symphony since 1988, and has been an active member of the organization behind the scenes as well. In 2005, Mark's dedication and volunteer efforts were recognized with the inaugural Jack Silverstein Memorial Volunteer Award. Beyond his role with the Symphony, Mark is also a founding member of the Serenata String Quartet, and enjoys an active freelance career, performing both as a vocalist and instrumentalist. Away from his music, Mark is an avid curler, cyclist, and golfer, on those rare occasions when spare time avails itself.

