



VIVA VOCE

Choral Series 2017-2018

presents



BOUNLESS

BASK IN THE WONDER AND MYSTERY OF THIS WORLD AND BEYOND

AVANTI CHAMBER SINGERS

Rachel Rensink-Hoff, Artistic Director
Lesley Kingham, Pianist & Organist

Saturday, April 28, 2018
St. Thomas Anglican Church
St. Catharines ON

A special thank you to St. Thomas' Anglican Church for use of this beautiful venue.

PROGRAM

Laudate Dominum
(from *Gloria Patri*)
Urmas Sisask
(b. 1960 | Estonia)

NOTES

We open tonight's concert with this selected movement from *Gloria Patri*, a collection of 24 Latin hymns set by Estonian composer Urmas Sisask. Fascinated with the relationship between astronomy and music, Sisask worked out theoretical sound values for the rotations of different planets, arriving at a five-pitch series of C#-D-F#-G#-A that he believes to be "the sounds of the movement of the universe". These are the only five pitches used in all 24 of the hymns. Interestingly, this succession of notes is an exact counterpart of a Japanese pentatonic scale known as Kumayoshi. Sisask lives today in a small Estonian village, in the tower of an old castle. The tower serves as an observatory-planetarium, a music studio and concert hall.

*Praise him, all nations of the earth;
Praise him, all people.
For he has bestowed his mercy upon us,
And his truth endures forever.*

READING. O Vast Rondure
Walt Whitman
(1819-1892 | USA)

On the Beach Alone at Night (a text featured later in the concert) and *A Passage to India* (from which the present poem is excerpted) were published in Whitman's poetry collection called *Leaves of Grass*. Whitman was not highly acclaimed by the general public during his lifetime but was embraced by British poets and composers. Both *On the Beach Alone at Night* and sections from *A Passage to India* were set to music by Ralph Vaughan Williams in his large choral-orchestral work, *A Sea Symphony*.

**At The Round Earth's
Imagined Corners**
Williametta Spencer
(b. 1932 | USA)

Spencer's composition was the winning piece of the 1968 Southern California Vocal Association Competition. Its text, from John Donne's Divine Sonnet VII, is rich with symbolism and imagery illustrating the end of the world. Spencer uses texture, changing meter and dynamic shifts to illuminate the richness of Donne's poetry.

*At the round earth's imagin'd corners, blow
Your trumpets, angels, and arise, arise
From death, you numberless infinities
Of souls, and to your scatter'd bodies go;
All whom the flood did, and fire shall o'erthrew,
All whom war, dearth, age, agues, tyrannies,
Despair, law, chance hath slain, and you whose eyes
Shall behold God and never taste death's woe.
But let them sleep, Lord, and me mourn a space,
For if above all these my sins abound,
'Tis late to ask abundance of thy grace
When we are there; here on this lowly ground
Teach me how to repent; for that's as good
As if thou hadst seal'd my pardon with thy blood.*

INTERLUDE. Cantabile
Niccolò Paganini
(1782-1840 | Italy)

Lux Aeterna

Morten Lauridsen
(b. 1943 | USA)

I Introitus
III O Nata Lux
IV Veni, Sancte Spiritus
V Agnus Dei-Lux Aeterna

Light is “a universal symbol of illumination at all levels—spiritual, artistic and intellectual,” as Morten Lauridsen writes in his notes to the score of *Lux Aeterna*. Written the year Lauridsen’s mother passed away, this work is based on various references to light: perpetual light, light risen in the darkness, light of the spirit, light of hearts, blessed light, eternal light—all supporting an earthly spirit seeking not only mercy, understanding, and consolation but also renewal. In expressing this human journey, Lauridsen seamlessly integrates the musical essence of ancient modes, Renaissance polyphony, Romanticism, and modern dissonance. He uses the beginning and ending of the traditional Requiem Mass to open and close *Lux Aeterna*. The third movement, “O Nata Lux” (Oh light born [from light]) is the centerpiece from which all of the other references to light seem to emanate. In “Veni, Sancte Spiritus” (Come, Holy Spirit), voices soar to high notes on both the words *lucis* (light) and *fletu* (grief). Unison singing at the phrase *O lux beatissima* (O most blessed light) encourages our hearts with the humble insight necessary to petition on behalf of those we have lost. The final movement, “Agnus Dei — Lux Aeterna” (Lamb of God, Eternal Light), begins with a long, whispered prayer on behalf of the dead, swells into full voice on the phrase *lux aeterna*, and ends with an exuberant *Alleluia*.

-C. Talbeck

I

*Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.
A hymn befits thee, O God in Zion,
and to thee a vow shall be fulfilled in Jerusalem:
Hear my prayer, for unto thee all flesh shall come.*

III

*O born light of light, redeemer of the world,
mercifully deem worthy and accept our praises and prayers.
You who once deigned to be clothed in flesh for the sake of the lost ones,
grant us to be made members of your holy body.*

IV

*Come, Holy Spirit, send forth from heaven the ray of your light.
Come, father of the poor, giver of gifts, light of hearts.
The best of consolers, sweet guest of the soul, sweet refreshment.
In labour, you are rest; in heat, the tempering; in grief, the consolation.
O Light most blessed, fill the inmost heart of all the faithful.
Without your grace, there is nothing in us, nothing that is not harmful.
Cleanse what is sordid, moisten what is arid, heal what is hurt.
Flex what is rigid, fire what is frigid, correct what goes astray.
Grant to thy faithful, those trusting in thee, your sacred seven-fold gifts.
Grant the reward of virtue, the deliverance of salvation, everlasting joy.*

V

*Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant them rest.
May light eternal shine upon them, in the company of your saints forever
and ever; for you are merciful.
Rest eternal grant to them, and let perpetual light shine upon them.
Alleluia. Amen.*

INTERMISSION

On the Beach at Night Alone

Stephen Chatman
(b. 1950 | Canada)

West coast composer, Stephen Chatman, sets this poignant poem taken from Walt Whitman's collection, *Leaves of Grass*. Here Whitman ponders the vast expanse and interconnectedness of the universe. Using techniques of repetition and parallel sentence structures, he develops compelling catalogues or lists that give this poem its unique quality: "all spheres, grown, ungrown, small, large, suns, moons, planets," and "all nations, colors, barbarisms, civilizations, languages."

*On the beach at night alone,
As the old mother sways her to and fro singing her husky song,
As I watch the bright stars shining, I think a thought of the clef of the
universes and of the future.
A vast similitude interlocks all,
All spheres, grown, ungrown, small, large, suns, moons, planets,
All distances of place however wide,
All distances of time, all inanimate forms,
All souls, all living bodies though they be ever so different, or in different worlds,
All gaseous, watery, vegetable, mineral processes, the fishes, the brutes,
All nations, colors, barbarisms, civilizations, languages,
All identities that have existed or may exist on this globe, or any globe,
All lives and deaths, all of the past, present, future,
This vast similitude spans them, and always has spann'd,
And shall forever span them and compactly hold and enclose them.*

READING. This We Know

Chief Seattle
(1780-1866 | Suquamish Tribe USA)

This We Know is attributed to Chief Seattle, a member of the Suquamish tribe on the Pacific coast. There is much controversy about the origins of this poem but the lore is that it was part of a speech that Seattle delivered in his own language on the occasion of the visit of newly appointed Governor Isaac Stevens to the council of local chiefs in 1854. Seattle, being the most influential chief in the area, was in attendance and if any native had spoken, he would have been the one. Henry Smith, a white settler, was at the meeting and thirty years later published Seattle's words in the *Seattle Sunday Star*. The poem has since become a hymn of the environmental movement, encouraging responsibility to the environment, respect for the land rights of his people, and reverence for the sacredness of the earth.

And Einstein Said

Trent Worthington
(b. 1978 | Canada)

- I Two Ways to Live Your Life
- II That's Relativity
- III My Idea of God
- V Everything That Can be Counted
- VI The Simplest Way

Trent Worthington is a composer, arranger, performer, conductor and educator based in Edmonton. His set of short pieces, based on popular phrases coined by Albert Einstein, demonstrates the clever wittiness of the scientist. Each quote is set uniquely, ranging from traditional homophonic chords to big band and vocal jazz stylings. The variety aptly illustrates Einstein's serious, and sometimes humorous, musings on God and the universe.

INTERLUDE. Contemplation

Johannes Brahms, arr. Jascha Heifetz
(1833-1897 | Germany)

Ballade to the Moon

Daniel Elder
(b. 1986 | USA)

Ballade to the Moon is the first in a cycle of nocturnes that explore both observational and psychological experiences associated with love, nature, darkness and light. Its text depicts a narrator's moonlit walk through woods and fields as he treasures the momentary beauty of his surroundings.

*On moonlit night I wander free,
my mind to roam on thoughts of thee.
With midnight darkness beckoning
my heart toward mystic fantasy:
Come, dream in me!
How beautiful, this night in June!
And here, upon the velvet dune,
I weep with joy beneath the moon.*

*The path lies dark before my sight,
and yet my feet with pure delight
trod onward through the darkened vale,
beneath the starry sky so bright.
O share thy light!
These woods, their weary wanderer soon
in awe and fearful wonder swoon;
I weep with joy beneath the moon.*

*And as the darkened hours flee,
my heart beats ever rapidly.
Though heavy hangs my eyes with sleep,
my singing soul, it cries to thee:
Come sing with me!
The twinkling sky casts forth its tune:
O must I leave thy charms so soon?
I weep with joy beneath the moon.*

Stars

Ēriks Ešenvalds
(b. 1977 | Latvia)

Our exploration of the cosmos continues with the colourful words of Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Sara Teasdale (1884-1933) who beautifully describes the divine as seen in the night sky. Latvian composer Ēriks Ešenvalds depicts Teasdale's night sky with "singing" glasses and unaccompanied voices.

*Alone in the night
On a dark hill
With pines around me
Spicy and still,
And a heaven full of stars
Over my head,
White and topaz
And misty red;
Myriads with beating
Hearts of fire
The aeons
Cannot vex or tire;
The dome of heaven
Like a great hill,
I know I am honoured to be witness
Of so much majesty*

Let Me Fly
Arr. Robert DeCormier
(1922-2017 | USA)
Liz Bonisteel, *alto*

To not be bound was the goal of Harriet Tubman and so many others who worked to bring refugees via the Underground Railroad to freedom. Harriet Tubman brought a group of slaves that included her parents here to St. Catharines and it is said that many, including Harriet, used coded messages in their songs to help guide people to freedom. It is possible that the reference in this spiritual to "a mother in the promised land" was Harriet Tubman or someone like her. As slaves were encouraged to practice Christianity to reinforce the message that they were to be submissive and obedient to their masters, it was only natural that they openly used biblical language and metaphors to share musical messages of hope and visions of escape to abolitionist states and to Canada.

*'Way down yonder in the middle of the fiel'
Angel a-workin' at the chariot wheel.
Not so partic'lar 'bout workin' at the wheel,
I jus' wan' to see how the chariot feel.
Oh let me fly to Mount Zion, Lord, Lord ...
Meet the hypocrite on the street,
First thing he do is show his teeth.
Next thing he do is tell a lie.
Well, the best thing to do is pass him by.
I got a mother in the Promised Land.
Well, I ain't gonna stop 'til I shake her hand.
Not so partic'lar 'bout shakin' her hand,
But I just wan' to get to the Promised Land.
I heard such a-rumbalin' in the sky,
I thought my Lord was passin' by.
'Twas the good ol' chariot drawin' nigh.
Well, it shook the earth, swept the sky.
I want wings, I wan' to fly,
Oh Lord, won't you let me fly to Mount Zion?*

Ave Maris Stella
Mark Thomas
(b. 1961 | USA)

Melissa Shriner, Natalie Watson &
Carmen Witten, *soloists*

We close tonight's program with a setting of this ancient Vesper hymn, *Hail, Star of the Sea*, first recorded in a manuscript found in Switzerland dating from the 9th century. The simple verse structure of the beautiful prayer text inspired the music. The melody shines over the gentle-rolling, wave-like contour of the choral and piano accompaniment.

*Thank you for your support this year.
Please stay tuned for news about our 2018-2019 concert season!*



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LESLEY KINGHAM, PIANIST & ORGANIST

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.

JESSICA TIGCHELAAR, GUEST VIOLINIST

Jessica Tigchelaar grew up on a strawberry farm in the Hamilton area. When she was five years old, she started taking violin lessons, followed by all of her siblings. She began performing violin with her siblings and cousins at age ten, and started a private teaching studio in 2014. Jessica is the concertmaster of the Brock University String Orchestra, and is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Music in Violin Performance at Brock University with Vera Alekseeva.

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. 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.

AVANTI CHAMBER SINGERS

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

⁺Avanti executive

Soprano

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

Alto

Liz Bonisteel, Janice Coles, Carol Gaspari*, Rachel Janecek, Sheryl Janzen, Karen Orlandi, Annie Slade*,
Janice Slade*, Jan Venema*, Lori Reimer-Wiebe*, Carmen Witten

Tenor

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

Bass

Kenton Janzen, Paul Miller, Jim Reynolds*, Majid Hassas Roudsari*, Tim Slade*⁺,
Henk Vanden Beukel, Paul Wiebe*

