

The **Avanti Chamber Singers**, founded in 2006 by Dr. Harris Loewen and now under the direction of Dr. Rachel Rensink-Hoff, is a community-based chamber choir dedicated to presenting intimate choral performances of exemplary quality in genres ranging from Renaissance to the present, giving emphasis to Canadian works and living composers. Avanti has performed in several Niagara communities and collaborated with a variety of guest artists including members of the Niagara Symphony Orchestra, Chorus Niagara, Harmonia Chamber Singers, Youngstown Presbyterian Choir and Brock University choirs. In November 2015, Avanti also joined Kenny Rogers for the first four shows of his Farewell Christmas Tour. This November, they are featured performers in Music Niagara's Choral Fest in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Named Promising New Adult Ensemble in the 2019 Choral Canada National Competition for Canadian Amateur Choirs, Avanti serves as Ensemble-in-Residence for Brock University, regularly presenting its concerts as part of the university's Viva Voce Choral series.

SOPRANO

Carol Dohn*, Mary-Teresa Franceschini*, Shelley Griffin*, Pat Hartman*, Julia Hooker*
Gisela Reimer+, Melissa-Marie Shriner*, Natalie Watson*, Emese Zaduban

ALTO

Liz Bonisteel, Janice Coles, Rachel Janecek+, Karen Orlandi
Annie Slade*, Janice Slade*+, Lori Reimer-Wiebe*, Carmen Witten

TENOR

Isaiah Burry, Ted Harris, Casey Heemskerk, Aron Hoff
Daniel McColgan*, Tim Stacey*+, James van den Brink*, Scott Vernon

BASS

James Bourne, Paul Miller, Jim Reynolds*, Tim Slade*+
Brody Smith*, Henk Vanden Beukel, Gordon Vanderwoude, Paul Wiebe*

**current or former Brock University students, staff or faculty +Avanti executive*



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INNER FIRE

November 9, 2019

Rachel Rensink-Hoff, conductor
Lesley Kingham, piano
Laura Jones, cello

Avanti
CHAMBER SINGERS

Tonight's concert captures the fiery essence and resilience of the human spirit, ranging from expressions of profound pain to that of spirited passion and exuberant joy. Three contrasting larger-scale works form the basis of our program: *Lobet den Herrn* by Johann Sebastian Bach, *A Silence Haunts Me* by American Jake Runestad, and *Exaudi* by Canadian composer Jocelyn Morlock. Interspersed with these is an eclectic range of choral works from 16th century to present day.

We begin with one of Bach's six motets, ***Lobet den Herrn***, a lively, virtuosic setting of Psalm 117 that culminates in an infectious, dancing "Alleluia." Paired with this is a movement from one of Bach's many beloved Cello Suites, performed this evening by our guest artist, Laura Jones.

What follows is a new composition, premiered earlier this year at the 2019 conference of the American Choral Directors' Association: ***A Silence Haunts Me***. The piece sets the text of Todd Boss, who was invited by composer Jake Runestad to adapt the words of Beethoven's *Heiligenstadt Testament*, a famous text in which the great composer Beethoven admits to his brothers the tragic diagnosis of his impending hearing loss. Overcome with contemplations of suicide, Beethoven declares his last will and testament, but also conveys a desire to overcome physical and emotional obstacles to carry out his artistic aspirations. Beethoven's hopeful lament is followed by ***The Music of Stillness***, which sets the poem *There Will Be Rest* penned by American poet Sara Teasdale just months before she took her own life. Again, hope is mingled with despair.

Opening the second half is Dr. Harris Loewen's moving setting of a Bahá'í prayer, ***If It Be Thy Pleasure***, followed by a poignant work that carries us, rather literally, on a journey from the raw and painful outcries of utter grief, to a powerful unfolding of comfort expressed through the soothing, rich tones of cello and choir. Nominated in 2011 for a JUNO Award, Jocelyn Morlock's ***Exaudi*** has earned its place as a highly-revered composition in the canon of contemporary Canadian choral repertoire.

Concluding the program are two pairings: first, a set of Spanish works, one by American composer Joan Syzmko and the other, a solo work for cello by Manuel de Falla; and second, contrasting love songs by Thomas Morley and contemporary Canadian composer Sarah Quartel. And what better way to round out our program *Inner Fire* than with William Dawson's vibrant arrangement of ***Ev'ry Time I Feel the Spirit!***

Thank you for joining us this evening,

Rachel Rensink-Hoff & Avanti Chamber Singers

Guest artist LAURA JONES has been praised for performances on all three of her instruments: modern cello, historical cello, and viola da gamba. Currently Acting Principal Cellist of the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra, she also performs with the Windermere String Quartet, has played and arranged for the Talisker Players, and is principal cellist/gambist and a founding member of Nota Bene Baroque Players in Kitchener-Waterloo. Her kaleidoscopic activities range from playing the solo viola da gamba part in George Benjamin's "Written on Skin" with the Toronto Symphony to sold-out performances with Ensemble Ritmo Flamenco. Her recordings include the recently released *Inner Landscapes*, the Windermere String Quartet's follow-up to their critically acclaimed first CD, *The Golden Age of String Quartets*, as well as *Serenade Française*, a CD of music by French composers recorded with her father, pianist Lawrence Jones, and *Where Words and Music Meet: Talisker Players at Massey College*.

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. 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.

DR. RACHEL RENSINK-HOFF is Assistant Professor of Music at Brock University and Artistic Director of the Avanti Chamber Singers. Former conductor of the McMaster choirs, she serves as Vice-President of Programming for Choral Canada and Past-President of Choirs Ontario. Rachel Rensink-Hoff is the 2015 winner of the Leslie Bell Prize for Choral Conducting of the Ontario Arts Council. That same year, her McMaster Women's Choir was awarded first prize in their category for the 2015 National Choral Competition for Amateur Choirs; in 2019, the Avanti Chamber Singers, under her direction, was awarded "Most Promising New Adult Ensemble" in the competition. Rensink-Hoff works frequently as guest conductor, adjudicator, conference presenter and workshop clinician locally, across Canada, and internationally.

Love is Patient

Sarah Quartel
(b. 1982)

Love is patient, love is kind, love is not boastful or proud,
Love is hopeful, love protects, love keeps no record of wrong,
Love sustains us, love believes, love does not think of itself,
Love rejoices in the truth, love always trusts, always hopes.
When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought in childish ways.
When now I am grown, I put those ways behind me.
And know that love should be your guide always.

-based on 1 Corinthians 13 & 14

Ev’ry Time I Feel the Spirit

arr. William Dawson
(1899-1990)

Henk Vanden Beukel, soloist

Ev’ry time I feel the spirit
Moving in my heart I will pray.
Up on the mountains my Lord spoke,
Out of His mouth came fire and smoke.
Looked all around me, it looked so fine,
‘till I asked my Lord if all was mine.
Jordan river is chilly and cold,
It chills the body, but not the soul.
There ain’t but one train upon this track,
It runs to heaven, and right back.

-Trad. African American



Thank you to St. Thomas’ Anglican Church.

PROGRAM

Lobet Den Herrn

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

*Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden,
und preiset ihn, alle Völker!
Denn seine Gnade und Wahrheit
waltet über uns in Ewigkeit.
Alleluja!*

Praise the Lord, all nations,
praise him, all peoples!
Certain is his love and mercy,
His faithfulness endures forever.
Alleluia!
-Psalm 117

Prelude (Cello Suite No. 4 in Eb Major)

Johann Sebastian Bach

A Silence Haunts Me

Jake Runestad
(b. 1986)

Hear me, brothers, I have a confession painful to make:
Six years I have endured a curse that deepens every day.
They say that soon I’ll cease to hear the very music of my soul.
What should be the sense most perfect in me fails me, shames me, taunts me.
A silence haunts me.
They ask me, “Do you hear the shepherd singing far-off soft?”
They ask me, “Do you hear a distant fluting dancing joyously aloft?”
No, I think so. No.
God, am I Prometheus exiled in chains for gifting humankind my fire?
Take my feeling, take my sight, take my wings,
But let me hear the searing roar of air before I score the ground.
Why? Silence is God’s reply.
And so I beg me, take my life.
When lo, I hear a grace and feel a ringing in me after all.
So now as autumn leaves fall, I make my mark and sign my name,
And turn again to touch my flame of music to the world,
A broken man, as best I can.
As ever,
Faithfully Yours (a bell, a bell?)
Hear me, and be well.

-Todd Boss, an adaptation after
Beethoven’s *Heiligenstadt Testament*

The Music of Stillness

There will be rest, and sure stars shining
Over the roof-tops crowned with snow,
A reign of rest, serene forgetting,
The music of stillness holy and low.
I will make this world of my devising
Out of a dream in my lonely mind.
I shall find the crystal of peace,
Above me, stars I shall find.

Elaine Hagenberg
(b. 1979)

-Sara Teasdale

INTERMISSION

If It Be Thy Pleasure

If it be Thy pleasure,
make me grow as a tender herb in the meadows of Thy grace.
If it be Thy pleasure,
let the gentle winds of Thy will now stir my soul,
then sing me into serenity,
and Thy pleasure in such wise that my movement and my stillness
may be wholly accepted by Thee.
If it be Thy pleasure.

Harris Loewen
(b. 1952)

-Mirza Husayn, trans. by Efendi
Adapted by Harris Loewen

Exaudi

*Exaudi orationem meam;
ad te omnis caro veniet.*

*In Paradisum deducant te Angeli;
in tuo adventu suscipiant te martyres,
et perducant te in civitatem sanctam Jerusalem
Chorus Angelorum te suscipiat,
et cum Lazaro quondam paupere
aeternam habeas requiem.*

Jocelyn Morlock
(b. 1969)

Hear my prayer;
For unto you all flesh shall come.

May Angels lead you into Paradise;
at your coming may martyrs receive you,
and lead you into the Holy City Jerusalem
May the chorus of angels receive you,
and with Lazarus, who was a pauper,
may you have eternal rest.

-Psalm 65:2 & Requiem Mass

Lux Aeterna

*Lux aeterna luceat eis,
cum sanctis tuis in aeternum,
quia pius es.
Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,
et lux perpetua luceat eis.*

Brian Schmidt
(b. 1980)

Let light shine upon them, O Lord,
with your saints forever
For you are merciful.
Grant them eternal rest, O Lord,
And let perpetual light shine upon them.

-Requiem Mass

Nana (Suite Populaire Espagnol)

Manuel de Falla
(1876-1946)

Nade Te Turbe

*Nada te turbe
nada te espante
Todo se pasa
Dios nose muda.
La paciencia todo alcanza.
Quien a Dios tiene nada le falta.*

Joan Szymko
(b. 1957)

Let nothing disturb you,
let nothing frighten you.
All things are passing.
God never changes.
Patience obtains all things.
Whoever has this, lacks nothing.

-Saint (Mother) Teresa de Ávila

Fyer, Fyer

Fire, fire! My heart! O, I burn me!
Alas! O help, alas!
Ay me, I sit and cry me
And call for help, but none comes nigh me.
I burn, alas!
Ay me, will none come quench me?
O cast water on and drench me!
Fa la la la la.

Thomas Morley
(1557-1602)

-Anonymous