

LOOK NORTH

February 22, 2020

Rachel Rensink-Hoff
Conductor
Lesley Kingham
Pianist



avantisingers.com



facebook.com/acsniagara



[avantichambersingers](https://www.instagram.com/avantichambersingers)

NOTES

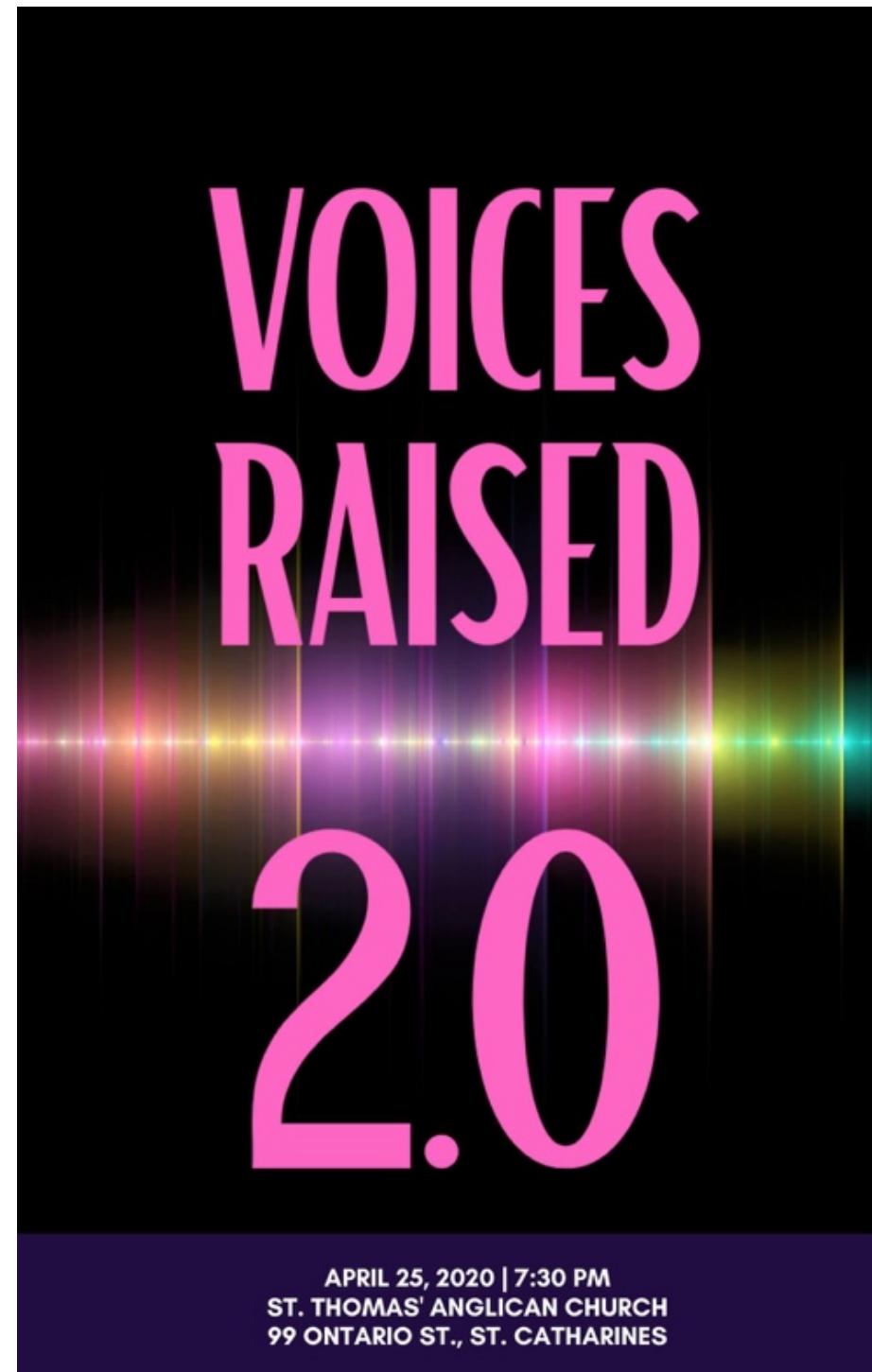
A landmark Canadian documentary *The Idea of North*, by 20th century legendary pianist Glenn Gould, first aired on CBC Radio in 1967. In it, Gould meditates on the vast, cold expanse that constitutes the top third of our country. Opening the documentary is this statement by Gould: "I've long been intrigued by that incredible tapestry of tundra and taiga which constitutes the Arctic and sub-Arctic of our country. I've read about it, written about it, and even pulled up my parka once and gone there. Yet like all but a very few Canadians I've had no real experience of the North. I've remained, of necessity, an outsider. And the North has remained for me, a convenient place to dream about, spin tall tales about, and, in the end, avoid. This documentary brings together some remarkable people who have had a direct confrontation with that northern third of Canada, who've lived and worked there and in whose lives the North has played a very vital role."

Tonight's program takes us on a journey through these northlands. Enchanting accounts of life and landscape by Canadian, Scandinavian and Baltic composers capture the unique and treasured beauty of all things north: from barren tundra and rocky shore to mystical night skies and snow-covered rooftops, the stories and tales we sing this evening capture the essence of life in the northern hemisphere.

With the exception of prolific Estonian composer Veljo Tormis, who passed away only recently in 2017, all works performed tonight are by living composers. Our concert opens with two sacred works, a joyful setting of **Cantate Domino** followed by a movement from a larger collection of songs by Urmas Sisask, **Laudate Dominum**. This 24-part collection is rooted in Sisask's studies of the solar system from which he worked out theoretical sound values for the rotations of the planets, devising what he calls "the planetary scale". Featuring only five tones, C#, D, F#, G# and A, Sisask later discovered that this scale matched that of the Japanese *kumayoshi* mode. All movements, including *Laudate*, include only these five pitches.

Toronto-based composer, Eleanor Daley, has set the powerful poem of Mi'kmaq poet Mary Louise Martin, **Grandmother Moon**. The first of all mothers, Grandmother Moon keeps watch over her daughter, Mother Earth, and is cherished in Indigenous culture as the guide and leader of feminine life as she keeps watch over the waters of the earth in her regulating of the tides. **The Stars Keep Watch**, based on *The Camper* by E. Pauline Johnson, daughter of a Mohawk chief and English immigrant, explores the spiritual connection between humanity and the natural world, also evoking the vastness and meditative calm of the Canadian wilderness.

Following is one of the central works on our program, **Northern Lights**. Ešenvalds uses tuned water glasses and chimes to conjure the ethereal music of the aurora borealis. Various texts are woven together to depict the intensity and beauty of the northern lights but also the primitive



THANK YOU TO

St. Thomas' Anglican Church for use of this space

David Braun at Welland Centennial High School for use of the risers

Harriet Tubman Public School for use of the chimes

Our concert volunteers for assisting with tickets and ushering

Tim Stacey for his leadership with social media & publicity

Henk Vanden Buekel for assembling the projected visuals

Jim Reynolds & Pat Hartman for assistance with the concert program

Annie Slade for coordinating the tuned glasses

James Bourne for rehearsing the tenors and basses for *Tantsulaul*

The Avanti executive for all their work behind the scenes

fear expressed in the folklore of many northern communities should these "warriors of the sky" bring their battles to earth.

While sightings of northern lights may be scarce on the shores of Georgian Bay, its beauty certainly offers to those living in southern Ontario a taste of the "northern experience". The poetic text of Eleanor Hunter's ***Song of Georgian Bay*** lends itself beautifully to this musically descriptive setting by Eleanor Daley who was born and raised in Parry Sound. But as a reminder that this "paradise" is not always filled with moments of peace and tranquility, we offer a short tale about those pesky black flies!

Deeply rooted in the ancient Estonian folk tradition, the music of Veljo Tormis played a significant role in the revolutionary movement for Estonian independence from the Soviet Union. Tormis described the influence of Estonian folksongs on his work this way: "I do not use folk song. It is folk music that uses me. To me, folk music is not a means of self-expression; on the contrary, I feel the need to express the essence of folk music, its spirit, meaning and form."

Lauliku Lapsepoli ("The Songster's Childhood") was written during the Soviet occupation of Estonia and its text reflects on the process of learning to sing as a child, a common theme in Estonian folk music. Following is ***Tantsulaul*** or "Dancing Song", a humorous account of a man who (inaccurately) fancies himself a learned dancer. Concluding this set is a celebratory ***Norwegian Wedding March***. The romance continues in the whimsical writings of Sara Teasdale and Archibald Lampman, whose images of skaters, frosted windowpanes, crunching snow and golden sunsets are playfully set by Canadian composers Trent Worthington and Kathleen Allan.

The essence of place ties together our final collection of songs. The Quebecois folk song ***Un Canadien Errant*** dates from shortly after the unsuccessful rebellions of Upper and Lower Canada in 1836-1837. The text takes on the perspective of a rebel who, banished from his homeland for treason, speaks longingly of Canada. The return home is then powerfully captured in ***Trilo***, a Swedish folksong said to be sung by the wives of fishermen as they welcome the long-awaited return of their men who have been out at sea. The initial and final fifths in the male voices depict the misty, infinite ocean where all that can be heard are the sounds of distant foghorns.

We make our home in this northern country of Canada, and our concert concludes with ***North*** by Vancouver-based band *Sleeping at Last* in which we celebrate and cherish the roots we plant wherever we are.

-Rachel Rensink-Hoff



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.

We acknowledge the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples, many of whom continue to live and work here today. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties and is within the land protected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Agreement.

Today this gathering place is home to many First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and acknowledging reminds us that our great standard of living is directly related to the resources and friendship of Indigenous people.

WELCOME TO BROCK UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC GUEST MUSICIANS

Karlie Boyle, Nick Braun & Ameera Razek



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 of the Renaissance to present-day, with an emphasis on the works of 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 past November they were 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.

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

PROGRAM

This concert is being recorded.

Cantate Domino

Vytautas Miškinis

(Lithuania)

Sing to the Lord a new song,
Sing and give praise to his name:
for he has done marvelous deeds.
Sing and exult and praise.
in songs with the harp and the voice:
for he has done marvelous deeds.

-*Psalm 95 & 97*

Laudate Dominum (from *Gloria Patri: 24 Hymns for Mixed Choir*)

Urmas Sisask

(Estonia)

O praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people.
For his merciful kindness is great toward us:
and the truth of the Lord endures forever.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

-*Psalm 117*

Grandmother Moon

Eleanor Daley

(Canada)

she looks into and beyond my soul
the lacy cedar boughs creating her shadows
cedar ones weave design of midnight canvas
she looks into and beyond my soul
she a powerful sacred hoop of full light
simplicity against the ebony blues and blacks
of night sky land and crystal star people
she looks into and beyond my soul
her round face of translucent beauty and light
quiet powers speak out in her name.....
we'lalin I welcome

-*Mary Louise Martin (Mi'kmaq)*

The Stars Keep Watch

Night 'neath northern skies, lone, black and grim:
Nought but the starlight lies 'twixt heaven, and him [...]
Above his bivouac the firs fling down
Through branches gaunt and black, their needles brown.
Afar some mountain streams, rockbound and fleet,
Sing themselves through his dreams in cadence sweet,
The pine trees whispering, the heron's cry,
The plover's passing wing, his lullaby.
And blinking overhead the white stars keep
Watch o'er his hemlock bed—his sinless sleep.

-E. Pauline Johnson | "Tekahionwake" (Mohawk)

Northern Lights

Scott Vernon & Melissa-Marie Shriner, soloists

How many nights against the North wind
I saw the Northern Lights fighting;
Fighting in the sky, the Northern Lights
Bring wars to our land.

-Traditional Latvian folk song

It was night, and I had gone on deck several times.
Iceberg was silent; I too was silent.
It was true dark and cold.
At nine o'clock I was below in my cabin,
When the captain hailed me with the words:
"Come above, Hall, come above at once! The world is on fire!"
I knew his meaning, and, quick as thought,
I rushed to the companion stairs.
In a moment I reached the deck,
And as the cabin door swung open,
A dazzling light, overpow'ring light burst upon my startled senses!

-Adapted from *Arctic Researches & Life Among the Esquimaux*, by Charles Francis Hall

Nicholas Kelly
(Canada)

North

Isaiah Burry & Julia Hooker, soloists | Paul Wiebe, guitar

We will call this place our home
The dirt in which our roots may grow.
Though the storms will push and pull
We will call this place our home.
We'll tell our stories on these walls.
Every year, measure how tall.
And just like a work of art
We'll tell our stories on these walls.

Let the years we're here be kind, be kind.
Let our hearts, like doors, open wide, open wide.
Settle our bones like wood over time, over time.
Give us bread, give us salt, give us wine.

Ēriks Ešenvalds
(Latvia)

A little broken, a little new.
We are the impact and the glue.
Capable of more than we know
To call this fixer upper home.
With each year, our color fades.
Slowly, our paint chips away.
But we will find the strength
And the nerve it takes
To repaint and repaint and repaint every day.

Smaller than dust on this map
Lies the greatest thing we have:
The dirt in which our roots may grow
And the right to call it home.

-Ryan O'Neal



Sleeping at Last
(Canada)

Snow Song (from *Three Winter Songs*)

Fairy snow, fairy snow,
Blowing, blowing everywhere,
Would that I
Too, could fly
Lightly, lightly through the air.
Like a wee, crystal star
I should drift, I should blow
Near, more near,
To my dear
Where he comes through the snow.
I should fly to my love
Like a flake in the storm,
I should die,
On his lips that are warm.
-Sara Teasdale

Un Canadien Errant

A Canadian exile, banished from his home,
wandered in tears through foreign lands.
One day, sad and reflective, seated on the river's bank,
he watched the stream rush by and spoke these words:
"If you should see my homeland, my sad homeland,
Say to my friends that I will remember them.
O days once so full of happiness, you are gone,
And my homeland, alas, I will never see again.
No, but with my last breath, O my dear Canada,
My fading thought will be of you."

-Antoine Gérin-Lajoie

Trilo

Liz Bonisteel, soloist

Here he is, near land.

-Traditional Swedish folk song

Trent Worthington

(Canada)

Oh, the whole sky was one glowing mass of colored flames, so mighty, so brave!
Like a pathway of light the northern lights seemed to draw us into the sky.
Yes, it was harp-music, wild storming in the darkness;
The strings trembled and sparkled in the glow of the flames
Like a shower of fiery darts.
A fiery crown of auroral light cast a warm glow across the arctic ice.
Again at times it was like softly playing,
gently rocking silvery waves
On which dreams travel into unknown worlds.

*-Adapted from writings of the Norwegian
explorer & Nobel laureate Fridtjof Nansen*

arr. Mark Sirett

(Canada)

Song of Paradise

Eleanor Daley

(Canada)

A song is born in Georgian Bay,
Where the rolling breakers roar
On the reefs that were laid in an ancient day,
And the song begins to soar,
When the tune is tossed to the waiting breeze
Then down to the island's pine trees
To add to their lullabies.
Paradise, this our Paradise.
The waters give to the rocky shore,
And the shore gives to the land,
In the crashing surf that ever, evermore
Carves its beach of curving sand,
And each of them offers their sound to the song
As on to us it flies to us,
The lone loons call,
And the seagulls scream their wild and haunting cries.
Paradise, this our Paradise.

-Eleanor Hunter

Bengt Ollén

(Sweden)

Black Fly Song

Wade Hemsworth, arr. Earle Peach

(Canada)

Paul Miller, soloist

INTERMISSION

Lauliku Lapsepõli

Emese Zaduban, soloist

Once I was just a little one, then I grew very nicely and I was one night old.
After two days my mother took my cradle to a fallow field.
She put the cradle on the field and set a duck in it to comfort me,
and a summer bird to rock it.
The duck had a lot of words, and the summer bird had much to say.
The duck and the bird both sang to me a lot.
There, as a child, I learned songs and many words.
All of this I put on paper, all of it I etched into a book.
From this book I have many words, from this book I have many songs.

-Traditional Estonian folk song

Tantsulaul

Let our Mari come, I shall get her on her feet.
My sock heels have holes like an old mare's blaze.
My ears are ringing as if Jüri from next door was playing the pipes.

-Paul-Eerik Rummo

Bruremarsj fra Valsøyfjord/Aure

Norwegian Wedding March, arr. Grete Pederson

(Norway)

A Winter Bluejay (from Three Winter Songs)

Crisply the bright snow whispered,
Crunching beneath our feet;
Behind us as we walked along the parkway,
Our shadows danced,
Fantastic shapes in vivid blue.
Across the lake the skaters
Flew to and fro,
With sharp turns weaving

Veljo Tormis

(Estonia)

A frail invisible net.
In ecstasy the earth
Drank the silver sunlight;
In ecstasy the skaters
Drank the wine of speed;
In ecstasy we laughed
Drinking the wine of love.
Had not the music (of our joy)
Sounded its highest note?

But no,
For suddenly, with lifted eyes you said,
"Oh look!"

There, on the black bough of a snow flecked maple,
Fearless and gay as our love,
A bluejay cocked his crest!
Oh who can tell the range of joy
Or set the bounds of beauty?

-Sara Teasdale

Veljo Tormis

(Estonia)

The Frost

Kathleen Allan

(Canada)

The frost that stings like fire upon my cheek,
The loneliness of this forsaken ground,
The long white drift upon whose powdered peak
I sit in the great silence as one bound;
The rippled sheet of snow where the wind blew
Across the open fields for miles ahead;
The far-off city towered and roofed in blue
A tender line upon the western red;
The stars that singly, then in flocks appear,
Like jets of silver from a violet dome,
So wonderful, so many and so near,
And then the golden moon to light me home—
The crunching snowshoes and the stinging air,
And silence, frost and beauty everywhere.

-Archibald Lampman

Trent Worthington

(Canada)