

Inspired Transformed *Reverend Joy*
Chamber Choir *Da Capo*
From the Beginning *of the Spirit, With*
Imagination
Chamber Choir

DIRECTED BY
LEONARD ENNS

GIVING IDEAS VOICE

Mid-Winter Songs

Saturday March 4 – 8pm

St. John the Evangelist, Kitchener

Sunday March 5 – 3pm

St. John's Lutheran, Waterloo

A choral concert with guests...

Catherine Robertson, piano

Lance Ouellette, violin

Program

Northern Lights - Ēriks Ešenvalds
Curtis Dueck, soloist

I saw eternity - Leonard Enns

Earth My Song - Kirke Mechem
with Catherine Robertson, piano

1. I Could Hear The Least Bird Sing
2. Isle of The Dead
3. Rebirth

~ intermission ~

Mid-Winter Songs - Morton Lauridsen
with Catherine Robertson, piano

1. Lament for Pasiphaë
2. Like Snow
3. She Tells Her Love While Half Asleep
4. Mid-Winter Waking
5. Intercession in Late October

This Fragile Web - Christine Donkin
with Lance Ouellette, violin
and Catherine Robertson, piano

1. Autumn's Orchestra
2. The Firs
3. Finale

Stars - Ēriks Ešenvalds

*We'd love to visit with you after the concert...
please join us to chat over some snacks!*

Notes & Texts

(notes written by L. Enns)

The 16/17 DaCapo season is a three-part celebration marking Canada's 150th year. We began with Remembrance Day 2016 as the starting point, and will end with a slightly early birthday concert for Canada in May 2017. November celebrated our land as a place of refuge and promise for those coming to this new home (including ourselves or our ancestors); May will celebrate the colourful mixture of ethnic and religious threads that constitute our nation.

Today's concert is inspired by the physical immensity of the land: the beautiful, harsh, seemingly endless landscape, the stunning daytime and nighttime "skyscape," the both gorgeous and bracing weather – all amazing in themselves but also grist for metaphor and metaphysical reflection. The program is framed at beginning and end by Ēriks Ešenvalds' *Northern Lights* and *Stars* respectively, with a structural highpoint created by two major cycles for choir and piano separated by the intermission – Kirk Mechem's *Earth My Song* and Morten Lauridsen's *Mid-Winter Songs*. The Mechem cycle, on poetry by the composer's father, closes the first half of the concert. Mechem takes his metaphors from nature and the land, and the cycle ends with the promise that time will turn the "snow-white death" into the roses of spring. After intermission, again for Lauridsen, sunset, snow, night, winter and autumn all become themes for the poetry of Robert Graves. The program continues with Canadian Christine Donkin's cycle (for choir and violin) *This Fragile Web* and proceeds to a magical ending with Ešenvalds' *Stars*.

***Northern Lights* – Ēriks Ešenvalds (b. 1977, Latvia)**

Ešenvalds teaches at the Latvian Academy of Music in Riga. Now in mid-career, with the promise of much, much more to come, he is already one of most performed choral composers of our time.

His early studies in Latvia included both theology and music, and it is perhaps not too great a stretch to think that the rich sonorities of his music are more than simple beauty, but reflect a conviction of a mystical and powerful reality that holds this material world together. It is a very northern music, certainly in the chosen texts, but also in musical textures that so aptly translate the magic of a northern night-scape into sound. Reviewers consistently use works such as *ecstasy* and *musical mysticism* in describing his sound; a Gramophone review describes his music as *outrageously, exhaustingly beautiful*.

The work has two text sources. First we hear a Latvian folk song that serves as a frame for the heart of the composition. The folksong text translates as: *Whenever at night in the north, I saw the souls of the dead soldiers having their battle, I was afraid "what if they bring their war to my land too?"* Fragments of the folksong return again to close the work.

The choral text is taken from the journals of arctic explorers Charles Francis Hall (1821-71) and Fridtjof Nansen (1861-1930):

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, Hall! The world is on fire!"

I knew his meaning, and, quick as thought, I rushed to the companion stairs. In the moment I reached the deck, and as the cabin door swung open, a dazzling light, overpowering light burst upon my startled senses! Oh, the whole sky was on one glowing mass of coloured 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 aural light cast a warm glow across the arctic ice. Like a pathway of light the northern lights seem to draw us into the sky.

Again at times it was like softly playing, gently rocking, silvery waves, on which dreams travel, into unknown worlds.

***I saw eternity* – Leonard Enns (b. 1948, Canada)**

This work was commissioned by the Esoterics Chamber Choir, Seattle, Washington. It was premiered in April 2008, in Seattle, and is recorded on DaCapo's *Shadowland* CD (and available as a single on iTunes, Spotify, Google Play, and more).

The text, by 17th century Henry Vaughan, describes time as a vast shadow cast by eternity within which the world exists. His physical reference could well be the Northern Lights, and the metaphysical "reading" of them goes even further than in the Ešenvalds text.

The chosen text is only a small fragment of Vaughan's extended poem, *The World*:

I saw Eternity the other night
Like a great ring of pure and endless light,
All calm as it was bright;
And round beneath it,
Time, in hours, days, years,
Driven by the spheres,
Like a vast shadow moved, in which the world
And all her train were hurled.

~ Henry Vaughan (1621-1695)
from the beginning of The World

Earth My Song – Kirke Mechen (b. 1925, USA)

Kirke Mechem was born to a writer father (author of the text of this work) and pianist mother. Music studies took him to Harvard University – where he was a pupil of the leading American choral composer of that era, Randall Thompson – and also to Vienna, after which San Francisco became his home. Mechem has composed much instrumental and orchestral music, several operas (of which *Tartuffe* has been performed over four hundred times and in six countries), and numerous choral works. Today's composition contemplates the cycle of life, death, and renewal, the darkest point being the second movement which becomes almost ghoulish, but then is redeemed in third by the promise that "time exposes death ... with the first spring roses."

1. I Could Hear the Least Bird Sing

In my boyhood, in the spring,
When the world and I were young,
I could hear the least bird sing
Songs no bird has ever sung.

And in summer, in my youth,
As an eagle climbs the sun,
I could reach the starry truth
Men of earth have never won.

Now in autumn, in the fall,
When the birds are flying far,
All the truth seems very small
And a star is but a star.

But in winter, in old age,
I shall go where truth is found:
Earth my song and earth my wage,
In the stall and starless ground.

2. Isle of the Dead

Beyond the fog of the tide
In the night,
When the moon fades,
The graves open.
First the old men
Clamber about the shore,
Staring seaward,
Searching among the sods.
Behind them the old women,
Blinking, walk the pale grass,
Shuffling among the sods.
Then the men in their prime
And the women in their beauty,
Separately, searching.
And last the children,
Boys and girls together,
Whimpering in the
unaccustomed light,
Crawl among the sods.
Neither the old men
See their old women,
Nor the men in their prime
Their women in their beauty,
Nor any their children.
Nor do the children
Discover father or mother.
For this is the first intimation
And outpost of hell,
Found by the living
Among love ones
In the depths of the night.

3. Rebirth

Come, dawdling rose,
Most feckless of flowers.
Autumn is here,
The chill winds moan,
The leaves are sere,
The birds have flown
And swift days close
Your summer hours.

Make haste now, go.
Swiftly, before
Your glowing face
And fragrant breath
And slender grace
Must come to death
In the winter snow.
Loiter no more.

Go. Grieve not.
For time exposes
Death, that pale flower,
Snow-white Death,
To fade in an hour,
Die at a breath,
In this charmed plot
With the first spring roses.

~ Kirke Field Mechem

Mid-Winter Songs - Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943, USA)

The *Mid-Winter Songs* on poems by Robert Graves were commissioned by the University of Southern California to celebrate its Centennial in 1980. People familiar with Lauridsen's lush choral sonorities and his near-mystic compositions may find this cycle from a quarter century ago fresh and surprising in the context of his later works. Lauridsen's approach here, in this relatively early work, is near Benjamin Britten-ish, and altogether captivating in its musical reading of this marvelous poetry by Robert Graves.

1. Lament for Pasiphaë

Dying sun, shine warm a little longer!
My eye, dazzled with tears, shall dazzle yours,
Conjuring you to shine and not to move.
You, sun, and I all afternoon have laboured
Beneath a dewless and oppressive cloud –
A fleece now gilded with our common grief
That this must be a night without a moon.
Dying sun, shine warm a little longer!

Faithless she was not: she was very woman,
Smiling with dire impartiality,
Sov'reign, with heart unmatched, adored of men,
Until Spring's cuckoo with bedraggled plumes
Tempted her pity and her truth betrayed.
Then she who shone for all resigned her being,
And this must be a night without a moon.
Dying sun, shine warm a little longer!

2. Like Snow

She, then, like snow in a dark night,
Fell secretly. And the world waked
With dazzling of the drowsy eye,
So that some muttered 'Too much light,'
And drew the curtains close.
Like snow, warmer than fingers feared,
And to soil friendly;
Holding the histories of the night
In yet unmelted tracks.

3. She Tells Her Love While Half Asleep

She tells her love while half asleep,
In the dark hours,
With half-words whispered low:

As Earth stirs in her winter sleep
And puts out grass and flowers
Despite the snow,
Despite the falling snow.

4. Mid-Winter Waking

Stirring suddenly from long hibernation
I knew myself once more a poet
Guarded by timeless principalities
Against the worm of death, this hillside haunting;
And presently dared open both my eyes.

O gracious, lofty, shone against from under,
Back-of-the-mind-far clouds like towers;
And you, sudden warm airs that blow
Before the expected season of new blossom,
While sheep still gnaw at roots and lambless go –

Be witness that on waking, this mid-winter,
I found her hand in mine laid closely
Who shall watch out the Spring with me.
We stared in silence all around us
But found no winter anywhere to see.

5. Intercession in Late October

How hard the year dies: no frost yet.
On drifts of yellow sand Midas reclines,
Fearless of moaning reed or sullen wave.
Firm and fragrant still the brambleberries.
On ivy-bloom butterflies wag.

Spare him a little longer, Crone,
For his clean hands and love-submissive heart.

~ Robert Graves (1895-1985)

***This Fragile Web* – Christine Donkin (b. 1976, Canada)**

Christine Donkin studied music composition at the University of Alberta and University of British Columbia. Currently living in Ottawa, she is active as composer, adjudicator, and music educator. Her music has won both national and international awards, receiving performances in Canada and internationally, including at Carnegie Hall, the Moscow Conservatory, and the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Mumbai. DaCapo premiered Donkin's *Candles* in November 2011 (it was an honourable mention work in the 2010 DaCapo NewWorks composition competition).

In this three-part cycle we are reminded, in turn, of the tender beauty of our Canadian land, of the bitter-sweet nostalgia that often arises in the embrace of our forests, and of the quiet blessing we receive through the precious gift of nature. Pauline Johnson's poetry is quintessentially Canadian, born of a deep respect for the land and its historic peoples blended with the sensibilities of its immigrant cultures; in the second poem, for example, Johnson writes: *the night wind plays, / Just as it whispered once to you and me / Beneath the English pines beyond the sea*. She was raised near Brantford, by an English mother and Mohawk father.

1. Autumn's Orchestra

Know by the thread of music woven through
This fragile web of cadences I spin,
That I have only caught these songs since you
Voiced them upon your haunting violin.

2. The Firs

There is a lonely minor chord that sings
Faintly and far along the forest ways,
When the firs finger faintly on the strings
Of that rare violin the night wind plays,
Just as it whispered once to you and me
Beneath the English pines beyond the sea.

3. Finale

The cedar trees have sung their vesper hymn,
And now the music sleeps –
Its benediction falling where the dim
Dusk of the forest creeps.
Mute grows the great concerto – and the light
Of day is darkening, Good-night, Good-night.
But through the night time I shall hear within
The murmur of these trees,
The calling of your distant violin
Sobbing across the seas,
And waking wind, and star-reflected light
Shall voice my answering. Good-night, Good-night.

~ Pauline Johnson (1861-1913)

Stars - Ēriks Ešenvalds

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
That aeons
Cannot vex or tire;
Up the dome of heaven
Like a great hill,
(omitted: I watch them marching
Stately and still,)
And I know that I
Am honored to be
Witness
Of so much majesty.

~ Sara Teasdale (1884-1933)

The Artists

Leonard Enns

Conductor and composer Leonard Enns is the founding director of the DaCapo Chamber Choir, and Professor Emeritus in the Music Department at Conrad Grebel University College, University of Waterloo. His work as composer, conductor and adjudicator takes him across Canada, and to the US and Europe. His current composition projects include a major work for the University of Guelph, to be premiered April 2018.

DaCapo Chamber Choir

The DaCapo Chamber Choir was founded in 1998 in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario under the direction of Leonard Enns. The mission of the choir is to promote the best of contemporary choral music through public performance and recordings, including the intentional championing of music of Canadian and local composers. The choir's annual national NewWorks choral competition for Canadian composers aids in establishing a vibrant and vital presence for recent and emerging Canadian choral music.

Our performance season consists of three annual concerts in Kitchener-Waterloo: once in the fall around Remembrance Day, a mid-winter, and a spring concert. In addition, the choir performs on an ad hoc basis at other events.

The choir has released two CDs, the award-winning *ShadowLand* (winner of the 2010 ACCC's National Choral Recording of the Year award, including the Juno-nominated *Nocturne* by Leonard Enns) and *Still* (2004). The choir is currently working on their third recording - with an anticipated release to coincide with the opening of their 20th anniversary season in the fall of 2018.

For more information about the choir, including photos, sound clips, the NewWorks choral composition competition, and more, visit our web site at www.dacapochamberchoir.ca or join our eList by emailing info@dacapochamberchoir.ca.



For behind-the-scenes photos, rehearsal insights, and online savings, become a facebook fan of DaCapo or follow us on Twitter @DaCapoChoir

Choir Members

Soprano

Sara Fretz
Sara Martin
Sarah Pearson
Caroline Schmidt
Hannah Swiderski

Tenor

Brian Black
Curtis Dueck
Chris Everett
Robert Gooding-Townsend
Stephen Preece

Alto

Theresa Bauer
Janice Maust Hedrick
Alex Meinzingher
Susan Schwartzentruber
Jennie Wiebe

Bass

Donny Cheung
Michael Hook
Phil Klassen-Rempel
Luc Larocque
Michael Lepock
Daniel Morris

To inquire about auditions, email auditions@dacapochoir.ca

Catherine Robertson, piano

Catherine Robertson is active as a pianist, chamber musician, singer, coach and teacher. She is a frequent piano and choral adjudicator at music festivals across the country. Catherine teaches piano and piano literature courses at the music department of Conrad Grebel College, University of Waterloo and is conductor of the College Chapel Choir.

Catherine received her B. Mus. Piano Performance (Queen's University), Piano Licentiate LRAM, (Royal Academy of Music, London, U.K.) and her M. Mus. Piano Performance (Western University) degrees. She was a collaborative pianist and coach at Wilfrid Laurier University, and for eight years taught piano at Redeemer University College.

For twenty years, Catherine demonstrated her love of early music as director of TACTUS Vocal Ensemble, a professional group that specialized in music of the European Renaissance. She is also a former consort member of Tafelmusik Chamber Choir and sang for twenty-five years with the Elora Festival Singers.

Membership on the board of the Guelph Connections Concerts series has helped keep Catherine active in recital and in planning chamber concerts of musical excellence and accessibility within the community. She a long-time friend of DaCapo (first performing as a member of TACTUS) and has been a guest pianist with us a number of times, beginning back in November of 2006.

Lance Ouellette, violin

Lance Ouellette is a violin soloist, adjudicator, chamber musician, an instructor at Conrad Grebel University College, and the Interim Associate Concertmaster of the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony since 2015 (he joined the Symphony as the 2nd Associate Concertmaster in 2003). He is also the Associate Concertmaster of the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra and performs with the TSO and other orchestras throughout Canada. Orchestral highlights include tours of Canada, Japan, Carnegie Hall, Europe, and an upcoming tour to Israel.

Lance began his musical training in Saint John, N.B. learning the violin, piano, and voice. While studying at the University of Toronto and Laurier University, Lance received the top awards in the Canadian Music Competition and the Federation of Canadian Music Festivals. He has performed on stages across Canada and has been featured on Showtime/ Showcase Television, CBC Radio, CTV, NPR, as well as music festivals ranging from northern Ontario to southern Mexico. Career highlights include concert tours of Canada, Japan, and Europe as well as performing in Carnegie Hall with the TSO. An upcoming performance of the Mendelssohn Double Concerto for violin and piano will be performed in April, 2017 with his wife, Justyna Szajna, on piano along with the Waterloo Chamber Players.

As a perpetual hobbyist, Lance's other interests include golfing, fly fishing, table tennis, darts, cycling, canoeing, backpacking, and traveling.

Acknowledgements

DaCapo logo, poster, and program design – Heather Lee www.leedesigns.ca

Choir Manager – Sara Martin

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DaCapo thanks the following organizations and individuals:



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Conrad Grebel
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We are grateful to Conrad Grebel University College for providing rehearsal space in its beautiful Chapel, where DaCapo was shaped as a child of the Grebel Chapel Choir, and which continues to be our rehearsal home.

There is a strong historic and ideological relationship between DaCapo and Grebel. Artistic director, and Grebel Professor Emeritus, Leonard Enns directed the Grebel Chapel Choir for 33 years; out of this grew the DaCapo Chamber Choir, beginning in 1998 with a dozen alumni.

DaCapo has grown to extend beyond its Grebel origins, but organic connections remain. Even after nearly 20 years, over half the singers are Grebel alumni, and our music continues to be grounded in spiritual and healing convictions shared with the College.

2016-2017 Season Supporters

DaCapo thanks all of our donors, including the many individuals and organizations who wished to remain anonymous.

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You, too, can become a DaCapo season supporter. Simply visit our web site at www.dacapochamberchoir.ca and click on Support.

Upcoming DaCapo Events

O, Canada!

May 6, 2017

An all-Canadian concert featuring the world premiere of the 2016 NewWorks winning composition *Harvest* by Benjamin Bolden (Ganonoque, ON) and honourable mention *Miigwetch* by Justin Lapierre (Cambridge, ON)

ONE PERFORMANCE ONLY

Saturday May 6th, 8pm – St. John's Lutheran, Waterloo

