

Inspired - Transformed - Reborn
From the Spirit of the
Chamber Choir

directed by Leonard Enns

creating home

featuring

Colour of Freedom by Iman Habibi
based on text by Marina Nemat
with vocalist Amir Haghighi

Saturday Feb 25/12 - 8pm
Sunday Feb 26/12 - 3pm

St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church
(corner of Duke & Water streets, Kitchener)

Program

***Hal Men Mofarrajen (Remover of Difficulties) –
Amir Haghghi (arr. Amy Stephen & Amir Haghghi)***

Amir Haghghi, vocalist

Horizons – Peter van Dijk

Agnus Dei – Samuel Barber

introduction to *Colour of Freedom* with
composer Amir Haghghi, author Marina Nemat,
and soloist Amir Haghghi

Colour of Freedom – Iman Habibi

Amir Haghghi

intermission

Atem/Locus iste – Leonard Enns/Anton Bruckner

Behold, the Tabernacle of God – Healey Willan

Schmücke dich, O liebe Seele – Johann Crüger

Hymn to the Creator of Light – John Rutter

This Still Room – Jonathan Adams

Please join us for an informal reception following the concert.



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Notes & Texts

(notes written by L. Enns, unless otherwise noted)

The creation of home is often fraught with difficulties – physical, spiritual, social or political among other things. The first half of our concert begins with a prayer for the removal of difficulties, be they imprisonment, political unrest, or deprivation of various sorts. This prayer is followed by two works (*Horizons* and *Colour of Peace*) whose topic is the violent disruption of home (in South Africa and Iran respectively), those two separated by Samuel Barber's poignant prayer for mercy and peace, his *Agnus Dei*.

The second half of the concert takes the words of Marina Nemat from the first half as its motivation: *I know that hope will grow / ...Its life the symphony of our voices / Witnessing the birth of a magnificent light*. The focus now is on the holy (in the works by Bruckner & Willan), and ultimately on the "creator of the visible light" (in Rutter's hymn). Here is a ground for creating a home that embraces body and spirit. Yet, after all this, there is still the realization that, really, we simply long for a small space of security and calm—a still room. This is a right of all people.

Hal Men Mofarrajen – Amir Haghghi (Canadian)

(arr. Amy Stephen & Amir Haghghi)

The text is a prayer of the Bab (1819-1850), one of three central figures of the Bahá'í faith, set to music by our guest soloist. Haghghi writes:

This Bahá'í prayer for divine assistance, chanted in Arabic, is dedicated to the "Yaran", the seven Iranian Bahá'ís who were unjustly arrested and imprisoned in Iran 2008 and have been sentenced to twenty years each in prison in Iran. Amnesty International described them as 'prisoners of conscience jailed solely on account of their beliefs or peaceful activities on behalf of the persecuted Baha'i minority.'

The choir sings, as an underlying refrain, the Arabic words "Ya illa hal mustaghas," a plea to God for help in times of peril or dire need.

Horizons – Peter van Dijk (b. 1953, South African)

Written nearly two decades ago for the Kings' Singers, this work was inspired by an African Bushman cave-painting depicting a European ship thought to be carrying gods who would show the people "new and far horizons." Rather, the "gods" brought the near-extinction of the race. Van Dijk's composition is a powerful critique of exploitation and destruction of indigenous homeland, often perversely disguised as positive activity. The third verse of his text, tragically inverting the Bushmen's struggle for survival expressed in the first two verses, reflects the hunger and thirst of the conquerors who steal the life from the belly of the conquered – the gods are crazy! Home has become hell.

1. Sleep, my springbok baby,
Sleep for me, my springbok child,
When morning comes I'll go out hunting,
For you are hungry and thirsty.

When the sun rises you must speak to the Rain,
Charm her with herbs and honeycomb,
O speak to her that I may drink,
This little thing...

She will come across the dark sky:
Mighty Raincow, sing your song for me
That I may find you on the far horizon.

2. Sleep, my springbok baby,
Sleep for me, my springbok child,
When morning comes I'll go out hunting,
For you are hungry and thirsty.

O Star, hunting star,
When the sun rises you must blind with your light
the Eland's eyes,
O blind his eyes that I may eat,
This little thing...

He will come across the red sand:
Mighty Eland, dance your dance for me
That I may find you on the far horizon.

3. Sleep, my springbok baby,
Sleep for me, my springbok child,
When morning comes they'll come a-hunting,
For they are hungry and thirsty.

They will come across the waters:
Mighty saviours in their sailing ships,
And they will show us new and far horizons.

And they came across the waters:
Gods in galleons bearing bows and steel,
Then they killed us on the far horizon.

Agnus Dei – Samuel Barber (1910-1981, American)

Barber's *Agnus Dei* began as the central movement of his 1936 *String Quartet*, which he transcribed two years later for string orchestra and then three decades later for choir. The structure of this choral version does not follow the normal tripartite liturgical form (Lamb of God...have mercy upon us, Lamb of God...have mercy upon us, Lamb of God...grant us peace). Rather, the music probes deeply into the pathos of the text, and finds a form and purpose there. The phrases are long, extending beyond any normal human breath length; the pitch ranges challenge the extremes of normal ability. Yet the expression is deeply human; this is a plea with the skin off. Barber saves the most heart-wrenching cry for the word "pacem." Not a whispered gentle peace, this, but a cry from the gut. In the words of Gerard Manley Hopkins (from our fall concert): *And when Peace here does house / He comes with work to do*. This "dona nobis pacem" does not ask for peace as a reward, but is a commitment to peace as an obligation.

*Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis. Dona nobis pacem.*

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us. Grant us peace.

Colour of Freedom – Iman Habibi (b. 1985, Canadian)

English poetry by Marina Nemat; Persian poetry by Baba Taher

When I was 16 years old, in January 1982 in Evin Prison in Tehran, two men took me to a small room and tied me to a bare wooden bed. I was lying down on my stomach. One of them, Hamehd, lashed the soles of my feet with a length of cable. With every strike, I felt like my whole nervous system would explode and then would magically be put back together again, ready for the next strike. I hoped to lose consciousness, but it never happened. After a few strikes, they untied me and made me walk. It was painful and difficult. Why did they do this? Walking makes the swelling go down a little. If they continue beating prisoners for too long, the skin would rupture, and, as a result, the prisoner could die relatively quickly from bleeding or infection. This staggered method of torture helps torturers maximize the amount of pain they can inflict. Torture is not designed to get information; it is designed to break the human soul.

While I was in Evin, my parents came to the prison for limited and very brief visitations once a month. They sobbed as they looked at me from behind the thick glass barrier in the visitation room. I smiled. I had to hold back my tears, because if I showed any sign of distress, I would be tortured or maybe even executed for it. There were (and are) thousands of prisoners in Evin prison, and, in the 80s, the vast majority of us were teenagers. I had been disconnected from the world and was drowning in a black hole of despair, injustice, and pain. In Evin, I broke under torture. I signed every piece of paper they told me to sign, because I just wanted to go home and sleep in my own bed.

It took me about 20 years to be able to look back at my past and write about it. It took me 20 years to discover that the Marina I was before Evin had died and that the new Marina I had become was a witness. No more. No less. I live to testify. Without it, my life loses all meaning.

Canada took me when I had nowhere to go. It allowed me to gradually find my way back to myself and to the reality of the person I have become, a woman who breathes because she has a story to tell, a story that is not only hers but, in a humble and imperfect yet honest way, is also the story of thousands of others who have been terribly wronged. People are being tortured and executed in many countries as we speak because they have dared speak against oppressive regimes and demand the freedoms that many of us take for granted.

Since the beginning of human history, we have been caught in a vicious cycle that turns tortures into victims and victims into torturers. Anger and hatred have the potential to lead the tortured to give in to a desire for revenge that can be mistaken with justice. War cannot cure our violence-inflicted world, and different forms of disregard for human rights will only sink us deeper into

darkness. Let us speak out against violence, stand up to it, and do our best to make the world a better place for our children. It is the silent majority, the bystander, that allows atrocities to happen. ~ Marina Nemat

(choral text)

The streets of Tehran
Cannot remember the colour of freedom,
For even the pavement of alleyways
Is crimson red.

Freedom is the colour of water,
And it dripped through our fingers
Till all that was left was thirst.
But seeds of light
Remain in the depths of darkness
And will grow when droplets of hope
Find their way through layers of cruelty.

Sunlight carries the psalm of the sky
Through an Angel,
His transparent hands clenched in prayer,
Concealed, yet in plain view.
Iran was not meant to be
The valley of the shadow of death.

I know that hope will grow
Into an eternal ocean,
And it will dance in Tehran
In the pink clouds of sunrise,
Its life the symphony of our voices
Witnessing the birth of a magnificent light.

~ from *Freedom*, by Marina Nemat (b. 1965)

(solo text)

My sorrows plenty, and my pains countless
Alas, there is no remedy to my pain
Oh God, my companion doesn't know
That my cries are involuntary

I have a heart, fragile as glass
My sighs are only because of my thoughts
It is no wonder that my tears are of blood
I am that palm tree rooted in blood

Let's give up our worldly matters
Let's take the heart out of the mud
Let's practice patience
Let's spread the seeds of beneficence
~ from *Quatrains of Bab Taher*
(11th c Persian Poet and Mystic)

Atem/Locus Iste – Leonard Enns (b. 1948, Canadian)
/ Anton Bruckner (1824-1896, Austrian)

In this setting, Bruckner's motet emerges from an improvised choral texture, as if rising from a mist, and then recedes again at the end. Here is a brief glimpse of a holy place, of a possible home. "Atem" simply means breath, carrying with it resonances of our various creation stories.

*Locus iste a Deo factus est,
inaestimabile sacramentum
irreprehensibilis est.*

This place was made by God,
an inestimable holy place,
it is without blame.

Behold, the Tabernacle of God – Healey Willan (1880-1968, Canadian)

Behold, the tabernacle of God is with us,
and the Spirit of God dwelleth within you:
for the temple of God is holy, which temple are ye:
for the love of whom ye do this day
celebrate the joys of the temple with a season of festivity.
O how dreadful is this place.
This is the house of God, and this is the gate of heav'n.
~ from *Antiphons of the Feast of Dedication*

Schmücke dich, O liebe Seele – Johann Crüger (1598-1662, German)

Rutter uses later verses of this communion hymn for the culminating section of his *Hymn to the Creator of Light*. Given our concert theme, the wonderful turn of phrase at the end of this first verse of Johann Franck's hymn is especially fitting in its original German. "Herberg" there means shelter – the German translates literally as "the one who rules heaven, will now find shelter in you."

*Schmücke dich, O liebe Seele,
lass die dunkle Sündenhöhle!
Komm ans helle Licht gegangen,
fange herrlich an zu prangen!
denn der Herr, voll Heil und Gnaden,
will dich jetzt zu Gaste laden;
der den Himmel kann verwalten,
will jetzt Herberg in dir halten.*

Deck thyself, my soul, with gladness,
Leave the gloomy haunts of sadness;
Come into the daylight's splendor,
There with joy thy praises render
Unto Christ whose grace unbounded
Hath this wondrous banquet founded.
Higher o'er all the heav'ns He reigneth,
Yet to dwell with thee He deigneth.

~ J. Franck, 1618-77, tr. Catherine Winkworth)

Hymn to the Creator of Light – John Rutter (b. 1945, British)

John Rutter's double-choir motet is dedicated to the memory of composer Herbert Howells. The colours and general "cloth" of the work are wonderful, rich and filled with mystery and light – fitting for a work dedicated to the memory of composer Herbert Howells. The work was written for the 1992 dedication of the Howells memorial window in Gloucester Cathedral.

Glory be to thee, O lord, glory be to thee,
Creator of the visible light,
The sun's ray, the flame of fire;
Creator also of the light invisible and intellectual:
That which is known of God, the light invisible.
Glory be to thee, O Lord, glory be to thee,
Creator of the Light.
for writings of the law, glory be to thee:
for oracles of prophets, glory be to thee:
for melody of psalms, glory be to thee:
for wisdom of proverbs, glory be to thee:

experience of histories, glory be to thee:
a light which never sets.

God is the Lord, who hath shewed us light.

~ Lancelot Andrewes, 1555-1626, tr. Alexander Whyte

Light, who dost my soul enlighten;
Sun, who all my life dost brighten;
Joy, the sweetest man e'er knoweth;
Fount, whence all my being floweth.
From thy banquet let me measure,
Lord, how vast and deep its treasurer;
Through the gifts thou here dost give us,
As thy guest in heaven receive us.

~ Johann Franck (1618-77)

tr. Catherine Winkworth (adapted)

This Still Room – Jonathan Adams (b. 1962, American)

And so I find it well to come
For deeper rest to this still room,
For here the habit of the soul
Feels less the outer world's control;
The strength of mutual purpose pleads
More earnestly our common needs;
And from the silence multiplied
By these still forms on either side,
The world that time and sense have known
Falls off and leaves us God alone.

~ John Greenleaf Whittier (1807 – 1892)

The Artists

DaCapo Chamber Choir

The DaCapo Chamber Choir was founded in 1998 under the direction of Leonard Enns. The mission of the choir is to identify, study, rehearse, and present in public performance and recordings, the outstanding choral chamber works of the past 100 years and to champion music of Canadian and local composers. In 2011, DaCapo was awarded first place in the Association of Canadian Choral Communities' (ACCC) National Competition for Canadian Amateur Choirs in the Contemporary Choral Music category. The choir also received second place in the Chamber Choir category.

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 has also appeared on several other recordings, including *notes towards*; DaCapo's performance on that disk helped garner a Juno nomination for the title work, *Notes Towards a Poem That Can Never Be Written*, by Timothy Corlis.



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. Plus, you can now become a facebook fan of DaCapo!

DaCapo Chamber Choir

Soprano

Corey Cotter Linforth
Sara Martin
Liz Mitchell
Laura Wallace Jarvis
Jennie Wiebe
Valerie Wiersma

Alto

Theresa Bauer
Sarah Flatt
Janice Maust Hedrick
Deborah Seabrook
Susan Schwartztruber

Tenor

Brian Black
Thomas Brown
Curtis Dueck
Benjamin Janzen
Michael Lee-Poy

Bass

Keith Hagerman
Stephen Horst
Timothy Kauk
Vincent Kong
Bill Labron
Phil Rempel

To inquire about auditions, email auditions@dacapochamberchoir.ca

Leonard Enns, director

DaCapo's founding director, Leonard Enns, is on the faculty of the Music Department at Conrad Grebel University College, University of Waterloo. He is the director of the UW Chamber Choir, and former (founding) director of the Conrad Grebel Chapel Choir. He is active as guest conductor and choral clinician; in July he will be serving on the adjudication panel at the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod in Wales. In addition to his work as conductor, he maintains an active composition schedule; in May he will be in a composition residency at the Banff Centre as a Leighton Colony Artist. Upcoming premieres include *Second-Storey Sun*, for choir and counter-tenor, commissioned by the Halifax Camerata Singers, and the song cycle, *Behind the Seen*, commissioned by baritone Mel Braun and pianist Laura Loewen in Winnipeg.

Amir Haghghi, vocalist

Amir Haghghi began singing at an early age in his native city of Tehran, Iran. Later on, he attended the Center for Preservation and Advancement of Iranian Music, where he studied tar (Persian lute) and traditional music with Master Ata Jankuk. After he emigrated to Canada, Amir studied music at Capilano University, and further advanced his traditional Persian avaz (singing) with Master Hossein Omoumi.

Amir has been performing since 1984 in Canada, the United States and Europe. Performing both traditional Persian music as well as singing in a world music context, Amir was featured in the award-winning documentary "Music for a New World". Amir has been working with the Vancouver Intercultural Orchestra, as well as well-known Canadian choral ensembles across the country. He has performed at the Vancouver International Folk Festival, Vancouver International Jazz Festival, as well as international Persian cultural conferences. Amir is also a recording artist, composer, and arranger. He teaches voice in the Greater Vancouver area.

Iman Habibi, composer

Iman Habibi, MMUS (UBC 2010), BMUS (UBC 2008), is an award-winning composer and pianist. Hailed as "a giant in talent," (The Penticton Herald) Iman's music has been performed by a number of noted ensembles and performers across the world in cities such as New York, London, Oslo, Toronto, Tehran, Nashville, Ottawa, and Vancouver, and has been programmed by organizations such as The Marilyn Horne Foundation (New York), The Canadian Opera Company, Tapestry New Opera (Toronto), Atlantic Music Festival (Maine), the BCScene Festival (Ottawa), and the Powell Street Festival (Vancouver).

He has received numerous awards including the Mayor's Arts Award for Emerging Artist in Music (2011), First Prize at the SOCAN Foundation's Awards for Young Audio-Visual Composers, Second Prize at The 2008 Vancouver Bach Choir's Competition for Large Choir Works, and First Prize for his work at the 2009 Guelph Chamber Choir's Competition. In November 2011, Iman was selected for a six-month composer residency position co-sponsored by the Canadian Music Centre, and the Canadian League of Composers.

As a pianist, Iman is well-known for his collaborations with Deborah Grimmett. The two pianists formed a duo in 2010, which at its debut, won third prize, and the audience choice award at The International Northwest Piano Ensemble Competition.

Marina Nemat, author

Marina Nemat was born in 1965 in Tehran, Iran. After the Islamic Revolution of 1979, she was arrested at the age of sixteen and spent more than two years in Evin, a political prison in Tehran, where she was tortured and came very close to execution. She came to Canada in 1991 and has called it home ever since. Her memoir of her life in Iran, *Prisoner of Tehran*, was published in Canada by Penguin Canada in April 2007, has been published in 28 other countries, and has been an international bestseller. MacLean's Magazine has called it "...one of the finest (memoirs) ever written by a Canadian." *Prisoner of Tehran* has been short-listed for many literary awards, including the Young Minds Award in the UK and the Borders Original Voices Award in the US; it

was a 2012 CBC Canada Reads nominee. On December 15, 2007, Marina received the inaugural Human Dignity Award from the European Parliament, and in October 2008, she received the prestigious Grinzane Prize in Italy. In 2008/2009, she was an Aurea Fellow at University of Toronto's Massey College, where she wrote her second book, *After Tehran: A Life Reclaimed*. Currently she is teaching a creative writing course in Farsi at the University of Toronto's School of Continuing Studies.

Acknowledgements

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

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Upcoming performances

Saturday April 21st, 2pm - Young Composers' Reading Session

If you are interested in the art (and work!) of composing, join us for an open rehearsal as DaCapo workshops the selected 2011 NewWorks young composers' compositions.



Celebrating Home

Saturday May 5th, 8pm

Sunday May 6th, 3pm

Featuring guest pianist, Catherine Robertson.