

Inspire - Transform - Enchant
From the Beginning
Resounding Joy
The Spirit of the
Chamber Choir
Da Capo
Imagination

GIVING IDEAS VOICE
DIRECTED BY LEONARD ENNS

BE LIKE A BIRD

SATURDAY, MARCH 26, 7PM

SUNDAY, MARCH 27, 3PM

Trillium Lutheran, Waterloo

with pianist CATHERINE ROBERSTON

Program

Today's program is offered without intermission.

Be Like a Bird – Abbie Betinis

One Ruby-throated Moment – Leonard Enns

*Mid-Winter Songs – Morten Lauridsen
with Catherine Robertson, piano*

*Ondine (Prelude, Book 2, No. 8) – Claude Debussy
with Catherine Robertson, piano*

Stars – Ēriks Ešēvalds

Leonardo Dreams of His Flying Machine – Eric Whitacre

Most of us are here today as settlers on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (Neutral), Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee peoples. Both our venue today and our choir's rehearsal space is built on the Haldimand Tract, the land granted in 1784 to the Six Nations that includes 10 kilometres on each side of the Grand River from its source in Dundalk to its mouth at Lake Erie.

Overview

The central thrust of today's program lies in the word "despite." Despite war and pestilence, we hope. The grounding image is that of our environment. The cycle of seasons is a lesson in confidence. We know spring will come despite the cold. We know, despite persistent new variants, that Covid will lose its grip. Covid is weakening (it seems anyway), but, stunningly, along with the omnipresent challenges of wars, famine, and climate change, the world is now teetering following the cruel body-blow of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Perhaps the ground is, in fact, failing and falling.

Still, still!, grass will force its way through the cracks in the concrete, sunflowers will grow from seeds in the pockets of the fallen soldiers in Ukraine. When the base seems to fail, still there is a deeper security. Victor Hugo's words are re-assuring and motivating: "Be like a bird that, pausing in her flight awhile on boughs too slight, feels them give way beneath her, and sings, knowing she hath wings."

Our program begins with that anchoring claim of confidence, followed by my setting of Rae Crossman's poem, "One Ruby-throated Moment," which invites us to be like a bird in another way: to drink — hummingbird-like — from the chalice of the sun. You will hear the light spilling down in a luminous embrace as the piece ends.

Mid-Winter Songs by Morten Lauridsen is suffused with nature imagery. From a dark moment of dying sun and clouded moon, the journey flows through spring, summer, and fall. Taken as a whole, the five movements of this work reflect a journey of love lost, found anew and held dearly, ending in bittersweet regret that the halcyon days of summer will not last.

Ondine, the eighth piano prelude of Debussy's *Book II*, is inspired by the mythical character of the sea nymph, Ondine, who marries a human. Tragically, her magical powers prove fatal to the mortal side of this union. The sparkling beginning of the prelude turns dark, perhaps reflecting this sinister side of the nymph, before returning briefly for a playful ending. This is an image, in miniature, of beautiful freedom, invasive threat, and restored calm.

Humans reach up, dream of stars, dream of exploring the stretches of the universe. In his engaging book, *A History of Canada in Ten Maps*, Adam Shoaltes writes: "earliest surviving maps don't depict what we might expect — simple hunting territories — but instead chart the stars.... Humankind, it seems, has always dreamed of the stars — of distant horizons and the unknown." In this spirit, our program continues with music that reflects our bedazzlement with the awe-inspiring wonder above and around us, the "heaven full of stars ... myriads with beating / hearts of fire," in words of Sara Teasdale, as set to music by Latvia's Ēriks Ešenvalds.

That's the amazing part of looking up. The exploring part of our avian aspirations concludes our concert, through a light hearted re-telling of Leonardo Da Vinci's efforts to create a flying machine. Humanity wants to break free of gravitational pulls in many ways: particularly to be free of the old duo, war and pestilence. Still we reach — perhaps "resting on a bough to slight," but knowing we have wings. Eric Whitacre's composition is a tongue-in-cheek parable about this determination to "slip... the surly bonds of earth" (in the words of John Gillespie Magee's *High Flight*).

Texts (and a few more notes)

Program notes written by Leonard Enns

Be Like a Bird – Abbie Betinis (b. 1980, USA)

Be like the bird, that
Pausing in her flight a while
On boughs too slight
Feels them give way beneath her,
And sings
Knowing she hath wings.
~Victor Hugo (*variously translated*)

One Ruby-throated Moment – Leonard Enns (b. 1948, Canada)

if only for one
ruby-throated moment
your life could hover

rapid
radiant
rare

you would never let the quiver
out of your bloodstream

seek always the nectar
you sensed was there

if only for one
ruby-throated moment
your heart could beat

a hundred thrilling times

a hundred exclamations
a hundred revelations
a hundred prayers

if only for one
ruby-throated moment
you could drink
from the chalice of the sun
~ *Rae Crossman*

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

The form this five-movement work is arch-like, nearly palindromic, with musical motives shared between the vigorous and expansive outer two movements; the second and fourth movements are short and spritely; all of this is centered on the introspective third movement. These five movements express a cycle of loss, of renewed hope, of renewal itself, of absolute joy, and of gentle acceptance, in the final movement, of the truth that another winter will come. Like the Victor Hugo text (Be like a bird), the central third movement speaks of a beautiful confidence: "Earth...puts out grass and flowers...despite the falling snow." These are words from the pen of Robert Graves, severely injured in the trenches of World War I, surviving World War II, and living on to the age of ninety.

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)

Stars – Ēriks Ešenvalds (b. 1977, Latvia)

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,
(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)
**omitted from the choral text*

Leonardo Dreams of His Flying Machine – Eric Whitacre (b. 1970, USA)

Whitacre describes this work as a kind of miniature opera, in which both text and music are at times modern and at other times reflective of Da Vinci's late Renaissance era, in the composer's words "an exotic hybrid of old and new." The music is playful and intentionally derivative (you can catch hints of Renaissance music).

Tormented by visions of flight and falling,
More wondrous and terrible each than the last,
Master Leonardo imagines an engine
To carry a man up into the sun...

And as he's dreaming the heavens call him,
Softly whispering their siren-song:
Leonardo. Leonardo, vieni á volare.
(Leonardo. Leonardo, come fly.)

L'uomo colle sua congegiate e grandi ale,
facendo forza contro alla resistente aria.
*(A man with wings large enough and duly connected
might learn to overcome the resistance of the air.)*

As the candles burn low he paces and writes,
Releasing purchased pigeons one by one
Into the golden Tuscan sunrise...

And as he dreams, again the calling,
The very air itself gives voice:
Leonardo. Leonardo, vieni á volare.
(Leonardo. Leonardo, come fly.)

Vicina all'elemento del fuoco...
(Close to the sphere of elemental fire...)
Scratching quill on crumpled paper,
Rete, canna, filo, carta.
(Net, cane, thread, paper.)
Images of wing and frame and fabric fastened tightly.
...sulla suprema sottile aria.
(...in the highest and rarest atmosphere.)

As the midnight watchtower tolls,
Over rooftop, street and dome,
The triumph of a human being ascending
In the dreaming of a mortal man.

Leonardo steels himself,
takes one last breath, and leaps...
Leonardo vieni á volare! Leonardo, sognare!
(Leonardo, come fly! Leonardo, dream!)
~ Charles Anthony Silvestri (b. 1965)
(Italian fragments taken from the notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci)

The Artists

Catherine Robertson, pianist

Catherine Robertson is a versatile musician who, in addition to solo and collaborative-piano performances, has extensive experience as a post-secondary teacher, singer, conductor and adjudicator. Catherine received her B. Mus. Piano Performance (Queen's University), Piano Licentiate LRAM (Royal Academy of Music, London, UK) and her M. Mus. Piano Performance (WU) degrees. For twenty-two years she taught piano and piano literature courses at Conrad Grebel University College, University of Waterloo. Catherine also taught piano at Redeemer College, Ancaster and at the University of Guelph. She was a collaborative pianist and coach at Wilfred Laurier University. Catherine enjoys the challenges of presenting new music and has enjoyed an ongoing relationship with DaCapo Chamber Choir and its dedication to the performance of contemporary music. She has recorded new music as well, including piano and chamber works of Leonard Enns and Michael Purves-Smith.

Leonard Enns, Artistic Director

Leonard Enns is the founding director of the DaCapo Chamber Choir and Professor Emeritus of Music at Conrad Grebel University College, University of Waterloo. A child of Russian Mennonite refugees of the 1920s from the southern Ukraine, his current projects include commissioned works to be performed at two of a number of cross-Canada events marking the centennial of that traumatic decade — one composition for the KW event (to be performed by DaCapo), and another (different) composition for the Winnipeg event, both in July 2023. His other current composition project is a work commissioned by the Winnipeg Philharmonic Choir, in celebration of its own centennial in December of this year.

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: one 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 three CDs: *NewWorks* (2019); 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).

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.

We're Social!

For behind-the-scenes photos, rehearsal insights, and online savings, become a Facebook fan of DaCapo or follow us on Twitter @DaCapoChoir. Find our YouTube channel by searching DaCapo Chamber Choir.

Choir Members

Soprano

Sara Fretz
Maria Geleyense
Marlys Neufeldt
Sydney O'Brien
Janelle Santi
Caroline Schmidt

Alto

Theresa Bauer
Sara Martin
Janice Maust Hedrick
Nathalie Nasr
Susan Schwartzentruber
Jennie Wiebe

Tenor

Joel Becker
Brian Black
Marcus Kramer
Cameron Streicher
Art Winter

Bass

Daniel Cockayne
Mike Hook
Daniel King
Phil Klassen-Rempel
Mike Lepock
Luke MacLean

Acknowledgements

Graphic Design – Heather Lee, www.leedesigns.ca

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Dave Switzer

DaCapo thanks the following organizations and individuals:

 **PeaceWorks** – for hosting our Web site
TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS



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.

Donors (since March 2020)

DaCapo thanks all of our donors, including the many individuals and organizations who wished to remain anonymous. We also wish to thank all those individuals who made a donation to the choir in memory of Laura Shantz.



Paul Born & Marlene Epp
Ralph & Anne Brubacher
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Upcoming DaCapo Performances...

Watch our web site & social media posts for further information about our upcoming concerts.

DEAR MOTHER EARTH

May 7 & 8, 2022

Finally, in May we will premiere the winning works of our current joint first place NewWorks winners, *Storm Birds* by Maria Case and *I Heard the Bird Cry* by Kathryn Rose. In keeping with the theme of earth, both as a planet and as soil that mothers the natural world, we will perform Copland's *In the Beginning* (with Jennifer Enns Modolo, as soloist), and the brilliant *The Passing of the Year* by Jonathan Dove, with Catherine Robertson as pianist.



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