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CONDUCTOR



THIS
DELICATE
UNIVERSE



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Vancouver Chamber Choir

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VANCOUVER CHAMBER CHOIR

Artistic Director Kari Turunen began leading the Vancouver Chamber Choir - one of Canada's premier professional choral ensembles - in September 2019, its 49th concert season.

Jon Washburn founded the choir in 1971 and it has become an amazing success story, ranking with the handful of North America's best professional choruses and noted for its diverse repertoire and performing excellence. The choir has presented concerts at home in Vancouver and on tour across Canada. International excursions have taken them to the USA, Mexico, Japan, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Finland, France, Germany, the Czech Republic, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine.

Honoured with the Margaret Hillis Award for Choral Excellence by Chorus America, the choir has performed countless concerts and broadcasts, released 36 recordings and received numerous awards. Foremost supporters of Canadian music, they are responsible for commissions and premieres of 334 choral works by 145 composers and arrangers, most of whom are Canadian. Over the years the choir has sung over 4,000 performances of works by Canadian composers, in addition to their extensive international repertoire.

The choir's award-winning educational programs include the *Conductors' Symposium* for advanced choral conductors, *Interplay* interactive workshops for choral composers, *Focus* professional development program for student singers, *OnSite* visitations for school choirs, the biennial *Young Composers Competition*, and many on-tour workshops and residencies.



KARI TURUNEN, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

The Vancouver Chamber Choir welcomed Kari Turunen in 2019 as its second-ever Artistic Director in 49 years. Prior to his arrival in Vancouver, Dr. Turunen was a versatile performer on the Finnish choral and vocal music scene. A former college-level teacher, he continues to be a full time conductor, clinician, adjudicator and lecturer in Vancouver, Finland and abroad.

As Artistic Director, he has led prominent Finnish choirs Akademiska Damkören Lyran (1998–2009), Akademiska Sångföreningen (2008–2019), Kampin Laulu chamber choir (2011–2019), the choir of the cantors of the Finnish Lutheran Church and Chorus Cantorum Finlandiae (2011–2019), Spira Ensemble (2012–2019), and the professional early music performers Ensemble Petraloysio and I Dodici, with which he continues to occasionally work. He has won numerous prizes at national and international festivals with his groups and was named choral conductor of the year in Finland in 2008.

Dr. Turunen is a founding member of Lumen Valo, a professional vocal ensemble of eight voices. Lumen Valo has been a driving force on the early music scene in Finland since its conception in 1993 and has made a name for itself in almost 250 concerts around Finland and Europe. The group has recorded nine CDs, all of them critically acclaimed for their fresh programming and quality of singing.

In addition to artistic activities, he has produced events as Artistic Director for the annual Aurora Renaissance Festival and the upcoming Finnish-Swedish Song Celebration in June 2021.

He was educated at the University of Helsinki and the Sibelius Academy where he studied choral conducting (MA). He holds a doctorate in early music performance practice from the University of the Arts, Helsinki.



The Vancouver Chamber Choir acknowledges that it operates and performs on the unceded Indigenous land belonging to the Coast Salish peoples, including the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Stó:lō and Səl̓ílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. We are grateful for this privilege.

VANCOUVER
CHAMBER CHOIR

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Emily M Cheung
Christina Cichos
Beth Currie
Kira Fondse
Krista Pederson
Madeline Lucy Smith

ALTOS

Dinah Ayre
Tabitha Brasso-Ernst
Maria Golas
Martina Govednik
Fabiana Katz
Dolores Scott

TENORS

Eric Biskupski
Tristán Chalcraft
Tom Ellis
Eric Schwarzhoff
Taka Shimojima
Rob Workman

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VANCOUVER CHAMBER CHOIR
KARI TURUNEN, CONDUCTOR

THIS DELICATE UNIVERSE

This Delicate Universe (*Τούτος κόσμος φθαρτος*)

Eric Banks
(b. 1969)

- I. **I have brought to art** (*Εκόμισα εις την τέχνη*)
- II. **In this place** (*Στον ίδιο χώρο*)
- III. **The morning sea** (*Θάλασσα του πρωιού*)
- IV. **An epic in the heart** (*Έπος καρδιάς*)

Christina Cichos and Beth Currie, sopranos
Maria Golas and Fabiana Katz, altos
Eric Biskupski and Eric Schwarzhoff, tenors
Jacob Gramit and Wim Vermeulen, basses

- v. **Beside an open window** (*Πλησίον παραθύρου ανοικτού*)

Produced by Steven Bélanger
and the Vancouver Chamber Choir
in association with Spitshine Flicks
and EventLAB Productions

Direction:
Javier Badillo

Audio engineer:
Grant Rowledge

Camera operation:
Javier Badillo, Jacob Couture, James Ong, Eduardo Ottoni

Editor: Javier Badillo



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- ❖ **Finding the Still Point music for healing** * A healing ambience of calm, warmth and consolation projected through 15 beloved choral favourites with interconnecting Gregorian chants.
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- ❖ **A Quiet Place music for healing III** * An outstanding collection of choral treasures chosen to help find peace, quiet and healing in today's hectic world.

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- ❖ **BaroqueFest** Festive music of Bach, Purcell, Handel and Monteverdi from a gala Expo 86 concert, with Jon Washburn and Michael Corboz conducting their professional choirs from Canada and Switzerland.
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The Canadian Composer Series

- ❖ **A Garden of Bells** * R. Murray Schafer, Vol. 1: Early choral works including *Miniwanka*, *Epitaph for Moonlight*, *Snowforms*, *Gamelan*, *Sun*, *Fire*, *Felix's Girls* and *A Garden of Bells*.
- ❖ **Imagining Incense** * R. Murray Schafer, Vol. 3: Recent choral works including *Magic Songs*, *Three Hymns*, *Rain Chant*, *Alleluia*, *Beautiful Spanish Song*, *Imagining Incense* and other works.

- ❖ **The Love that Moves the Universe** * R. Murray Schafer, Vol. 4: Three outstanding major works recorded in 2018 for the composer's 85th birthday: the title piece for choir and orchestra, plus *The Star Princess and the Waterlilies* and *Narcissus and Echo*.
- ❖ **Earth Chants** Imant Raminsh, Vol. 2 *Missa Brevis in C Minor*, *Earth Chants* & smaller works.
- ❖ **Due West** Stephen Chatman, Vol. 2 With oboist Roger Cole and pianist Linda Lee Thomas.
- ❖ **Due East** Stephen Chatman, Vol. 3 The Canadian composer's latest pieces since 2000.
- ❖ **Rise! Shine!** * Music of Jon Washburn Including *The Star*, *A Stephen Foster Medley*, *Chinese Melodies*, *Rossetti Songs*, *God's Lamb*, *Noel Sing We!*, *Behold I build an house* and *Rise! Shine!*

The Christmas Recordings

- ❖ **A Dylan Thomas Christmas** * The Vancouver Chamber Choir's signature performance of *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, read by Welsh actor Russell Roberts with special carol settings by Jon Washburn.
- ❖ **A World Christmas** Carols and seasonal songs of many lands from guitarist and arranger Ed Henderson, the Worldfest Ensemble and the Vancouver Chamber Choir with Jon Washburn conducting.
- ❖ **The Miracle of Christmas** Christmas music with a colourful Central and South American flavour played by the ensemble Ancient Cultures with several tracks featuring the Vancouver Chamber Choir.

THIS DELICATE UNIVERSE

I met composer Eric Banks at the World Symposium for Choral Music in Barcelona on a hot July evening in 2017. At the suggestion of a mutual friend, we grabbed a quick dinner between concerts. We hit it off really well and ended up having to run across town to make it to the late-evening concert. I asked Eric about his compositional style, and he answered something like: “Well, I really love the music of Richard Strauss.” I thought it was such a surprising thing to say that I was intrigued and asked him to send me some scores. One of the scores I later received was *This Delicate Universe*, written in 2014–15.

This 40-minute work in five movements is based on five poems by Constantine Cavafy (or Konstantinos Kavafis), an Alexandrian poet and journalist (1863–1933) who wrote in Greek. Alexandria, located on the northern coast of Egypt, retained a strong Greek cultural presence through its twists and turns of history. During Cavafy’s lifetime, Egypt was under British rule, even if it formally remained an autonomous part of the Ottoman Empire until the First World War. Before the British occupation, Alexandria had seen Ptolemaic, Roman, Byzantine, Arabic, French and Ottoman rule. Cavafy’s own succinct biographical note bears several references to the multicultural character of his home town:

I am from Constantinople by descent, but I was born in Alexandria—at a house on Seriph Street; I left very young, and spent much of my childhood in England. Subsequently I visited this country as an adult, but for a short period of time. I have also lived in France. During my adolescence I lived over two years in Constantinople. It has been many years since I last visited Greece. My last employment was as a clerk at a government office under the Ministry of Public Works of Egypt. I know English, French, and a little Italian.

While Cavafy is considered one of the most important modern Greek poets, he was not well known in his time. There are many reasons for this. For one, Cavafy was not eager to publish his poems in collections, rather seeing them printed in newspapers or small private printings. Secondly, he was a perfectionist who kept polishing his poems to the point that many of them remained in sketch form. Thirdly, his subjects were not typical for poetry of his times – many of them are based on historical figures, others deeply philosophical, and his sensual poems bore too many references to same-sex love to achieve broader recognition during his times. However, he had several

champions in the English-speaking world, such as E.M. Forster and T.S. Eliot, and his poems gradually gained recognition internationally. His style is concise, often described as a free iambic form with no rhymes and irregular meter. A lovely example of his poetry is *Voices* (originally 1894):

Imagined voices, and beloved, too
of those who died, or of those who are
lost unto us like the dead.

Sometimes in our dreams they speak to us;
sometimes in its thought the mind will hear them.

And with their sound for a moment there return
sounds from the first poetry of our life –
like music, in the night, far off, that fades away.

(Translated by Daniel Mendelsohn)

Eric Banks is a Seattle-based composer and conductor who runs his own choir, The Esoterics. When he sent me the score to *This Delicate Universe* I immediately fell in love with it. I still enjoy the structural clarity it is based on and the sumptuous double-choir writing. In addition, the scope of the work is extremely rewarding amongst the norm of fairly rhapsodic four-minute choral works – it almost feels like a choral symphony. Banks sets the Cavafy poem both in the original Greek and in his own English translation. The music of the Greek sections is mostly in an Arabic scale, the *Suzidil*. The English sections are modal (or, if you like, in the *Kurd* scale, which is equivalent to a Phrygian mode), giving the whole work an ambiguous harmonic character. Throughout the work, Banks uses twelve different transpositions of the scales. Another layer of the systematic approach is visible in the time signatures of the Greek sections: they move from 3/4 in the first movement, through 4/4 and 5/4 in movements II and III, to 6/8 and 6/4 in the last two movements. Typically, one choir has the melody, often in unison, and the other a clearly structured accompaniment figure.

Through this pandemic year we have been learning how video concerts can and should be produced and what is possible for us in the medium. It felt only natural to leave the most ambitious product for last. This is more a music film than an online concert. With director Javier Badillo we have imagined a different approach with a strong emphasis on the visual. We hope you enjoy this reimagining of what is possible for us. For more information on the work and the process leading to the video, I recommend watching the discussion between myself, Javier Badillo and Eric Banks.

Kari Turunen



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I

Εκόμισα εις την τέχνη

I have brought to art

The first, dreamy movement consists of a short introduction followed by four sections (Greek-English-Greek-English) in which the two choirs exchange roles halfway through. Each of the four main sections is in a different key: e-flat minor, A Major, b-flat minor, E Major. The poem describes the way the artist has given form and shape to his experiences and how it has filled his life 'almost imperceptibly'.

Κάθομαι και ρεμβάζω.
Επιθυμίες κ' αισθήσεις
Εκόμισα εις την τέχνην ·
Κάτι μισοειδωμένα,
Πρόσωπα ή γραμμές ·
Ερώτων ατελών
Κάτι αβέβαιες μνήμες.

I sit here, and I dream.
I have brought to art
Sensation and desire;
With some half-noticed images,
Faces and lines,
Incomplete loves
And uncertain memories.

Ας αφεθώ σ' αυτήν.
Ξέρει να σχηματίσει
Μορφήν της καλλονής ·
Σχεδόν ανεπαισθήτως
Τον βίον συμπληρούσα,
Συνδυάζουσα εντυπώσεις,
Συνδυάζουσα τες μέρες.

Let me surrender myself to art.
For art can give shape
To any form of beauty;
And almost imperceptibly
It can fulfill one's life,
While composing impressions,
And arranging the days.

II

Στον ίδιο χώρο

In this place

The poem describes the neighborhood the poet has lived in almost all his life, and the way these mundane surroundings have over the years and through experiences 'been entirely transformed into pure emotion, for me'. Musically, the movement has four main sections followed by a coda, making it a mirror image of the shape of the first movement. The Greek verses, including the coda, are based on a canon *ostinato* in the altos, tenors and sopranos, respectively. The other voices alternate with chords slowly growing in intensity. In the English verses, the two choirs are equal, alternating partners in telling the story. The key shifts in this movement are f-sharp minor, G Major, c-sharp minor and D major, adding to the feeling of symmetry between these two first movements.

Οικίας περιβάλλον,
Κέντρων συνοικίας,
Που βλέπω
Κι όπου περπατώ ·
Χρόνια και χρόνια.

This is my home, the heart of my neighborhood,
The houses and the cafés of my quarter,
These are the buildings that stand all around me,
And the streets that I wander every day;
In this place, year after year.

Σε δημιούργησα
Μεσ σε χαρά και μεσ σε λύπες;
Με τόσα περιστατικά,
Με τόσα πράγματα.
Κ' αισθηματοποιήθηκες
Ολόκληρο, για μένα.

I have recreated these surroundings
In my joy and in my sorrow:
Through a lifetime of experience,
And in abundant detail.
This place has been entirely transformed
Into pure emotion, for me.

III

Θάλασσα του πρωϊού

The morning sea

The central movement is by far the most dynamic. Again, we have four musical sections (ABAB). The Greek verses seem to depict both the sea and the emotions born in viewing it. The first time around in the Greek verse, the tenors and basses form rising waves based on the *Suzidil* scale and the altos and sopranos carry the text, first in similar chains of gestures as the male voices, but gradually coming together to intensify the atmosphere. After both Greek verses, the music explodes into the English verses with a fast 5/4 rhythm created by half of the voices (breaking the choir-versus-choir structure) and the main text told by the other four voice parts grouped in two in symmetrical movements (inverted intervals). In the second set of Greek and English verses, the roles are changed: the sopranos and altos create the waves, and the tenors and basses have the stronger melodic role in the Greek verse and the grouping of the four voices in the English verse are reversed. In this poem, the poet ponders to what extent we can actually see and experience the here-and-now for all our experiences of similar situations and not be distracted by our, as he puts it, daydreams, memories and images of past delights.

Εδώ ας σταθώ.
Κι ας δω κ' εγώ την φύσι λίγο.
Θάλασσας του πρωϊού
Κι ανέφελου ουρανού;
Λαμπρά μαβιά,
Και κίτρινη όχθη ·
Όλα ωραία
Και μεγάλα φωτισμένα.

Εδώ ας σταθώ.
Κι ας γελασθώ πως βλέπω αυτά
(Τα είδ' αλήθεια,
Μια στιγμή σαν πρωτοστάθηκα),
Κι όχι κ' εδώ
Τες φαντασίες μου,
Τες αναμνήσεις μου,
Τα ινδάλματα της ηδονής.

Let me stand here.
Let me enjoy this view for a while.
The morning sea
And the cloudless sky;
The brilliant blue
Against the pale yellow shore;
These colors are utterly beautiful,
As they shimmer in the sunlight.

Let me stand here.
Let me pretend that I can take this all in.
(I will tell you honestly
That this is what I saw when I arrived.)
And I will not be distracted
By my daydreams,
By my memories,
And those images of my past delights.

IV

Έπος καρδιάς

An epic in the heart

The fourth movement is the most intimate. The poem is a pure and ecstatic love song. In the music, time seems to stand still as we move through six sections. The first and fourth sections (in Greek) are driven by soloists; the second and fifth (Greek) feature alternating choirs moving in chords up an octave through the *Suzidil* scale. The English verses are more straightforward and feature a 'heartbeat' duet between one of the alto and tenor parts, respectively. The other six voices tell the story. For the first time, the storytelling group is broken into several groups that are brought together at the most important lines of the text.

Μετά σου το παν,
Νομίζω, προσηγές με μειδιά,
Στον καθρέπτη των ματιών σου
Την χαράν αντανακλά.
Στάσου, φως μου,
Και ακόμη δεν σε είπα τα μισά
Απ' εκείνα που πιάζουν
Την ερώσαν μου καρδιά
Και στα χείλη μου ορμούνε
Με μια μόνη σου ματιά.

Everything within you
Seems to smile at me kindly,
And in the mirror of your eyes,
I can see the reflection of my own joy.
Stay here, my light,
For I have not yet told you
Even half of the things
That seize my heart with passion
And rush to my lips
After a single glance from you.

Μη με ομιλής αν θέλεις,
Μη με πης γοητευτικά
Λόγια αγάπης και λατρείας.
Φθάνει να 'σαι εδώ κοντά,
Να σε λέγω πως σε θέλω,
Να σ' εγγίζω, την δροσιά
Του πρωιού που αναπνέεις
ν' αναπνέω · κι αν και αυτά
Υπερβολικά τα βρίσκεις,
Να σε βλέπω μοναχά.

If you do not want me to speak,
Then do not try to charm me
With your words of love and adoration.
It is enough for me that you are here,
So I can tell you that I want you,
So I can touch you, and in the morning,
So I can breathe in the air that you exhale;
And if you find my attention
Just too much to take,
Then stay here anyway, and let me look at you.

V

Πλησίον παραθύρου ανοικτού

Beside an open window

The last movement is a substantial choral work in itself, well over 10 minutes in duration. The poem is a weighty meditation on life and ends with ecstatic hope. For the first time, we hear the same text in two languages simultaneously. The Greek verses form the accompaniment in one choir and the English verses are presented in unison melodies in the other. The *Suzidil* and *Kurd* scales still alternate and lead us gradually to the climax of the whole cycle. The ending leaves us with the fading sounds of 'music of the spheres'.

Εν φθινοπωρινής νυκτός ευδία,
Πλησίον παραθύρου ανοικτού,
Εφ' ώρας ολοκλήρους, εντελεία,
Ηδονική κάθημαι ησυχία.

Των φύλλων πίπτ' η ελαφρά βροχή.
Ο στεναγμός του κόσμου του φθαρτού
Εν τη φθαρτή μου φύσει αντηχεί,
Αλλ' είναι στεναγμός γλυκός, υψούται ως ευχή.

Ανοίγει το παράθυρόν μου κόσμον
Άγνωστον. Αναμνήσεων ευόσμων,
Αρρήτων μοι προσφέρεται πηγή.

Επί του παραθύρου μου πετρά
Κτυπώσι · φθινοπωρινά πνεύματα δροσερά
Εισέρχονται και με περικυκλούσι,
Κ' εν τη αγνή των γλώσση μοι λαλούσι.

Ελπίδας αορίστους και ευρείας
Αισθάνομαι · κ' εν τη σεπτή σιγή
Της πλάσεως, τα ώτα μου ακούουν μελωδίας,
Ακούουν κρυσταλλίνην, μυστικήν
Εκ του χορού των άστρων μουσικήν.

On this clear autumn night,
Beside an open window,
For hour after hour, I remain,
In the perfect, voluptuous quiet.

The rain drips lightly from the leaves.
A sigh from this delicate universe
Resounds within my own vulnerable nature;
It is a sweet sigh, and rises up like a blessing.

My window looks out upon an unfamiliar world.
A murmuring spring evokes memories
That are fragrant and indescribable to me.

Near my window, a pair of wings flutters by;
The dewy spirits of autumn
Approach and encircle me,
And in the purest of languages, they speak.

I begin to feel a vague and widespread hope;
And in the sacred silence of creation,
My ears encounter faint and distant melodies,
I hear a crystalline, mystical music,
From the chorus of the stars.

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\$ 100 - \$ 249 | Anonymous (5) | Rita Acton | Gloria Aldrich | Frank & Anita Anderson | Kenton Anderson | David & Jan Buley | Frank Cameron | George & Susan Challies* | Reg & Laura Cichos | Dr. Pamela Dalziel | Dr. Terence Dawson | Marilyn deVerteuil* | Richard Dolan | Earl & Monica Drake | Thomas Duncan | Morna Edmundson | Susan Edwards | Elektra Women's Choir | Ian Farthing | Adam Garvin | Thom Geise* | Victoria Hathaway | Johanna Hickey | Donna Hinds | Ralph Huenemann & Deidre Roberts* | Rina Jaswal | Lars Kaario | Wendy Klein | Joslin Kobyłka | Ron Lambert | Sophia Leung | Brenda Mary Lloyd | Laurel March | Peter Mercer | Craig Morash* | Paul Nash | Sumiko Nishizawa | William Patey | Jocelyn Pritchard* | Imant Raminsh | Patrice Ranger | Ronald Schubank | Eileen Sengara | Beverly Short | Elizabeth Snow | David Squires | David K. Stewart | Dr. Ian and Mrs. Jane Strang | Lucille Taylor | Ching Tien | Anthony Tobin | Joel Tranquilla | Anna Turunen | Victoria Uberall* | Cara Ventura | José Verstappen | Margaret Wadge | Marianne Werner | Tom Whalley | James W. Wright

Up to \$100 | Anonymous (8) | Maria Baharustani | Lois Bewley | Marilyn Clark* | Jenny Crober | Colin Dowson | Judith Forst* | Sarah Gaddes | Nancy Garrett | Michael B. Hare | Drusilla Harding | Dr. Peter Harmon | Shirley & David Hsu | Rudolf & Ulrike Janzen | Dianne Kennedy | Ann Marie McGrath | Jean Pamplin | Ian Perry | Silva Plut | Carman J. Price | Jennifer Price | David Rain | Stan Ridley | George & Frances Roberts | Polly Sams | Dr. Heather Sutherland

* Special Thanks to our Most Loyal Donors

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IN REMEMBRANCE

Maurice D. Copithorne, QC, LLD | Fred & Eva Bild | Joost Blom | Jane Ciacci | Sylvia Crooks | Monica & Earle Drake | Janis Hamilton | Stephen Heaney | David Hilton | Izumo-Canada Friendship Society | Linda Johnston | Raymond Kam | Wendy Klein | Cynthia Mak | Chris McGill | Donald McRae | Nozomi Nakamura | Christine Nicolas | R. Lindsay Perceval | Pat Rekert | Theresa Wright

Laverne G'froerer | Maurice & Tama Copithorne | Brian G'froerer

My wife, Marion Haney | Ron Haney

Björn Nitting | Al & Violet Goosen | LeGaVi Holdings | Viviane Nitting | John & Leonora Pauls

In memory of Bob | Jean Pamplin

Fern Seaboyer | Karen Seaboyer*

IN HONOUR

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