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ON
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Kari Turunen
CONDUCTOR



2020 / 21 SEASON

SUMMER IS GONE!



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Vancouver Chamber Choir

1254 West 7th Avenue
Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6H 1B6

Tel: 604.738.6822 • Fax: 604.738.7832
info@vancouverchamberchoir.com
www.vancouverchamberchoir.com

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 Aurore 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/Səl̓ilw̓itl̓ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. We are grateful for this privilege.

VANCOUVER
CHAMBER CHOIR

SOPRANOS

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

ALTOS

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

TENORS

Eric Biskupski
Tom Ellis
Carman J. Price
Eric Schwarzhoff
Rob Workman

BASSES

Steven Bélanger
Jacob Gramit
Paul Nash
George Roberts
Wim Vermeulen

VANCOUVER CHAMBER CHOIR
KARI TURUNEN, CONDUCTOR

SUMMER IS GONE!

Summer is gone

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor
(1875-1912)
Poetry by Christina Rossetti

My World, My Heart

Ramona Luengen
(b. 1960)
Poetry by Holly Benson

Three songs from Seven Poems of Robert Bridges

My Spirit Sang All Day
I Praise the Tender Flower
Clear and Gentle Stream

Gerald Finzi
(1901-1956)
Poetry by Robert Bridges

Vision Chant (from *Bawajigaywin*)

Andrew Balfour
(b. 1967)
Text in Ojibwe

När natten skänker frid (*When night gifts peace*)

Dinah Ayre, mezzo-soprano

Karin Rehnqvist
(b. 1957)
Poetry by Gunnar Björling

Let my love be heard

Jake Runestad
(b. 1986)
Poetry by Alfred Noyes

Three songs from Fünf Gesänge, Op. 104

Nachtwache I (Nightwatch I)
Nachtwache II (Nightwatch II)
Letztes Glück (Last Happiness)

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)
Poetry by Friedrich Rückert
and Max Kalbeck

Lie still, lie still, my breaking heart (WORLD PREMIERE)

Emily M Cheung, soprano

Stephen Chatman
(b. 1950)
Poetry by Christina Rossetti

There will be stars

Christina Cichos and Beth Currie, sopranos

Stephen Chatman
Poetry by Sara Teasdale

Due East

Nor'easter
Minke Whale
Farewell Nancy
Fishing

Madeline Lucy Smith, soprano

James Ong
Production Coordinator

OK DAVE
Graphic Design

José Verstappen
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PROGRAM NOTES, TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

Choral music is a word-music art form. In most cases, the poem came first and played a major role in shaping the music. Many choral works could indeed be described as sung poetry. Yet the poems and the poets very often fly under the radar: the poets are at best mentioned as names and the poem itself is at best printed in the concert program. This is understandable, as there is often so much to say about the music, its composer and the context in which it was born, but I am afraid that in neglecting the poet and poem, we lose something of the diversity of our art. Choral performances feature many voices: those of the composer, the poet and the performers.

This program was initially selected around a few works, but as the program took shape, I noticed I had been drawn to the poems as strongly as the music. And if there is unity in this program, it is based more on the elegiac and nostalgic themes of the poetry than the musical languages presented. As an exercise, or penance for earlier sins of omission, I decided to approach these program notes as much as, if not more, from the point of view of the poems than of the music. I was surprised by how much this change of approach altered my hearing of the music. It is absolutely fine to enjoy the musical sounds as they are, but sometimes doors and windows are opened to new worlds through the poem. This is especially important as I believe choral music and solo songs can be seen as the poetry of classical music when compared to the orchestral and operatic forms more akin to prose or drama.

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor: **Summer is gone**

Christina Rossetti has remained a favourite of choral composers for the last 150 years. Rossetti was seen as a strong female voice already in her own time, and after her collection *Goblin Market and other Poems* came out in 1862, at the age of 31 she was widely seen as the pre-eminent English female poet. The poem Samuel Coleridge-Taylor decided to set to music was originally titled *Bitter for Sweet*, which captures the feeling of the poem moving from late summer to early fall. Coleridge-Taylor was an intriguing figure in *fin-de-siècle* London: a Black man (his father was a physician born in Sierra Leone) who became very popular through his cantata *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* and was celebrated by all the major composers of his time (Stanford, Elgar, Sullivan) and referred to as the 'African Mahler' on his successful tours to New York. Although he succumbed to pneumonia at the age of 37, his works form an impressive catalogue. Most of these works are large in scale, but his setting of the Rossetti poem is an impressive miniature: flowing, harmonically intricate and orchestral in texture.

Summer is gone with all its roses,
Its sun, and perfumes and sweet flow'rs,
Its warm air, and refreshing show'rs;
And even Autumn closes.

Yea! Autumn's chilly self is going,
And winter comes which is yet colder,
Each day the hoarfrost waxes bolder,
And the last buds cease blowing.

Summer is gone with all its roses.

(Christina Rossetti)

Ramona Luengen: **My World, My Heart**

Ramona Luengen's *My World, My Heart* was written in 2008 in memory of Frances Keen, founder and director of the Island Voices Chamber Choir. The poem is by Holly Benson, the daughter of Frances Keen, and paints a picture of a life lived as well as its meaning for those left behind. The musical setting consists of four distinct sections giving the work variation and a broader scope than its length would suggest.

The moon illuminates my thoughts
It reflects your face on the river
The stars shine bright like your soul
Your enormous heart that filled the deepest crevasses.
Your music that brought the Dead Sea to life
Your laugh now echoes between the Himalayan Mountains
Like a yodeler, you, in all your glory.
Your wisdom is a secret whispered in the wind.
I feel my memories of you, senses electric.
Your love given to me so patiently
Will always be in this world, my heart.

(Holly Benson)



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Gerald Finzi:
Three songs from
Seven Poems of Robert Bridges

Robert Bridges achieved literary fame only in later life – he was initially an MD – but when it came, it came in spades: Bridges was Poet Laureate of the UK from 1913 to 1930. His poems are restrained, pure and delicate, often touching upon the theme of lost innocence. The poems Gerald Finzi chose for his setting of Bridges' poems are all from a fairly early collection (*Shorter Poems*, 1890). It seems that the introvert and poetic composer found himself in many of the poems – even in the joy of *My Spirit Sang All Day* (Finzi's wife-to-be was Joyce Black, affectionally 'Joy'). Finzi seems to have been drawn to elegiac poems (Finzi lost his father, three brothers and a teacher-mentor early in life), and Bridges' poems certainly check that box.

Finzi's Bridges cycle was composed between 1934 and 1937, by which time he had left London and moved to the countryside with his wife. There he cultivated apple trees and collected a very impressive library of poetry, philosophy and literature – and composed. *I Praise the Tender Flower* is a beautiful depiction of the introvert artist only being able to express his true feelings through his art. *My Spirit Sang All Day* is an almost breathless expression of joy and love, whilst *Clear and Gentle Stream* is elegiac and nostalgic to the extreme. The way the music effortlessly flows through its text like the river the poet will always miss, makes it one of my greatest favourites amongst English partsongs.

My Spirit Sang All Day

My spirit sang all day
O my joy.
Nothing my tongue could say,
Only My joy!
My heart an echo caught
O my joy
And spake, Tell me thy thought
Hide not thy joy.
My eyes gan peer around,
O my joy
What beauty hast thou found?
Shew us thy joy.
My jealous ears grew whist;
O my joy
Music from heaven is't,
Sent for our joy?
She also came and heard;
O my joy,
What, said she, is this word?
What is thy joy?
And I replied, O see,
O my joy,
'Tis thee, I cried, 'tis thee:
Thou art my joy.

(Robert Bridges)

I Praise the Tender Flower

I praise the tender flower,
That on a mournful day
Bloomed in my garden bower
And made the winter gay.
Its loveliness contented
My heart tormented.
I praise the gentle maid
Whose happy voice and smile
To confidence betrayed
My doleful heart awhile:
And gave my spirit deploring
Fresh wings for soaring.
The maid for very fear
Of love I durst not tell:
The rose could never hear,
Though I bespake her well:
So in my song I bind them
For all to find them.

(Robert Bridges)

Clear and Gentle Stream

Clear and gentle stream!
Known and loved so long,
That hast heard the song
And the idle dream
Of my boyish day;
While I once again
Down thy margin stray,
In the selfsame strain
Still my voice is spent,
With my old lament
And my idle dream,
Clear and gentle stream!
Where my old seat was

Here again I sit,
Where the long boughs knit
Over stream and grass
A translucent eaves:
Where back eddies play
Shipwreck with the leaves,
And the proud swans stray,
Sailing one by one
Out of stream and sun,
And the fish lie cool
In their chosen pool.
Many an afternoon

Of the summer day
Dreaming here I lay;
And I know how soon,
Idly at its hour,
First the deep bell hums
From the minster tower,
And then evening comes,
Creeping up the glade,
With her lengthening shade,
And the tardy boon
Of her brightening moon.

Clear and gentle stream!
Ere again I go
Where thou dost not flow,
Well does it beseem
Thee to hear again
Once my youthful song,
That familiar strain
Silent now so long:
Be as I content
With my old lament
And my idle dream,
Clear and gentle stream.

(Robert Bridges)

Andrew Balfour:
Vision Chant

Winnipeg-based composer Andrew Balfour's *Vision Chant* comes from a larger work called *Bawajigaywin* (Vision Quest) from 2013. Balfour, who is of Cree descent, creates a soundscape that bears strong references to indigenous chant. The work is ternary (ABA) in form: the outer sections are linear and based on a flowing melody, whereas the central section is more expansive and features a pulsating rhythmic ostinato in the baritone part. The only word with a direct meaning is "Babamadizwin", Ojibwe for "journey".

[Text in Ojibwe]

Karin Rehnqvist:
När natten skänker frid

När natten skänker frid (When night gifts peace) is a poem by influential Swedish-speaking Finnish poet Gunnar Björling. In his early works he was a modernist, and he was at one time even called the last Dadaist! Björling was openly bisexual, an identity that was accepted by very few at the time. In his later poems, Björling found an extremely economical voice: to say more with fewer words. *När natten skänker frid* is from the collection *Ohjälpligheten* (Helplessness) from 1943. Swedish composer Karin Rehnqvist, known for incorporating elements of folk music in her choral works, has found a musical expression that is in line with Björling's. This work from 2003 is as economical with notes as Björling is with words.

När natten skänker frid
låt dagen vara all
när dag ej
plågar mer
och lugn mitt öga bjuder
när hjärtat är med tröst
med mod
och livet utan sorg
mig minner
– när natten skänker frid.

(Gunnar Björling)

When night gifts peace,
let the day be done
when the day causes
no more pain
and gives rest to my eyes
when the heart is comforted
and brave
and life without sorrow
remembers me
– when night gifts peace.

Jake Runestad:
Let my love be heard

Jake Runestad's *Let my love be heard* is a setting of *A Prayer* by Alfred Noyes (from the collection *Dick Turpin's Ride and other Poems*, 1927). Noyes had lost his first wife in 1926 and it seems likely that the grief mentioned in the poem is connected to this loss. Runestad finds a fine balance between emotionality and structure in his setting. Especially effective is the central passage where the music rises and rises towards the skies.

Angels, where you soar
Up to God's own light,
Take my own lost bird
On your hearts tonight;
And as grief once more
Mounts to heaven and sings,
Let my love be heard
Whispering in your wings.

(Alfred Noyes)

R.I.P.
Stephen Drance, O.C., M.D.
(1925-2020)



Photo credit Jan Gates

The Board, Singers and Staff of the Vancouver Chamber Choir would like to express our condolences to the family of Dr. Stephen Drance, who passed away on September 2nd.

Dr. Drance was an important figure in the history of the VCC. He was on the Board from 1992 to 2000, and was our President from 1996 to 1998. He was an

enthusiastic supporter of the arts in Vancouver, especially in his leadership roles with Early Music Vancouver, the Vancouver Chamber Choir and MusicFest Vancouver, which he founded in 2000.

He was a considered a visionary in the field of ophthalmology, and was the head of the Department of Ophthalmology at UBC from 1973 to 1990. Respected worldwide for his research on glaucoma, he also was a key figure in the building of the UBC/VGH Eye Care Centre, where clinical care, surgery, and medical training happens under one roof.

Both the medical world and the Vancouver arts community have lost a true gentleman. He leaves behind many mentees for whom he set an example for devoted volunteerism in the arts.

Johannes Brahms:
Three songs from
Fünf Gesänge, Op. 104

Johannes Brahms wrote his Five Songs for mixed choir in 1888, a few years after his Fourth Symphony. Brahms was an accomplished choral conductor and his knowledge of the instrument, combined with a deep love for the polyphonic music of the early masters, shows in everything he writes for choir. In many ways this music was old-fashioned at the time of its inception, which, ironically, makes it feel a great deal more modern than much of the Romantic choral repertoire.

The first two songs of the cycle are based on the first and last verses of a poem from Friedrich Rückert's collection *Wanderung* (1868). In some ways, what Brahms did not set is the key to understanding the two verses he did set: in verses two to five Rückert reveals that the poem is about a lost youthful love. The first of Brahms' *Nachtwachen* (Nightwatches) sees the protagonist send his love through his sighs to the beloved, and in the second the poet accepts his fate and settles to sleep in peace and calm. The third song of the cycle is based on a poem by Max Kalbeck, Brahms' first biographer, depicting falling autumn leaves and the ephemerality of life. The German language gives Kalbeck the chance to leave the harsh punchline to the very last two syllables (*hoffnungslosen*; without hope). Brahms set these poems in an array of styles, albeit all three are scored in the same manner for three high and three low voices. The juxtaposition of the high and low is at its clearest in the first song, in which the other striking features are the shortness of most phrases and the almost instrumental articulation. In the second song Brahms uses varied groupings of the six voice parts and plays with the reference to the signal horns in the distance. The third song has a very intricate tonal structure reminiscent of sonata form. The orchestration of the voices is skillful, and the feeling of movement varies constantly within this song that has to belong to the finest choral works Brahms ever wrote.

Nachtwache I

Leise Töne der Brust,
geweckt vom Odem der Liebe,
hauchet zitternd hinaus,
ob sich euch öffnen' ein Ohr,
öffn' ein liebendes Herz,
und wenn sich keines euch öffnet,
trag' ein Nachtwind euch seufzend in meines zurück.

(Friedrich Rückert)

Gentle sounds of the bosom,
Awakened by the breath of love,
Flow tremblingly forth,
If you open an ear,
open a loving heart;
and if none opens to you,
let the night wind carry you sighing back to me.

Nachtwache II

Ruh'n sie? ruft das Horn des Wächters drüben aus Westen,
und aus Osten das Horn ruft entgegen: Sie ruh'n!
Hörst du, zagendes Herz, die flüsternden Stimmen
der Engel?
Lösche die Lampe getrost, hülle in Frieden dich ein.

(Friedrich Rückert)

Are they resting? the horn of the watchman calls from the west,
and from the east the horn calls a reply: they rest!
Do you hear, apprehensive heart, the whispering voices
of angels?
Extinguish the lamp confidently, and cover yourself in peace.

Letztes Glück

Leblos gleitet Blatt um Blatt
still und traurig von den Bäumen;
seines Hoffens nimmer satt,
lebt das Herz in Frühlingsträumen.

Noch verweilt ein Sonnenblick
bei den späten Hagerosen,
wie bei einem letzten Glück,
einem süßen, hoffnungslosen.

(Max Kalbeck)

Lifeless floats leaf upon leaf,
quietly and sadly from the trees;
its hopes never satisfied,
the heart dwells in dreams of spring.

Yet a sunny glance still lingers
in the late-blooming rose bush,
like one last bit of happiness -
sweet, but without hope.

Stephen Chatman:
Lie still, lie still, my breaking heart

The Vancouver Chamber Choir had planned to partner with the Canadian Music Centre BC Region to celebrate Stephen Chatman and his music on his 70th birthday last spring. COVID-19 blew even that plan out of the water. We thought we would allow a ripple of this cancelled celebration to reach this concert and we will end the program with three works by this skilled BC composer.

Lie still, lie still, my breaking heart will be premiered this evening. It is a very Chatman-esque slow and sustained movement with melodic beauty, softly enhanced chords and subtle variation. The second verse features a soprano solo that further adds life to the piece. The text is the third stanza of Rossetti's *Mirage* (from *Goblin Market, The Prince's Progress, and Other Poems*, 1879), a poem that encompasses lost love and deep disappointment.

Lie still, lie still, my breaking heart;
My silent heart, lie still and break:
Life, and the world, and mine own self, are changed
For a dream's sake.

(Christina Rossetti)

Stephen Chatman:
There will be stars

There will be stars from 2012 is very much in the same mold as the previous work. The Sara Teasdale poem from the collection *Dark of Moon* (1926) has the same kind of innate sadness as Rossetti's *Mirage*. The poem seems to walk the fine line between hope and despair and Chatman gives it ample space to play out. Most sections open with an imitative gesture and perhaps Chatman here nods gently towards Renaissance polyphony. An arching soprano solo towards the end of the piece seems to strive for the stars before the music melts softly into silence.

There will be stars over the place forever;
Though the house we loved and the street we loved are lost,
Every time the earth circles her orbit
On the night the autumn equinox is crossed,
Two stars we knew, poised on the peak of midnight
Will reach their zenith; stillness will be deep;
There will be stars over the place forever,
There will be stars forever, while we sleep.

(Sara Teasdale)

Stephen Chatman:
Due East

Due East was commissioned in 2006 by the Philharmonic Choir of the Newfoundland Symphony. It continued Chatman's earlier cycles *Due North* and *Due West*, the East in this case being the Canadian Maritimes. All the songs of the cycle (poems by Chatman's spouse, Tara Wohlberg) are closely connected to the sea. In *Nor'easter*, Chatman depicts the cold winds with the openness of the chords dominated by pure fourths, while *Minke Whale* is a playful, lively depiction of a regular visitor to the bay. *Farewell Nancy*, an adaptation of a folk poem, is a restful setting that resembles a folk song – a resemblance made all the more poignant by the closing solo verse. The cycle ends with a lilting and spritely depiction of the commotion of a fishing trip.

Nor'easter

Wild wind,
Strong, cold wind,
Icy wind,
Howling sky,
Stormy sea,
High dark waves,
Icy, angry, blowing wind,
Nor'easter,
Gale force wind,
Freezing fingers,
Stinging eyes,
Nor'easter,
Slapping water,
Spraying salt,
Nor'easter.

Minke Whale

Minke whale in the harbour,
Minke whale in the bay,
Cruising, diving, lunging, feeding,
Splashing water, spouting spray,
Diving for its prey,
Diving near the surface,
Solitary little whale, graceful,
Swimming through the school,
Water streaming, raising its head,
So smooth and powerful,
Spy hopping, feeding,
Feed on herring, caplin, mackerel,
Hanging 'round the fishermen's gear,
Catching fish.

Farewell Nancy

O Nancy, lovely Nancy, I'm going for to leave you;
Down to the East Indies we're bound for to steer,
And it's by my long absence, lovely Nancy, don't grieve you,
For I will be back in the spring of the year.

O Jimmie, lovely Jimmie, shall I go along with you?
In the midst of all danger with you I shan't fail;
When the clod stormy winds, love, and the hurricanes are
blowing,
Darling, I shall be ready to reef your topsail.

It's not your little fingers our cables can't handle,
And your neat little feet our topsail can't go;
When the cold stormy winds, love, and the hurricanes are
blowing;
I'll advise you, lovely Nancy, to the seas do not go.

Where Jimmie was sailin' and Nancy kept wavin',
Her cheeks bein' more paler than ever was before;
With her gold gay locks, love, she tenderly kept tearing of,
You are gone, lovely Jimmie, where I'll see you no more.

Fishing

Fishing, running out the bay,
Sailing, got her under way,
On the bank and steering straight,
Whipping breeze and tub of bait.

Traps and trawls and finger stalls,
Rubber boots and killick claws,
Lines, twines, ropes and coils,
Get sore hands and full of boils.

What a brave young banker's crew,
Foolish things cod-jiggers do,
Catching codfish, pick out dogfish,
Catching big fish, pick out small fish.

Haul up smelt and salmon, too,
Catching more than just a few,
Steady wind and thick'ning fog,
Bound for home to get more grog.

(Tara Wohlberg)

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& **Jane Coop**
and
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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.

W I T H O U R T H A N K S

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