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Kari Turunen  
CONDUCTOR



2020 / 21 SEASON

# MARIA!



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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 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/Selilwitulh (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  
Maria Golas  
Martina Govednik  
Fabiana Katz  
Dolores Scott

TENORS

Eric Biskupski  
Tristán Chalcraft  
Tom Ellis  
Eric Schwarzhoff  
Rob Workman

BASSES

Steven Bélanger  
Jacob Gramit  
Paul Nash  
George Roberts  
Wim Vermeulen

VANCOUVER CHAMBER CHOIR  
KARI TURUNEN, CONDUCTOR

MARIA!

- Maria, Maria** Gregorian antiphon (Cantus Sororum)
- A Hymn to the Virgin** Benjamin Britten  
(1913-1976)
- Ave Maria** Robert Parsons  
(c. 1535-1572)
- Lux aurumque** Eric Whitacre  
(b. 1970)  
Emily M Cheung, soprano
- Blessed be that maid Mary** Traditional English, arr. David Willcocks  
(1919-2015)
- Nesciens mater** Jean Mouton  
(c. 1459-1522)
- Second Eve** Ola Gjeilo  
(b. 1978)
- Богородице Дево (Rejoice, O Virgin)** Sergei Rachmaninoff  
(1873-1943)
- Gabriel's Message** Basque carol, arr. Jim Clements  
(b. 1983)  
Christina Cichos, soprano
- O magnum mysterium** Hanna Järveläinen  
(b. 1972)
- Nesciens mater** Walter Lambe  
(c. 1450-1504)  
Madeline Lucy Smith, soprano Fabiana Katz, alto  
Eric Schwarzhoff and Rob Workman, tenors Jacob Gramit, bass
- In dulci jubilo** German carol, arr. Robert Lucas de Pearsall  
(1795-1856)  
Maria Golas, mezzo-soprano, Dolores Scott, alto, Tristán Chalcraft, tenor
- Silent Night** Franz Xaver Gruber, arr. Michael McGlynn  
(b. 1964)  
Tristán Chalcraft, tenor Jacob Gramit, baritone

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# PROGRAM NOTES, TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

## MARIA!

Nativity scenes were not a tradition in my childhood home, and I have only grown to enjoy them in adulthood as a part of seasonal décor. One thing that draws me to the scenes is the entourage. Even though the central figure is the infant Jesus, he often seems almost crowded out by the other characters on the scene. Mary and Joseph are naturally there, but with them are angels, the magi, a collection of domestic animals, some shepherds, and even a star. There is something extremely human in this throng.

Music for advent and Christmas is a similar cornucopia. And logically enough, the characters of the nativity scenes keep appearing in the music. Even in this concert, where I chose to focus on Mary, you will find much of the throng represented. Through the music it is as if the wish expressed in *In dulci jubilo*, “O that we were there”, were granted to us. Besides the animals, my favourite has always been the perplexed, yet calm teenage mother, Mary. As an old Latin text says, in Mary *‘humanum osculatur naturam divinitas’* (human nature kisses the divine). I find much of this tenderness in the Marian motets of the Renaissance as well as later carols and choral works that feature Mary.

### Gregorian antiphon (Cantus Sororum): Maria, Maria

The program opens with a Gregorian antiphon from a collection of works sung by Bridgettine nuns in the monasteries of Sweden and Finland in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries (this antiphon is edited by Hilikka-Liisa Vuori). The melody alternates between florid and syllabic sections, with a few surprising turns.

Maria, Maria, totius sanctitatis tu principalis gemma,  
nos tibi humiliter da servire,  
et ab hostis antiqui mille millenis  
fraudibus conserva, Maria.

Mary, Mary, incomparable gem of all sanctity,  
Let us serve you with humility  
And save us, Maria, from the thousands upon thousands  
of betrayals of the old enemy.

### Benjamin Britten: A Hymn to the Virgin

Benjamin Britten’s A Hymn to the Virgin is a youthful work for double choir. The text set by the seventeen-year-old composer is an anonymous poem from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The poem is a macaronic text, i.e. it combines two different languages, in this case English and Latin. As we will see later in the program, this combination is surprisingly popular in many carols. The text plays with Eva (through whom sin came into the world) and Ave (Maria; through whom redemption came into the world). Britten mostly alternates the two choirs and only brings them together for a short moment in the last verse.

Of one that is so fair and bright,  
*Velut maris stella* [like the star of the sea]  
Brighter than the day is light;  
*Parens et puella*. [parent and child]  
I cry to thee, thou see to me,  
Lady, pray thy Son for me  
*Tam pia* [so pure]  
That I may come to thee  
*Maria*.

All this world was forlorn,  
*Eva peccatrice*, [Eve, the sinner]  
till our Saviour Lord was born  
*de te genetrice*; [through you, his mother]  
with thy ‘ave’ it went away,  
darkest night and comes the day  
*salutis*. [salvation]  
The well springeth out of thee,  
*virtutis*. [virtue]

Lady, flow’r of ev’rything,  
*Rosa sine spina*, [rose without thorns]  
Thou bare Jesu, Heaven’s King,  
*Gratia divina*, [divine grace]  
Of all thou bear’st the prize  
Lady, Queen of Paradise  
*Electa*, [elected]  
Maid mild, Mother  
*Es effecta*. [you are made]



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Robert Parsons:  
**Ave Maria**

Robert Parsons was a Gentleman of the Royal Chapel in London from the 1560s until his untimely death by drowning in 1572. His Anglican church music has for some reason never enjoyed the fame it deserves. *Ave Maria*, from the early 1560s, is a good example of his skill. This beautiful five-part motet flows effortlessly and ends with an energetic and bright amen.

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum;  
benedicta tu in mulieribus,  
et benedictus fructus ventris tui.  
Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee;  
blessed art thou among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.  
Amen.

Eric Whitacre:  
**Lux aurumque**

In any normal December, Eric Whitacre's *Lux aurumque* would be heard thousands of times all around the world. The composer describes his popular work thus: "After deciding upon the poem by Edward Esch (I was immediately struck by its genuine, elegant simplicity), I had it translated into Latin by the celebrated American poet Charles Anthony Silvestri. A simple approach was essential to the success of the work, and I waited patiently for the tight harmonies to shimmer and glow."

Lux  
calida gravisque pura velut aurum  
et canunt angeli molliter  
modo natum.

(translated by Charles Anthony Silvestri)

Light  
warm and heavy as pure gold  
and the angels sing softly  
to the newborn babe.

(Edward Esch)

Traditional English, arr. David Willcocks:  
**Blessed be that maid Mary**

David Willcocks' arrangements of English carols became famous through the Nine Lessons and Carols services broadcast from King's College, Cambridge. His arrangement of the traditional English carol, *Blessed be that maid Mary*, gives each verse its own musical form. The first verse is a flowing four-part harmonization; the second features the unison melody in choir I, with choir II accompanying with long note values; the third and fourth are for three-part descant and low voices, respectively; and the last verse gives each of the eight voices a taste of the melody.

Blessed be that Maid Mary;  
Born He was of her body;  
Very God ere time began,  
Born in time the Son of man.  
*Eya! Jesus hodie* [Jesus on this day]  
*natus est de virgine.* [is born of a virgin]

In a manger of an ass  
Jesus lay and lulled was;  
Born to die upon the tree  
*pro peccante homine.* [for the sins of man]  
*Eya! Jesus hodie*  
*natus est de virgine.*

Sweet and blissful was the song  
Changed of the Angel throng,  
"Peace on earth," Alleluia.  
*In excelsis gloria.* [Glory on high]  
*Eya! Jesus hodie*  
*natus est de virgine.*

Fare three Kings from far-off land,  
Incense, gold and myrrh in hand;  
In Bethlehem the Babe they see,  
*stelle ducti lumine.* [guided by the star]  
*Eya! Jesus hodie*  
*natus est de virgine.*

Make we merry on this fest,  
*in quo Christus natus est;*  
[on which Christ was born]  
On this Child I pray you call,  
To assoil and save us all.  
*Eya! Jesus hodie*  
*natus est de virgine.*

## Jean Mouton: Nesciens mater

A subsequently lost epitaph in a church in Northern France is said to have defined Mouton as ‘Maistre Jehan de Hollingue, dit Mouton’. Where he acquired his nickname is not known. What is known is that he was one of the most important French Renaissance composers and his sacred music is of the highest standard. Even within those standards, *Nesciens mater* stands out. It is a technical tour de force; a quadruple canon at the fifth, or if you like, a canon of two four-part choirs at the fifth and at the distance of four beats. Perhaps even more pertinently, it is a sonorous, spacious and gentle work worthy of its extraordinary text.

Nesciens mater virgo virum peperit  
sine dolore salvatorem sæculorum  
ipsum regem angelorum  
sola virgo lactabat ubera de cælo plena.

The virgin-mother knew not of man,  
but still gave birth, without pain, to the eternal Saviour.  
She fed the King of angels  
with the milk of her breasts filled with the fullness of heaven.

## Ola Gjeilo: Second Eve

Ola Gjeilo is a US-based Norwegian composer who has quietly been building a reputation as an excellent choral composer. His *Second Eve* – another reference Mary as the new Eve – from 2012, combines two classical Marian texts: *Sancta Maria* and *Ave Maria*. The eight-part texture is unabashedly beautiful whether employing thick chords or flowing polyphonic lines.

Sancta Maria, regina cæli,  
dulcis et pia, o mater Dei:  
ora pro nobis peccatoribus,  
ut cum electis te videamus.

Holy Mary, Queen of heaven,  
sweet and pure, o mother of God:  
pray for us sinners  
that we may be elected to see you.

Ave Maria, gratia plena,  
Dominus tecum:  
benedicta tu in mulieribus,  
et benedictus fructus ventris tui,  
Jesus Christus. Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace,  
The Lord be with you.  
You are blessed amongst women,  
and blessed is the fruit of your womb,  
Jesus Christ. Amen.

## Sergei Rachmaninoff: Богородице Дево (Bogoroditse Devo)

Sergei Rachmaninoff’s choral oeuvre is fairly meagre in number and extremely rich in quality. *Bogoroditse Devo* (Rejoice, O Virgin) is from his All-Night Vigil from 1915, a true classic of twentieth-century choral music. The text in Church Slavonic is the Orthodox equivalent of *Ave Maria* and the music rises from almost transparent to great strength before a becalmed ending.

Богородице Дево, радуйся,  
Благодатная Марие, Господь с Тобою;  
Благословенна Ты в женах,  
и благословен Плод чрева Твоего,  
яко Спаса родила еси душ наших.

Rejoice, O Virgin Mother of God,  
Mary full of grace, the Lord is with Thee.  
Blessed art Thou among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of Thy womb,  
for Thou hast borne the Saviour of our souls.

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Basque carol, arr. Jim Clements:  
**Gabriel's Message**

The Basque carol *Birjina gaztetto bat zegoen* found its way into English collections of carols in the 19th century. Its English text is a paraphrase of the visitation of Archangel Michael and Mary's acceptance of the surprising news. The arrangement by Jim Clements gives ample room to the gently rocking melody and adds a few fresh harmonies on the way.

Gloria!

The angel Gabriel from Heaven came,  
His wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame.  
"All hail" said he, "thou lowly maiden Mary,"  
Most highly favoured lady, Gloria!

"For known a blessed mother thou shalt be,  
All generations laud and honour thee.  
Thy Son shall be Emanuel, by seers foretold,"  
Most highly favoured lady, Gloria!

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head,  
"To me be as it pleaseth God", she said,  
"My soul shall laud and magnify His holy name."  
Most highly favoured lady, Gloria!

Of her Emmanuel, the Christ, was born  
In Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn,  
And Christian folk throughout the world will ever say:  
Most highly favoured lady, Gloria!

(Sabine Baring-Gould)

Hanna Järveläinen:  
**O magnum mysterium**

One of the loveliest traditional Christmas texts is *O magnum mysterium*. It celebrates the role of the animals in our nativity scene, without forgetting to add a small tribute to Mary. Hanna Järveläinen is a Switzerland-based Finnish singer, arranger and composer. She wrote a version of this age-old text in memory of young girl who loved the story of the animals at the Nativity. Its winding melodies, soft and calm accompanying chords, surprising changes of harmonic direction and long rising gestures are worthy company for this beautiful text.

O magnum mysterium,  
et admirabile sacramentum,  
ut animalia viderent Dominum,  
jacentem in præsepio!  
Beata virgo  
cujus viscera meruerunt,  
portare Dominum Christum.  
Alleluia.

O great mystery  
and wonderful sacrament  
that animals saw the Lord  
lying in a manger!  
Blessed virgin,  
whose womb was deemed worthy  
to bear the Lord Christ.  
Hallelujah.

Walter Lambe:  
**Nesciens mater**

Walter Lambe was a scholar at Eton college in the late 15th century and spent most of his professional life at the Chapel of St. George in Windsor, only a mile from Eton. His *Nesciens mater* is a votive motet found in the wonderful Eton Choirbook from c. 1510. Marian motets such as this one were sung in the daily evening service dedicated to Mary. Lambe's motet is based on the Gregorian melody, which can be found in long note values in the tenor voice. For an Eton Choirbook motet, Lambe's *Nesciens mater* is only relatively imitative and florid – the emphasis seems to be on sonority and flow. The juxtaposition of the solo and tutti passages is typical of English music from c. 1500.

Nesciens mater virgo virum peperit  
sine dolore salvatorem sæculorum  
ipsum regem angelorum  
sola virgo lactabat ubera de cælo plena.

The virgin-mother knew not of man,  
but still gave birth, without pain, to the eternal Saviour.  
She fed the King of angels  
with the milk of her breasts filled with the fullness of heaven.

German carol,  
arr. Robert Lucas de Pearsall:  
**In dulci jubilo**

Robert Lucas de Pearsall came from a family of means and after acting as barrister, he moved to Germany in the 1820s and dedicated his life to the study of genealogy and music. In the latter, he seems to have been self-taught. His fame is based on a handful of romantic works, one of them being this elaborate arrangement of the medieval German carol *In dulci jubilo*. Again we encounter a mixed-language text – the original was German and Latin, and in Pearsall's version it is English and Latin. Pearsall opens with a couple of verses in four-part harmony before proceeding through a trio to full eight-part harmony. The ending of this arrangement is shimmering.

*In dulci jubilo* [In sweet joy]  
Let us our homage show  
Our heart's joy reclineth  
*in præsepio* [in a manger]  
And like a bright star shineth  
*Matris in gremio!* [in the mother's lap]  
*Alpha es et O!* [You are the beginning and the end]

*O Jesu parvule* [O infant Jesus]  
My heart is sore for Thee!  
Hear me, I beseech Thee,  
*O puer optime!* [O best of boys]  
My prayer, let it reach Thee,  
*O princeps gloriæ!* [Prince of glory]  
*Trahe me post te!* [draw me to you]

*O patris caritas,* [O father's love]  
*O nati lenitas,* [O newborn's mildness]  
Deeply were we stained  
*per nostra crimina* [by our crimes]  
But Thou hast for us gained  
*cælorum gaudia.* [heavenly joy]  
O that we were there!

*Ubi sunt gaudia* [where be joys]  
If that they be not there?  
There are angels singing  
*nova cantica:* [new songs]  
There the bells are ringing  
*in Regis curia.* [at the king's court]  
O that we were there!

Franz Xaver Gruber,  
arr. Michael McGlynn:  
**Silent Night**

Silent Night has travelled a long way since 1818, when Franz Gruber, the teacher of a small Austrian village school, wrote the song to the text of a local chaplain. The song has been arranged and rearranged endless times. This arrangement we use is by Irish composer and conductor Michael McGlynn.

Silent night, holy night!  
All is calm, all is bright;  
Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child  
Holy Infant so tender and mild.  
Sleep in heavenly peace,  
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night!  
Shepherds quake at the sight:  
Glories stream from heaven afar  
Heavenly hosts sing 'Alleluia!  
Christ the Saviour is born,  
Christ the Saviour is born.  
Silent night, holy night!  
Son of God, love's pure light,  
Radiant beams from Thy holy face,  
With the dawn of redeeming grace  
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth,  
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth.

*(Joseph Franz Mohr, translated by John Freeman Young)*

thank  
you

Thank you to  
our Concert Patrons,  
**Pat & Don Hudson**  
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The Vancouver Chamber Choir  
appreciates your continued support  
of our performances.

## A New Honorary Patron

### David Cousins



David Cousins was President of the Vancouver Chamber Choir Board of Directors from 2007 to 2011, and also from 2013 to 2014. He has been a very generous donor to the choir for many years. In real life David is a business entrepreneur and the President of C-Pac Canada Ltd., a distribution company for paper products.

Here, he tells his own story about his relationship with the VCC:

"I knew about the VCC very early in its long history. In the early 1970s I was going to school in Victoria. Jon Washburn (Founder and Conductor Emeritus) was also conducting a group in Victoria called the Amity Singers. I started singing for Jon way back then, and later I went to UBC and then permanently moved to Vancouver in 1984. I had kept in contact with Jon throughout that time, and was well aware of what the VCC was doing. I loved what they did, and I started singing with their affiliated group, the Vancouver Chorale.

I grew up in a musical family. My mother was a pianist, and instilled choral singing in all of us, initially through the church. I received very good training as a boy chorister at Christ Church Cathedral in Victoria. I became used to hearing large massed choirs, but I didn't know much about chamber choirs.

When I heard that Jon Washburn was founding a paid professional choir, I loved the idea. The approach was to "force" singers to have music as their primary focus by having them rehearse during the daytime. I could see how this was going to lead to higher musical levels than any west coast choir had achieved before.

Much later I was approached by a singer in the choir to join the Board (2005), as they wanted me to apply my business skills to the operation of the choir. I was happy to serve as a Board member, and later as President for two stints.

When I think about what sets the Vancouver Chamber Choir apart from other fine groups, I ask myself: Where else can you get a group of fabulous soloists together, who can blend with one another to sing a ton of music from all over the world on an ongoing weekly basis, with numerous concerts in many venues? That's what sets the VCC apart from most other choirs in Canada. The legacy of the VCC leaves most other choirs in the dust!

When thinking about the cultural landscape of a city, people usually think of an orchestra, a ballet, an opera and theatre. I think it should be much more than that. The VCC is an important part of the landscape. It remains so relevant and excels in so many ways!"



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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.

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