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Jon Washburn
Kari Turunen
CONDUCTORS



2021 / 22 SEASON

FIFTY



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

VANCOUVER
CHAMBER CHOIR

SOPRANOS

Emily M Cheung
Christina Cichos
Siri Olesen
Krista Pederson
Madeline Lucy Smith

ALTOS

Dinah Ayre
Tabitha Brasso-Ernst
Katherine Evans
Maria Golas
Fabiana Katz

TENORS

Eric Biskupski
Sam Dabrusin
Tom Ellis
Eric Schwarzhoff
Rob Workman

BASSES

Steven Bélanger
Paul Nash
George Roberts
Wim Vermeulen
Jaime Yoon

VANCOUVER CHAMBER CHOIR
KARI TURUNEN AND JON WASHBURN,
CONDUCTORS

FIFTY

Stars (2015) Kathleen Allan
(b. 1989)

Härmaniitide lend (from Hilissügis) (2020) Ēriks Ešenvalds
(b. 1977)

she was wilderness (2021; WORLD PREMIERE) Katerina Gimón
(b. 1993)
Emily M Cheung, soprano Fabiana Katz, alto

Les Rêveries (2020; WORLD PREMIERE) Mikko Nisula
(b. 1974)
Maria Golas, alto Jaime Yoon, bass
Eric Biskupski and Eric Schwarzhoff, tenors

Lauantaisauna (2017; CANADIAN PREMIERE) Matthew Whittall
(b. 1975)

INTERMISSION

Ave Maria (1984) Imant Raminsh
(b. 1943)
Madeline Lucy Smith, soprano

Landscapes and Soundscapes (2007; CANADIAN PREMIERE) R. Murray Schafer
(1933-2021)

Lilies, Water, Carp
Fountain with Birds
Ancient Stones
Flying Kites
The Philosopher's Walk
The Rainbow

Do I Hear a Waltz? (1995) Richard Rodgers/Stephen Sondheim
(arr. Jon Washburn)
(b. 1942)

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FIFTY THOUGHTS

by Jon Washburn, Founder & Conductor Emeritus

FIFTY, of course, refers to the founding of the Vancouver Chamber Choir back in 1971. Once the Choir had made it to ten, twenty and even more anniversaries, I always thought a fiftieth would be something big. An Orpheum concert, for sure, with

JON WASHBURN FOUNDER AND CONDUCTOR EMERITUS



Jon Washburn is the Founder and Conductor Emeritus of the Vancouver Chamber Choir, Canada's outstanding professional vocal ensemble which he led as Artistic and Executive Director for 48 years.

He has earned international acclaim for mastery of choral technique and interpretation, travelling widely as guest conductor, lecturer, clinician and master teacher.

During those 48 years with the Vancouver Chamber Choir, he led 400 subscription concerts, 150 radio and TV appearances, 800 concerts and events on 92 separate tours, 59 CD recordings, 350 commissioned/premiered new works, 300 large Baroque works, 40 Conductors' Symposiums, 60 Composers' Workshops, thousands of individual pieces in over 40 languages and countless workshops and residencies for choral conductors, composers, students and singers.

Jon Washburn is an active composer, arranger, lyricist and editor, published by G. Schirmer, Walton, Cypress, Oxford University Press, earthsongs and others. His music is widely published, performed and recorded around the world. He is a noted champion of new choral repertoire, having commissioned and premiered hundreds of new compositions by Canadian, American and European composers. He has conducted thousands of performances of works by Canadian composers, for which he received the Friends of Canadian Music Award from the Canadian League of Composers and Canadian Music Centre.

In 2001 he was given the Order of Canada (the nation's highest civilian honour) and subsequently received Queen Elizabeth's Silver, Golden and Diamond Jubilee Medals, recognizing his lifetime contribution to Canadian arts and culture. He was awarded a star on Vancouver's Entertainment Walk of Fame and has received both the Louis Botto and Michael Korn awards from Chorus America, marking his long devotion to the development of professional choirs and the choral art.

orchestra and a stage full of former singers young and old. Even Hazel would have come from Brisbane, Wendy from Oxford and John from Chicago.

The audience, too would be full of former Board Members, who would have to take a final vote before allowing the concert to commence. There would be a few former managers and staff people out in the lane beneath the Commodore having a last drag on their cigarettes and cursing the sound of amplified drums and guitars. The lobby would have been festooned with photos of the choir and its many collaborators over the decades. In the hall, some wag would have replaced the face of the unlikely left-handed bass player painted on the ceiling with the caricature of me that Roy Peterson did for the 10th anniversary. Audience members who had been loyal subscribers for years and years would find roses waiting at their seats.

The Westcoast Hall across the lobby and up the stairs would be pre-set for a big after-party, where we would officially thank governments and donors and sponsors, raising a glass of bubbly provided by some canny European consulate. Even some strangers from the CBC would be there, cramped up in their dusty little tech room in the basement, sharing stories of the '80s when the VCC was virtually a "radio choir" and had worked extensively with the "radio orchestra" ... all now things of the distant past. At the appointed moment, I would be rolled out to the podium and pretend to lead the accumulated forces in some big Vaughan Williams tune. Then we'd all clap and shout and whistle and laugh and cry and hug and head home for an early bedtime, exclaiming "... see you in 2171..."

The real FIFTY will prove to be a more modest affair, reflecting the "Life and Art in a Time of Pestilence" character of our present conditions. An *a cappella* concert, with masks, and spacing, half-filled hall, elbow bumps and hopes for easier times yet to come. Perhaps it will be a truer reflection of the real Chamber Choir essence – the searing beauty of 20 voices in perfect synchronization. Although we missed the actual 50th year completely, having to move the proposed celebration further into the future every time the authorities announced the need to extend their lock-outs "... just a little longer...", Kari Turunen and Steven Bélanger finally set this date – no matter what! – and kindly asked me to conduct half of it. Of course, my even closer associates – M. Parkinson, Mme. Pandemia and Master Tempusfugit – have made it a bit more of a challenge than I would have expected. But it is wonderful to visit again with the singers and converse musically with our composer friends Imant, Murray and Et Al.

And I do have occasional reveries of what happened fifty years ago ... how the summer of '71 was so full of plans and expectations. I was entering my fourth year in Vancouver, having arrived in 1967 to study musicology at UBC. I was feeling very comfortable here and had fallen in with a very active bunch of young musicians, including Ray Nurse, David Kendall Stewart, Doreen Oke, David Skulski, George Ross, Ingrid Suderman, Patrick Wedd and many more, pouring mostly out of the hot-bed music

PROGRAM NOTES, TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

FIFTY

It is almost 50 years to the day from when the Vancouver Chamber Choir held its first official concert. To celebrate this journey and especially the choir's role in championing contemporary music, we have put together a program predominantly consisting of works commissioned and/or premiered by the choir. It is our profound pleasure to invite the Founder and Conductor Emeritus Jon Washburn to share the podium with present Artistic Director Kari Turunen. Kari will conduct the first half with music from last six years, including two premieres, and Jon will be in charge of the second half with an emphasis on the music he championed in his illustrious sojourn with the choir.

Kathleen Allan **Stars**

Kathleen Allan is a fine young conductor and singer who has also shown great ability as a composer. A former member of the Vancouver Chamber Choir, she is now the Artistic Director and Conductor of the Amadeus Choir of Greater Toronto, Artistic Director of Canzona, Winnipeg's professional Baroque choir, and Visiting Professor of Choral Music at Western University. Her *Stars* was commissioned and premiered by the Vancouver Chamber Choir in 2015. It is set to a poem by Marjorie Pickthall, an early 20th-century Canadian poet. *Stars* is a concise composition that rises to a broad climax before a soft, calm ending.

Now in the West the slender moon lies low,
And now Orion glimmers through the trees,
Clearing the earth with even pace and slow,
And now the stately-moving Pleiades,
In that soft infinite darkness overhead
Hang jewel-wise upon a silver thread.

And all the lonelier stars that have their place,
Calm lamps within the distant southern sky,
And planet-dust upon the edge of space,
Look down upon the fretful world, and I
Look up to outer vastness unafraid
And see the stars which sang when earth was made.

(Marjorie Pickthall, 1883–1922)

Härmaniitide lend

Härmaniitide lend (A gossamer flight) is the third movement from the suite *Hilissügis* (Late Autumn) by Latvian composer Ēriks Ešņvalds. This suite was commissioned for the Vancouver Chamber Choir and Jon Washburn by long-term supporter and friend of the choir Pille Bunnell in memory of her parents, Laine and Heino Loo. Jon Washburn led the premiere in January 2020, a little before the pandemic struck. *Härmaniitide lend* is set to a poem by Paul Eerik Rummo, Estonian poet, playwright and politician (he was the cabinet Minister for Culture and Education 1992–94 and the Minister of Population and Ethnic Affairs 2003–2007!). The poem focuses on autumnal nature and is brief, light and impressionistic. Ešņvalds brings rich textures and warmth to his musical interpretation of the poem, and by repeating lines of the text, gives it additional breadth.

Härmaniitide lend

Järvelappide üle
härmaniitide lend.
Pohlade poeg olen mina
vaevakaskede vend.

Pohlade poeg mina olen
põdrasambliku sees.
Oma silmad ma leidsin
sügisjärvede vees.

Järved kordavad taevast
pilved lasuvad seal.
Taevast mis seisab kaskede
kitsaste õlgade peal.

(Paul Eerik Rummo)

A Gossamer Flight

Gossamer mist flying
over patchwork lakes.
Child of lingonberry am I,
kin of a dwarfed birch.
Child of lingon I am,

living in lichen.
I found my sight
in autumn lakewater.
The lake reflects the sky

as clouds lie there.
A sky that stands on
slim birch shoulders.

(Translated by Pille Bunnell)

Katerina Gimon
she was wilderness

The first premiere of this concert is a newly commissioned work by highly promising young BC composer Katerina Gimon, who clearly has a strong voice of her own. Katerina's own words on the new work are worth reading:

she was wilderness is a setting of a powerful and timely poem by young Saudi Arabian poet Waad Tariq. Her words serve as a poignant reminder of human impacts on the climate through activities such as deforestation, and what's at stake to be lost without collective action. In my musical setting, I aimed to at once depict the remarkable beauty of our natural world as well as the immense grief and tragedy in her decline — from a lush, beautiful forest of “evergreen” to a “single tree”.

she was wilderness
made of wood, vines, trees
her skin, a world of evergreens
and once, her beauty was timeless

but where once she was an evergreen
now she is deciduous
and tomorrow, perhaps nonexistent
if the weather climbs any higher

and where once she was a sea
now she is ponds and puddles
and tomorrow, perhaps just a legend
if people continue to pillage her lands, ungrateful

and soon she becomes a single tree
where she was once an earth
and only when the last bough breaks
will the people learn

(Waad Tariq)

**A Message from
David Cousins, Honorary Patron**

For five decades, the Vancouver Chamber Choir has served as a steadfast source of artistic and organizational inspiration for choirs across the Lower Mainland, Canada and internationally. I have been lucky enough to have experienced parts of the ascending journey with them for the majority of the last 50 years, including a stint as the President of the Board of Directors. I'm honoured to call Jon Washburn a dear friend and remain beholden to his contributions to choral music. I'm delighted with the more recent addition of Kari Turunen and for the ways that the choir's legacy continues to take root under his leadership.

The nature of an ensemble as excellent and practiced as the Vancouver Chamber Choir is that relatively few singers will ever get the formative experience of participating in such a group. Yet in raising the bar, in ascending the ladder, VCC has also shown many additional choirs – professional, non-professional, and youth choirs alike – the experience of the joy of shared harmony. Today I serve as President of the Board of Phoenix Chamber Choir, a Vancouver-based community choir. As I have participated in Phoenix's upward climb and witnessed yet another choir in our city flourish, I cannot help but reiterate my gratitude and admiration for the pillar that VCC is in our community.

It's been a trying couple of years for the world at large, the choral sector no exception. When the world went silent in early 2020 as the pandemic first broke out, we recognized immediately what was missing. Surprisingly, it wasn't toilet paper, or even money. It was music. As venues darkened and tickets were refunded, we remembered what a gift it is to steward such a space and a respite for our audiences. It's no surprise that VCC is again opening its curtains while welcoming such a significant milestone; of course you are still here and of course you always will be. Congratulations!

thank
you

Thank you to
our Concert Patrons,
Bryan & Gail Atkins
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David Cousins
Violet Goosen

The Vancouver Chamber Choir
appreciates your continued support
of our performances.

Mikko Nisula
Les Rêveries

Mikko Nisula is a Finnish composer who studied composition in St. Petersburg, Russia. His style could probably best be characterized as Neo-Romantic. Nisula's choral output is limited, but of a high quality and a point in case is *Les Rêveries*, premiered in this concert, and set to a poem by Alphonse de Lamartine, a French 18th-century poet and statesman. De Lamartine was a Catholic turned pantheist and both these elements are very much present in the poem that celebrates the holiness of nature. Mikko Nisula writes:

My epic choral work *Les Rêveries* was written in 2020. It is based on an extensive poem, *Désir* (Wish) from *Harmonies poétiques and religieuses* (1830) by Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869). *Désir* is a pantheistic vision in which the poet listens to various sounds of nature and realizes that they all tell in their own ways about the greatness of the Creator. Only humans must resort to words that struggle to express their overflowing feelings.

Before composing the music, I divided the text into four parts. The first section is a pastorale-like introduction, and the second section begins with a fugue depicting the stormy sea. The third section returns to the music of the beginning but develops into a culmination in a suddenly-reached D major. The fourth section forms a short epilogue in tempo *Largo e nobile*. Musically one of my main intentions was to compose a piece that would bring some word-painting techniques of Renaissance madrigals into my own Neo-Romantic and Impressionistic idiom.

Ah ! si j'avais des paroles,
des images, des symboles,
pour peindre ce que je sens !
Si ma langue, embarrassée
pour révéler ma pensée,
pouvait créer des accents !

Loi sainte et mystérieuse !
Une âme mélodieuse
anime tout l'univers ;
chaque être a son harmonie,
chaque étoile son génie,
chaque élément ses concerts.

Ils n'ont qu'une voix, mais pure,
forte comme la nature,
sublime comme son Dieu ;
et, quoique toujours la même,
Seigneur, cette voix suprême
se fait entendre en tout lieu.

Quand les vents sifflent sur l'onde,
quand la mer gémit ou gronde,
quand la foudre retentit,
tout ignorants que nous sommes,
qui de nous, enfants des hommes,
demande ce qu'ils ont dit ?

L'un a dit : « Magnificence ! »
L'autre : « Immensité ! puissance ! »
L'autre : « Terreur et courroux ! »
L'un a fui devant sa face,
l'autre a dit : « Son ombre passe :
cieux et terre, taisez-vous ! »

Mais l'homme, ta créature,
lui qui comprend la nature,
pour parler n'a que des mots,
des mots sans vie et sans aile,
de sa pensée immortelle
trop périssables échos !

Oh, if I had the words,
the images, the symbols
to paint what I feel!
If only my tongue,
embarrassed to reveal my thoughts,
could create sounds!

Law holy and mysterious,
one single melodious soul
animates the universe;
every being its harmony,
every star its spirit,
every element its ensemble.

They have only one voice, but it is pure,
strong as nature,
sublime like their God.
And, although always the same,
Lord, this supreme voice
is heard everywhere.

When the winds whistle above the waves,
when the sea groans or rumbles,
when thunder rolls,
completely ignorant of our existence,
who of us, human beings,
ask what they said?

One said: "Magnificence!"
Another: "Vastness! Power!"
Yet another: "Terror and Rage!"
One has fled before him,
another has said: "His shadow will pass:
heaven and earth, grow silent!"

But a mortal, your creation,
one who understands nature,
has no words to speak,
has no words with life or wings,
for its immortal thoughts,
only perishable echoes.

Son âme est comme l'orage
qui gronde dans le nuage
et qui ne peut éclater,
comme la vague captive
qui bat et blanchit sa rive
et ne peut la surmonter.

Elle s'use et se consume
comme un aiglon dont la plume
n'aurait pas encor grandi,
dont l'œil aspire à sa sphère,
et qui rampe sur la terre
comme un reptile engourdi.

Ah ! ce qu'aux anges j'envie
n'est pas l'éternelle vie,
ni leur glorieux destin :
c'est la lyre, c'est l'organe
par qui même un cœur profane
peut chanter l'hymne sans fin !

Quelque chose en moi soupire,
aussi doux que le zéphyr
que la nuit laisse exhale,
aussi sublime que l'onde,
ou que la foudre qui gronde ;
et mon cœur ne peut parler !

Océan, qui sur tes rives
épands tes vagues plaintives,
rameaux murmurants des bois,
foudre dont la nue est pleine,
ruisseaux à la molle haleine,
ah ! si j'avais votre voix !

Si seulement, ô mon âme,
ce Dieu dont l'amour t'enflamme
comme le feu, l'aiglon,
au zèle ardent qui t'embrace
accordait, dans une extase,
un mot pour dire son nom !

Son nom, tel que la nature
sans parole le murmure,
tel que le savent les cieux ;
ce nom que l'aurore voile,
et dont l'étoile à l'étoile
est l'écho mélodieux ;

Les ouragans, le tonnerre,
les mers, les feux et la terre,
se tairaient pour l'écouter ;
les airs, ravis de l'entendre,
s'arrêteraient pour l'apprendre,
les cieux pour le répéter.

Ce nom seul, redit sans cesse,
soulèverait ma tristesse
dans ce vallon de douleurs ;
et je dirais sans me plaindre :
« Mon dernier jour peut s'éteindre,
j'ai dit sa gloire, et je meurs ! »

Her soul is like a storm
that growls in the clouds
but finds no outlet,
like a captive wave
that strikes and whitens the shore
but cannot surmount it.

It wears itself out and consumes itself
like a young eagle whose plumes
have not yet grown
as it eyes with ambition the spheres
but falls to the earth
like a sleeping reptile.

Oh, what I envy in the angels
is not eternal life
or their future glory:
it is the lyre, the organ
to the tune of which even a mortal heart
can sing everlasting hymns!

Something in me whispers,
as soft as the west wind,
what the night allows to exhale,
as sublime as a wave,
or like thunder that rumbles
and that my heart cannot speak.

Ocean, that over its shores
spreads its mournful waves,
the murmuring branches of trees
lightning that uncovers all,
streams with soft breaths,
oh, if only I had your voice!

If only, oh my soul,
this God whose love inflames you,
like the fire, the north wind,
with ardent zeal embraces you,
gave in moment of ecstasy,
just one word to utter his name!

His name, like nature
it murmurs without words,
like it is known by the heavens;
this name veiled by sunrise,
and of whom star after star
is a melodious echo.

The storms, the thunder,
the seas, the fires and the land,
fall silent to listen;
The air, delighted to hear,
stand still,
the skies to repeat it.

This name alone, spoken and respoken,
lifts my sorrow
in this valley of sorrows;
and I say this without complaint:
“My last day may come,
I will speak his glory, and I will die!”

Fine choice of singers makes chamber choir 'hit'

By LLOYD H. DYKK

Audiences most often see Jon Washburn in an early music setting, wielding viola da gamba or recorder among the membership of the Hortulani Musicae players.

Sunday evening we were presented with a new facet of Jon Washburn and one worth keeping an eye on — as conductor of the new Vancouver Chamber Choir in their debut at the Queen Elizabeth Playhouse.

Washburn has made a fine selection of singers — eight female, seven male — whose voices he blends into an almost seamless unity, who are well-informed on various points of style, and who, de-

spite a bit of understandable nervousness on Sunday, hold the stage well.

Their program was as interesting and attractive as it was brief (coming to just more than an hour including intermission), starting with John Benet's Flow, O My Tears which the singers made into a soft, continuous flow of sighs. Right on its heels, came the contrasting brightness and quickness of Orlando di Lasso's Matona, Fairest Maiden.

Dietrich Buxtehude's Missa Brevis began buoyantly enough with the Kyrie, but the great activity of contrapuntal writing in the Gloria section seemed to take its toll in the form of breathlessness and

strained desperation.

The only objection to Brahms' Six Folk Songs which followed is that one of the soprano voices was a bit obtrusive in one or two of the songs; but more typically, these simple, but artful distillations of joy and sadness served the singers well, revealing their purity, color and sweetness in good quantity, and also communicating the affection Washburn obviously has for these songs.

Most difficult to bring off, but one of the most rewarding pieces, was Monteverdi's Lamento d'Arianna, his own madrigal version of the soprano aria from his now-lost opera Arianna.

In this four-part lament by Ariadne, who helps Theseus escape the Labyrinth and is left abandoned by him, the singers painted the images and moods built so masterfully and realistically into the music, with real emotional resonance, power and ringing clarity.

They ended with a fine performance of Ned Rorem's fond, skilful setting of seven anonymous 16th century lyrics.

The next performance by the chamber choir is set for Feb. 2 at Ryerson United Church, when they will be joined by the Baroque Strings in music of Bach in music of—
Bach and Mozart.

Choir's debut successful

By LAWRENCE CLUDERAY

Skilful programming can be an important factor in a successful debut.

Jon Washburn, conductor of the newly formed Vancouver Chamber Choir which gave its first concert in the Queen Elizabeth Playhouse Sunday night, knows this and wisely began with a pair of well known madrigals by John Benet and Orlando di Lasso.

These not very demanding pieces allowed his singers time to unwind and settle down before arriving at the really meaty part of their program. It was a nice beginning — even though Washburn was guilty of over interpreting Flow, O my tears.

The choir has nice tenors and basses, excellent altos, and bright, clear-toned sopranos who pose a bit of a problem.

The fact is, from my point of vantage the soprano tone above mf was a mite over bright for the remainder of the choir, with one voice occasionally being heard above the rest.

However, in its quiet singing the choir sounded quite beautiful; there was much

exemplary phrasing, and for the most part the words came through without one having to specially listen for them.

A Missa Brevis by Dietrich Buxtehude followed the madrigals and, apart from a couple of rough spots, revealed the choralists as having a confident command of the requisite style.

I thoroughly enjoyed the group of folk songs by Brahms which were neither overstated nor undersung. Instead the choir emphasized the songs' diversity within their central simplicity.

As for the Lament from Monteverdi's opera, L'arianna, which was such a "hit" in its day that the composer rewrote it as a cycle of five-part madrigals; this tour-de-force of expression should be sung with as much commitment as Verdi or Puccini.

Alas, the choir did not seem quite at ease with this music so that the performance fell short of achieving a compelling impact. Not so Ned Rorem's arresting settings of 16th century lyrics which Washburn's choralists sang with much beauty of tone and keen response to the music's changing moods.

Reviews following the first performance of the Vancouver Chamber Choir on 21 November 1971.

Matthew Whittall
Lauantaisauna

Matthew Whittall is a Canadian composer who arrived in Finland in 2001 for graduate studies at the Sibelius Academy. In Finland, with a similar population to BC, this meant our paths were guaranteed to cross, especially as Matthew is an avid choral singer. During the time I have known him, his reputation as a composer has grown to being on the verge of an international breakthrough. His choral music is sonorous, lush with wonderful harmonies, yet firmly structured and skilfully wrought. In the composer's own words:

Asked to provide a short piece for a concert whose themes were warmth, togetherness, home and the soul, I thought immediately of the binding ritual that encompasses those words in the spirit of Finnishness: the sauna. It is a holy place of peace, meditation and closeness, best experienced in the cathedral of nature on a summer evening. Niilo Rauhala's brief poem had been on my mind for some time [...]. In a handful of words, Rauhala manages to encapsulate the essence of the sauna and its mystical effect. The music is an unhurried, floating cloud of D-flat major, only veering away briefly before returning to gentle contemplation.

Lauantaisauna. Paahtoleipä.
Vaikenevan hämärän läpi
jalkani etsii sinun jalkojasi,
elämä tunnustelee elämää
ja aamu on kaukana
verhojen tuolla puolen.

(Niilo Rauhala)

Saturday sauna. Toast.
Through the hushed twilight
my foot reaches for yours,
life seeking life,
and morning is far away
over beyond the curtains.

(Translated by Matthew Whittall)

Imant Raminsh
Ave Maria

Imant Raminsh is the wonderful British Columbian composer who came to international prominence in the years after the Vancouver Chamber Choir gave the first performance of his famous *Ave verum corpus* in 1977. Since then the choir has premiered many of his choral works, including this setting of the beloved Catholic prayer *Ave Maria*, which we first sang on October 26, 1984 in Banff, Alberta, at a conference of the Kodály Institute of Canada. (The first soloist was alto Bonnie Dodds.) The hallmarks of the Raminsh style remain his lyrical melodies and the rich, sonorous harmonies with which he accompanies them. That distinctive Raminsh sound is amply displayed in this short work for mezzo-soprano solo and eight-part choir.

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

Sancta Maria, Mater Dei,
ora pro nobis peccatoribus,
nunc et in hora mortis nostrae.
Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with Thee.
Thou art blessed among women
and blessed is the fruit of Thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners,
now and in the hour of our death.
Amen.

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R. Murray Schafer
Landscapes and Soundscapes

Our dear friend and lifelong collaborator, R. Murray Schafer, passed away this summer after a long bout with Alzheimer's Disease. We miss him terrifically. As I have written elsewhere, the choir and I sang, toured and recorded 478 performances of 29 choral works large and small by Schafer during the 48 years that I was privileged to be Artistic Director. Kari Turunen is already starting to add to those figures. It seemed appropriate to add another new title on this 50th Anniversary occasion. (480 X 30 now, I think!)

Landscapes and Soundscapes is a set of six small choral pieces on typically Schaferesque environmental themes – simple natural things perceived in intriguing musical ways. Our score is marked completed in 2007, but the Schafer scholar Brett Scott indicates that parts were composed, on and off, between 2006 and 2010. It is still unpublished at this time. The choir and I were given the score by our good friend David Buley, a musician and professor at Memorial University in Newfoundland, to whom

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Schafer had dedicated it. It must have been assumed that David would give the premiere of the whole work, but he had only been able to do a few movements, so he suggested that we do the full set here in Vancouver. We even announced the event, but fortunately discovered that Dr. Scott himself had presented the set in Cincinnati, so we will call tonight's performance the Canadian premiere, still new to you and me.

The pieces are easy to listen to. In *Lilies, Water, Carp* (No. 1), think of the tenor and bass voices as lily pads and the *glissandi* in the sopranos and altos as running water. Towards the end, the lower voices erupt out of the texture in carp-like fashion for just a momentary flash. In *Fountain with Birds* (No. 2), the upper voices are gushings or gurglings of water, and nearby birds echo a tintinnabulation of their own. In *Ancient Stones* (No. 3), there are nine stones - each has its own unique shape, texture and nearly-audible shine.

In *Flying Kites* (No. 4), the natural winds sustain and buffet the flippety-floppity paper blades of the kites. To start *The Philosopher's Walk* (No. 5), each arpeggio seems to be a trial premise that ends in naught, then we hear a few steps, an inspiration, a fully-shaped thought, some repeats of these elements, a little ... indigestion, perhaps ... to be mulled over. *The Rainbow* (No. 6): What are the colours of sounds? What are the colours of chords? What is the sound of an arc? What is the treasure at the end of the Rainbow?

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Do I Hear a Waltz?

Do I Hear a Waltz? is the title song from a 1975 musical by Richard Rodgers with a book by Arthur Laurents and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim. The musical was adapted from Laurents' 1952 play *The Time of the Cuckoo*, which had also become the basis for the 1955 film *Summertime* starring Katharine Hepburn. The show itself was perhaps not nearly as interesting as the volatile back-stage story, which has nearly all of the principal creators, producers and directors seemingly at odds with each other during its gestation.

This song, though, is effortlessly charming and amusing, full of Sondheim's usual word wizardry and Rodgers' ability to turn a perfect tune and provide a light touch wonderfully suited to conclude a concert. Jon Washburn chose it to make this arrangement for a voices-only encore on an elegant Christmas concert called "A Silver Christmas" in the Pacific Ballroom of the Hotel Vancouver in December of 1995, the Silver being especially appropriate, as the choir (blessedly un-pandemified) was in the midst of a year-long celebration of its 25th Anniversary.

Do I hear a waltz?

Very odd, but I hear a waltz.

There isn't a band

And I don't understand it at all.

I can't hear a waltz,

Oh, my Lord, there it goes again!

Why is nobody dancing in the street?

Can't they hear the beat?

Magical, mystical, miracle.

Can it be? Is it true?

Things are impossibly lyrical.

Is it me? No, it's you!

I do hear a waltz.

I see you and I hear a waltz!

It's what I've been waiting for

All my life: to hear a waltz!

Do you hear a waltz?

Oh, my dear, don't you hear a waltz?

Such love Blue Danube-y

Music, how can you be still?

You must hear a waltz!

Even strangers are dancing now:

An old lady is waltzing in her flat

Waltzing with her cat.

Roses are dancing with peonies.

Yes, it's true! Don't you see?

Everything's suddenly Viennese.

Can't be you! Must be me!

Do I hear a waltz?

I want more than to hear a waltz:

I want you to share it 'cause

Oh, boy, do I hear a waltz?

Stephen Sondheim



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