

elektra

women's
choir



S K Y L A R K

This collection celebrates a wealth of outstanding choral repertoire for women from four areas of the world: Continental Europe, Canada, Britain and the Baltic Sea. Drawing its inspiration from nature, the church and folk traditions, the music is rich and varied. It is performed by Canada's premiere women's choir, Elektra, based in Vancouver, British Columbia.

From Continental Europe

Medieval abbess Hildegard von Bingen was renowned in her day as a theologian and poet as well as a composer of religious monody. *O Vivens Fons* is from an extended work, the *Ordo Virtutum* (Rite of the Virtues).

The Four Sacred Choruses represent the last of Verdi's musical works. *Laudi Alla Vergine Maria* is the third chorus in this set of four glorious and timeless works. Using the text from the final canto in Dante's *Paradiso* and setting this Italian text for a cappella women's chorus, Verdi, in his inimitable harmonic voice, captures the beauty and purity of the virgin to whom the text is dedicated. (*publ. Edition Peters*)

Maurice Durufle's liturgical motets are beloved staples of choral literature. *Tota Pulchra Es* is one of a set of four motets composed "on Gregorian themes." (*publ. Editions Durand*)

From Canada

In *Wind Song*, Richard Kidd (b.1954) weaves together eleven descriptive definitions of wind from various parts of the world. From the "faintest breath of air at dawn" to a "fierce squall," this three-part piece sets a variety of moods and rhythms. (*publ. Boosey & Hawkes*)

Salve Regina, with its lush harmonic framework, was written by Canadian composer Ramona Luengen (b.1960) for Elektra's first concert in 1987. (*publ. Cypress Publishing*)

In the score of *Snowforms*, R. Murray Schafer (b. 1933) uses Inuit words and a graphic notation to suggest a continuous, subtle and ever-changing landscape of snow. The singer's task is to sing the shape of the snowforms using glissando, portamento and seamless unisons to give the listener a sense of the timelessness, majesty and awe one feels when seeing a never-ending horizon of snow. (*publ. Arcana Editions*)

From Britain

Follow Me Down to Carlow, a jaunty, spirited setting of an Irish folk tune, cleverly captures the joyous invitation for all to hurry to Carlow on this celebratory sunny wedding day. (publ. G. Schirmer)

Ave Maria is one of Gustav Holst's most beloved works. This eight-part double choir motet perfectly illuminates the serenity and grace of its beautiful text. (publ. Galaxy Music)

England's John Tavener (b. 1944) is in the forefront of contemporary choral composition. *He Hath Entered the Heaven* calls for a double choir with handbells. One choir sings the last recorded words of Lady Margaret Beaufort (1443-1509), while the second group sings part of the text of the sermon preached at her funeral. The latter group is led by a soprano soloist, with the remaining singers picking up passing notes of her chantlike melody and sustaining them throughout each phrase, creating a growing tonal cluster behind the solo line. (publ. Chester Music)

From the Baltic Sea

Jaakobin Pojat is a commanding composition for five-part women's choir. It alternates avant garde techniques such as sprechstimme, glissandos, tonal clusters, grunts, screams and reverberating echoes with lush lyrical harmonies and melodies to enumerate the twelve sons of Jacob. (publ. Fazer Musik)

Veljo Tormis' magical arrangement of the Estonian folk song *Lauliku Lapsepoli*, with its superimposition of harmonies, tonalities and occasional echoes of the melody, continues to charm audiences wherever and whenever Elektra sings.

Matti Hyökki (b.1946) is represented here with an imaginative pair of folksong arrangements,

On Suuri Sun Rantas Autius and *Mina Olen Härmän Kankaanpäästä*. Each captures something of the flair and virtuosity of Finland and its choirs. The first is a haunting tune that evokes the sense of peace and melancholy pervading the Finnish lake landscape. The second cleverly captures the mischievous humour that unites little rascals all over the world. (publ. Fazer Musik)

M. Edmundson and D. Loomer

Texts and Translations

O Vivens Fons

O vivens fons, quam magna est suavitas tua
qui faciem historum in te non amisisti
sed acute previdisti
quomodo ejus de angelico casu abstraheres
qui se aestimabant illud habere
quod non licet sic stare.

Unde, gaude, filia Sion
quia Deus tibi multos reddit
quos serpens de te abscidere voluit,
qui nunc in majori luce fulgent
quam prius illorum causa fuisset.

Laud! Alla Vergine Maria

Vergine madre, figlia del tuo Figlio,
umile ed alta piu che creature,
termine fisso d'eterno consiglio,
tu se colei che l'humana natura
nobilitasti si, che'l suo Fattore
non disdegnò di farsi sua fattura.

Nel ventre tuo si raccese l'amore,
per lo cui caldo nell'eterna pace
così è germinato questo fiore.
Oui se a noi meridiana face di caritate,
e giusto, in trai mortali,
se' di speranza fontana vivace.

Donna, se' tanto grande et tanto vali,
che qual vuol grazia, ed a te non ricorre
sua disianza vuol volar senz 'ali.
La tua benignità non pur soccorre
a chi dimanda, ma molte fiato
liberamente al dimandar precorre.

In te misericordia, in te pietate,
in te magnificenza, in te s'aduna,
quantunque in creatura e di bontate.

Living fountain, how great is your sweetness:
you did not reject the gaze of these upon you-
no, acutely you foresaw how you could
avert them from a fall as of the angels,
they who thought they possessed a power
which cannot lawfully subsist like that.

Rejoice then, daughter of Jerusalem,
for God is giving you back many
whom the serpent wanted to sunder from you,
who now gleam in greater brightness
than would have been their lot before.

Virgin mother, daughter of thy Son,
lowly and uplifted more than any creature,
fixed goal of the eternal counsel,
thou art she who didst human nature
so enoble that its own Maker
scorned not to become its making.

In thy womb was lit again the love
under whose warmth in the eternal peace
this flower hath thus unfolded.
Here art thou unto us the meridian torch of love
and there below with mortals art
a living spring of hope.

Lady, thou art so great and hast such worth
that if there be who would have grace
yet betaketh not himself to thee,
his longing seeketh to fly without wings.
Thy kindness not only succoreth whoso
requesteth,
but does oftentimes freely forerun request.

In thee is tenderness, in thee is pity,
in thee munificence, in thee united whatever
in created being is of excellence.

Tota Pulchra Es, Maria

Tota pulchra es, Maria,
et macula originalis non est in te,
Vestimentum tuum candidum quasi nix,
et facies tua sicut sol.
Tu gloria Jerusalem,
tu laetitia Israel,
tu honorificentia populi nostri.

Thou art all fair, O Mary,
and the stain of original sin is not in thee.
Your vestments are as white as snow,
and your face is like the sun.
Thou art the glory of Jerusalem,
the joy of Israel,
and the honour of our people.

Wind Song

aura (Greece)
cacimbo (Angola)
vento coado (Portugal)
pampero (Argentina)
minuano (Dzahni)
dzahni (North Africa)
kokaze (Japan)
mbatis (Greece)
soyo kaze (Japan)
sz (China)
zephiro (Italy)

faintest breath of air at sunrise
cold wind from the southwest
breeze
fierce squall from the southwest
chilly wind
warm southerly wind
light breeze
light evening breeze
very soft wind
autumn breath of air
moderate, warm breeze

Salve Regina

Salve Regina, mater misericordiae:
Vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve.
Ad te clamamus, exules filii Evae.
Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes,
in hac lacrimarum Valle.

Mary, we greet thee, Mother and Queen all merciful;
our life, our sweetness and our hope we all hail to thee
To thee we, exiled children of Eve, lift our crying
To thee we send our sighs as, mourning and weeping
we pass through this vale of sorrow.

Eja ergo, Advocata nostra,
illos tuos misericordes oculos
ad nos converte.
Et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,
nobis post hoc exilium ostende.
O clemens: O pia: O dulcis Virgo Maria.

Haste then, we pray, O, our intercessor,
look with pity, with eyes of love compassionate,
upon us sinners.
And after, when this earthly exile shall be ended,
show us the most blessed fruit of thy womb, thy Jesus.
O clement, O loving, O most sweet Virgin Mary.

Snowforms

apingaut
mauyak
qanit
sitidlorak
akelrorak
pokaktok
anio
tiltuktortok
aput

first snowfall
soft snow
falling snow
hard snow
newly drifted snow
snow like salt
snow melting into water
snow beaten down
snow spread out

Follow Me Down to Carlow

Follow me down to Carlow, lads!
Come lasses, too, away we go!
So limber and lightly, heel and toe,
There's frolic and fun at Carlow!
For striking is now the wedding hour,
And yonder's a bride that's like a flow'r,
The boy that has won her, all do know,
Is stealing the Pride of Carlow!

Follow me down to Carlow town!
Be leaving your work and toil behind,
The cat'll be proud the house to mind,
While ye are away at Carlow!
Come Kitty, asthore, with eyes of blue,
Come, Dennis and Meg and Pat and Sue;
For never a one must fail, and so
I'm bidding ye all to Carlow!

Follow me down to Carlow, then!
The way winds round the green hillside,
And thro' the lone lane where fairies hide,
And over the moor to Carlow!
Then hurry, good people, one and all,
For sure ye can hear the music call;
And limber and lightly, heel and toe,
We'll go to the fun at Carlow!

Ave Maria

Ave Maria, gratia plena
Dominus tecum.
Benedicta tu in mulieribus
et benedictus fructus ventris tui Jesus
Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis.
Amen.

He Hath Entered the Heven

O Blessyd Jhesu, helpe me!
O Blessyd Lady, socoure me!

He hath entered the Heven to appeare before the visage of His Fader for us.
To shew the wounds which he did suffer for the deliverance of us from sin.
Therefore put we aside all wepyng and teeres, and be not sad,
Ne hevye as men withoten hope, but rather be gladde and joyous,
and eche of us herein comfort other,
Always praysynge and magnifyenge the name of our Lorde,
to whom be Laude and honore enlessly.
Amen.

Hark, the bells they gaily ring,
And finch and thrush and blackbird sing;
For Love on this fair day is King!
Och! Follow me down to Carlow!

See, the sun shines out so gay;
"A wedding, sure!" I heard him say,
"I'll send my beams to gild the day. "
Och! Follow me down to Carlow!

Hark, the bells they gaily ring,
And finch and thrush and blackbird sing;
For Love on this fair day is King!
Och! Follow me down to Carlow!

Hail Mary, full of grace.
The Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women
and blessed be the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, hear our prayer.
Amen.

Jaakobin Pojat (The Sons of Jacob)

Ruuben, Simeon, Leevi, Juuda, Daan, Naftal
Gaad, Asser, Isaskar, Sebulon, Joosef
ja Benjamin.
Jaakobin poikia kaikki.

Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali,
Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph
and Benjamin.
They are all sons of Jacob.

Lauliku Lapol (The Bard's Childhood)

Kui ma ol'li väikokônô,
al' leaa a'leaa
kas'vi masis kaunikônô,
ol'li üte üü vannu,
pääle katô päävä vannu.
Imä vei kiigu kesä pääle
pan'de hällü palo pääle,
pan'de par'dsi hällütämmä,
Suvôlinnu liigutamma,
par' dsil ol' le pal' lo sônnu,
suvôlennul liia' laalu.
Par'ts sääl man mul pal'lo lauli
suvôlindu liiast kônôli
säält mina lat's sis laulu' ope
ul'li kônô sôna osasi.
ul'likônô so'na' osasi,
kôik mina papôrine
kôik mina raiô raamatune
selle minol pal'lo sônnu,
selle laajalt laaluviisi.

Once I was just a little one,
then I grew very nicely and I was one night old.
After two days my mother took my cradle
to a fallow field.
She put the cradle on the field
and set a duck in it to comfort me,
and a summer bird to rock it.
The duck had a lot of words,
and the summer bird had much to say.
The duck and the bird both sang to me a lot.
There, as a child, I learned songs and many
words.
All of this I put on paper, all of it I etched into a
book.
From this book I have many words,
from this book I have many songs.

On Suuri Sun Rantas Autius

On suuri sun rantas autius,
sitä sentään ikävöin:
miten villi sorsan valitus
soi kaisli kossa öin.

How lonely are your shores
And yet I still long for them.
I long to hear again the wild duck's lament
calling from the lake's rushes in the night.

Joku yksinäinen eksynyt, joka vilua val keroi
jok'on kaisli kossa kierrellyt
eik' emoa löytää voi.

A lonely, lost one who is cold
calls out as he swims around and through the rushes
as he searches for his mother.

Sun harmajata aaltoas olen katsonut kyönelein,
ens' surunsa itkenyt rannallas
mun on oma nuoruutein.

Through my tears I have watched your grey waves.
It was here, on your shore (as a young one)
that I cried my first tears of sorrow.

On syvään sun kuvasi painunut
la sitä ikävöin,
olen villisorsaa kuunellut
mä sielä monin öin.

Your image lies deep in my memory
and increases my longing for your shores.
I want to hear once again the wild duck's lament
as I did so many nights long ago.

Minä Olen Harman Kankaanpäästä

Minä olen Härmän Kankaanpäästä
pikkunen ja häjy.
Jala jallan jala jala vei vei vei,
pikkunen ja häjy.

Aina mun ääneni ylitse kuuluu
vaikei mua näjy. Jala...

Tämän kylän ämmät ne sanovat,
Että minä olen suuri suinen. Jala...

Aina on muule piisannut,
tuo lusikka yksipuinen. Jala...

Mammani mua tuuditti
tuo lusikka yksipuinen. Jala...

Tämän kylän ämmvt ne sanovat,
ettv minä olen yksin ruma. Jala...

Oh I hail from Kankaanpää in Härma
And I'm short on size and temper.
Jala jallan jala jala vei vei vei,
Short on size and temper.

My voice it carries well enough,
E'en thought ye might not see me. Jala...

The women round here, they will tell
I'm a big-mouthed boy from Härmä. Jala...

But it's always been enough for me,
A spoon of the standard measure. Jala...

My mother she bounced me on her knee
And her time it was not wasted. Jala...

The women round here, they will tell
That I'm an ugly scoundrel. Jala...



Elektra Women's Choir Morna Edmundson and Diane Loomer, co-directors

Elektra Women's Choir was founded by co-directors Morna Edmundson and Diane Loomer in 1987. The choir is known for its adventurous programming, seeking out music written specifically for women and frequently commissioning new works. The singers are selected by audition and share an enthusiasm for challenging repertoire. Elektra was awarded first prize for women's choirs in three consecutive rounds of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's amateur choir competition, as well as several prizes for performance of contemporary music. The choir is frequently heard on CBC radio across Canada.

The Singers: Liz Baker, Margaret Barry, Elizabeth Brodovitch, Nadine Bugden, Maggie Burr, Maureen Ciarniello, Annette Coffin, Brigid Coult, Marianne de Kleer, Susan Edwards, Karen Frazer, Audrey Fricker, Nola Gibson, Allison Girvan, Deborah Handley, Devon Hanley, Corlynn Hanney, Kim Hardy, Sandra Head, Janice Hill, Christina Jahn, Charlotte Kennedy, Shelley Koke, Wendy Klein, Catherine Lee, Denise O'Brien, Susan Ohannesian, Leanne Patenaude, Barb Paul, Sandra Phillips, Elizabeth Rathbun, Lorraine Reinhardt, Mary Ridgley, Deirdre Rogers, Renée Roseland, Carmen Rosen, Elaine Smookler, Moyra Van Nus, Sandra Zink

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