

YOUR ONE AND ONLY LIFE The Choral Music of Stephen Smith

Artistic Director, Morna Edmundson



with guest artists **The Vancouver Men's Chorus** Directed by Willi Zwozdesky

Saturday, March 5, 2016 – 7:30 pm • Sunday, March 6, 2016 – 3 pm

Ryerson United Church, Vancouver

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Morna Edmundson, Artistic Director

March 5 and 6, 2016 Ryerson United Church, Vancouver

Your One and Only Life The Choral Music of Stephen Smith

Elektra Women's Choir, Morna Edmundson, Artistic Director

Stephen Smith, piano and organ

with special guests The Vancouver Men's Chorus Willi Zwozdesky, Artistic Director

Colleen Venables, violin Alana Lopez, violin Colin Miles, viola Stefan Hintersteininger, cello

and the singers of Elektra's Mira Youth Mentorship Program

This concert has been generously supported by

H THE HAEBLER GROUP

Welcome!

Thank you for sharing a very special milestone with us today. Our colleague, collaborator, pianist, and friend for fifteen years, Dr. Stephen Smith, is turning 50 this year, and we've taken the opportunity to bring him to centre stage for a true celebration of everything he brings to Elektra and Vancouver's choral community.

The sound of a choir is deeply influenced by the repertoire it sings and – simply put – Stephen Smith's music makes Elektra sound good. There is no other composer who has written more for Elektra, nor been as often performed by our choir. As you will hear, Stephen's beautiful sense of melody and form, and his fluid vocal lines pervade his scores and make them very gratifying to conduct and sing. From the simple perfection of the unison line that opens *what i want* to the challenging layers of sound in *Consider the Lilies*, each composition is truly unique, taking its cue from the text's musical opportunities. The harmonic language is rich, infusing works such as *Solitude* with subtlety and beauty. The piano's role is often as an equal with the choir, such as in the playful composition *Yellow Twig of Willow*, on Edna St. Vincent Millay's "counting-out" poem. *Sea Psalm* was written for the Vancouver Chamber Choir, specifically to showcase Ryerson United Church's wonderful organ and we are delighted to give a second performance today.

I am delighted that my dear friend Willi Zwozdesky and the Vancouver Men's Chorus immediately and wholeheartedly accepted Elektra's invitation to be our special guests for this birthday celebration. You can read more about Stephen's longstanding involvement with the VMC on page 12. Welcome to each and every one of the VMC singers, to our guest string players, and to Elektra's Mira Youth Mentorship singers, who are also with us today.

Mark

Morna Edmundson, Artistic Director Elektra Women's Choir

From the composer

Although arranging and composing music is a fairly solitary pursuit, the actual product is almost always a collaboration of some sort. In the case of an arrangement, of course, one is merely re-working someone else's pre-existing artistic creation. If one is writing for voices, the whole process begins with the selection of a text – usually the work of some poet or other. Very often the impetus for composing in the first place is a request from an individual or group, sometimes coupled with a gift from a donor. And finally there must be performers to breathe life into the finished work, and listeners to hear and appreciate it, or else it remains merely a collection of black dots on paper.

As I have sat at the piano in rehearsals over the past several weeks while Elektra and the Vancouver Men's Chorus have been preparing for these concerts, I have been deeply honoured, gratified, and humbled by the great care bestowed on those little black dots of mine by the directors and singers of both groups. And now as you, the audience, provide the last crucial element of the music-making, I feel truly blessed to have such collaborators. Thank you for being here, and enjoy the show!

Hylen

Programme

Elektra

Your One and Only Life

words and music by Susan Crowe, arr. Stephen Smith (2001, for A Vancouver Women's Chorus)

About a thousand years ago, when I was very young, My hair burned like the sea beneath an ever-rising sun; My blood ran thick with promise, I was tender to the bone; But now I'm Evangeline, made of stone.

This is your one and only life. What will you do?

Now the meteors of August, they fly all through my hair. The day will come when I will rise to find my eye less fair; And this body scorched by beauty and these hands I left unplayed What was I waiting for, afraid?

This is your one and only life. What will you do?

You can dream, you can imagine, you can simply hope and pray, You can save yourself for glory, you can wait til judgement day; You can hold out til you stand a breath away from heaven's gate; Your day of redemption will come – too late.

This is your one and only life. What will you do?

what i want words by Patricia Lowther, music by Stephen Smith (1997) *

what i want is to be blessed what i want is a cloak of air

the light entering my lungs my love entering my body the blessing descending like the sky sliding down the spectrum

what i want is to be aware of the spaces between stars, to breathe continuously the sources of sky, a veined sail moving, my love never setting foot to the dark anvil of earth

Solitude

words by Lorna Crozier, music by Stephen Smith (2011, for Elektra) *

Sometimes the dark's so dark nothing can move through it. Even the wind, even the geese who just an hour ago charcoaled their journey from star to star. You love the lake at night because water keeps its distance yet carries sound, crackled and clear from the farthest shore. You said nothing moves through this dark. But music does, and voices, and you go on.

* recording available on Pure Elektra CD

Yellow Twig of Willow

words ("Counting-Out Rhyme") by Edna St. Vincent Millay, music by Stephen Smith (2014, for the Women's Commissioning Consortium of the American Choral Directors Assn.) **

Silver bark of beech, and sallow Bark of yellow birch, and yellow Twig of willow.

Stripe of green in moosewood maple, Colour seen in leaf of apple, Bark of popple.

Wood of popple pale as moonbeam, Wood of oak for yoke and barn-beam, Wood of hornbeam.

Silver bark of beech, and hollow Stem of elder, tall and yellow Twig of willow.

** recording available on All My Heart is Listening CD

Pity Me Not

(world premiere) Commissioned by Elektra, and Ros Best, on the occasion of Stephen Smith's 50th birthday, with gratitude and joy. words (Sonnet 29) by Edna St. Vincent Millay, music by Stephen Smith (2016, for Elektra)

Pity me not because the light of day At close of day no longer walks the sky; Pity me not for beauties passed away From field and thicket as the year goes by. Pity me not the waning of the moon, Nor that the ebbing tide goes out to sea; Nor that a man's desire is hushed so soon, And you no longer look with love on me. This have I known always: love is no more Than the wide blossom which the wind assails, Than the great tide that treads the shifting shore, Strewing fresh wreckage gathered in the gales. Pity me that the heart is slow to learn What the swift mind beholds at every turn.

Elektra and the singers of the Mira Youth Mentorship program

Consider the Lilies

words from the Gospel of Matthew, music by Stephen Smith (2013, for Elektra) **

Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink. Behold the birds of the air; they sow not, neither do they reap; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.

And why take ye thought for raiment, saying wherewithal shall we be clothed? Consider the lilies of the field; they toil not, neither do they spin; yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for itself. But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

If My Love Leaves Me

words and music traditional, arr. Stephen Smith (2011, for Elektra)**

I Will Walk With My Love (a fragment from Dublin) I Know Where I'm Going (from County Antrim) I Know My Love (from the west of Ireland) Danny Boy (tune from County Derry, words by Frederick Wetherley)

** recording available on All My Heart is Listening CD

✤ Intermission ◆

Vancouver Men's Chorus

Ring Out, Wild Bells

words by Alfred, Lord Tennyson (altered), music by Stephen Smith (2013, for the VMC)

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky! The year is dying - let him die. Ring, happy bells, across the snow! The year is going - let him go.

Ring out the false, ring in the true; Ring out the old, ring in the new!

Ring out false pride in place and blood, The ancient feuds, the party strife; Ring in the nobler modes of life, Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out the want, the care, the grief, Ring out the narrowing lust of gold; Ring out the thousand wars of old, Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free, The larger heart, the kindlier hand; Ring out the darkness of the land, Ring in the world that is to be!

Sonnet

words by Elizabeth Bishop, music by Stephen Smith (2012, for the VMC)

I am in need of music that would flow Over my fretful-feeling fingertips, Over my bitter-tainted, trembling lips, With melody deep, clear, and liquid-slow. Oh, for the healing swaying, old and low, Of some song sung to rest the tired dead; A song to fall like water on my head, And over quivering limbs, dream-flushed, to glow! There is a magic made by melody: A spell of rest, and quiet breath, and cool Heart, that sinks through fading colours deep To the subaqueous stillness of the sea And floats forever in a moon-green pool, Held in the arms of rhythm, and of sleep.

Diamonds are a Material Girl's Best Friend

words and music by Jule Styne, Leo Robin, Peter Brown and Robert Rans, arr. Stephen Smith (1997, for the VMC); choreography by Mok Escueta

Combined Choirs

If You Would Hear the Angels Sing ***

words by Dora Greenwell (altered), music by Stephen Smith (2000)

*** recording available on Elektra's Still CD

Sea Psalm

words from Psalms 93 and 29 (Vulgate), music by Stephen Smith (2005, for the Vancouver Chamber Choir)

Levaverunt flumina, Domine: levaverunt flumina voces suas. Levaverunt flumina gurgites suos vocibus aquarum multuarum. Vox Domini super aquas; Deus gloriae intonuit. Grandes fluctus maris; grandis Dominus Deus. Alleluia.

The floods have lifted up, O Lord: the floods have lifted up their voice. The floods have lifted up their waves with the noise of many waters. The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of majesty has thundered. Great are the surges of the sea; great is the Lord God. Alleluia.

In the Evening

words and music by Susan Crowe, arr. Stephen Smith (2005, for the Vancouver Lesbian and Gay Choir)

Fare Thee Well, Love (world premiere) words and music by Jimmy Rankin, arr. Stephen Smith (2015)



Stephen Smith grew up in rural Nova Scotia, where he sang and played the piano from an early age. After initial studies in his home province in both piano and organ, he attended the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, England. While there, he participated in national and international competitions and won numerous awards and distinctions.

Since 1990, Stephen has lived in Vancouver, obtaining his doctoral degree in piano performance from the University of British Columbia, and contributing to the musical life of the city as a performer, teacher, conductor, composer and arranger.

Central to Stephen's career is his long-standing relationship with some of Vancouver's finest choral groups. In addition to his work with Elektra (which he has accompanied since 2001), he is also resident accompanist of the Vancouver Men's Chorus,

pianist for the Vancouver Bach Choir, and a frequent collaborator with Chor Leoni Men's Choir, the Vancouver Chamber Choir, and many other ensembles.

Stephen is also a published composer and arranger of choral music, with a long and growing list of commissions from individual choirs across North America, and from such entities as the British Columbia Choral Federation, the Women's Commissioning Consortium of the ACDA, and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Stephen's work as both composer and pianist can be heard on dozens of CDs in commercial release, including a solo recording of classical piano miniatures entitled "Kaleidoscope," which is available on iTunes.

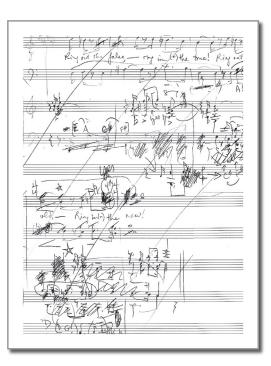
A few little-known facts from Dr. Smith's biography:

From the age of about 6, whenever distant relatives, visiting dignitaries, or random tourists turned up on his grandmother's doorstep, little Stephen was invariably called upon to entertain. On these occasions he would improvise precocious arpeggiated rhapsodies on "Danny Boy" and "The Sweet Bye And Bye," while the visitors looked on in wonder/horror/utter boredom.

During a particularly fraught lesson at Acadia University, Stephen's organ teacher became so exasperated that he literally "threw in the towel" - that is, he happened to be holding an old towel, used as a dustrag, when he was suddenly overcome by the urge to lob something at his recalcitrant pupil's noggin! It's just as well it was a towel he was holding, and not Vol. III of the *Klavierübung*!

One of Stephen's most prized possessions is a 1985 cassette recording, made surreptitiously and illegally, of a live New York City performance (in which he sang) of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, conducted by Robert Shaw.

In 2004, two women from the church where Stephen was then part-time organist asked him to collaborate with them on a musical comedy. The result, entitled Alley Cats, was mounted in October 2005 at the Vogue Theatre, with a stellar cast including Broadway diva Lea Delaria and National Ballet star "Sexy Rexy" Harrington. The production was panned by critics from coast to coast, closed early, and lost a great deal of money.



Rough notes (very) for "Ring Out, Wild Bells"



Morna Edmundson, Artistic Director

Elektra Women's Choir

from Vancouver, Canada has been a leader among women's choirs since 1987. Under the direction of Artistic Director Morna Edmundson the 48voice adult choir is known for its adventurous programming, seeking out music written specifically for women and frequently commissioning new works. The choir is honoured to



work with an outstanding accompanist, Dr. Stephen Smith.

Elektra delivers its mandate to "inspire and lead" through an annual concert series including new and commissioned works and featuring outstanding guest artists. In addition to performing worthy repertoire from the past, Elektra has commissioned over 70 compositions and arrangements. The choir's recordings on iTunes and CD Baby extend the reach of its repertoire internationally. Elektra's 13th CD *Still* was released in October 2015 – a collection of 14 Christmas tracks including many world premiere recordings of Canadian and international works for women's voices. Elektra's website offers a permanent repertoire resource featuring all works programmed by the choir to date. Elektra's celebrated outreach programs encourage, train, and mentor the next generation of youth and adults: singers, conductors, and composers.

A multiple national prize-winning ensemble, Elektra has been honoured to perform at conferences of Choral Canada, the American Choral Directors Association, Chorus America, the International Society for Music Education, and the International Federation for Choral Music. Elektra participates enthusiastically in shared projects with other arts organizations such as the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra and Chor Leoni Men's Choir, and in festivals and concert series.

Soprano 1

Grace Fatkin, Susanna Henderson, Malaika Horswill, Danica Kell, Holly Kennedy*, Shannon Lythgoe, Ashley McConnell, Janine Magaw, Christy Mahlberg, Rachel Nelson, Taryn Plater, Jillian Schina, Alessia Todde

Soprano 2

Ann Busay, Sophia Fan, Catherine Lee, Susan Ohannesian, Sandra Phillips, Sharon Schermbrucker, Kathryn Slemko*, Kim Taylor, Moyra Van Nus, Patty Wagner

Alto 1

Joanna Bevaart, Beth Busby, Amy Dawson, Karen Dionne, Susan Edwards, Grace Groot, Kirsten Hain, Shelley Koke, Simone Lemieux, Sheila Little, Stephanie Loo*, Kate MacColl, Rosemary Speakman, Alison Stillwell

Alto 2

Stephanie Ching, Maureen Ciarniello, Elisabeth Finch, Sharla Marr, Corinne Norbraten*, Denise O'Brien, Caitlin Robinson, Deirdre Rogers, Carmen Rosen, Bernice Slemko



Morna Edmundson is one of Canada's best-known choral conductors with a strong reputation for excellence. Passionate since childhood about choral singing, she obtained degrees and diplomas in vocal music in Vancouver, Bellingham, and Stockholm, Sweden where her teachers included Eric Ericson. In 1987, she co-founded Elektra Women's Choir with Diane Loomer, a treasured partnership that lasted 22 years. In 2009, Morna became Elektra's sole Artistic Director, continuing the choir's strong leadership role in concert presentation, commissioning, recording, and mentorship.

For 14 years Morna shared her love of quality repertoire with a new generation of singers in her role as Associate Artistic Director of Coastal Sound Music

Academy, where she was Music Director of the mixed-voice Youth Chamber Choir. Morna has adjudicated in North America and Asia, conducted honour choirs in several states, co-directed the American Choral Directors Association National Women's Honour Choir, and gives frequent workshops with choirs of all ages.

In 2000, she was presented with the Healey Willan Award for outstanding service to the BC Choral Federation, an organization she serves as a member of the President's Advisory Council. In 2009, Morna was a recipient of the BC Community Achievement Award, which recognized her gifted organizational talent, leadership by example, and her encouragement of others to pursue their musical and choral goals. In 2011, Morna received a YWCA Woman of Distinction award in recognition of her work with Elektra. Since 2013, Morna has served on the board of Chorus America, the advocacy, research, and leadership development organization that gives voice to the choral field.

Mira Elektra's Youth Mentorship Program

Elektra's *Mira* program is designed to instill a lifelong love of singing in young women so that when they leave high school they know there are welcoming places in which they can continue to sing and grow musically, whether that place is Elektra or some other ensemble. Mira singers, with the support of their high school and community choral directors, study selected pieces of Elektra repertoire on their own, rehearse with Elektra, and then perform in concert with the choir.

Elektra is pleased to welcome our Mira Mentorship Program singers into the ranks of Elektra this week. They have risen to the challenge of this repertoire with skill and energy. Our thanks to all of them and to their sponsoring conductors. For more information on this program, visit elektra.ca and click on Outreach Programs.

Tianna Alcee-Lewlyn, Killarney Secondary, Vancouver (Lisa Reimer, director) Jolene Bernardino, New Westminster Secondary (Kelly Proznick, director) Jasmine Campbell, Burnaby Central Secondary (Carrie Taylor, director) Holly Cheuk, Eric Hamber Secondary, Vancouver (Les Nerling, director) Audrey Estacio, Eric Hamber Secondary, Vancouver (Les Nerling, director) Lisa Garrone, Burnaby Central Secondary (Carrie Taylor, director) Eyiya Kanda, Sir Winston Churchill Secondary, Vancouver (Karen Dionne, director) Maya Lewis, Sir Winston Churchill Secondary, Vancouver (Karen Dionne, director) Lorynne Machado, New Westminster Secondary (Kelly Proznick, director) Jenna Potter, Burnaby Central Secondary (Carrie Taylor, director) Julianna Vanderhoeven, Killarney Secondary, Vancouver (Lisa Reimer, director) Cherie Yuen, Eric Hamber Secondary, Vancouver (Les Nerling, director)



Morna Edmundson, Artistic Director

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Elektra Women's Choir is a proud member of



Consider donating to Elektra in our 29th Season of Excellence!

Elektra's mandate is to inspire and lead in the choral art from through excellence in performance and the creation, exploration and celebration of women's repertoire.

Donors play a crucial role in the life of the choir and Elektra's brilliant performances and extensive outreach programs only exist because of their steadfast and ongoing support. Our supporters inspire our singers and give Elektra and other local, national and international choirs an opportunity to create, explore, and celebrate new compositions while also treasuring the classics of the past.

Your gift to Elektra recognizes the importance of choral music in our lives. Please visit **elektra.ca** to learn more about our choir, the Diane Loomer Commissioning Fund for Elektra Women's Choir and our outreach programs. Your support and encouragement are very much appreciated.

Donations can be made through CanadaHelps at **canadahelps.org** or by contacting the Elektra office at 604.739.1255 or manager@elektra.ca

If you wish to commit tonight to a year of monthly donations of \$25 or more, please see our Front of House volunteers. You will take home a CD of your choice as our thank you gift!

(Elektra Women's Choir is a charitable organization. Tax receipts are issued for donations of \$25 or more).

Vancouver Men's Chorus

Since its founding in 1981, the Vancouver Men's Chorus (VMC) has established itself among the nation's premiere men's choruses and Vancouver's leading gay community organizations. Under the continuing direction of its conductor Willi Zwozdesky, the Chorus has achieved prominence through extensive concert touring, radio broadcasts, six commercial CD recordings, and a 35year tradition of home season concerts. In addition, the Chorus performs numerous



local volunteer services every year, including benefits for AIDS-related causes, conferences, rallies, and other community events. The VMC has added its voice to the global "It Gets Better" campaign, through the creation and posting of its YouTube anti-bullying video performance of Everything Possible.

Our Resident Accompanist Stephen Smith has contributed profoundly to the Chorus' artistic success. In addition to accompanying the Chorus on stage and in recordings, Stephen has also created a very great number of custom arrangements and original works for the repertoire of the VMC. His founding and extended leadership of Synergy, a 12-voice VMC a cappella ensemble, added a unique dimension to the VMC's artistic presence over a fifteen year period.

The Vancouver Men's Chorus is a registered non-profit society dedicated to presenting high-quality musical entertainment. Composed of gay men and their friends, the chorus promotes community spirit and a positive image of the gay community. The Chorus is a member of the Vancouver Cultural Alliance, the British Columbia Choral Federation and of GALA Choruses, an association of over one hundred men's, women's, and mixed choruses from the United States, Canada, Europe and Australia, dedicated to providing leadership and inspiration to the gay and lesbian movement through excellence in the choral arts.



Willi Zwozdesky

Now in his thirty-fifth season as Artistic Director and Conductor of the Vancouver Men's Chorus, Willi Zwozdesky is widely-known for his work as a conductor, arranger, publisher, and producer. A native of north-central Alberta, Zwozdesky later moved to Seattle, where he completed a Master of Music in choral conducting and a Master of Arts in music theory at the University of Washington in 1981. Following his move to Vancouver in that year, he established himself as a leader in the city's cultural community, and undertook the development of the voice of the VMC. Under his direction, the Chorus has distinguished itself through innovative, often collaborative programming that

emphasizes the work of Canadian creators, custom arrangements for men's voices, a wide range of women's music, and extra-choral elements such as spoken word, movement, and dance.

Zwozdesky's long-term dedication to choral music has been recognized internationally and regionally with a Legacy Award from GALA Choruses and a Willan Award from the British Columbia Choral Federation. An active choral clinician and consultant, Willi has also volunteered on a number of national and regional organizations, including the Canadian Music Centre, GALA Choruses, Inc., and the World of Children's Choirs. Today, in addition to his freelance work, he serves as the Executive Director of the British Columbia Choral Federation and as a board member of Choral Canada – the Association of Canadian Choral Communities.

Vancouver Men's Chorus

Willi Zwozdesky – Conductor and Artistic Director Stephen Smith – Resident Accompanist

Tenor 1

Bruce Liao, Chris Wanjoff, Ed Deeks, Gareth Wee, Gerry Ryan, Humphrey Tam, Malcolm Atia, Mikey Van Nen, Mok Escueta, Rob Minifie, Todd Lund, Vivan Tan, Wahkee Ting, Yogi Omar

Tenor 2

Aaron Essex, Bernard Lee, Bob Frampton, Bob Millar, Brendan Green, Cameron Power, Chris Lam, Dan Worsley, Daryl Dyck, David Browning, David Keen, Eric Bussieres, Fabyo Brenner-Araujo, Geoffrey Dice, Guy Cribdon, Harro Lauprecht, Ian Poole, James Curtis, James Strand, Jarrett Mckee, Jason Roth, Jay Skaluba, Jesse Macleod, Justin Lin, Kieran Nelson, Lenny Cousineau, Matthew Parker, Michael Cliffe, Michael Lapp, Peter Jaskiewicz, Phill Esau, Roger Lieschman, Soon Loo, Tony Edgecombe, Tyler House

Baritone

 Alan Baycroft, Alex Burns, Andrew Knapman, Basil Girgrah, Brian Chau, Dale Frankin, Dan Cachola, Daniel Watson, Danny Pierson, David Evans, Denny Choboter, DJ Hrubizna, Hugh Jansen, Jay Catterson, Jeff Hsu, Joe Bahlman, Kelly Loden, Leigh Gayman, Marcus Lemire, Mark Flaming, Mike Bui, Mike Ryan, Murray Schellenberg, Nicolas Lisicin-Wilson, Nikolay Malyarov, Paul Barton,
Phil Marnik, Pierre Chauvot, Randy Romero, Raymond Lee, Rob Innes, Scott Macleay, Tommy Fincham

Bass

Adam Higgs, Adam Wojtowicz, Ashley Stevenson, Brian Porter, Bruce Forster, Daniel Kiermaier, Dirk Winkler, Erik Gustavson, Georrge Schwab, James Conklin, James Moan, Jeremy Young, John Liesch, Jonas Yoe, Josh Hamlin, Len Christiansen, Luke Shwart, Malcolm Francis, Manuel Villaneva, Nic Cotton, Pat Stephenson, Paul Hynds, Paul Stacey, Phil Hughes, Rory Penny, Steve Burri, Tom Heffron, Trevor McLain



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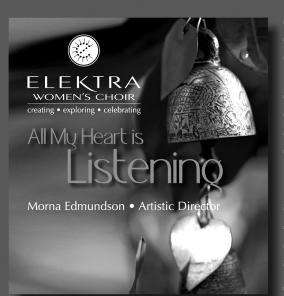




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