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WOMEN'S CHOIR

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In the Abbey Garden

Morna Edmundson, Artistic Director

Guest artists: **Borealis String Quartet**

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May 7, 2016
Ryerson United Church

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ELEKTRA
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Morna Edmundson,
Artistic Director

May 7, 2016
Ryerson United Church, Vancouver

In The Abbey Garden

Elektra Women's Choir,
Morna Edmundson, Artistic Director

Stephen Smith, piano and organ

with special guests
The Borealis String Quartet
Patricia Shih, violin
Yuel Yawney, violin
Nikita Pogrebnoy, viola
Sungyong Lim, cello

Generously sponsored by



Presented with the generous support
of Barbara Lowy in memory of Otto Lowy



Welcome!

Throughout history, compositions for choirs have sprung up where ensembles existed and had a strong desire or need to create new repertoire for themselves. We are lucky when these works were created in an environment where writing music down was possible – never the case until recently in the streets and hillsides, but routinely in the abbeys and churches where literacy and legacy were held in the highest regard. This is the very root of Western choral music, now sung in every corner of the world and being invented and reinvented and made relevant in every culture.

In the case of women's choirs, we can trace notated compositions back to the 12th century abbeys where Hildegard von Bingen was a spiritual leader, political advisor, botanist, poet, and composer. Skip forward to Vivaldi and his contemporaries in the girls' orphanages of early 18th century Venice and another stellar and virtuosic body of work is found. Today's glimpse into European music for women's voices starts at the next major point – the Romantic era, where organist-composers such as Franck and Rheinberger contributed to the repertoire, and where a handsome young Johannes Brahms formed his own women's choir and wrote many works of lasting value for them to sing. At this point, listeners who love classical music will start to recognize composers whose instrumental music may be better known than their choral works, including Rachmaninoff, Casals, and Holst. It is our great pleasure to sing their vocal music for you tonight, deepening our understanding of who they were as creative musicians. The first half of the program also includes three works by living European composers, showing connections to the continuous stream of choral composition in these European musical cultures and connecting themes of the older works with our modern world.

I'm very grateful to our friends, the Borealis String Quartet, for joining us in this project and for sharing two movements of the Dvorak "American Quartet" with us. Our closing piece is not European at all, but I wanted you to hear Ottawa-based Kelly Marie Murphy's beautiful new *Instrument of Peace*. Somehow, and maybe partly so we can send you home with a message in a language you understand, it seems a fitting close to the concert. Thank you for your support throughout the past year and we look forward to seeing you again in the fall for Elektra's 30th Anniversary Season.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Morna". The script is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial 'M'.

Morna Edmundson, Artistic Director
Elektra Women's Choir

*Please turn off your cell phones.
Please note that photography and videography
are not permitted during the performance.*

Programme

Nigra Sum Pablo Casals (Spanish, 1876-1973)
Originally scored with piano. String and organ orchestration by Sheldon Rose.

Nigra Sum Bernat Vivancos (Spanish, b.1973)

Que doncella se casa con el viento? Alejandro Yagüe (Spanish, b.1947)
4th movement from *Historietas del viento*

III: Molto vivace (from String Quartet No. 12, Op 96) Antonín Dvořák (Czech, 1841-1904)

Spring, the Sweet Spring Ēriks Ešvalds (Latvian, b.1977)

Les danses de Lormont César Franck (French, 1822-1890)

❖ Intermission ❖

Six Choruses (opus 15) Sergei Rachmaninoff (Russian, 1873-1943)

1. Glory!

2. Night

3. The Pine Tree

Amy Dawson and Stephanie Ching, soloists

4. Now the Waves are Drowsing

5. Captivity

6. The Angel

Ave Maria Gustav Holst (English, 1874-1934)

IV: Vivace ma non troppo (from String Quartet No.12, Op.96) Antonín Dvořák

Ave Regina Coelorum Josef Gabriel Rheinberger (Austrian, 1839-1901)

Psalm 13 Johannes Brahms (German, 1833-1897)

Instrument of Peace Kelly-Marie Murphy (Canadian, b.1964)

Translations

Nigra Sum

Sung in Latin. Text from the biblical Song of Songs.

*I am a dark-skinned, comely daughter of Jerusalem,
Therefore have I pleased the Lord and he has brought me into his chamber and said to me:
arise my love and come.
For now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone,
The flowers have appeared in our land; the time of pruning is come.
Alleluia.*

Que doncella se casa con el viento?

Sung in Spanish. Poem by Federico García Lorca (1898-1936)

School

The Teacher

What maiden will marry the wind?

Child

The maiden of all our desires.

Teacher

What does the wind give the maiden?

Child

Whirlwinds of gold. A pileup of maps.

Teacher

And she gives him what in return?

Child

Her heart laid bare.

Teacher

Tell me her name.

Child

Her name is a secret.

(The window
in the school
has a curtain
of stars.)

Spring, the Sweet Spring

Poem by Thomas Nashe (1567- c.1601)

Spring, the sweet spring, is the year's pleasant king,
Then blooms each thing, then maids dance in a ring,
Cold doth not sting, the pretty birds do sing:
 Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

The palm and may make country houses gay,
Lambs frisk and play, the shepherds pipe all day,
And we hear aye birds tune this merry lay:
 Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

The fields breathe sweet, the daisies kiss our feet,
Young lovers meet, old wives a-sunning sit,
In every street these tunes our ears do greet:
 Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to witta-woo!
 Spring, the sweet spring!

Les danses de Lormont

Sung in French. Poem by Marceline Desbordes-Valmore (1785-1859)

*Chasing the clouds of our songs, hand in hand, let's dance! Let's dance!
We are the pallid girls of Lormont.
The breeze picks us up and carries us.
They say our feet give wing to the dance.
We're carried by the wind.
With its big voice the sea accompanies us,
the sea, which pounds the shore and breaks the reeds.
Seeing us gliding over the mountain, we are mistaken for birds.
Look, look, the mountain is on fire!
It's Lormont aflame at sunset.
Look, we dance our joyous round on the mountainside like a bright red circle.*

Six Choruses (opus 15)

Sung in Russian

1. Glory!

From a poem by Nikolai A. Nekrasov (1821-1877)

*Glory! Long live the people in glory!
First are the people, first is their fate,
 first is their need for freedom and peace!
Our fathers battled enemies and defended
 the land that we might be free.
Now we go onward, one loving family,
 furthering freedom even as we are
 strengthening peace.
Glory! Long live the people in glory!
First are the people, first is their fate.
 first is their need for freedom and peace!
Glory! Glory! Glory!*

2. Night

Poem by Vladimir Ladyzhensky (1859-1932)

*Softly night comes in on dusky wings,
taking flight across the land,
and from somewhere drifts a dreary song,
drifts a song made dark by a tear.
Go away, you melancholy tune.
Soon the night will fall away.
The triumphant resurrected day
will bring happiness to all.
Meanwhile, the weary dreamers are renewed
in the mystery of sleep.
Crimson dawn will seep across the sky
and dissolve itself in blue.*

3. The Pine Tree

Poem by Mikhail Lermontov (1814-1841)

*The north wind is savage.
The mountain is barren.
Alone on the peak stands a pine.
It sways as it slumbers,
as glittering snowflakes drift downward
and clothe it in white.
It dreams in its sleep of a distant horizon,
a desert of sand dunes and sun.
where, high on a cliff,
swaying slowly in sorrow,
a beautiful palm stands alone.*

4. Now the Waves are Drowsing

Poem by K. R. [Grand Duke Konstantin Romanov] (1858-1915)

*Now the waves are drowsing
in the quiet night,
azure waters glimmer brightly
in the full moon light.*

*Silver moonbeams falling
set the waves ablaze beneath.
Like a moonbeam driving darkness from the ocean.
joy makes light of grief.*

4. Captivity

Poem by Nikolai Tsyganov (1797-1831)

*"Little nightingale with your head beneath your wing,
Why do you eat nothing and why do you not sing?"*

*"Ages ago I sang in spring in a wood beneath the stars.
Now I only hang my head in a cage with golden bars.
Sound I sing? My mate is alone and signing for me?
Sound I sing when my nestlings are calling and crying for me?"*

*"Through the open window behold the open sky.
Be happy, little nightingale. Spread your wings and fly!"*

6. The Angel

Poem by Mikhail Lermontov (1814-1841)

*The heavenly song of an angel in flight
was quietly filling the night.
The clouds and the moon and the stars in a throng
were listening as he sang the song.*

*He sang of the sinless spirits in bliss
in gardens of paradise.
He sang of the greatness of God,
and his guileless praises pervaded the sky.*

*The angel embraced a young soul in his arms
to set in this harsh vale of tears.
The sound of the song lingered on in the soul,
remaining alive through the years.*

*Confined to the face of the wearisome world,
the soul ached with wondrous desire;
the sounds of the earth could never replace
a song of the heavenly choir.*

English translations copyright 2008 by Mark Herman and Ronnie Apter

Ave Maria

Sung in Latin

*Hail, Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with Thee. Blessed are thou among women
and blessed is Jesus, the fruit of your womb. Holy Mary, pray for us. Amen.*

Ave Regina Coelorum

Sung in Latin

*Hail, O Queen of Heaven.
Hail, O Lady of Angels.
Hail! Thou root, hail! Thou gate
from whom unto the world, a light has arisen:*

*Rejoice, O glorious Virgin,
Lovely beyond all others,
Farewell, most beautiful maiden,
And pray for us to Christ.*

Psalm 13

Sung in German

*Lord, Lord, Lord,
how long wilt thou forget me and forsake me?
How long wilt thou rage and hide thy face far from me?*

*How long shall I have trouble in all my spirit
and give over my heart to sorrow daily?
How long Lord, shall still my enemy rise against me?*

*Look on me and give ear to me, Lord, my God!
Enlighten thou my vision, lest I sleep,
lest I sleep the sleep of my dying.*

*Let not my foe say now that he prevails against me,
And let my enemies not boast in triumph that they see me shaken.
But thou, Lord, art my refuge,
For thou art merciful;
My heart has rejoiced that thou art strong to help.*

*I praise the lord with singing,
For he does great things for me.*

English translation by Jean Lunn



ELEKTRA
WOMEN'S CHOIR

Morna Edmundson, Artistic Director

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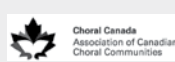
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Elektra Women's Choir is a proud member of





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 48-voice 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.



photo: David Cooper

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*,
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Joanna Bevaart, Beth Busby, Amy Dawson, Karen Dionne, Susan Edwards, Grace Groot,
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Alto 2

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

* Section Leaders



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.



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.

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The Borealis String Quartet

"With its intense, focused style of playing, drawing the maximum expression from every phrase, the quartet presents itself as a group of star players, the energy radiating from them like the stars." - Calgary Herald

"The youthful Borealis String Quartet plays with a passion I haven't heard since the heyday of the fabled Budapest Quartet in the 1950s." - Music at Kohl Mansion, Burlingame, CA

One of the most dynamic and exciting world-class ensembles of its generation, the Borealis String Quartet has received international critical acclaim as an ensemble praised for its fiery performances, passionate style, and refined, musical interpretation. Founded in Vancouver, British Columbia in the fall of 2000 and rapidly establishing a stellar reputation, the Borealis has toured extensively in North America Europe and Asia and performed to enthusiastic sold-out audiences in major cities, including New York, Washington, DC, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Rome, Mainz, Shanghai, Taipei, Beijing, Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa and, of course, in their home town of Vancouver.

The Borealis has continued to receive awards and rave accolades from presenters, renowned musicians and critics alike for their artistry. The Borealis was the only classical group to be selected for the Great Canadian Dream Competition which was televised across the nation and as a result, were the only classical musicians to perform for the Prime Minister of Canada at the Parliament Hill in Ottawa for an audience of over 75,000. Since then, they have performed on every music series in Canada. Amongst other awards, their most recent CD was also nominated for the prestigious Golden Melody Award in Asia.

The quartet is frequently seen on television and heard on CBC Radio and other stations across North America and Asia. The Borealis has also filmed music videos including "The Harp" which were debuted at the Vancouver International Film Festival and often broadcast on Bravo Television and the Knowledge Network. Exploring a synergy of classical, fusion, folk and world music, the Borealis has recorded seven CDs which feature the great classics as well as music written especially for them.

Although the Borealis feels strongly committed to the great traditional quartet literature, they actively seek to promote new works and are strong advocates of Canadian music, with quartets by R. Murray Schafer, Omar Daniels, John Stetch and Peter Tiefenbach among others in their repertory. They have also worked closely with and commissioned music from Bramwell Tovey, Imant Raminsh, Kelly-Marie Murphy, and John Oliver to name a few.

In addition to performance, the Borealis has frequently served as jury members for competitions and most recently at the 2012 EGre National Competition. The Borealis was the String Quartet-in-Residence at the University of British Columbia for over 10 years and as Visiting Scholars at Green College from 2000-2004 during which time they often performed for dignitaries including the Dalai Lama. They have also been invited to be the the Quartet in Residence at numerous festivals and universities across North America, Mexico, Europe and Asia. From 2012, the Borealis has been the String Quartet-in-Residence at the Casalmaggiore International Music Festival in Italy. Beginning September, 2014, the Borealis will be the Quartet in Residence at Kwantlen University in Langley, BC.

The Borealis String Quartet would like to acknowledge the generous support of the Canada Council and the BC Arts Council. We are grateful for the financial assistance given to further our artistic ambitions and vision as well as enable us bring Canadian music and culture to audiences abroad.

"...combination of superb musicality and impressive technique...Energy charged, yet still full of nuance, they take the audience on an unforgettable ride " - Winnipeg News

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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).



ELEKTRA
WOMEN'S CHOIR
creating • exploring • celebrating

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of San Francisco
Artistic Director Susan McMane



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