



ELEKTRA

WOMEN'S CHOIR

celebrating 30 years of song

Morna Edmundson, Artistic Director

30TH ANNIVERSARY GALA CONCERT

Featuring soprano **Isabel Bayrakdarian**



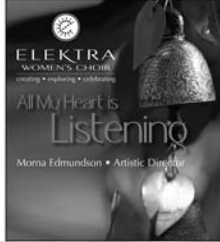
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 2017

Chan Centre for the Performing Arts



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CELEBRATING WOMEN COMPOSERS



In Elektra's first 30 years, we have commissioned **85 new works**, most by Canadians, and brought these to life on stage, on tour and on our recordings which reach the world. From 2017 through 2019, we are focusing on creating opportunities for and raising the profile of women composers through our **Celebrating Women Composers** project.

If you would like to help support this important work with a donation, please contact **manager@elektra.ca** to learn more.

Composer **Katerina Gimón**, commissioned by Elektra to create the first composition for the **Celebrating Women Composers** project.

Supported by



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Like what you hear? Comments or suggestions? Feel free to visit the comment section on our website at

www.elektra.ca/concerts-events

click through to **30th Anniversary Gala Concert** and scroll to the bottom to submit your review!



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KEEP IN TOUCH WITH US!

We love to hear from our friends by connecting through social media. Find us on the following platforms and join the conversation:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ElektraWomensChoir

Twitter: @ElektraYVR

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ELEKTRA
WOMEN'S CHOIR

Warmest welcome to Elektra Women's Choir's 30th Anniversary Gala concert. We are thrilled to share our music and the artistry of our guest artists, particularly that of the incomparable soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian.

Elektra's mandate is to inspire and lead in the choral art form through excellence in performance and the creation, exploration, and celebration of women's repertoire. Since 1987, we have been part of a global surge in interest in women's choral singing. Through this work, we have been fortunate to have forged strong bonds of friendship with conductors and choirs from around the world who share our vision of a higher level of artistry and recognition for women's choirs. Together, we have changed and continue to change the landscape.

Tonight's repertoire has roots in and references to the ancient and modern cultures of Greece, Armenia, Persia, and Lebanon, inspired by the suite of Armenian hymns spanning over 1,000 years that you will hear in the first half of the program. Our opening and closing works are world premieres. As the concert progresses, I encourage you to follow the notes and translations in this program. When you get home, if you haven't discovered it already, I encourage you to read the Listener's Guide on the 30th Anniversary Gala Concert page of elektra.ca.

A choir does not arrive at a 30th Anniversary celebration without the sustained hard work and commitment of many skilled and passionate people. My deepest thanks go to every one of the Elektra singers past and present, to our board members, staff members, volunteers, and generous supporters including individuals and governments. Your trust sustains this vision and makes the music possible.

Sincerely,

Morna Edmundson
Artistic Director

FROM OUR FRIENDS...

Congratulations, Morna and Elektra on this milestone anniversary. You continue to inspire women's choirs across the country and around the world. Félicitations!! Wishing you a fabulous concert and continued success. *Pat Abbott & the Chorale du Gesù women's choir, Montreal*

Congrats on 30 years of inspiring audiences with your unmistakable Elektra sound! You are a composer's dream come true. *Kathleen Allan, Composer/Conductor, Vancouver*

I wish all the best for every one of you, now and forever. Congratulations. With best regards. *Javier Busto, Composer/Artistic Director, Hondarribia, Spain*

The name Elektra on a recording or choral score, and I know without preview that it contains inspiring new wonders, exemplary beauty, and highest artistic integrity. Congratulations on 30 years. *Alan Gumm, Director of CMU Women's Chorus, School of Music, Central Michigan University*

All the women of Canzona applaud your 30th Anniversary and send our very best wishes for the years to come! *Cricket Handler & Jill Anderson, Artistic Directors, Canzona Women's Ensemble, San Luis Obispo, California*

"The life we give to beauty, returns to us again." Bliss Carman, (Earth Voices) Elektra - thank you for the life you give to beauty! With gratitude and wild applause from, *The Cantiamo Girls Choir of Ottawa, and Jackie Hawley, Founding Artistic Director*

Sending our huge appreciation and gratitude for your beautiful, generous artistry and spirit – you are an inspiration! Thank you and congratulations! *Laura Hawley, Conductor, Composer/Educator, Hypatia's Voice Women's Choir, University of Ottawa*

The Women's Chorus of Dallas and I send our sincere congratulations to Elektra on this important milestone. Sing on! *Melinda Imthurn, Artistic Director, The Women's Chorus of Dallas*

Wow, 30 years! Your music making and generous spirit has been an inspiration to us all. Thank you for hosting us last summer! *Dr. Susan McMane, Artistic Director, Conductor, Young Women's Choral Projects of San Francisco*

Thank you for being a beacon of light for women's choirs. Your contribution to Canada's choral community these past 30 years has been invaluable! Congrats! *Erica Phare-Bergh, Composer, Calgary*

Congratulations, Elektra Women's Choir. You have inspired us, taught us, and changed the landscape for women and women's singing. Here's to the next 30 years! *Sandra Snow, Artistic Director, mirabai women's choir (launching August 2017), Conductor, Michigan State University Women's Chamber Ensemble, East Lansing, Michigan*

May I personally, and on behalf of the Aeolian Women's Choir, send you our warmest congratulations on the 30th Anniversary of Elektra Women's Choir. We know Elektra will continue to contribute to the field of female choral music in the world. *Mitsukazu Suwaki, Conductor, Aeolian Singers, Kyoto, Japan*

Congratulations, Elektra on this milestone anniversary. We joyfully celebrate your outstanding artistry and leadership in the development of women's choirs in North America. *Dr. Barbara M Tagg, Founder and Director Emerita, Syracuse Children's Chorus*

30th Anniversary Gala Concert
March 8, 2017 ~ 8:00pm
Chan Centre for the Performing Arts, Vancouver



Elektra Women's Choir
Morna Edmundson, Artistic Director
Stephen Smith, pianist
with special guest, Isabel Bayrakdarian, soprano
and with Rebecca Wenham, cello and Robin Reid, percussion

Please turn off your cell phone. Please note that photography and videography (other than by Elektra's official photographers) are not permitted during the performance. At intermission and following the concert, we encourage you to tweet about your experience: @ElektraYVR and visit the 30th Anniversary Gala Concert page on elektra.ca to write your own review!

Programme

To Timarion (world premiere) Sheldon Rose (b.1962) 🍁
Soloist: Holly Kennedy

Nigra Sum Bernat Vivancos (b.1973)

Mother of Light – Armenian hymns and chants in praise of Mary arr. Serouj Kradjian (b.1973) 🍁
(world premiere)

Khngi Dsarin (Frankincense Tree) by Anonymous (medieval)
Zartir Nazeli (Arise Graceful One) by Baghdasar Tbir (1683-1768)
Mayr yev Gouys (Mother & Virgin) by Ara Bartevidan (1902-1986)
Diramayrn (The Mother of the Lord) by St. Gregory of Nareg (951-1003)
Varaneem (Burdened with Sins) by Anonymous (medieval)
Oor Es Mayr Im (Where are you, my Mother?) by Anonymous (18th-19th century)

❖ **Intermission** ❖

From Behind the Caravan: Songs of Hâfez Abbie Betinis (b. 1980)
*Soloists (in order of appearance): Carmen Rosen, Caitlin Robinson,
Amy Dawson, Grace Fatkin, Stephanie Ching, Holly Kennedy*

- I. **we have come** (from #366)
- II. **suffer no grief** (from #255)
- III. **closer to the fire** (from #184)
- IV. **boatpeople** (from #5)
- V. **we have come (reprise)** (from #366)

Prayer (world premiere) text by Gibran Khalil Gibran; music by Serouj Kradjian 
*Commissioned for Elektra Women's Choir's 30th Anniversary Season with support from Catherine
and Roland Haebler and the Diane Loomer Commissioning Fund for Elektra Women's Choir*

 Denotes Canadian composer

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Presented by Elektra Women's Choir
in partnership with the Chan Centre for the Performing Arts



Texts, Translations, and Notes

To Timarion

Text: Marjorie Pickthall (1883 - 1922), from The Woodcarver's Wife

HAD I the thrush's throat, I could not sing you
Songs sweeter than his own. And I'm too poor
To lay the gifts that other lovers bring you
Low at your silver door.

Such as I have, I give. See, for your taking
Tired hands are here, and feet grown dark with dust.
Here's a lost hope, and here a heart whose aching
Grows greater than its trust.

Sleep on, you will not hear me. But to-morrow
You will remember in your fragrant ways,
Finding the voice of twilight and my sorrow
Lovelier than all men's praise.

Nigra Sum

Text: from the Song of Songs

Nigra sum, sed formosa,
filiae Jerusalem.
Ideo dilexit me Rex,
et introduxit me in cubiculum suum.
Et dixit mihi:
Surge et veni amica mea,
jam hiems transit,
imber abiit et recessit.
Flores aparuerunt in terra nostra,
tempus putationis ad venit. Alleluia.

*I am a dark-skinned,
comely daughter of Jerusalem.
Therefore the King loved me,
and brought me into his chamber,
and he 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!*

Armenian Hymns

Notes by Isabel Bayrakdarian

In 2016, I released a CD called *Mother of Light, Armenian hymns and chants in praise of Mary*. The idea for this project materialized during a very dark moment in my life. A couple of years previously, I had made a desperate plea to God to spare my mother's life, and in return, I promised that I would sing the praises of His mother, Mary. The recording, which includes music written from the 5th century onwards in arrangements for solo voice, women's choir, and cello by my husband, pianist and composer Serouj Kradjian, is entirely devoted to Armenian hymns dedicated to Mary, mother of Jesus Christ, and is the fulfillment of my promise.

I grew up singing in the Armenian Apostolic Church. My mother was the choir director, and she often let me join the adult choir, even though I was too young to contribute effectively. That particular music, with its exotic melismas, Eastern melodies, and long legatos, formed the early foundation for my musical education, and continues to be my inner compass, by which I find and stay on my personal path in life.

Researching the repertoire for this recording yielded an exciting discovery of rare gems and a treasure trove of hymns dedicated to Mary. In Armenian Church doctrine, Mary has a primary place of honor, because it was of her and by the Holy Spirit that God became incarnate. She is seen as the image of humanity fully obedient to God, and she's ultimately sanctified by accomplishing God's will.

For tonight's world premiere concert performance of these settings, I have chosen six of the eighteen hymns on the recording. They represent three types of hymns in the Armenian sacred music tradition: "sharagan" (hymn), "dagh" (ode) and "megheti" (canticle). Sharagan refers to a sacred hymn sung during liturgy, having specific musical patterns and restrictions. Sharagans are distinguishable by the specific musical keys in which they're written, referred to here as modes unique to the ancient traditional Armenian singing system. Dagh and megheti are sacred songs, which have been accepted as additions to the sung liturgical repertoire, further enriching an already-rich tradition. The long melismatic vocal lines and brevity of text characteristic of megheti further distinguishes it from dagh.

It is no coincidence that our performing musical forces are women: what better way to use the collective feminine power to exalt the virtues, sorrows, beauty, and glory of Mary, the most celebrated woman of all time.

Khngi Dzarin (*Frankincense Tree*) is a dagh, which is sung on the Feast of Assumption of Mary, during the Divine Liturgy, or “Badarak.”

Khngi dzarin nman es,
Bdoogh tu kaghtsraham es,
Zpari bdough peryal es,
Asdvadzadzin megha kez.

*You are like the frankincense tree,
You are a sweet-tasting fruit,
You bore the good fruit,
Mother of God, I have sinned before you.*

Tu hoghanyout srovpe es,
Harsn i hergre hergins es,
zAsvdadz marmnov dznyal es,
Asdvadzadzin megha kez.

*You are an earthly seraph,
Earth's bride to Heaven,
You gave birth to God in the flesh,
Mother of God, I have sinned before you.*

Tu hortarad aghpyour es,
Dzaravelots arpoum es,
Meghavorats kavitch es,
Asdvadzadzin megha kez.

*You are like an overflowing spring,
You quench those who are thirsty,
You are atonement for the sinful,
Mother of God, I have sinned before you.*

Tu looseghen dadjar es,
Vosgiabad khoran es,
Tu markarid, ankin es,
Asdvadzadzin megha kez.

*You are a temple of light,
You are a golden tabernacle,
You are a priceless pearl,
Mother of God, I have sinned before you.*

Zartir Nazeli, also a dagh, declares love and devotion to Mary. It was written by Baghdasar Tbir, who was a late medieval poet-musician (born in Constantinople in the 17th century). This hymn resembles a troubadour song in its character and style.

Ee nnchmanet arkayagan
Zartir, nazeli im, zartir,
nshouyln arekagan,
Zartir, nazeli im, zartir.

*From your royal slumber
Arise, my graceful one, arise
The sun's ray has arrived,
Arise, my beloved, arise.*

Mayr Yev Gouys is a sharagan, written in mode 6, that is sung at the Morning Hour service. It was harmonized by the French Armenian composer Ara Bartevian.

Mayr yev gouys,
Aghakhin Krisdosi,
Vor parekhos es mishd ashkhhi,
Kez yeranen amenayn azink.

*Immaculate mother and virgin,
Servant of Christ,
You are the constant intercessor for the world,
all nations bless you.*

Makoor aghavni
Yev harsn yergnits Mariyam,
Dadjar yev ator Asdoudzo Panin,
kez yeranen amenayn azink.

*Pure turtle-dove,
Mary, bride of heaven,
Temple and vessel of God's Word,
All nations bless you.*

Mayr yev gouys, harsn yergnits,
Kez yeranen amenayn aink.

*Mother and virgin, bride of heaven,
All nations bless you.*

Diramayrn is a dagh sung during the Feast of the Holy Cross, and it's considered an Armenian equivalent to the classic Latin *Stabat Mater*. However, only a single verse has reached us. In this arrangement, the choir sings the narration and the solo voice expresses Mary's anguish.

Diramayrn hanteb vortvouyn
ee khatchin
Gayr drdmakin
Yev lselov zdzaravin
harachmamp layr tsavakin.

*The Mother of the Lord stood before her son on
the cross,
Full of sorrow,
And hearing the thirsty one,
She sighed and wept painful tears.*

Ee poosh bsagn tidelov,
voghp, godz, vay dayr yoor antsinn.
"Achats-s louys vortyag im Hisoos
voh yes ent kez meranim."

*Seeing the crown of thorns,
her soul moaned, wailed, and lamented.
"Light of my eyes, my son Jesus,
Oh, I die with you."*

Varaneem is a medieval dagh. It asks for the intercession of Mary for the forgiveness of sins.

Varaneem i meghats,
Tu azadich meghoutselouys
Ov diramayr, voh, ov diramayr
voh tsoghia gatil mi goosa
gan zoregh genats,
Voh zoregh genats

*I'm burdened with sins,
Only you can save me, great sinner that I am.
Oh Mother of the Lord, Oh, Mother of the Lord.
Oh, bedew upon me a drop of your pure and
life-giving power,
Oh, life-giving power.*

Him nakhgin vayelmants
Arjanabes ardaksetsa,
Voh yeghgelouys, voh yeghgelouys.
Voh poosh yev dadasg poosouyts
yergir voghormelouys
Voh voghormelouys

*I was rightfully expelled,
From the honour which I enjoyed before.
Woe to me! Oh, Woe to me.
Oh, the ground brought forth thorns and thistles
for me
Pitiful person, that I am.*

Oor es Mayr im is one of the most poignant hymns of the Holy Week. It is sung during the Maundy Thursday Tenebrae service, when at midnight, the lights of the church are gradually extinguished to symbolize the darkness enveloping the hearts of humankind, and their choice to kill the Light. It is in this darkness that Jesus calls for the one person who is dearest to him: his mother.

Oor es, Mayr im,
kaghtsr yev anoush
Ser dznoghitt zis ayre.

*Where are you, my most delicate and sweet
Mother?
Your motherly love I seek fervently.*

Ltsan achk im tarn ardasvok,
Voch zok ounim vor srpe.

*My eyes are full of bitter tears
I have no one to wipe them away.*

Tchour khntretsi, katsakh arpi
Hanorinats tserane.

*I asked for water, but drank vinegar
Given to me by the wicked.*

Tkin, harin, abdagetsin,
Bsag yetin ee pshe.

*They slapped my face, spat at me, and beat me
And crowned me with a crown of thorns.*

Azt ararek morn imo,
Vor yes sirem ee srdes

*Go tell my Mother
That I love her with all my heart.*

Oor es, Mayr im,
yeg zim dzarav
Gatampt arpo kaghtsrakin.

*Where are you, my Mother?
Please come and quench my thirst
With your sweet motherly love.*

From Behind the Caravan: Songs of Hâfez

Poetry: Khwajeh Shams al-Din Muhammad Hâfez-e Shirazi (ca. 1320-1390)

Note from the composer, Abbie Betinis:

Johann Wolfgang Goethe once wrote, “Only with you, Hâfez, do I wish to compete, for the older you get the younger you become... And religion is no obstacle, for if the word ‘Islam’ means to submit to God, we all live and die in Islam.” Khwajeh Shams al-Din Muhammad Hâfez-e Shirazi (ca. 1320-1390) was born in Shiraz, Persia (Iran). He wrote nearly 400 lyric poems, called *ghazals*, and is the undisputed master of that particular poetic form. His mystical writing is based on Sufism, a tradition of Islam that is associated both with the Sunni and Shi’a denominations, as well as many other currents of Islam.

I was particularly drawn to these four ghazals because of the elegant way they depict longing... longing for Truth, longing for Reason, longing for Kindness, Love, and – always – longing for the Beloved. Also, as I was reading, I found that many of Hâfez’s poems seem to have in common beautiful metaphors of transience: fire, breath, breeze. Above all, I have tried desperately to remain true to the intonation of the language, and to Hâfez’s poetic instinct. Each poem unfortunately had to be shortened to create a concert piece, but I encourage anyone to seek out the original poems in their entirety. Special thanks to my friend Behrooz Alavi for his insights into Hâfez’s poetry, its pronunciation, and its rich performance practice.

The music is my own, and not authentically Persian. It is my interpretation of an assortment of influences, including my study of Persian speech, scales and modes, but perhaps also from my distant memory of being four years old and dancing – joyfully and tirelessly – with my Greek relatives to music that whirled feverishly around me.

I. we have come (from #366)

*We, to this door, seeking neither pride nor glory... we have come.
For shelter from ill-fortune, here... we have come.
Traveling along love’s journey, from the borders of nothingness,
Now into states of being, all this way... we have come.
O ship of grace, where is thy anchor of forbearance?
For in this ocean of generosity, immersed in sin... we have come.
Hâfez, throw off your woolen kherqe [Sufi cloak], for we, from
behind the caravan, with the fire of sighing “ah!”... we have come.*

II. suffer no grief (from #255)

*Joseph, forsaken, shall return to Canaan.
Suffer no grief...
From the thorny stalks of family grief, one day, a rose garden.
Suffer no grief...
If you desire the Way and plant your pilgrim foot in the desert,
then if the mighty Arabian thorn makes reproofs,
Suffer no grief...
Suffer no grief, suffer no grief, O heart.
Back to reason, comes this distraught head.
Suffer no grief...
O heart, despairing heart, O! O! Suffer no grief...
There is no road that has no end.*

III. closer to the fire (from #184)

*Last night I saw the angels beating at the door of the tavern,
The clay of Adam they shaped, and into the mould they cast it.
The churches war among themselves, forgive them
When they cannot see the truth, the door of fable they beat.
Fire, Fire! Oh! Oh!
Thanks be to God, for between me and Him, peace chanced,
Sufis, dancing, cast their cups of thankfulness!
Fire, Fire! Oh! Oh!*

IV. boatpeople (from #5)

*My heart falls from grasp! Come to my cry, for God's sake;
O the pain that Love's hidden mystery should be disclosed!
Arise, arise... O breeze...
To ease the pain of the world, live by these words:
With friends, give kindness; with enemies, courtesy.
Shipwrecked are we, O fair breeze, arise!
So that, again, we may behold the face of the Beloved.
Behold...!*

V. we have come (reprise) (from #366)

*Hâfez, throw off your woolen kherqe [Sufi cloak], for we, from
behind the caravan, with the fire of sighing "ah!"... we have come!*

Prayer

text: from The Prophet by Gibran Khalil Gibran

Speak to us of Prayer.

You pray in your distress and in your need; would that you might pray also in the fullness of your joy and in your days of abundance.

When you pray you rise to meet in the air those who are praying at that very hour, and whom save in prayer you may not meet.

And if you cannot but weep when your soul summons you to prayer, she should spur you again and yet again, though weeping, until you shall come laughing.

I cannot teach you how to pray in words.

God listens not to your words save when He Himself utters them through your lips.

I cannot teach you the prayer of the seas and the forests and the mountains.

But you who are born of the mountains and the forests and the seas shall find their prayer in your heart.

And, if you listen, in the stillness of the night you shall hear them saying in silence,

"Our God, who art our winged self, it is thy will in us that willeth.

It is thy desire in us that desireth.

It is thy urge in us that would turn our nights, which are thine, into days which are thine also.

We cannot ask thee for aught, for thou knowest our needs before they are born in us:

Thou art our need; and in giving us more of thyself thou givest us all."



ELEKTRA

WOMEN'S CHOIR

Morna Edmundson,
Artistic Director



photo: David Cooper

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 55-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.

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 80 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. In July 2017, Elektra will be one of two choirs representing Canada at the World Symposium on Choral Music, in Barcelona, Spain.

Soprano 1

Julie Edmundson, Grace Fatkin, Susanna Henderson, Malaika Horswill, Danica Kell, Holly Kennedy*, Cassie Luftspring, Shannon Lythgoe, Ashley McConnell, Janine Magaw, Christy Mahlberg, Rachel Nelson, Taryn Plater, Amanda Randt, Erika Salas, Jillian Schina

Soprano 2

Ann Busay, Catherine Cheneval, Catherine Crouch, Sophia Fan, Patti Fletcher, Catherine Haebler, Catherine Lee, Oksana Legebokoff, Katrin Lohuaru, Calena Olsen, Sharon Schermbrucker, Kathryn Slemko*, Kim Taylor, Allison Tremblay, Moyra Van Nus, Maggie Van Seters, Patty Wagner

Alto 1

Joanna Bevaart, Amy Dawson*, Karen Dionne, Susan Edwards, Grace Groot, Kirstin Hain, Shelley Koke, Simone Lemieux, Sheila Little, Stephanie Loo, Kate MacColl, Stephanie Mayer, Rosemary Speakman, Alison Stillwell, Brenda Wilson

Alto 2

Beth Busby, Stephanie Ching, Maureen Ciarniello, Elisabeth Finch, Nancy Kim, Corinne Norbraten*, Alicia O'Brien, Denise O'Brien, Caitlin Robinson, Deirdre Rogers, Carmen Rosen, Stephanie Schollen, Bernice Slemko

** Section Leaders*

photo: David Cooper



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.



Isabel Bayrakdarian, soprano

Soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian is an eagerly anticipated visitor to opera houses and concert halls the world over. A winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions in 1997—the same year she graduated from the University of Toronto cum laude with a Biomedical Engineering Degree—Ms. Bayrakdarian thereafter found her career taking rapid wing. In 1999 she scored a notable success in the Lyric Opera of Chicago’s world premiere production of William Bolcom’s *A View from the Bridge*; the following year, she walked away from Plácido Domingo’s prestigious Operalia competition with first prize. More debuts followed, including her San Francisco

Opera debut, as Valencienne in *The Merry Widow*, and her Metropolitan Opera debut, in the New York premiere of Bolcom’s opera; a season later, she won plaudits as Teresa in the Met premiere of Berlioz’s *Benvenuto Cellini*. Mozart has become a specialty: Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* (New York, Houston, Salzburg), Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Los Angeles, London), and Pamina in *The Magic Flute* (New York, Toronto). Her roles at Toronto’s Canadian Opera Company range from Gluck’s *Euridice* to Debussy’s *Mélisande* to Poulenc’s *Blanche* in *Dialogues des Carmélites*; and away from Canada, she has shone as Monteverdi’s *Poppea* in Barcelona, Handel’s *Romilda* (Serse) in Dresden, and Janáček’s *Vixen* in New York, Florence, and the Saito Kinen Festival in Matsumoto, Japan.

But opera is only one page of the Bayrakdarian résumé. An ever-active concertizer, she’s appeared with the premier orchestras of New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, Minnesota, RAI Torino, Paris, London, Vienna, Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal under the baton of such eminent conductors as Seiji Ozawa, James Conlon, David Zinman, Michael Tilson Thomas, Alan Gilbert, Nicholas McGegan, Christoph von Dohnányi, Christoph Eschenbach, Colin Davis, Sir Andrew Davis, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Mariss Jansons, Leonard Slatkin, James Levine, Anne Manson, Bramwell Tovey, Peter Oundjian and Richard Bradshaw.

The versatile Bayrakdarian is featured vocal soloist on the Grammy-award winning soundtrack of the blockbuster film *The Two Towers* from *The Lord of The Rings* trilogy and on the soundtrack of Atom Egoyan’s *Ararat*; a trance music collaboration with the electronica band *Delerium* that garnered yet another Grammy nomination. She sings on the BBC-produced short film *HOLOCAUST – A Music Memorial Film* from Auschwitz, as well as on her Gemini-nominated film *Long Journey Home*, documenting her first visit to her ancestral homeland, Armenia.

Bayrakdarian is the winner of four consecutive Juno Awards for Best Classical Album (Vocal). She is also the recipient of many awards including the Marilyn Horne Foundation Competition Award, Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee and the Diamond Jubilee Medals, the Arbor Award from the University of Toronto, the George London Foundation Award, and Canada Council’s Virginia Parker Prize. She is also the recipient of the “St Sahag-St Mesrob” medal and the “St Mesrob Mashtots” medal.

She holds an Honorary Doctorate from Wilfrid Laurier University, and an Honorary Fellowship from the Royal Conservatory of Music. Ms. Bayrakdarian currently serves on the Voice Faculty at the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB).

isabelbayrakdarian.com

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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.



Cellist **Rebecca Wenham's** performances have been described as "silken, highly refined" (Globe and Mail), as well as having "extraordinary commitment and maturity" (Montreal Gazette). Her animated playing style is often surprising, dramatic and impulsive, leaving a breathless audience on the edge of their seats. She has performed across North America, Mexico, Europe, Japan and Australia. Formerly a member of the Cecilia String Quartet, she won prizes in the Osaka, Rutenberg, Bordeaux and Banff International String Quartet Competitions, and was a CBC Galaxie Rising Star in 2007. Highlights of the 2015 season included performances of Elgar cello concerto with the Vancouver Philharmonic, Brahms Double Concerto with

the Lion's Gate Sinfonia, and Schumann cello concerto with West Coast Symphony Orchestra. This past May, Music on Main presented Rebecca in a program of solo cello exploring works that highlight divergent musical styles (all composed in the 21st century), from classical to music by jazz cellist Peggy Lee and rock violinist Sarah Neufeld.

Rebecca is principal cello of the Vancouver Opera Orchestra, and a member of Microcosmos Quartet. Her projects have been generously funded by the Canada Council, the BC Arts Council and ProQuartet. She holds degrees from the HARID Conservatory of Music, and from Rice, San Diego State and McGill Universities.

Percussionist **Robin Reid** began working professionally at age 16, playing in “the pit” for various musical theatre organizations in Vancouver. Since that time, she’s performed with a wide variety of entertainers in an equally wide variety of styles from latin-jazz to Scottish pipe band to industrial theatrical drumming. To give herself as broad a musical palette to work from as possible, Robin has studied diverse percussion styles such as West African drumming, Cuban and Brazilian percussion, frame drumming, and marimba. She is equally at home playing ‘western’ music, performing regularly with the Vancouver Symphony, Vancouver New Music, Vancouver Opera, and Turning Point Ensemble. She can be heard on soundtracks for Disney, Lionsgate Films and EA Sports.

A committed educator, Robin has been teaching percussion at Saint George’s School since 2001, as well as being a periodic instructor at the University of British Columbia and Vancouver Academy of Music, a workshop leader for the VSO, and a private teacher. She has been Head of Percussion at St. James Music Academy since 2015. Highlights of Robin’s career include performing off Broadway at the New Victory Theatre with the “action drumming” ensemble, SWARM, and performing nightly at the 2010 Olympic Medals Ceremonies in Whistler.

About tonight’s featured composer:

Canadian pianist and composer **Serouj Kradjian** has established himself as a versatile artist whose readiness to break new boundaries and explore different styles has made him an exciting voice on the international music scene. Solo, chamber music recitals and premieres of his compositions have taken Mr. Kradjian from all major Canadian cities, via the U.S – New York (Carnegie Hall), Boston (Jordan Hall), San Francisco, Miami, Chicago and Los Angeles – to European concert halls in Paris, Munich, Salzburg, Trondheim, Lausanne, Geneva, Madrid, Barcelona and Bilbao and to the Far East in China and Japan. He is regularly invited to the Ottawa, Bergen, Savannah, Colmar and Cortona music festivals. Works composed or arranged by Serouj Kradjian have been performed by I Musici de Montréal, the Vancouver Symphony and the Elmer Iseler Singers. His 2008 orchestral arrangements of folk songs by Gomidas, Armenia’s national composer, featured in the Nonesuch release Gomidas Songs earned him a Grammy award nomination. Trobairitz Ysabella, a song cycle for soprano and orchestra, inspired by medieval women troubadours, was a commission by the CBC and premiered by the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra in 2011 and included in the Juno-nominated recording “Troubadour and the Nightingale” also featuring his orchestrations of songs by Maurice Ravel and Sayat Nova sung by Ms. Bayrakdarian and Anne Manson conducting the MCO. In April 2015, Mr. Kradjian’s new composition “Cantata for Living Martyrs”, dedicated to the centenary of the Armenian Genocide, was premiered by the Fresno Philharmonic and Chorus.

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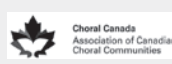
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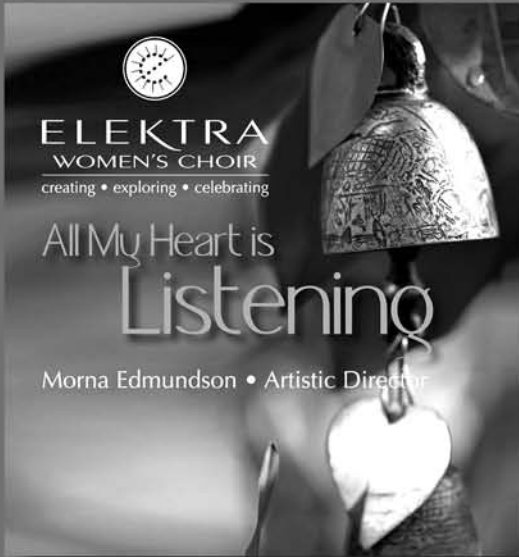


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