

# Bridges

Extended Program Notes



# Bridges Extended Program Notes

May 1st, 2022

## *Otche Nash - Roman Hurko*

From the composer's website:

In the tradition of the Slavic Eastern Orthodox and Byzantine Catholic Churches, composer Roman Hurko's works of sacred choral music are original settings of The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, as well as Vespers and the Panachyda Requiem. Mr. Hurko's work is faithful to these profound and centuries old Byzantine rite texts. The directness and simplicity of his byzantine rite sacred music gives prominence to the prayers.

## *Compassio - David Archer*

From the score:

compassio = compassion

Compassio is a choral prelude. It expresses that small acts of kindness and partnership can add up to something big. The Latin word "compassio" is exploded and then reassembled with joy, hope, and a bit of playfulness. This music reminds me that well-meaning words need to be paired with action. -David Archer

"Most good things have already been said far too many times and just need to be lived." -Shane Claiborne

Note from the composer:

"It's funny how your perception of your own work changes over time. I think this piece is adaptable to many different types of concerts. This was originally written to pair with Pärt's Passio and Lang's The Little Match Girl Passion. Two works with very heavy subject matter.

...So, "to suffer with" seemed like the perfect word to use given the context. The other two pieces use a lot of text, whereas Compassio only reflects on "compassion", asking, "What does it mean for you to suffer with someone?" One idea I tried to infuse in the music is that suffering with another person can bring its own kind of joy. Carrying one another's

burdens, that sort of thing. You'll notice I included a quote from Shane Claiborne in the score, as his work for the poor communicates an example of serving one another in joy and compassion. There are these playful moments in the middle of the piece where the parts imitate each other, broken, but eventually uniting.”

### *Deux/Two Solitudes - Marie-Claire Saindon*

Note from the composer:

"Deux/Two Solitudes" came out of a desire to express the miscommunication between two isolated communities of the same nation. The tension between the French- and Anglo-Canadians is complex and would take much too long to unravel in one single work of art. However, in this conflict, as it is in many others, it is clear that beneath all of the frustration, there is the desire to be understood, and to understand the other. This desire is what we present to you through this piece.

« Deux/Two Solitudes » est né d'une volonté d'explorer le malentendu entre deux communautés isolées d'une même nation. La discorde est complexe entre francophones et anglophones au Canada, et prendrait beaucoup de temps à se faire dénouer en une seule œuvre musicale. Pourtant, dans ce conflit comme dans bien d'autres, force est de constater que derrière toute la frustration, il y a le désir d'être compris et de comprendre autrui. Nous vous présentons donc ce souhait avec cette pièce musicale.“

### **Christine ML Lee (poet)**

Based out of Tiotia:ke/Mooniyang/Montreal, Christine ML Lee is a composer, playwright and poet interested in the intersection between music, movement and storytelling. Poet and writer, she has contributed several articles for the music magazine La Scena Musicale. Her video poem Holding Waterways premiered at the Festival St-Ambroise Montreal Fringe 2021. Christine is serving on the 2021-2022 Board of Directors for the Quebec Writers' Federation .

## *Gaze upon the trees - Andrew Balfour*

Gaze upon the trees is inspired not only by the text by Dr. Duke Redbird, but also the man himself and the composer's relationship with him. Andrew says Dr. Redbird's poems "and his spirit are always about honouring the land." Andrew's inclusion of Ojibway text reflects the fact that the poet's observations about nature are rooted in that honouring, and in the traditional teachings that he has received. The Ojibway words signify the "whispering of the ancestors", amplifying the spiritual quality of the music. (JVB, from conversations with the composer)

### **Duke Redbird (poet)**

Elder Dr. Duke Redbird is an established Indigenous intellectual, poet, painter, broadcaster, filmmaker and keynote speaker, he brings his breadth of cultural knowledge and artistic practice to the benefit of a global audience. His art has been exhibited and his poetry published and translated in anthologies around the world.

Dr. Redbird received his Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies from York University in 1978, and his Doctorate from OCAD University in 2013. As a poet, essayist and screenwriter, he has published and performed poetry readings, theatrical productions, video and film, both locally and internationally. Honors have included having his work performed in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen on the occasion of her Silver Jubilee in 1977, representing Canada at the Valmiki World Poetry Festival in India, and the Silver Hugo Award at the Chicago Film Festival. From 1994 to 2009, Dr. Redbird was a familiar face on television as an on air Arts & Entertainment reporter for City TV.

## *Songbird - Sarah Quartel*

Note from the composer:

"Songbird" sets an evocative text describing songbirds that spin tunes of gold. The catchy, colourful melody is first presented by tutti voices, and is then woven through the vocal parts, often to scat accompaniment. The setting ends with an effective passage of close imitation.

*Loveliest of Trees (The Cherry hung with snow) - Timothy Corlis*

Note from the composer:

“This work was commissioned by Noel Edison and the Elora Festival Singers. It received its premier performance as part of the Summer Lessons and Carols, at The Elora Festival, 2007, under the title, To See the Cherry Hung with Snow. In 2012, it appeared on the NAXOS release, I Saw Eternity. This piece is dedicated to Tom Musselman, a dear friend and mentor who passed away tragically in 2010 of ALS. Wishing you grace and peace Tom. I always enjoyed our walks in the Musselman woods, from the garden plot, down on to the sawmill by the pond.”

*All the love that lies beneath - Edward Enman (2021 Competition Winner)*

Note from the composer:

"This piece was written during the time I was first learning to be a parent. The melodies throughout began as improvised tunes I would sing to my daughter at some indistinct time in the night. Eventually I wrote some of these melodies down, added words, and melded it all together. The core spark of this piece is the idea of leading a life with love, and to inspire that same love-centered way of living in others. If you start with love, the rest will follow.

My heartfelt thanks to Jordan and Chronos Vocal Ensemble for their devotion and trust in this work!"

*You Speak Violets - Nicholas Ryan Kelly*

Note from the composer:

“This piece is about seeing a quiet child's vibrant inner world: the deep wells of imagination and emotion that lie beneath a shy, placid surface.

I was once such a child myself (and am now, in many ways, a quiet adult). How freeing and validating it would have been to have heard this piece's sentiments back then! For those of us without a knack for words, music and the arts can be a powerful way to communicate our experiences--and I hope this piece gives voice to the forests, waterfalls, and (yes) violets blooming, unspoken, in many an introverted mind.”

## **Shannon Bramer (Poet)**

Shannon Bramer writes poems and plays for human beings of all ages. She is the author of suitcases and other poems (winner, Hamilton and Region Best Book Award), scarf, The Refrigerator Memory, Precious Energy, and Climbing Shadows: Poems for Children, illustrated by Cindy Derby. Climbing Shadows received the National Council of Teachers of English Award for Excellence in Poetry (2020) and was also nominated for the Rocky Mountain Book Award (Alberta, Canada). Trapsongs: three plays is Shannon's most recent book (published in December 2020, with Book\*hug Press); a new collection of poetry for children (Robot, Unicorn, Queen: poems for you and me) is forthcoming from Greenwood Books in September 2023. She lives in Toronto with her family and works as a lunchroom supervisor for the Toronto District School Board.

## *Da Pacem Domine - Peter-Anthony Togni*

Note from the composer:

“Da Pacem Domine is part of a work I wrote in 2014 called Warrior Songs, a work about the concept of non-aggression, of a true Warrior, one who never actually goes into battle. I drew inspiration from Tibetan Buddhist texts, from Malcolm X and from the from my own Roman Catholic tradition. My motet Da Pacem Domine is based on one of the most beautiful Gregorian Chant melodies. Even though the text is peaceful and hopeful, it still calls for surrender to God's will. The chant sounds rather serious, even somber, but again points to the fact that peace does not mean tranquility, it is often a steady walk in the face of adversity.”

## *Anthem for a doomed youth - Andrew Balfour*

Andrew is a self-proclaimed “war buff”, highly interested in the history of the World Wars in particular. Research and learning stories on the role of Indigenous soldiers in these (and more recent wars) led to the large-scale work Notinikew, premiered in Winnipeg in 2018 by Dead of Winter (formerly Camerata Nova), Andrew Balfour, Cris Derksen, the Winnipeg Boys' Choir, and traditional drummer/singer Cory Campbell. The larger work is primarily in Cree text, however this movement sets a text by the English war poet Wilfred Owen, killed in action in 1918. The text describes how no bells toll for those who die in battle, and that only the sounds of war mark their passing. Andrew Balfour's setting paints the described sounds of bells, rifles, shells and the bugle. (JVB, from conversations with the composer)

*Hear My Prayer (After Purcell) - Dorothy Chang*

Dorothy Chang is Professor of Music at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. Born in Winfield, Illinois, Dorothy began her music studies on piano at age six and began composing at the age of fourteen. Described as "evocative and kaleidoscopic" (Seattle Times), her music often reflects the eclectic mix of musical influences from her youth, ranging from popular and folk music to elements of traditional Chinese music.

Hear My Prayer takes the Purcell setting of the same Psalm text, albeit adding a portion of an additional verse, and taking the original melodic lines of the Purcell as raw material, recombines elements constructing a new melodic and harmonic sound-world in a highly expressive setting. Intake of breath is also used as an expressive device. (JVB)

*hope, faith, life, love... - Eric Whitacre*

Note from the composer:

"...the original poem is actually quite long, with sounds of clashing and flying and singing, and calls for music that is vibrant and virtuosic, a real show piece. The more I thought about faith, however, the more introspective I became, and I modified the poem entirely to fit that feeling. I took only the first four words (hope, faith, life, love) and the last four (dream, joy, truth, soul) and set each of them as a repeating meditation. Each of the words, in turn, quotes a different choral work from my catalog, and its corresponding musical material comments on the word I set (i.e. the word 'life' quotes the musical material from Cloudburst, where the text is 'roots, trunk, branches, birds, stars'). Because I wrote it last, the middle movement even quotes the first and the last piece in [Three Songs of Faith] on the word 'soul.'"

### *The Letter (from "I am like many") - Stuart Beatch*

Note from the composer:

"'I am like many' is the result of a unique commission from Senate House Library in London, which tasked me with setting something from their current exhibition of queer texts. Upon perusing their materials, it seemed to me that everything centred around a single moment in time: the Parliamentary debates on the Wolfenden Report in 1958, representing the first significant (if initially unsuccessful) steps towards the legalisation of homosexuality in Britain. In "I am like many," I have composed a dramatic scene, setting dialogue from the debates and newspaper reports, interwoven with lines from Don Leon (a 19th century poem which argued for the legalisation of homosexuality nearly a century earlier). The title itself comes from an anonymous letter read during the debates: 'I do not pretend that I am good, but I am like many.'"

### *Vision Chant - Andrew Balfour*

Composer Andrew Balfour is of Cree descent. After a ceremonial opening, the vision described in the music is somewhat fearsome at its climax. The personage of "Windigo", a fearsome creature, is mentioned (though the minimal text is buried deep inside the texture, in the bass line). Grandmother (Nokomis) and Grandfather (Mishomis) are called upon. By the conclusion, there is resolution, and perhaps of awakening to a sunrise. (From a conversation with the composer - JVB)