

Chronos Vocal Ensemble

Resolve: Podium pre-release

Notes to pre-release tracks



Message from the Artistic Director

May 2022

It's been a tough couple of years for us all!

For Chronos Vocal Ensemble, setting out in the fall of 2021 with a subscription series of three concerts was a leap of faith, and over the course of the season, we re-planned and regrouped numerous times.

In the end, we emerged stronger. This season renewed our focus and appreciation for what we've missed—the music, the choral community, the privilege of bringing new works to life, the thrill of performance for a live audience. In the process we collected a trove of recorded material from concerts and rehearsals, including more than a dozen premieres of new works, all captured at St. Andrew's United Church in Edmonton from a masked Chronos Vocal Ensemble.

To coincide with the joyous occasion of our first national Podium conference in four years, we've released these freshly-minted tracks of new music by Canadian composers, including competition-winners and commissions premiered this season. Ultimately these will become a portion of our fourth album, *Resolve*.

A “live” album is another departure for us; thinking about making performances more readily-available to a variety of audiences has helped me become a little more comfortable releasing material that reflects the spontaneity—and imperfection—of real performance. :-)

In partnership with the composers whose works are featured, we hope you enjoy what you hear. Best wishes for your own music-making and community-(re)building. We're in this together!

Peace,

Jordan

Jordan Van Biert

Founder and Artistic Director,

Chronos Vocal Ensemble

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All the love that lies beneath | Edward Enman | 2021 Competition Winner | Text by the composer

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!*

Leading, moving t'ward the end,
Warmly show and freely send
 All the love that lies beneath.

Hide the day in mem'ries deep
And keep all openness in sleep.
 Find the love that lies beneath.

When all lights in towers dim,
Hold the lamp, strong from within.
 Share the love that lies beneath.

Breathing softly, list'ning near,
Seek a shadow's sound to hear,
 Travel closely without need
And reach your heart to those who bleed.
 Take the peace you strive to grow
 And build a wind with which to blow – All the love that lies beneath,
 All the love that lies beneath,
 All the love that lies beneath.

Anthem for a doomed youth | Andrew Balfour | Text: Wilfred Owen (1893–1918)

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 conflicts) led to the large-scale work *Notinikew*, which was premiered in Winnipeg in 2018 by *Dead of Winter*, formerly *Camerata Nova*, featuring Andrew Balfour, Cris Derksen, and the Winnipeg Boys’ Choir, under the direction of Mel Braun, with and traditional singer Cory Campbell. The larger work is primarily in Cree; 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)

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?

— Only the monstrous anger of the guns.

Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle

Can patter out their hasty orisons.

No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;

Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,—

The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;

And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

Gaze upon the trees | Andrew Balfour | Commissioned in 2021

Text: Duke Redbird (b. 1939) from “Waterfall in Spring”, additional text in Ojibway

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)

Love is like a waterfall

That happens in the spring

When the snow has melted in the

mountains and rushes to the sea

Noopimiing (in the forest)

And just you happened on it

When you walked out in the forest

Just to gaze upon the trees

Mitigoog (trees)

And you find a wisp of loveliness

Floating in the magic and the leaves.

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.

You Speak Violets | Nicholas Ryan Kelly | Commissioned in 2021 | Text: Shannon Bramer

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.

sometimes you are quiet as a trillium yet your eyes speak
the language of wild basil red butterflies impatient
for a buzzing loud summer you've got a young forest inside you
i see waterfalls beyond tall white sleeping trees
birches poplars where everything is moving and alive
i see rushing water in your eyes when you get a new idea
sun through the branches making shadows inside you
when you find it hard to say what you are feeling
you speak violets

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 Groundwood Books in September 2023. She lives in Toronto with her family and works as a lunchroom supervisor for the Toronto District School Board.

Deux/Two Solitudes | Marie-Claire Saindon | Commissioned in 2021; text also commissioned

Text: Christine ML Lee, Translation: Keltie Robertson

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.

When we collide,
we crumble as waves do against
sand and seafoam.
You, ocean whisper.
Me, earth hush.
We are twin entities
with erosion
trashing lines between us.
We crash,
sea salt cleaving sea salt.
We are ocean meeting land:
sea edges and waterfront soil.
Distance measures our voices in echoes
and dims our worlds.
I want to meet you
like a shore
meets another shore,
side by side,
lullabied by the same songs,
the same sun.
To be an opened beach,
a united coast.
To find and be found.

Quand nous nous déferlons,
nous nous émiettons comme vagues sur
écume et sable.
Toi, murmure d'océan.
Moi, silence du sol.
Nous sommes entités jumelles,
entre lesquelles l'érosion
creuse ses sillons.
Nous déferlons l'un sur l'autre,
sel de mer clivant sel de mer.
Nous sommes océan qui rencontre terre:
lisières de mer et sol riverain.
La distance mesure nos voix en échos
et atténue nos mots.
Je veux aller à ta rencontre,
comme une rive
vers une autre rive,
côte à côte,
bercées par les mêmes chansons,
le même soleil.
Être une plage épanouie,
un littoral uni.
Trouver et être trouvé

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.

Resolve recordings made in rehearsal and performance in November, February, and April-May of 2021-22.

Concert Productions: Breathe (November 7), Hearts Afire (February 20), Bridges (May 1)

Venue: St. Andrew's United Church, Edmonton

Artistic Direction: Jordan Van Biert

Recording Engineering: Ron Yachimec, Corey Haberstock

Recording Assistance: Trent Worthington

Editing: Jordan Van Biert, Trent Worthington

Mastering: Trent Worthington, Corey Haberstock

Administrative Assistance: Beth Mackey

Art and Design: Laurel Halkier, Halkier+Dutton Design

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Choir roster and technical details to come in complete liner notes.