

# mi VOCAL ENSEMBLE

---

## annual report 2023 - 2024

---



## board of directors

**Troy Topnik** PRESIDENT  
**Dan McFaul** TREASURER  
**Anne Louise Aboud**  
**Katherine Evans** SINGERS REP  
**Brigid Lumholst-Smith**

**Don Brooks** RETIRED JAN. 2024  
**Cathy Wong** RETIRED JAN. 2024

## staff

**Jacob Gramit** ARTISTIC MANAGER  
**Lucy Smith** OPERATIONS MANAGER

## thanks

musica intima receives operating funding from the City of Vancouver, the BC Arts Council, and the Canada Council for the Arts. We are grateful for continued government financial support.

## ensemble singers 2023 - 2024

*Steven Bélanger*  
*Tabitha Brasso-Ernst*  
*Nicholas Burns*  
*Alvin Carpintero*  
*Lee Clapp*  
*Rebecca Collett*  
*Sam Dabrusin*  
*Oliver Dalton*  
*Katherine Evans*  
*Deanna Gestrin*  
*Jacob Gramit*  
*Kiyomi Hori*

*Anja Kelly*  
*Melodie Langevin*  
*Steve Maddock*  
*Luke McAndless-Davis*  
*Kate Medcalf*  
*Danny Najjar*  
*Carman J. Price*  
*Lucy Smith*  
*Risa Takahashi*  
*Asitha Tennekoon*  
*Gloria Wan*  
*Jaime Yoon*





## A SUMMARY OF THE 23/24 SEASON

**THE NEW CANON** - After 30 years of commissioning new works and bringing groundbreaking music to Vancouver audiences, musica intima has curated a new body of repertoire - our new canon. Co-presented at Heritage Hall in Vancouver, with the Canadian Music Centre BC.

**THE FENIX** - Wordless soundscapes and meditations on brief phrases, alongside evocative poems meticulously set created two contemplative evenings in the beautiful Celebration Hall at Mountain View Cemetery, with a soundscape by Storyteller-in-Residence Cease Wyss.

**NIGHTINGALES** - Presented with the Vancouver Chamber Choir, Ugis Praulins' modern and virtuosic masterpiece "The Nightingale" featuring recorder player Vincent Lauzer. mi thrilled audiences with our memorized set of Balfour, Sewepagaham and Tirolien.

**IN WINTER'S HOUSE** - In Granville Island's Performance Works, this December evening featured works and texts about the winter season from a variety of lived experiences, along with new and jazzy arrangements of seasonal favourites, as well as an interactive and improvisatory soundscape by Storyteller-in-Residence Cease Wyss in which the ensemble sang with the bio-sonification of native plants. **In Winter's House** was also presented in Coquitlam (Evergreen Arts Centre), and West Vancouver (Kay Meek Centre).



*The Fenix: photo by Paula Brewster*



*Nightingales: mi & VCC perform un-conducted!*

**DING DONG** - Returning to the jazz roots of Dings Dong past, we featured Sharon Minemoto, Jodi Proznick and Kate Johnson, who joined us for roasted chestnuts from Jackson Browne, Donny Hathaway, Ingrid Michaelson and The Pretenders. A festive sell-out yet again, and the debut of the complimentary popcorn!

**NOVUM MUSICA** - The sixth iteration of our emerging composers program, this year co-presented by the Canadian Music Centre. We were thrilled to welcome Leslie Uyeda as Mentor-Composer for a series of workshops in the fall, and in February 2024 we premiered seven new choral works by emerging composers Mari Alice Conrad, Daniel Gardner, Emily Hiemstra, Nicholas Ryan Kelly, Katharine Petkovski, Hope Salmonson, and Alex Vollant. Four of these have been published by musica printima!

**RENDER** - Featuring instrumentalists Meghan Williams on double bass, Martin Fisk on percussion, and Mark McGregor on flute, RENDER included the first combined performance of Joelysa Pankanea's requiems for her parents, "The First Stage" and "The Fifth Stage" - the latter given the world premiere of the new vocal arrangement by Pankanea. Music by Alex Vollant, Brad Wells, Viet Cuong, and Reena Esmail rounded out this moving program at the ANNEX.

## A SUMMARY OF THE 23/24 SEASON

**KI'MOLA** - 'walking together' in Kwakwaka, was a brand new project curated by Marion Newman, the critically acclaimed mezzo-soprano of Kwagiulth and Stó:lō First Nations with English, Irish and Scottish heritage. Music was drawn from Marion and musica intima's repertoire, and the program was created through Marion and the ensemble's time together - a truly unique, liminal experience.



*Marion Newman working with mi and mentored singers.*



*musica intima Retreat 2023 (Wendy D Photography)*

### ***Other Activities***

Artistic and Operations Managers Jacob Gramit and Lucy Smith traveled to Boston for the **Early Music America Summit** to give a lecture-presentation on NAGAMO to delegates from across the US, Canada and Europe. Andrew Balfour was denied entry into the country; but the presentation made important connections for the future of the project and led to a feature article in the May 2024 EMag (circulation 3000).

Our third annual participation in **Remembered Aloud**: Over 12,000 veterans rest in Mountain View Cemetery, and the hope is this event will speak several hundred names out loud, and each of those people will be given a small moment of individual reflection.

**Vocal Eye** is a Vancouver based non-profit that provides arts access to the blind community by way of audio description at live events and weekly online Zoom shows. mi ensemble member Deanna Gestrin presented excerpts from **(re)birth** (April 2023), and Managers Jacob Gramit and Lucy Smith were on deck for a post-show Q&A session.



*Above: mi & Leslie Uyeda cheer for composers Hope Salmonson, Alex Volland, Mari Alice Conrad, and Nicholas Ryan Kelly. Below: In Winter's House.*



*In the Malaspina Galleries on Gabriola Island following our performance for Lulu.*



## A SUMMARY OF THE 23/24 SEASON

We released our second EP, **MIDWINTER** - this time with a focus on familiar melodies in new contexts and new music we hope will become new holiday favourites by Vancouver composer Rodney Sharman, Cree composer Andrew Balfour, Jamaican-Canadian arranger Maria Thompson Corley, and UK composer Rebecca Dale.

Continuing our relationship with **Vancouver Opera** we performed in a free concert in honour of National Indigenous Peoples Day on June 21, which also featured M'Girl, Russell Wallace and family, and musica intima in an exchange of cultures and musical styles. In July, for the second year in a row, we participated in a free outdoor performance at **Deer Lake Park** as part of the pre-show to Opera in the Park which featured Sherryl Sewepagaham, and also included previous mentored singers from the Vancouver Youth Choir.

Returning to in-person rehearsals after 3-year hiatus, **Song-cology** featured Risa Takahashi & Kiyomi Hori as co-leaders, and the re-building ensemble gave performances in November, December, and June, including singing the national anthems at a Vancouver Canadian's baseball game. This program continues to be generously funded by the Martha Lou Henley Charitable Foundation.



*Andrew Balfour conducts the finale of  
Ahskenon'nia in Montréal*



*Song-cology performs at the BC Cancer  
Summit, November 2024*

### *On the Road...*

In April and early May, musica intima gave sold out performances to audiences in **Parksville** (Oceanside Classical Concerts), **Duncan** (Cowichan Performing Arts Centre), and **Gabriola Island** (Lulu Performing Arts Series) as part of a 3 night tour, and also presented parts of this program in run-outs to **Agassiz** (Cheam Visa Concerts), **Whistler** (Cantando Festivals, alongside a series of High School workshops), and **North Vancouver** (Carl Orff Conference, featuring Sherryl Sewepagaham).

In May, mi and Balfour performed **NAGAMO in Ottawa** presented by Music & Beyond Festival, attended by former Governor General of Canada Michaëlle Jean, after which we traveled to **Montreal** for workshops and performances, including as part of the PODIUM National Choral Conference. Invited by Sherryl and Choral Canada to be featured in Sherryl's curated concert, Ahskenon'nia: Songs of Peace (meaning "peace" in the Huron-Wendat language) - an Indigenous-led collaboration. The sold-out concert featured Andrée Levesque Sioui (Wendat singer-songwriter), Deantha Edmunds (Inuk soprano), Alex Volland (Innu baritone and pianist), and Andrew Balfour (Cree composer), with each composer performing alongside musica intima and the Montréal Children's Choir. The finale, a song by Levesque Sioui, arranged by Andrew for the two choirs and three soloists "highlighted the concert's collective Indigenous artists, choirs, and collaborators."

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT: THE SHOW GOES ON

***Troy Topnik***

musica intima continues to impress and amaze me. Every performance I've seen in the past year has been of the highest artistic standard, and each had many moments of transcendent beauty that moved me deeply. As I remarked to some of the singers after "solicitude" recently that it seems each successive performance becomes one of my "top five intima shows." Congratulations and thanks to the singers who give so much in service to their art.

The responsibility for making sure that this tradition of excellence continues weighs heavily on the board and the staff. This has been a challenging year financially and administratively, and I want to acknowledge that our Artistic and Operations managers have had to bear much of the weight of these challenges. Their work continues to sustain this organization, and we owe them our continued thanks and support.

Along with our dedicated staff, I'd like to thank my fellow board members for leaning in to help bridge a cash flow shortage this past year caused by delayed grant payments. Without your assistance, and the support of a few key donors, we would have had a challenging time keeping musica intima running over the summer.

*...it seems each  
successive performance  
becomes one of my  
'top five intima shows'*

This past year Anne Aboud decided to step back after four years of service on our board. We're grateful for her contributions over the past 4 years and miss her perspective and experience in our meetings. This highlights that we now have vacancies in the board which we hope to fill soon.

We are actively seeking new board members to bolster our numbers and increase our range of expertise in order to better support the ensemble. If any members of the Society or friends of the ensemble have some time and energy to commit to helping develop musica intima, please contact one of our board members to discuss nomination. Prior board experience is not strictly necessary, but we look for individuals with a passion for music, a commitment to this organization, and diverse perspectives.

Our October board meeting included a "Thriving Non-Profits" session, with coach Leslie Dunning, which was extremely constructive and outlined some things we can do together to further strengthen our organization in light of dwindling public sector grants. I look forward to pursuing some of these initiatives with the board and staff in the months ahead.

I'm extremely proud that our managers and the ensemble have planned an exciting and expansive 25/26 season! Thank you singers. Thank you Lucy and Jacob. Thank you Dan, Brigid, and Katherine. You help keep our Society running and the shows going on.

Respectfully submitted,  
Troy Topnik, President  
musica intima Board of Directors  
January 2025



## A JOINT MESSAGE FROM THE CO-MANAGERS

***Jacob Gramit & Lucy Smith***

Nanaimo-based poet and artist Sheila Northgate's *RISK*<sup>1</sup> hangs on the office wall. She writes of the questions artists are asked - the simple, but also the more challenging:

*Ones like why does an artist answer the call, and  
who exactly is calling, and why would anyone give up  
things like fiscal certainty to make marks, and who  
exactly makes the marks.*

*All I can say is that it has something to do with risk,  
and how at some point for me, the risk of flying  
without a net finally became smaller than the risk  
of never having flown at all.*

For *musica intima*, defining the net is tricky. At some point, government funding was a great net - but not lately. CD sales used to make up 10-20% of our annual revenue - enough to more than justify the recording expense, and give us a cushion for the next few seasons. This summer, the Society was caught in the net provided by the Board of Directors - and throughout the season, netting is continually comprised of the generosity of small foundations that believe in the work we're doing. These are the nets that appear as (or after) we leap - but as Northgate reminds us - the risk of flying, the risk of following that call demands leaping before we know how it will all come together.

In April 2024, we found out we didn't have the funding to fully support our East Coast tour of May 2024 (while we were producing *Render* alongside a series of concerts on and around Vancouver Island). The centerpiece of the tour was to be our performance at Podium in Montréal, and we were hoping to have a series of workshops in Nova Scotia (a tour now being planned for fall 2025). Nova Scotia was cancelled, and in its place, thanks to connection via Troy and alumna Karen Mang, composer Matthew Larkin quickly arranged a concert in Ottawa - a full performance of *NAGAMO* featuring protocol by Kyrstin Dumont, Songkeeper David White Deer Charette, and a chance to connect with composer Beverly McKiver, whose work we had sung earlier in the year. This performance allowed us to move forward with the Montréal leg of the tour; the incredible collaborators and connectors wove the net to get us there.

Bringing *NAGAMO* to the national stage, singing with incredible composers and artists like Sherryl Sewepagaham, Deantha Edmunds, Alex Vollant, and Andrew - Ahskennon'nia will long be remembered both in the collective consciousness of *musica intima*, but also in the national choral zeitgeist. The finale - a monumental arrangement by Andrew

1. Sheila Northgate, "RISK" in *FOLKLIFE* (Issue 1, 2020).



## A JOINT MESSAGE FROM THE CO-MANAGERS

***Jacob Gramit & Lucy Smith***

of a song by Andrée Levesque-Siouï featuring Andrée, Deantha, Sherryl, the Montréal Children's Choir and musica intima - reminded us all of the interconnectedness of ourselves with each other and the earth, and the music still rings in our ears. The process to get to this moment was challenging - but musica intima was able to support and champion our collaborators - themselves leaping without a net - and in turn, we were supported and loved.

While in Montréal, we had the unique opportunity to connect with the Philippine Madrigal Singers, who were performing Andrew's 'Omaa Biindig' as part of their Canadian tour. Through circumstance, we discovered we both had a free afternoon, and we leapt - thanks to François Ouimet for connecting us with a venue and an engineer. Ensemble members Risa and Jaime set up their phone cameras. In less than an hour, we rehearsed, sang together, shared, and connected; resulting in a stunning recording of Omaa, which has more than 30,000 views on Instagram, and 14,000 on Facebook. We typically expect a few thousand plays on posts like this. You can watch the video on YouTube; alongside the recording you'll see images of the two ensembles meeting and singing for each other.



*musica intima, the Philippine Madrigal Singers (Madz), and Andrew Balfour.*

There's a moment in the video where one of the Madz singers is shaping up to take a selfie with several singers. As he frames up, more and more singers from mi and Madz appear, everyone laughing and grinning. It's in moments like this when we begin to answer those harder questions Northgate poses. Our net isn't donors, foundations, institutions, board members, staff, sponsors - our net is people. Beautiful humans who support, connect, sing, smile, share, laugh - humans that answer the call. And the risk isn't not having flown. The risk is never having flown together.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jacob Gramit and Lucy Smith  
Artistic and Operations Managers



### *A word about people...*

musica intima is what it is today through the tremendous talents of singers and composers we're lucky to work with. In particular, this season was one of transition, as we bid a fond farewell to Tabitha, with us since 2020, and welcomed new-to-mi singers Anja, Gloria, Lee, all three of whom are singing most of the 24/25 season! Throughout the 23/24 season, we had a record twenty-four singers perform in the twelve-voice ensemble, truly weaving a tapestry of Vancouver choral artists.

### *A word about the finances...*

The 23/24 season was a fiscally challenging one. The perfect confluence of several factors put the organization in jeopardy - but thanks to staff and board generosity, musica intima remains stable and supported! How did we get here?

23/24 was the first season in which we did not receive extra 'resilience funding' from any government granting agency. Ticket sales continued to fall below pre-COVID numbers, and while our support from private foundations and donors continued to grow, we struggled to make up that shortfall. Adding insult to injury, we (along with 83.4% of applicants) were unsuccessful in the Fall 2023 Explore and Create intake - meaning we continue to be locked into the same level of Canada Council funding as we've had since 2008. The icing on the cake came when we were unsuccessful (twice!) for a BCAC Tour grant, despite positive feedback, meaning our NAGAMO tour to Montréal was re-planned and re-shaped on about one month's notice. The staff donated salaries back through the summer, and thanks to generous donations from the board (and well-timed loans), the Society remained stable and strong; and not one artistic project was limited or cancelled due to lack of funds.

Having ended the 2023 Fiscal Year with an accumulated deficit of \$21,331, the nearly \$51,000 deficit of the 23/24 season brings us to a total accumulated deficit of just over \$72,000. For an organization with a budget of between \$300k and \$400k, this is not an insignificant challenge; but with prudent artistic and organizational budgeting, we are already on track to reduce the deficit without too great a cost to the artistic product. Focusing on areas of growth in the private sector (prioritizing foundation applications, growing musica printima, and marketing "sold services" to other arts presenters in the Lower Mainland, across BC, and across the country), we become less reliant on



government funding and ticket sales, both helping us weather the current crisis and setting us up for a more resilient future.

And lest this be all doom and gloom - ticket sales have risen 13%, performance revenue is up 18%, CD and sheet music sales have doubled, foundation revenue has risen 24%, and individual donations are up a startling 54% - without taking into account the generosity of the Board which stewarded us through the summer. The most important part: 80% of our funding goes directly to the art - administration and marketing accounts for only 20% of our annual budget, compared to an average 33% in Canadian choral organisations; most of which receive double, or even up to quadruple our government funding. The art and the collaboration have always been at the core of the musica intima Society, and despite the rough financial seas, we continue to sail through, championing our unique model and decolonial approach. Our private sector revenues demonstrate this approach resonates with the public - and we're grateful for your continued support, both in turbulent and calm times.

### *thanks to our 23/24 volunteers!*

Miguel Alvarado | Sofia Avelino | Meruert Bestybay | Paula Brewster | John Carpenter  
Oliver Dalton | Thomas Dalton | Marcus Degenstein | Carolin Ford | Ben Horodyski  
Kelk Jeffrey | Anja Kelly | Emily Malmgren | Danny Najjar | Chiara Susanto  
Holly Ten Haaf | Alex Vollant | Gloria Wan

### THE 2023 - 2024 SEASON *by the numbers*

#### CONCERT ATTENDEES

**4,662**  
[+10%]

#### PERFORMANCES GIVEN

**24**  
[+41%]

#### CANADIAN & INDIGENOUS WORKS PERFORMED

**63**  
[+50%]

#### TOTAL DONORS

**138**  
[-5%]

#### INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS

**\$44,101**  
[+25%]

#### PHYSICAL CDS SOLD

**201**  
[+45%]

#### WORKS PUBLISHED

**23**  
[new initiative!]

#### ARTISTS HIRED

**42**  
[+8%]

#### STREAMS [NEW VIDEOS]

**5176**



# *thank you!*

musica intima can only continue thanks to your generous support. We asked, and you answered; YOU allow musica intima to continue to offer the world-class performances we've become known for, and enable us to keep connecting throughout the Lower Mainland and across Canada in our 2023/2024 season. Thank you!

Anne Louise Aboud  
Chris Aikenhead & Candace Knighton  
Janet Allwork  
Debra Anderson  
Anonymous (7)  
Sam & Mary Balden  
Alison Beale  
Caitlin and Robert Beaupré  
Bruce Beier  
Allan & Elizabeth Bell  
Jeremy Berkman  
Jan Berney  
Sean Bickerton  
Ulrike & Frank Boege  
Lisa Brasso  
Christina BurrIDGE  
Ann Cameron & Martin Landmann  
Anne Cameron  
Sandra Campbell  
Diana Carter  
Jan Constantinescu  
Stephen Cooke  
Sam Dabrusin  
Oliver Dalton  
Dandy Barber Inc.  
KirstenDaub  
Shannon Daub  
Shelagh Davies  
Joanna Dundas  
Kerry Dyer  
Mary Eggertson  
Peter Elliott & Thomas Roach  
Linda Emigh  
Varick Ernst  
Lise Faillettaz  
Dorothy Fairholm  
Eric Findlay  
Charles & Lucile Flavelle  
Ashley Daniel Foot  
Allen & Ruth Fowlis

Grace & Richard Fraser  
Patricia French  
Russ & Star Fuoco  
Dale Gamble & Jane McFadgen  
Karen Gelmon  
John Gordon & Mirjana Galovich  
Karen Gordon & Martin Smith  
Robin Grabell  
Jacob Gramit & Lucy Smith  
Frieda Woodruff & David Gramit  
Christer Hallberg  
Liz & Keith Hamel  
Don Harder  
Kim Hardy  
Derek Healey  
Helder Henrique  
Joshua Hendricksen  
Darby Honeyman  
Chloé Hurst  
Elsie Jang  
Patricia Janzen  
Karin Johnson  
Margo Keenan  
Beryl Kirk  
Kris Klaasen  
David Klaassen  
J. Evan Kreider  
Yolande Lafleur  
Darlene Lamb  
Simon LeSieur  
Erica Levy  
Janet Lowcock  
Brigid Lumholst-Smith & Andrew Smith  
Stephanie MacLeod  
Barbara Madani  
Karen Mang Kennedy & Craig Kennedy  
Melanie Marchand  
Liz & Andrew Massil  
Karen Matthews  
Rob Mayhew

John McBain  
Connie McElman  
Coral McFadden  
Dan McFaull  
Shawn McKenzie  
Carolyn McKindred  
Elizabeth & Robert McLenehan  
Harvey McLeod  
David McMurtry  
Patti McVey  
Nonie Medcalf  
Ivar Mickelson  
Laura Munn  
Terry & Barbara Myers  
Brenda Naylor  
James Neville  
Louise Nicholson Woodward  
Sumiko Nishizawa  
David Pay  
Patricia Phillips  
Robert Picard  
Charles Pitts  
Carman J. Price  
Ann Ramsay  
Kelly Rayter  
Shane Riczu  
Manako Roberts  
Geordie Roberts  
E. Jane Robertson  
Rhonda Rogers  
D & D Rollins  
Ingrid Rose  
Emmanuelle Rousseau  
Byron Schenkman  
Maxine Shu  
Jim & Donna Simpson  
Debra Sloan  
STRETCH Yoga Studios  
Edward Stringer  
Leigh & Nancy Taylor  
Troy Topnik  
Liz Tuck  
Leslie Uyeda  
Olga Volkoff  
Alex Vollant  
Stefan von Dehn  
Cindy Weisbart  
Tom Whalley  
James Wright

THIS LIST ACKNOWLEDGES GIFTS MADE BETWEEN  
SEPTEMBER 1, 2023 AND AUGUST 31, 2024.  
WE APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT!

*A special thank you to the incredible  
foundations that continue to support  
musica intima and the work we do!*

Anako Foundation

Azrieli Foundation  
*Kimola*

BC Fairs, Festivals, and Events  
*The New Canon & Kimola*

Canadian Music Centre BC  
*The New Canon & novum musica*

Charles and Lucile Flavelle Family Fund  
HELD AT VANCOUVER FOUNDATION

Deux Mille Foundation  
*Kimola - mentored singers from VYC*

Elsie and Audrey Jang Fund  
HELD AT VANCOUVER FOUNDATION

Hamber Foundation  
*Kimola - mentored singers from VYC*

Janice and J. Evan Kreider Family Fund  
HELD AT VANCOUVER FOUNDATION

Lohn Foundation  
*Kimola*

McCarthy Tetrault  
*Kimola*

Martha Lou Henley Family Foundation  
*Song-cology*

Nicola Wealth Management

Tuey Foundation  
*Kimola*

Y.P. Heung Foundation  
*novum musica*



## THE 23/24 SEASON IN PHOTOS



*Top left: before Ahskennon'nia in Montréal, with Andrew Balfour*

*Above: Rehearsing at STRETCH Yoga Studio for Nightingales*

*Left: with Ashley Foot, before our performance in Duncan*

*Bottom Left: members of mi and Marion Newman with composer Ian Cusson*

*Below: Rehearsals for RENDER with Joelysa Pankanea and instrumentalists Mark, Meaghan, and Martin.*

