

THE NEW CANON

SEPTEMBER 11, 2023

HERITAGE HALL

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MUSICA INTIMA PERFORMS AND OPERATES ON THE STOLEN
TERRITORY OF THE COAST SALISH PEOPLES, INCLUDING
THE TERRITORIES OF THE X^wMƏΘK^wƏYƏM (MUSQUEAM),
SK̄WXWÚ7MESH ÚXWUMIXW (SQUAMISH),
AND SƏLILWƏTAP̄ (TSLEIL-WAUTUTH) NATIONS.

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Okâwîmâw Askiy *Sherryl Sewepagaham*



Sherryl Sewepagaham, MEd, BEd, BMT, is Cree-Dene from the Little Red River Cree Nation in northern Alberta. She is a former elementary music teacher and director of two Indigenous children's choirs. Sherryl was also a 23-year member of the Indigenous women's trio, Asani and earned a 2006 Juno nomination and a Canadian Folk Music Award win

in 2010. Sherryl is a singer-songwriter and composes songs in Cree for children and choral arrangements for children, youth and adult choirs. Sherryl is a strong advocate for language revitalization through the arts and the preservation and creation of Cree language songs with the traditional hand drum and rattle.

Okâwîmâw askiy (Mother Earth) began as a vocable song and Cree words were added to bring more meaning. The intention of the song is love, hope, and standing in unity to take better care of our mother earth. A first-person plural perspective is intentional for us to speak directly to her as we sing to her as her children. Body percussion is to be used instead of a frame drum to symbolize the peoples' connection to the land.

Okâwîmâw askiy (Mother Earth) was commissioned by Samantha Whelan Kotkas for the 2021 production, Wandering with Wonder, and first debuted by Calgary's Luminous Voices (Dr. Timothy Shantz, conductor and Artistic Director) with support from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and the Canada Council for the Arts. (SS, 2021)

Okâwîmâw askiy
Niyânân kitawâsimsak
Kisâkihitanan

*Mother Earth
We are your children
We love you*

sleeping ideas

Holly Winter / Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797-1851)



Canadian composer Holly Winter's work has been described as striking and beautiful. Her diverse background is evident in her works, which implements visual art, theatrics, poetry and improvisation. As a multi-disciplinary artist, Holly writes her own text and designs the visual elements of her work.

Holly holds a Master of Music degree from the University of British Columbia where she studied with Jocelyn Morlock, Keith Hamel, and Dorothy Chang. She also holds a Bachelor of Music degree from the Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador where she studied composition with Andrew Staniland and clarinet with Christine Carter. She also holds a Bachelor of Arts from University of King's College in Philosophy and Creative Writing.

Holly was a participant in novum musica 2022.

The text for sleeping ideas comes from a novel called The Last Man: an apocalyptic, dystopian science fiction novel by Mary Shelley, first published in 1826. The narrative concerns Europe in the late 21st century, ravaged by a mysterious pandemic illness that rapidly sweeps across the entire globe, ultimately resulting in the near-extinction of humanity. This novel strikes a particular chord in 2022, with everything that is happening globally. The quote calls for a re-evaluation of our priorities, for us to reflect on what really matters. The text spoke to me as a prayer to the soul to consider the majesty of living in the natural world.

I wanted to explore the lush, harmonically driven choral writing - I expanded the text to express the themes more accurately through music. The setting of the text explores cluster harmonies and aleatoric elements. It uses frequent repetition of text fragments as a vehicle for reflection and contemplation. This reflection eventually builds to a dramatic call to live and all the actions, good and bad, that living entails. The piece ends with an ambiguous line of text sung rubato by a soloist. (HW, 2022)

“Let us live for each other and for happiness; let us seek peace in our dear home, near the inland murmur of streams, and the gracious waving of trees, the beautiful vesture of earth, and sublime pageantry of the skies. Let us leave “life,” that we may live.” (from *The Last Man*, Volume II, Chapter 4)

Adapted Text (H. Winter):

Let us breathe

Let us live

Let us live for each other

Let us breathe for happiness

Let us seek peace in our dear home

near the inland murmur of streams,

and the gracious waving of trees,

in the beautiful vesture of earth,

and the sublime pageantry of the skies.

Let us live

Let us seek

Let us breathe

Let us rest

Let us nest

Let us sleep

Let us help

Let us play

Let us make

Let us sew

Let us paint

Let us win

Let us lose

Let us draw

Let us try

Let us hope

Let us sing

Let us dance

Let us move

Let us hurt

Let us love

Let us be

Let us forget life so that we can live.



The Eye that Sees Itself

Tegan Wahlgren



Tegan Wahlgren is a composer, performer, and improviser based in Vancouver, Canada, whose scores for film, dance and theatre have been featured in Vancouver International Film Festival, TIFF Top Ten Student Shorts, Festival of Recorded Movement, and Vancouver Fringe Festival. She holds a BFA in Music

Composition from Simon Fraser University and is also a vocalist and violinist specializing in contemporary improvisation and pop/indie music. Her diverse influences—including a background in Celtic fiddle and choral singing—have aided in the development of Wallgrin, her experimental pop solo project. As Wallgrin, she has been a featured performer at Tallinn Music Week in Estonia, FOCUS Wales in the UK, as well as at Music on Main, BreakOut West, the Queer Arts Festival, and Western Front. Wallgrin released their debut album, *Bird/Alien*, on July 6, 2018 via Heavy Lark Records.

Tegan was a participant in novum musica 2022.

*Carving into clay,
nothing could be older.
Bullseye on the range,
hound without a collar.*

*Call me if you need,
call me if you need me.
Call me if you need,
call me if you need me.*

*Everything seems out of reach
since the flames extended.
Who could ever reach that far again?
How can I begin to understand the way they go
looking for the eye that sees itself?*

The Call: I. We Must Question

Tawnie Olson / Rosemary Brown

Described as “taut, focused... colourful” by Gramophone, “mesmerizing,” by critic Tim Smith, and “especially glorious... ethereal” by Whole Note, the music of Canadian composer Tawnie Olson draws inspiration from politics, spirituality, the natural world, and the musicians for whom she composes. Her



opera Sanctuary and Storm (libretto by Roberta Barker) is the winner of the 2021-2023 National Opera Association Dominick Argento Chamber Opera Composition Competition; Olson also won a 2019 Copland House Residency Award, the 2018 Barlow Prize, and the 2015 Iron Composer Competition. Her Three Songs on Poems by Lorri Neilsen Glenn took second prize in the 2018 NATS Art Song Competition. Olson has been commissioned by the Canadian Art Song Project, Third Practice/New Music USA, the Canada Council for the Arts, Mount Holyoke College/The Women’s Philharmonic, the Blue Water Chamber Orchestra, Ithaca College, the American Composers Forum, and the Yale Institute of Sacred Music’s Robert Baker Commissioning Fund, among others.

Olson holds a doctorate in music composition from the University of Toronto, a Master of Music degree from the Yale School of Music, an Artist Diploma from the Yale Institute of Sacred Music, and a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Calgary.

Tawnie was a composer/mentor for novum musica 2022.

The term “reproductive justice” had not yet been coined in June, 1987, when Rosemary Brown gave a passionate speech opposing a private member’s bill in the House of Commons that would have made abortion illegal in Canada. But as I set her words to music, I found myself thinking more broadly about reproductive issues; not just the people forced to carry pregnancies to term against their will, but also those subjected to involuntary sterilization and forced abortions. And then the question of how well (or poorly) we - as individuals and as a society - provide support to new parents and safe environments in which children can be raised.

Across the globe, people’s “right to control the terms and circumstances of [their] reproduction” seems to be continuously in flux. In every country there are those who press for the preservation or return of laws and policies that force gestation and birth on some and/or limit it for others. As Brown says, we must question why anyone would support these horrifying measures, and how it is that their advocacy sometimes meets with success. Then each of us must decide what we will do about it.

I am very grateful to musica intima and to the SOCAN Foundation for commissioning this piece. I also offer my deepest thanks to UBC Rare Books and Special Collections for giving me legal permission, and to Clea Brown for giving me moral permission to set these texts to music. (TO, 2023)

from “The Issue is Choice” Speech
July 1987, Toronto, Ontario

1. We must question our continuing lack of choice, our lack of power and the threat to our right to control the terms and circumstances of our reproduction. [...]



WORLD PREMIERE OF 'THE CALL'

Gaudí Madrigali: I. Para la armonia

Owen Underhill / Antoni Gaudí

Owen Underhill lives in Vancouver where he is active as a composer, conductor, and artistic director. As a composer, Underhill writes for diverse combinations including orchestra, voice and choir, and a wide variety of chamber music ranging from traditional ensembles to groupings of unusual instrumentation. His music has many different expressions and has been described as dense and interesting, colourful, lyrical in inspiration, exuberant and witty, subtle, and thoughtful. His compositions have been performed by leading music organizations in Canada and internationally, and his music has been included on several recordings including his recently released disc *Still Image* on the Centrediscs label.



Active as a programmer and promoter of contemporary music, Underhill was Artistic Director of Vancouver New Music from 1987 to 2000, and is currently Artistic Co-Director of the Turning Point Ensemble, a large chamber ensemble of outstanding Vancouver musicians dedicated to the celebration of twentieth century music and new music. He has been active as an arts advocate and supporter of Canadian music organizations, and has been active for many years with the Canadian Music Centre, serving as the President from 2010 – 2014.

Underhill's Gaudí Madrigali were commissioned by musica intima in 2019 for premiere at 'The Voice of the Sky' - a cancelled concert planned for April 2020. We are thankful for the opportunity to explore the first one today - as much of the music from this program continues to find a home in upcoming seasons. Underhill set passages of text from journal entries of Spanish modernist architect Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926), in which Gaudí describes some of his philosophies - a need for balance, contrast, and the inspiration he drew from nature. While we sing today in Heritage Hall, if you close your eyes, perhaps you can imagine the tree-like columns and shafts of colored light that fill his masterpiece, the still unfinished Sagrada Família in Barcelona.

Para la armonía,
es decir, el equilibrio,
es necesario el contraste;
luz y sombra;
continuidad,
discontinuidad;
concauidad, convexidad.
Para la armonía,
es decir, el equilibrio,
es necesario el contraste.

*For harmony,
that is, balance,
contrast is necessary;
light and shadow;
continuity,
discontinuity;
concavity, convexity.
For harmony,
that is, balance,
contrast is necessary.*



SAGRADA FAMILIA, BARCELONA

Debris

Jeffrey Ryan / Michael Redhill



Praised for his “strong personal voice” (Globe and Mail), “masterful command of instrumental colour” (Georgia Straight) and “superb attention to rhythm” (Audio Ideas Guide), and recipient of SOCAN’s Jan V. Matejcek New Classical Music Award, Vancouver-based Jeffrey Ryan takes inspiration

from the world around him and creates music running the gamut from orchestral and chamber works to opera, art song, and choral music. With awards and recognition including multiple JUNO nominations, his music has been commissioned, performed and recorded by orchestras, ensembles and soloists worldwide, including his award-winning portrait CD *Fugitive Colours* with the Vancouver Symphony and the Gryphon Trio. jeffreyryan.com

Jeff was a composer/mentor for novum musica 2022.

Debris is an a cappella choral work taken from the large-scale Scar Tissue, written for Nordic Voices and the Gryphon Trio. In this meditative movement, the lines of poet Michael Redhill’s words break down and fragment. Similarly, in the music, the words are deconstructed, floating on a sea of vowels, the sounds tumbling over each other until they dissolve away into breath. (JR, 2018)

*For when I look at you,
even a moment, no*

speaking is left in me.

I’m never alone now.

*My God, how we all swiftly
swiftly unwrap our lives.*

a boy & a boy

Stuart Beatch / Matthew Stepanic

Stuart Beatch (b. 1991) is a Canadian choral composer currently living in Edmonton, Alberta. He received a Master of Music in Composition from King's College London, studying with composer Rob Keeley, and was the Composer in Residence for The Fourth Choir (an LGBT chamber choir in London, UK). Beatch previously studied composition at the University of Alberta and music education at the University of Regina. He is an Associate Composer with the Canadian Music Centre and a member of the Canadian League of Composers.



In early 2019, my friend and poet Mathew Stepanic set out alongside fellow poet Jason Purcell with the ambitious plan to open Glass Bookshop a queer-focused bookstore & community space in Edmonton. As part of their fundraising campaign, I was able to commission a brand-new poem from Matthew - I asked him to write something unapologetically queer and romantic, taking inspiration from 'A Boy and a Girl', the poem by Octavio Paz famously set by Eric Whitacre.

This setting of 'a boy & a boy' was commissioned by Pro Coro Canada and Michael Zaugg in 2022. Matthew's poem adapts the fresh imagery of the original to weave a new narrative of queer summer love becoming something more. My music is lush and direct, focusing on the beauty and emotional depth of this brief poem, and I hope that it will resonate deeply with audiences and singers alike. This score is dedicated to Matthew, with deepest respect and admiration, for his openness and generosity in our collaborations - I'm thankful to have now set 12 of his poems to music, and I hope to continue amplifying his beautiful queer artistry in the years to come.
(SB, 2022)

*Stretched out on the ground: a boy & a boy.
the wind in the wheat; the wheat
in his teeth. He whistles Schumann
while the other sees his smooth image
in every cloud. His face a welcome
token in the blue sky. They savour
oranges & citrus kisses -
but only for the summer.*

*Stretched out across a theatre: a man & a man.
The past in his teeth; his tongue
in a memory. A symphony performs Schumann
while one recalls the shape of that face
like smoke in the sky. They savour
limes & gin kisses - both remembering
the taste of that summer.*

*Stretched out underground: two men.
The story in their bones; their bodies
in the dirt. He chose Schumann for the funeral
& looked for a signal in the sky. An unsmoothed face
in a cloud. Now, they savour silence,
give kisses to the earth under
a single engraved name.*



A Summer's Singing

Leslie Uyeda / Lorna Crozier

Born in Montréal, Québec, Leslie Uyeda is a composer, pianist, and conductor. Leslie's first love is the human voice.



During 25 years in opera, Leslie worked as a coach, pianist, chorus music director and conductor.

She has composed over fifty songs to the gorgeous and powerful poetry of Canadian poet Lorna Crozier, and four song cycles using the poignant and delicate words of Joy Kogawa. Leslie has composed for *musica intima* (including a new work to be premiered this fall), the Elektra Women's Choir, Chor Leoni, and Ensemble Vocal Arts-Québec (new work to be premiered this fall). *Leslie is the composer-mentor for novum musica 2024.*

A Summer's Singing is a poem that remains dear to me, as it was the first of now over fifty poems by the great Canadian poet Lorna Crozier, that I have set to music.

I was thrilled to be commissioned by musica intima in 2009, and knew immediately that A Summer's Singing would be the perfect text for that gifted ensemble. I decided to begin with a short Buddhist chant-like passage to set up the poem's opening question, "Where does that singing start ... ?" The unison singing of those first few bars gives way to some softly sung, close and crunchy harmonies which express the poet's questioning. As so often occurs when we're searching for something spiritual, we seem to know what "it" is not, well before we know what it is, or where it is. It's "Not the birds at false dawn or their song when morning comes"; rather, it is a "different kind of music. Listen, it is somewhere near you. In the heart, emptied of fear." "Where does the singing start? Here, where you are ...", and we can hear it, if we but listen, inside.

I hope that my music reflects the humanity and deep emotion I found in Lorna's poem. (LU, 2020)

*Where does that singing start, you know,
that thin sound—almost pure light?
Not the birds at false dawn or their song
when morning comes, feathered throats
warm with meaning. A different kind of music.*

*Listen, it is somewhere near you.
In the heart, emptied of fear,
stubbornly in love
with itself at last, the old
desires a ruined chorus,
a radiant bloody choir.*

*Where does the singing start?
Here, where you are, there's room
between your heartbeats,
as if everything you have ever been
begins, inside, to sing.*

*from Everything Arrives At The Light
(McClelland and Stewart Inc, 1995)*



Omaa Biindig

Andrew Balfour

Of Cree descent (from Fisher River First Nation), Andrew Balfour, a composer hailing from Winnipeg and now based in Toronto, is an innovative composer, conductor, singer, and sound designer with an extensive portfolio spanning choral, instrumental, electroacoustic, and orchestral works. Notably, he recently concluded a nationwide tour of his album ‘NAGAMO,’ commissioned and performed by Vancouver’s musica intima vocal ensemble, earning a 2023 Juno award nomination.



Andrew has collaborated with many of Canada’s prominent Indigenous musicians, including Buffy Sainte-Marie, Jeremy Dutcher, and Cris Derksen. In 2021, he co-led the Indigenous Classical Music summit at the Banff Centre for the Arts. Additionally, he is the founder and director of the innovative vocal group Dead of Winter, now in its 22nd year of presenting a concert series in Winnipeg. Andrew specializes in crafting unique ‘concept concerts’ rooted in Indigenous themes and collaborations through this role, fusing various musical styles and interdisciplinary partnerships.

Omaa Biindig describes the directions; not just the North, South, East, and West which we often remember, but also above and below us, as well as the most important - here, inside ourselves. We have had the privilege of singing this piece with Andrew across the country - and tonight it is the cornerstone of our ‘New Canon’ - music which we love to sing, share, and will champion for years to come.

| | |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| Nibi | <i>Water</i> |
| Ningaabii’anong | <i>The West</i> |
| Giiwedinaong | <i>The North</i> |
| Waabanong | <i>The East</i> |
| Zhaawanong | <i>The South</i> |
| Aki | <i>Earth</i> |
| Omaa biindig | <i>Here, inside.</i> |



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saturday, december 23

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Now, more than ever, we need your support to bring our 23/24 season to life. We have bold collaborations planned, new works commissioned, and more of the ground-breaking programming you've come to expect from this ensemble - but none of that is possible without your financial support. To continue to work of decolonizing the choral arts in this country, to continue programming music by the diversity of voices you hear tonight, and to continue fostering the next generation of singers, artists, and thinkers - we depend on you.

musica intima is unique. There is no other professional ensemble in Canada that is created for the artists, by the artists - and you know how special the shared connection is when you join us for our performances. Help us continue to share that here, across the province, and across Turtle Island...

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