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Saturday, February 17, 2024



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BIOGRAPHY





PAULA KREMER, Artistic Director of the Vancouver Cantata Singers

Born in Vancouver and educated at the Vancouver Academy of Music and the University of British Columbia, Paula Kremer has studied choral conducting in courses and workshops at Eton, Westminster Choir College, the Eastman School of Music and the University of Michigan. Holding an ARCT in both piano and voice from the Royal Conservatory of Music, Paula has also studied voice with Phyllis Mailing, Bruce Pullan, Marisa Gaetanne and Laura Pudwell, and piano from Margot Ehling. A full-time faculty member of the School of Music at Vancouver Community College, teaching voice, solfege, and choir, she was also the director of two Vancouver Bach Choir ensembles for young adults from 2009-17, the Vancouver Bach Youth Choir and Sarabande. Paula joined the alto section of our choir in 1994, and has been the Vancouver Cantata Singers' Artistic Director since 2013.

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To be Sung of a Summer Night on the Water II Frederick Delius

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Seaside Rendezvous Freddie Mercury, arr. Paul Hart

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with Percussiano 3 Saturday, March 9, 2024

PROGRAMME NOTES

Programme notes by J. Evan Kreider Professor Emeritus, UBC School of Music; member of VCS.

The Shower, Op. 71, No. 1 - Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

Elgar set the third and final modernized verse of "The Showre" from Henry Vaughan's Silex scintillans ("Sparkling Flint", 1650 and 1655), a two-volume collection of 129 devotional poems reflecting the Welshman's spiritual responses to the ongoing struggles between crown and church, Parliament and Puritans, all of which resulted in the disastrous Civil War of the 1640s and ended his peaceful student days at Jesus College, Oxford. After Vaughan's world view had been shaken to its core, he concluded that only God offers hope.

The self-taught Elgar was not recognized as an important English composer until he turned 40. He felt he was an outsider to the nation's music establishment, self-taught rather than university-trained, of humble origins rather than from a family of social standing and wealth, and a Catholic in a Protestant country. One senses Elgar finally realizing that his wife was right after all: now that he was finally receiving acclaim for his Enigma Variations and The Dream of Gerontius, he should live a less isolated life and set aside those long years of dejection. "Perhaps at last, / (Some such showers past,) / My God would give a Sun-shine after raine."

[Yet] Cloud, if as thou dost melt, and with thy traine Of drops make soft the Earth, my eyes could weep O'er my hard heart, that's bound up, and asleep; Perhaps at last, (Some such showers past,)
My God would give a Sun-shine after raine.

Henry Vaughan (1622-1695)

To Be Sung of a Summer Night on the Water I and II - Frederick Delius (1862-1934)

Delius had advantages Elgar lacked. He was born into a wealthy merchant family, studied music in Germany, and lived out his life in Paris. He was intrigued by the unending nature of Wagner's chromatic music, an approach he utilized in his first movement of this evening's work. Elgar moved in the same circles as Rodin, Gauguin, and Edvard Munch but tended to avoid all composers.

Neither of the two movements in "To Be Sung of a Summer Night on the Water" has text. Delius instructs singers to "Sing on the vowel 'uh' (as in "love") with very loose mouth, almost closed in the *pianissimo*, but which should be gradually opened or shut according as more or less tone is wanted." Voices are now musical instruments unfettered by poetic texts.

Soloist: Eric Biskupski

Entflieht auf leichten Kähnen, Op. 2 (1908) Anton Webern (1883-1945)

Anton Webern was Arnold Schönberg's first private composition student in Vienna. Webern wrote *Entflieht auf leichten Kähnen* while studying Renaissance music for his doctorate in musicology at the University of Vienna, and it shows. In *Entflieht*, Webern created a double canon, using imitation in much the same way as had the hero of his dissertation, Heinrich Isaac. But unlike Isaac, Webern explored chromatic writing that is no longer bound by tonality. The work's structure reflects the three verses of Stefan George's poem, the initial lines rising as the 'swift light vessels . . . fly'. After the second verse's whirling, swirling, and trembling, the final verse returns to the work's opening melodic ideas while the composition quietly settles, allowing the "silent sorrow" of springtime to hold us.

Entflieht auf leichten Kähnen berauschten Sonnenwelten daß immer mildre Tränen euch eure Flucht entgelten.

Seht diesen Taumel blonder lichtblauer Traumgewalten und trunkner Wonnen sonder Verzückung sich entfalten.

Daß nicht der süße Schauer in neues Leid euch hülle – es sei die stille Trauer die diesen Frühling fülle. In swift light vessels gliding You fly from sundrenched madness Which secret tears are guiding Onward to realms of gladness.

See through the pallid whirling Blue-tinted vision tremble, While clouds in joyful swirling About you disassemble.

Let not your sweet tomorrow In new-born grief enfold you, But in its silent sorrow Let lovely springtime hold you.

Stefan George (1868-1933), poetic trans. Robert Hess

To Be Sung on the Water, Op. 42, No. 1 (1968) - Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

Samuel Barber is best remembered for his Adagio for Strings (1936). Our song is one of only six works he managed to compose after the failure of his opera Antony and Cleopatra (Metropolitan Opera, 1966; revised by Barber and Menotti, 1975). Lois Bogan's poem "To Be Sung on the Water" first appeared in The New Yorker, for which she was poetry editor for nearly 40 years. Her poem celebrates beauty, even the fleeting nature of beauty—the passing waves, images of a mottled night, or promises spoken softly, "less than the sound of the oar".

Beautiful, my delight, Pass, as we pass the wave, Pass, as the mottled night Leaves what it cannot save, Scattering dark and bright. Beautiful, pass and be
Less than the guiltless shade
To which our vows were said—
Less than the sound of the oar
To which our vows were made,
Less than the sound of its blade
Dipping the stream once more.

Louise Bogan (1897-1970; pub. In The New Yorker, Aug. 21, 1937)

Calling Undine (world premiere) - Marcel Bergmann (b. 1965)

Marcel Bergmann studied musicology in Munich and piano in Hannover, where he met his future wife and professional pianist, Elizabeth. The Bergmann Duo has been performing for the past several decades in Europe and North America. Marcel has also composed music for film, theatre, and cabaret productions as well as chamber and choral music. VCS commissioned him to create a new setting of the first of the seven quatrains in the Dedication to the fairytale Undine (published 1811), a novella about a water spirit who magically appeared the day the fisherman's daughter was presumed to have drowned in the lake. This mysteriously beautiful 18-year-old water spirit is impulsively married to the handsome knight Huldbrand, who eventually proves unfaithful. In despair, Undine drowned him in her tears. She then transformed herself into a stream, perpetually encircling his grave, embracing him forever.

Undine, thou image fair and blest, Since first thy strange mysterious glance Shone on me from some old romance How hast thou sung my heart to rest!

Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué (1777-1843), translated by Fanny Elizabeth Bunnett (1832-1875)

The Drowned Lovers - Judith Bingham (b. 1952)

After singing professionally with the BBC Singers for twelve years, Judith Bingham (OBE) became a fulltime composer, creating more than 100 works for various ensembles. Her first love, however, has always been choral music. When she cannot find texts to her liking, she creates her own, as she did for "The Drowned Lovers". Two unnamed lovers, once separated, are now reunited mysteriously, even suspiciously, in death: "His love had been a lie / But now we share a watery grave, / Forever intertwined."

Soloist: Melanie Adams

Blue . . . blue in blue
In the deepest reaches of the lake
I and my love do lie,
Choir: Cold and still, clung to him,
I clung to him, and pulled him down
Below, below,
And so we both did die,
Blue in blue,
Th'uncaring clear blue waters
Over our heads did close
Cold and still,

And shoals of fishes, sightlessly
In clouds around us rose,
In the deepest reaches of the lake,
Blue, cold and still,
His pale green eyes were cold in death
His image, his image,
His love had been a lie
But now we share a watery grave,
Forever intertwined.
Forever, forever
Blue in blue the lake lay.

Judith Bingham

The Blue Bird, Op. 119, No. 3 (1910) - C. V. Stanford (1852-1924)

Before her unfortunate death in her early 40s from appendicitis, Mary E. Coleridge had published many poems and five novels, one of which sold out six editions in its first year. The hundreds of remaining poems were finally published posthumously in 1954, thirty years after her death. The music has been composed by Stanford, a close friend of the Coleridge family. Written three years after Mary Coleridge's passing, it is now one of his best-known choral works.

The lake lay blue below the hill. O'er it, as I looked, there flew Across the waters, cold and still, A bird whose wings were palest blue.

The sky above was blue at last, The sky beneath me blue in blue. A moment, ere the bird had passed, It caught his image as he flew.

Mary E. Coleridge (1861-1907)

By the Lone Sea Shore - Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912)

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was named after the English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Born of an English mother and a father who was a physician from Sierra Leone (a colony of formerly enslaved people), his musical gifts prompted the extended family to send him to the Royal College of Music where he studied under Stanford (see above), who later conducted Coleridge-Taylor's enormously popular "Hiawatha's Wedding Feast", which sold 'hundreds of thousands of copies'. In addition to composing, Taylor was Professor of Music at the Crystal Palace School of Music. It was said that musicians in America called him "the African Mahler". In the opening measures of "By the Lone Sea Shore" one senses the steady pulse of the waves softly breaking on the seashore.

By the lone seashore Mournfully beat the waves, Mournfully evermore The wild wind sobs and raves.

A sadness
And a sense of deep unrest
Brood on the clouds
And on the waters' breast.

Charles Mackay (1812 or 1814-1889)

But lo! The white sea mew careering, Float indolently by, And lo! A snowy sail appearing Gleams fair against the sky.

The sadness And the loneliness depart, And nature smiles With sympathy of heart.

Water (2015) - Anders Edenroth (b. 1963)

Anders Edenroth received training in Sweden as a composer, singer, pianist, and recording engineer. "Water" is one of more than 40 works he composed for The Real Group, a Swedish *a cappella* quintet which he helped found during his student days. We are singing a more recent version written for double choir and carefully-tuned bottles containing . . . water.

In the mind of a melting snowman, In the sound from a whistling kettle, In the gently alighting crystal of ice, In the dewdrops of a colourful petal— Water.

To live, everyone must have water,
To give, not to deny each other,
To bring from source to mouth,
Just like the food of love from a nursing mother—
Water.

Sweet as an angel's kiss,
Salt as her falling tears,
Droplets in patience wearing away
The mountain of time for billions of years.
Water.

Anders Edenroth

In the shape of a cloud evolving, In the gleam when your skin perspires, In the curse of a lost and foundering ship, In the silent face Narcissus admires— Water.

To kill for in a global battle,
To chill well in a plastic bottle,
To find between air and earth,
Both cold and wet, says Aristotle—
Water.

Mild as a mermaid's song,
Wild where the oceans roar,
Never been born and never been buried,
Infinite waves caressing the shore—
Water.

Shimmering Water - Bruce Sled

We are delighted to perform another work by Bruce Sled, a former member of the VCS bass section and husband of Rachel, one of our sopranos. His composition's non-lexical syllables occasionally combine between the voices to produce sounds that not only shimmer but also resemble the words 'shimmering water' ("shim-ma shim-ma ring ring gwa-da". You can appreciate the music's sounds much as one would enjoy an impressionistic painting, with hints of vowels and consonants combining to form an overall impression of shimmering water.

Water Night - Eric Whitacre (b. 1970)

Octavio Paz's family was a blend of indigenous Mexican and Spanish origins. He studied law and poetry, was drawn to Pablo Neruda's intriguing poems, followed the political liberalism of his family, supported those working against fascists in Spain, and was influenced by the surrealist movement.

He became Mexico's diplomat to New York City, Paris, and India. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature (1990).

"Water Night" is an early work by Whitacre, based on an early poem by Paz. Whitacre composed this piece in appreciation for his professor at the University of Nevada who convinced Whitacre to finish his degree and become a professional musician.

Night with the eyes of a horse that trembles in the night,
Night with eyes of water in the field asleep,
Is in your eyes, a horse that trembles,
Is in your eyes of secret water.

Eyes of shadow-water, Eyes of well-water, Eyes of dream-water.

Silence and solitude, Two little animals moon-led, Drink in your eyes, Drink in those waters, If you open your eyes, Night opens doors of musk, The secret kingdom of the water opens Flowing from the center of the night.

And if you close your eyes,
A river, a silent and beautiful current, fills you from within,
Flows forward, darkens you:

Night brings its wetness to beaches in your soul.

Agua nocturna, Octavio Paz (1914-1998), trans. Muriel Rukeyser (1913-1980).

Shenandoah (arr. 1971) - American Folksong, arr. James Erb (1926-2014)

Many delightful theories have been proposed for the origin of this American folksong which became a beloved sea shanty and was even sung as a paced capstan shanty when raising anchors. Some suspect the song began in the early 1800s, possibly sung by fur traders while canoeing between First Nations hunters and New World trading posts. Some versions of the song tell of a trader trying to convince Chief Shenandoah (Oneida Iroquois, d. 1816) to give his daughter in marriage (Chief Shenandoah: "My daughter you shall never follow." But, "He sold the chief that fire-water / And 'cross the river he stole his daughter").

Others have assumed that this song refers to Virginia's Shenandoah Valley ("I long to see your smiling valley" or another version: "O Shenandoah's my native valley / Beside her waters I love to dally"). After deciding not to make this their interim state song, the Virginia Legislature opted for "Our Great Virginia", which uses this evening's tune but different words. One obvious problem the legislators faced was that the Missouri River is hundreds of miles west of Virginia's beautiful valley.

Oh Shenando', I long to see you, And hear your rolling river. Oh Shenando', I long to see you, 'Way, we're bound away Across the wide Missouri.

I long to see your smiling valley, And hear your rolling river, I long to see your smiling valley, 'Way, we're bound away, Across the wide Missouri.

American folksong

'Tis sev'n long years since last I see you Away, you rolling river. 'Tis sev'n long years since last I see you, 'Way, we're bound away, Across the wide Missouri.

Oh Shenando', I long to see you, And hear your rolling river. Oh Shenando', I long to see you, 'Way, we're bound away Across the wide Missouri.

Blue (1971) - Joni Mitchell (b. 1943), arr. Malene Rigtrup

Born in Fort Macleod, Alberta in 1943, Joni Mitchell quickly became known as a singer, songwriter, pianist, and guitarist, equally adept in blues, jazz, and pop music. She has been nominated for a Grammy Award 20 times (most recently in November 2023) and received ten Grammy Awards. In 1997 she was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame (Cleveland, OH).

"Blue" was Mitchell's title track on her 1971 album, Blue, rated by Rolling Stone as the third greatest album of all time. Some of the language is hard, reflecting how drugs and the 60s affected pop musicians in the California scene. "Blue" is thought to have references to James Taylor, a gifted artist with whom she was in a relationship which ended the following month.

Blue, song are like tattoos You know I've been to sea before Crown and anchor me Or let me sail away

Hey, Blue, there is a song for you Ink on a pin Underneath the skin An empty space to fill in

Well, there's so many sinking now You gotta keep thinking You can make it through these waves Acid, booze, and ass Needles, guns, and grass Lots of laughs, lots of laughs Everybody's say that Hell's the hippest way to go Well, I don't think so But I'm gonna take a look around it, though Blue, I love you

Blue, here is a shell for you Inside you'll hear a sigh A foggy lullaby There is your song from me

Joni Mitchell

Light of a Clear Blue Morning - Dolly Parton (b. 1946), arr. Craig Hella Johnson (b. 1962)

Dolly Parton once said that this song grew out of her painful break with Porter Wagoner when she left his band in order to focus on her own career. His legal actions dragged on for about two years until she finally began to feel that the metaphoric clouds of her life were lifting, that she could finally begin to "see the light of a clear blue morning . . . It's gonna be okay."

Soloist: Sarah McGrath

It's been a long dark night,
And I've been a-waiting for the morning.
It's been a long hard fight,
I can see the light of a clear blue morning.
'cause I ain't seen it in so long.
Everything's gonna work out fine.
Everything's gonna be alright.

It's gonna be okay.

I can see the light of a clear blue morning.

I can see the light of a brand-new day.

I can see the light of a clear blue morning.

Everything's gonna be alright,

It's gonna be okay.

Clear blue morning blue.

Swimming over London - Bob Chilcott (b. 1955)

Bob Chilcott is a singer, choral composer, and arranger. He sang in The Choir of King's College, Cambridge both as a boy and as a university student. "Swimming over London" was the first of his many collaborations with the poet, Charles Bennett. The original dreamscape poem came from Bennett's collection How to Make a Woman Out of Water (2007) and was adapted for Chilcott's title song for the King's Singers' album (2010).

Soloists: Jonathan Saunders, Emily M. Cheung

A woman is swimming over London,

A fox turns up his face to see her pass,

There are blackbirds in the sleeping streets, A pear tree, luminous with blossom:

It's the dream she always has, The dream where she's touching a cloud.

The night is a tide she is pulled by, While a taxicab slumbers underneath,

And a robin is a fish who sings From a treetop of coral below her:

Charles Bennett (b. 1955)

It's the dream she always has,

The dream where she's dancing through air.

Aerials point like signposts Till the houses are gone,

And fields give way to a beach, Where the ocean is calling her name:

It's the dream she always has
The dream where she's swimming over London,

Where she sings to the stars like a mermaid, And darkness is a murmur in her hair.

Seaside Rendezvous (1975) - Freddie Mercury (1946-1991), Arr. Paul Hart

Born in Zanzibar, Freddie Mercury went with his family to England during the Zanzibar Revolution. In 1970 he was one of the founders of the band Queen. "Seaside Rendezvous" takes us back in time, recalling the joyfully flippant pre-war sounds of the music halls and vaudeville ("Be my Clementine"). It was included in Queen's album A Night at the Opera (1975), named after the Marx Brothers' film. The album climbed to No. 4 in the United States, just in time to solve the band's financial situation.

Seaside, whenever you stroll along with me I'm merely contemplating what you feel inside Can I have a volunteer? Meanwhile, I ask you to be my Clementine. You say you will if you could, but you can't I love you madly Let my imagination run away with you gladly A brand new angle, highly commendable Seaside rendezvous

I feel so romantic, can we do it again? Can we do it again sometime? Fantastic, c'est le vie mesdames et messieurs And at the peak of the season The Mediterranean This time of year, it's so fashionable

Freddie Mercury

I feel like dancing in the rain (Just keep right on dancing) What a damn jolly good idea It's such a jollification, as a matter of fact So très charmant, my dear

Underneath the moonlight Together we'll sail across the sea Reminiscing every night Meantime (And in the meantime, baby) I ask you to be my valentine You say you'd have to tell your daddy if you can I'll be your Valentino We'll ride upon an omnibus and then the casino Get a new facial, start a sensational

Seaside rendezvous, so adorable Seaside rendezvous, ooh-ooh Seaside rendezvous, give us a kiss.

Song Sung Blue - Neil Diamond (b. 1941)

Song Sung Blue, everybody knows one, Song Sung Blue, every garden grows one. Me and you, are subject to, the blues now and then, But when you take the blues, and make a song, You sing them out again, sing them out again.

Song Sung Blue, weepin' like a willow, Song Sung Blue, sleepin' on my pillow. Funny thing, but you can sing it with a cry in your voice. And before you know it start to feelin' good. You simply got no choice.

Neil Diamond

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