



Lift Every Voice



CONFEDERATION CENTRE OF THE ARTS
CENTRE DES ARTS DE LA CONFÉDÉRATION

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Lift Every Voice

When the landscapes of our lives seem to change every day, sharing our experiences can help us adapt. Singing is a particularly powerful way to share our perspective, and can offer a valuable window into others'. The Confederation Singers with Director Nick MacDonald are excited and proud to offer this springtime celebration of the unique beauty in each of us and our collective capacity to help each other grow!

Starting with powerful declarations of human identity and an anthemic call to share our unique voices with the world, the focus then expands to explore the wonder and wisdom of the natural world through a diversity of human expression.

After a series of meditations on the beauty and humility to be found in the rhythms of all growing things, attention returns to the human world with renewed perspective.

The final section of the program serves as an affirmation of our shared responsibility to make space for each other, to truly see and hear each other, and to persevere in the face of hardship and injustice.

By focusing on works from many different backgrounds including Women, Black, Indigenous, and Canadian composers and arrangers, in this concert we seek to lift up a diverse array of voices and listen deeply, opening to the work that this transformative time in history requires of us.



Lift Every
Voice

Message from the Director of Arts Education and Heritage at Confederation Centre of the Arts

What a tremendous, transformative year it has been for the Confederation Singers! Thank you for being here today to celebrate the culmination of this year of community building, sharing voices and sharing stories.

Confederation Centre of the Arts is delighted to continue its rich legacy of choral programming. As we look to the future, and as shovels hit the ground this fall for our upcoming revitalization project, we look forward to the continued growth and evolution of the choral programs and the Arts Education and Heritage programs overall. We have some exciting projects in the works and we can't wait to share them with you.

Thanks for being on this journey with us. Enjoy today's performance!



Francesca Perez
Director of Arts Education
and Heritage

REGISTER TODAY!



**2024-2025 early-bird registration available
from April 30, 2024 to July 31, 2024**

Regular registration August 1, 2024

Visit confederationcentre.com/choral-music
for more information or to register.

Message from the Director of Choral Music at Confederation Centre of the Arts

Welcome to the final Confederation Singers concert of the 2023-2024 season! This year has marked a significant transition for the Choral Program at Confederation Centre of the Arts. As the new Director of Choral Music, I feel so grateful to be able to work and play with these singers week after week. The connection, joy, and musical growth that has taken place has been remarkable, and leaves me inspired to build on the successes and live into the lessons learned.

When I introduced myself at the start of this season, I shared some of my overall goals intended to foster truly memorable and transformative experiences. They included three fundamental ingredients: 1. The pursuit of excellent musical technique and expression; 2. A diverse selection of repertoire that is interesting, challenging, fun, and meaningful for both performers and audience; and 3. A welcoming and inclusive space in which to do this work together. As we've worked and played with these building blocks in mind, I have seen members of our musical community feel ever more empowered to sing, connect, and be inspired.

Our concert tonight is all about welcoming diverse voices and the wisdom they have to share, from the multiplicity of human lived experiences to the beautiful lessons to be found in the natural world. I believe that a choral ensemble at its best is a prime example of just such an approach, bringing many voices together as one in the pursuit of art, beauty, and growth. We hope you leave the theatre tonight feeling a part of that – energized and open to the beauty that surrounds us, in the world and in each other.



Many thanks to all who have made this concert possible: To our longtime season sponsor Maritime Electric and the staff of the Centre who have made me feel so welcome in my new position. Thank you of course to the choristers for their hard work and dedication in continuing this journey together. Thank you to our wonderful collaborative pianist, Jamie Feinberg. And to you, our audience and community: Thank you for coming and enjoy the show!

Nick MacDonald
Director of Choral Music

CHORISTERS

SOPRANO 1

Gail Dixon
Sheila Gallant
Nora McCarthy
Shauna McGill
Anne McLeod

SOPRANO 2

Ann Auld
Alicia Chiasson
Keelin Howe
Lili Liu
Ashley McLellan
Kate Zhang

ALTO/BASS

Janice Burke
Susannah Campbell
Lorie Fowler
Norine Hanus
Dezhang He
Nicole Hollands
Mary MacEachern
Anastasiia Mikhailova
Marina Pogrebnaia



PROGRAM

We Are...

Words and music by Ysaye M. Barnwell

Lift Every Voice and Sing

Words by James Weldon Johnson, Music by J. Rosamond Johnson
Arranged by Rollo Dilworth

Qilak

Words and music by Andrew Balfour, Inspired by travels in Baffin Island
Edited by Catherine Robbins

Music of Life

Words by George Lathrop, Music by B.E. Boykin

Awakening

Words by James Weldon Johnson, Music by Christi Jones

This We Know

Words by Ted Perry (Inspired by a speech given by Chief Seattle in the 19th Century)
Music by Sarah Quartel

Rainy Day People

Words and music by Gordon Lightfoot, Arranged by Erica Phare-Bergh

Carry the Music

Words and music by Sarah Quartel
Inspired by members of the Northwest Girlchoir reflecting on what
their choir means to them

Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around

African-American Spiritual with additional text from "Words Like Freedom"
by Langston Hughes, Arranged by Rollo Dilworth

PROGRAM NOTES

Part I: “Who We Are”

“**We Are**” by Ysaye M. Barnwell kicks off our concert with a series of declarations of human identity, celebrating what is both unique and universal in each of us. Barnwell’s music has a wonderful momentum and mantra-like quality, with the vocal line at times disappearing and re-emerging from different areas of the choir in a call to share our authentic voices with each other in all our complexity and contradiction.

“**Lift Every Voice and Sing**” serves as the flagship song and namesake of our concert. It is an anthem of resilience and faith with text written in the year 1900 by seminal civil rights advocate James Weldon Johnson and later set to music by his brother John Rosamond Johnson. Having become widely known as the Black National Anthem in the United States, its message of hope in the face of hardship and injustice has continued to resonate deeply with Black and other racialized and marginalized populations across the U.S., Canada, and the world. Today it is widely performed by people of all races and backgrounds. The poem’s call to make “earth and heaven ring...with the harmonies of liberty” emphasizes the importance of making space for different perspectives to build a world in which every person feels a sense of both belonging and freedom. To quote the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: “ Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”

Part II: “All Growing Things”

In the second portion of our concert we expand the conversation beyond the human world to include voices to be found in nature, if only we choose to listen.

“**Qilak**” is a piece inspired by Cree-descended and Winnipeg-based composer Andrew Balfour’s travels in Baffin island. Written in a contemporary Western choral style and using a combination of evocative Inuktitut text with a shimmering and spacious musical language, it depicts the expanse of sky and the reflection of sun on snow. “Qilak” can be translated as “the sky,” “the heavens,” or “paradise,” and “ Tungunig ” refers to the reflection of open water in the sky at the horizon. This selection is also intended as a complement and follow-up to the Confederation Centre Gallery’s exhibition entitled “Arctic Visions, Arctic Life,” featuring historical and contemporary art made in the Inuit homeland in Canada.

PROGRAM NOTES (CONTINUED)

“Music of Life” by B.E. (Brittney) Boykin revels in the rhythmic undercurrent of energy that pulses through the Earth and all growing things. This is especially apparent in our current season of Spring, and Boykin’s haunting and effervescent setting of George Parsons Lathrop’s 19th century Romantic-era poetry might bring to mind fresh green shoots fervently rising through the decaying layers of last year’s leaves.

With **“Awakening”** the poetry of James Weldon Johnson makes a second appearance, this time in a lush and atmospheric setting by Christi Jones. Driving rhythms and a minor tonality pair with soaring, close harmonies to portray the human ache for companionship as it relates to the cycles and symbioses of the natural world. These come together in the beautiful metaphor of a rose and a bee to explore themes of true love and destiny.

Part II’s theme of natural wonder culminates with **“This We Know,”** composed by popular contemporary Canadian composer Sarah Quartel. The piece employs a musical style at once dignified and dreamlike to state with humility that “the Earth does not belong to us, we belong to the Earth.” The middle section uses layered entrances and flowing lines to emphasize that “we did not weave the web of life, we are merely a strand in it.”

It is important to recognize that this famous text cannot in fact be attributed to Chief Seattle; instead we have received it through the filter of two non-Indigenous writers. A Dr. Henry Smith was indeed present at a speech given by the Indigenous leader in December 1854, and wrote his own interpretation which he sent to a Seattle newspaper. This in turn inspired the script of a historical fiction film by Ted Perry in 1972. While the exact words are not Seattle’s, the theme and message of these words point to our shared responsibility to listen to and honour the invaluable traditional knowledge and wisdom of Indigenous peoples, and it offers inspiration to be mindful of our place in the web of life and to be generous and kind to the Earth and to one another.

PROGRAM NOTES (CONTINUED)

Part III: “Join the Story, Join the Song”

In the final portion of our concert attention turns back to the human world with renewed perspective as we resolve to look, to listen, to lift each other’s voices along with our own, and to make use of the lessons we’ve learned along the way.

Gordon Lightfoot was a Canadian folk music icon who composed over 200 songs, receiving 17 Juno awards and five Grammy nominations over his decades-long career before dying of natural causes less than a year ago in May 2023. His 1975 hit **“Rainy Day People”** reminds us that often the most important thing we can do for each other is simply to be present, listen, and share our time. The song expresses gratitude for those who “don’t hide love inside, they just pass it on,” suggesting that we all have the capacity to be “rainy day people” for each other.

This theme continues as Sarah Quartel’s compositional voice returns in **“Carry the Music,”** a heartfelt celebration of the genuine community that can be developed and deepened through collective music making. The text was written by Quartel and inspired by members of Seattle’s Northwest Girlchoir reflecting on what their choir means to them. In a lilting, lullaby-like style, the piece bridges the past to the future, celebrating what has been built and aspiring to greater, wider connection in the future.

Our program closes with a sense of determination and perseverance in Rollo Dilworth’s impassioned arrangement of the Black spiritual **“Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around.”** Dilworth, a prolific choral composer, arranger, conductor, and educator, has combined this traditional spiritual in an uptempo gospel style with portions of Langston Hughes’ poem “Words Like Freedom,” set to original music in a more lyrical style. The contrast between the two adds a bittersweet nuance to the spiritual’s message, reminding us of the immense amount of work that remains to be done in the pursuit of justice: “There are words like liberty that almost make me cry / If you had known what I know, you would know why.”

In spite of the work that lies before us, our entire program tonight affirms that we must remain undaunted, open to ways we can transform ourselves and our world. The tools we need are all around us, and if we keep on walking, keep on talking, keep on singing, keep on shouting, perhaps we can march up to our own freedom land – a world in which all are respected and cared for, and where we are truly free to Lift Every Voice.

Nick MacDonald, Director of Choral Music

Nick MacDonald is a conductor, educator, and performer dedicated to exploring the power of group singing to inspire joy, creativity, and connection in people of all ages. Nick was born in Boston and grew up in New Hampshire where he began guitar lessons at age 10 and had his first choral experience in a Beatles choir camp the following year. This was the beginning of a lifelong passion for music, and he has since become known for offering inclusive spaces in which all feel welcome to learn, grow, and share their own authentic voice.

After completing his Bachelor of Music in Music Education at the University of Southern Maine, Nick continued his private vocal studies with tenor Mark Sprinkle of the Blue Heron Renaissance Choir, and has participated in numerous workshops and master classes with choral leaders including Rollo Dilworth, Hilary Apfelstadt, John William Trotter, Caron Daley, and Craig Jessop. He has worked as a choral director and music teacher in public and private schools, churches, and community choruses, and as a private instructor in voice and guitar. Before relocating to Prince Edward Island in 2017, he served as Choral Director at the Waynflete School and Music Director of the Tri-City Community Chorus.

Since moving to PEI, Nick has offered voice and movement workshops as part of the Arts Ed Workshop Series at Confederation Centre of the Arts, as well as classes and performances for young children through Family Place and the Summerside Arts Festival. He has also performed as a bass-baritone with Luminos Ensemble and Under the Spire Music Festival's "Spire Choir."

Jamie Feinberg, Collaborative Pianist

Jamie Feinberg (she/her/hers) is a performing artist, coach, mental fitness trainer, speaker and writer who finds joy in helping people to create a life they love. After spending the early part of her career as a professional musical director, arts educator, and performer, she started her own theatre company in New Hampshire in 2010, toured the states from 2016-2021 in an RV with her husband, and in August of 2021 moved to PEI. She is the director of Island A Cappella, a women's competitive a cappella chorus based in Charlottetown, a soprano 1 in ECMA-nominated Luminos Ensemble, and a freelance vocal coach and collaborative pianist.