

Dawn on Our Darkness



CONFEDERATION CENTRE OF THE ARTS
CENTRE DES ARTS DE LA CONFÉDÉRATION

SPONSORED BY:



Dawn on Our Darkness



*“Brightest and best of the stars of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid.”*

-Southern Harmony 1835

*“With big sky above me
I’m on my way
Scanning the horizon
Of a brand new day.”*

-Sarah Quartel

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In the spirit of Reconciliation, Confederation Centre of the Arts acknowledges that the land upon which our organization stands is ancestral Mi'kmaq territory. Epekwitk (PEI), Mi'kma'ki, is covered by the historic Treaties of Peace and Friendship. We pay our respects to the Indigenous Mi'kmaq People who have occupied this Island for over 12,000 years; past, present and future. We work in collaboration and friendship with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit artists and storytellers from across Canada to promote cultural learning and understanding.

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

On behalf of Confederation Centre of the Arts, thank you for being a part of our vibrant community. Confederation Centre celebrated its 60th anniversary this year, and it has grown into a place where people can learn about how Canada was formed and how it continues to grow and change – always with the arts at the heart of it. As we look to the future, we remain committed to engaging greater audiences through artistic offerings that reflect our vibrant and rich communities, ensure accessibility, and that represent our shared voices.

As you know, renovations have begun at Confederation Centre, which is the culmination of years of strategic planning and community engagement. We appreciate you being a part of this transitional time at the Centre, which includes changes in rehearsal and performance spaces, among other things. We can't wait to share our new, accessible music rehearsal spaces with you when they are ready in just a couple of short years. Thank you for being on this journey with us. Enjoy today's performance!



Francesca Perez
Director of Arts Education
and Heritage

JOIN THE CHOIR



**2025-2026 early-bird registration available
from April 30, 2025 to July 31, 2025**

Regular registration August 1, 2025

Visit confederationcentre.com/choir
for more information.

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

Welcome to the Confederation Singers Winter Concert 2024! It has been my joy and privilege to work with these singers to prepare the program you are about to hear. With membership nearly double that of the 2023-2024 season, it has been so inspiring to witness musical skills and chorister connections grow over the course of the Fall/Winter rehearsal process. I am so proud of what we are cultivating together, building on the successes and learning from the challenges of the past.

The title of tonight's concert comes from the 1835 Southern Harmony tune arranged by Shawn Kirchner, "Brightest and Best," which calls on the star in the East of the Christmas story to "dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid." In programming this concert, two related themes emerged: the progression of light coming out of darkness, and our collective journeys between the two, in transformative cycles, both literally and metaphorically. As a result, one of the primary goals became to feature choral works that bridge the old to the new, traveling from the known to the unknown to the known – not back again, but onward.

Each day the sunrise follows the night and each year the daylight hours begin to grow out of the winter darkness. Light returns, but it is not exactly the same light. Each day, each year, each generation of life is new and different, both an homage to and a transformation of who and what came before.

This music gives us an opportunity to observe and participate in this journey. It is manifest musically in many familiar and beautiful Winter and Christmas songs that have been re-interpreted by the arrangers and, we hope, further reinvigorated in our renditions! In preparing these pieces for performance, we have been invited to re-imagine the way we perform some of these old favorites. In doing so we may glimpse new shades of meaning that didn't quite catch the light before.



Nick MacDonald
Director of Choral Music

Like those first shafts of slanted sunlight at dawn, we hope this concert offers some moments of reflection, and maybe even a bit of refraction – a chance for new meanings to dawn just as each day is a new beginning.

Thank you to everyone who has made this concert possible, from the tech, events, and marketing staff to the Arts Education team, our wonderful collaborative pianist Jamie Feinberg, and most of all to the choristers for their dedication and passion for choral singing. And of course, a huge thank you to you, our audience and community, for coming to experience and support this music! We hope you enjoy the performance.

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CHORISTERS

Ann Auld
Janice Burke
Susannah Campbell
Stella Chen
Qiao Mei Cheng
Alicia Chiasson
Gina Clow
Fiep de Bie
Gail Dixon
Lorie Fowler
Susie Fraser
F. Sheila Gallant

Alison Galley
Shannon Hartigan
Ruth Houtby
Keelin Howe
Jingxue Lie
Michael Ma
Kya MacBean
Christian MacDonald
Nora McCarthy Joyce
Ashley McLellan
Anne McLeod
Anastasiia Mikhailova

Wanda Naylor
Emily O'Brien
Janice Ployer
Kelly Power
Lindsay Schick
Marina Simon
Nancy Smith
Callista Tan
Roxana Valverde
Andrea VanWiechen
Tina Wang
Xinyue Yang



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PROGRAM

Solstice Carole

Words and music by Kim Baryluk
Transcribed by Larry Nickel

Brightest and Best

Hymn Tune from Southern Harmony 1835
Words by Reginald Heber
Arranged by Shawn Kirchner

Begin with the Heart

Words by Julian of Norwich
Music by Leah Hokanson

Rise Up, Shepherd and Follow

Traditional Spiritual
Adapted and arranged by Greg Gilpin

Night of Silence

Words and music by Daniel Kantor

Silent Night

Original German words by Joseph Mohr
English translation by John. F. Young
Music by Franz X. Gruber

Patapan Fantasia

Words and music by Bernard de la Monnoye
Arranged and translated by Audrey Snyder

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PROGRAM (CONTINUED)

I Wonder as I Wander

Traditional Appalachian Carol
Arranged by Ruth Elaine Schram

Song for a Winter's Night

Words and music by Gordon Lightfoot
Arranged by Michael Hanawalt and Justine Sasanfar

Wassail Song

Traditional Gloucestershire Wassailing Song
Arranged by Katherine K. Davies

Wide Open Spaces

Words and music by Sarah Quartel



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PROGRAM NOTES

Kim Baryluk's **Solstice Carole**, originally performed by the Wyrd Sisters, has become a choral favourite and invokes both a gentle and celebratory tone for our performance tonight. As we dance and glide through welcoming expressions of gratitude, we invite all to come by the fire and toast the past year as we prepare for our journey from darkness into light.

Brightest and Best, in the words of arranger Shawn Kirchner, "a lively arrangement...of the sturdy American hymn tune STAR IN THE EAST with text by Reginald Heber." The piano accompaniment emulates a banjo and "provides sparks," moving with fervent energy as the voices soar in search of that eternal guiding light of the Christmas story. After the powerful homorhythmic statement of the first verse and refrain, each subsequent verse features increasingly complex imitative entrances weaving in and out of the texture, exploding into harmony at each iteration of the words "brightest and best" before galvanizing into a stirring unison: "Star in the east, the horizon adorning, guide where our infant Redeemer is laid."

If we are going to embark on a journey from darkness into light, where do we begin? Julian of Norwich knew the answer in the 14th century: **Begin with the Heart**. Leah Hokanson's gently lilting, gospel-inspired meditation on these wise words offers an opportunity to centre ourselves in this question before seeking the answer in the stories that surround this cold and dark time of year; a time that also holds great anticipation of growth and beauty to come.

The journey begins in earnest with the sighting of a distant star – a horizon to strive for. This traditional Black spiritual has been re-imagined with a driving, rhythmic energy that draws from popular rock while paying tribute to the original tune's inherent urgency and yearning. We get swept up in the search as the invitation arrives to **Rise Up, Shepherd and Follow** the distant light filled with promise and mystery.

After rising up and following the brightest star, our Christmas path naturally leads to the manger's side. **Night of Silence** was written by Daniel Kantor as a partner melody to the beloved carol Silent Night with which we invite the audience to sing along during verse three of Kantor's beautiful, lyrical, and sometimes chromatically surprising, melody. The new text offers new shades of meaning to the original, a reminder that it is often darkest before the dawn, and "frozen in the snow lie roses, sleeping."

Following this moment of peaceful reverence, it's time to celebrate with flutes and drums! Audrey Snyder has reworked and rhapsodized upon this famous French Christmas tune to create **Patapan Fantasia**, honouring Bernard de la Mannoye's original while incorporating syncopated rhythmic patterns, percussive ostinati, and sweeping, almost symphonic gestures amongst the upper vocal lines. Listening carefully toward the end of the piece, the listener may catch a repeated melodic figure that rings a bell, so to speak, as a quote from another famous carol which also involves a great deal of repetition.

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PROGRAM NOTES (CONTINUED)

Revelry soon turns to reverie with Ruth Elaine Schram's haunting interpretation of **I Wonder as I Wander**. The harmonic language and unique phrasing of this arrangement emphasize the contemplative, mysterious air of this traditional Appalachian carol. While each verse begins with forward momentum, a subtle march vaguely reminiscent of "Brightest and Best," this inertia always proves temporary. As the piece progresses, in some moments it feels like time itself is suspended in sustained dissonance, like a thought hanging in the air or a question waiting for an answer.

This reflective theme continues into Gordon Lightfoot's classic folk ballad **Song for a Winter's Night**, arranged tenderly by Michael Hanawalt and Justine Sasanfar. With warm threads of resonant tone interweaving with the melody and the gentle undercurrent of the accompaniment emulating a finger-picked guitar, it's easy to be drawn into the moment in which this song dwells: a long winter's night of longing for what is lost as the lamplight grows dim – until the dawn eventually starts to show.

Out of this winter darkness comes the sound of distant singing! It gets louder and closer and soon the wassailers have arrived at your door to wish you holiday cheer – and to demand some in return! This **Wassail Song**, originating in Gloucestershire, England, is one of many festive and joyous songs that were traditionally sung by groups of revelers going door to door in their town, asking for food and drink in return for songs and good wishes. This practice of going out into the community to share goodwill in the coldest, darkest time of year reminds us that the light will come again and that we can help the new dawn arrive for each other.

Wide Open Spaces, an original choral piece by popular Canadian composer Sarah Quartel, ends our concert with a look to the future. Quartel's original text traces our journeys both inward and outward and in again to seek the spaces that are yet to be filled. The musical setting showcases a contrast between sustained, soaring lines and powerful rhythmic proclamations, all in a musical world filled with air and light. After journeying into the dark in search of a new beginning and turning inward with reflection, contemplation, and even despair, we have emerged on the other side, maybe with a different way of seeing the world. The lyrics to Quartel's song provide almost a map, a template for how this journey can happen.

Winter is often considered a time to be inside when we can, safe and warm away from the cold. It's a time when we might "look within and see the spaces inside...yet to be filled." When we do venture out again, we can help each other to fill these wide open spaces with something we love, something we would like to be.

We can make space to welcome the dawn.



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Nick MacDonald, Director of Choral Music

Nick MacDonald (he/him) is a conductor, educator, and performer dedicated to exploring the power of collective singing to inspire joy, creativity, and connection in people of all ages. Nick grew up in New England and began guitar lessons at age 10. Participation in school music programs, musicals, and numerous regional and state music festivals began a lifelong passion for choral singing. He has since become known for offering inclusive and engaging spaces in which all feel welcome to connect, learn, grow, and explore their own authentic voice.

After completing a Bachelor of Music in Music Education at the University of Southern Maine, Nick continued private vocal studies with tenor Mark Sprinkle of the Blue Heron Renaissance Choir and participated in workshops and master classes with choral leaders including Rollo Dilworth, Hilary Apfelstadt, John William Trotter, Caron Daley, and Craig Jessop. He worked as a choral director and music teacher in public and private schools, churches, community choral programs, 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 workshops focusing on voice, movement, and music theory at Confederation Centre of the Arts, as well as classes and performances for young children. He also performed as a bass-baritone with Charlottetown-based 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 competitive, community a cappella chorus for women and non-binary people based in Charlottetown, and a freelance vocal coach and collaborative pianist.