



VIVRE LA MUSIQUE - LET'S MAKE MUSIC

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IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

THROAT SINGING

TRADITION AND MODERN PRACTICE

Submitted by Rachel Beausoleil

I have been asked to write this article on a theme relative to indigenous musics because I have spent the last several months producing a series of classes for CAMMAC designed for participants to get to know indigenous musics and artists. I would like to state here that I am sensitive to the idea of cultural appropriation, and that I hope my work will not be received as such. I do not position myself as an expert on this subject. Rather, I come to these musics as a humble student and a fellow musician. I am interested, eager to learn, curious and full of respect. I do not pretend to understand from the point of view of an insider, but I am a deeply moved listener from the edges of these cultures, that have at times felt to me to be so close and yet so far.

The CAMMAC presentations have been educational for me both as a researcher and performer. They have forced me to dig deeper, to go further, to try harder. All in the hopes of becoming more sensitive, more aware, more in tune with the people making the music, more understanding of the issues that face them, more appreciative of their art and their cultural practices. It is in this spirit that I write these few words on the topic of throat singing, which has held a fascination for me for quite some time. Any mistakes are my own, and I welcome the opportunity to stand corrected.

Traditionally, Inuit throat singing was practiced primarily as a game between women who might need something to pass the time, particularly while the men were out hunting. It could also serve to soothe children and help them fall asleep. It is a practice that is thriving nowadays, despite having been forbidden

by colonial priests. However, some of the parameters have shifted. The game is still practiced at friendly gatherings for self-entertainment. But more and more, this type of singing is building steam as a performance practice on concert and festival stages.

The game

As a friendly competition, a pair of women hold each other by the arms and sway side to side. They use their voices and their breath to imitate sounds from their environment, such as those made by tools or animals, for instance. They do this in tandem, like a tight canon of sorts, where one person starts the phrase a split second after the other. The sounds and rhythms are repeated for an undetermined length of time. However, without warning, one person can change the pattern, and the other person must switch to imitate it without breaking the rhythm. It is a question of continuing the patterns until one person either runs out of breath or breaks out laughing. The first person to laugh loses the game. The tempo remains relatively constant for a whole song, but partners can slow or speed up the beat slightly, and can signal each other by a gentle squeeze or release of the elbow.¹

Sound can be produced on both the inhalation and the exhalation. In some cases, the phrases are divided in length between the inhale or exhale in equal measure. Sometimes, the inhalation happens in short bursts between exhaled sound productions.² In all cases, the breath is both inhaled and exhaled through the mouth. Throat singers have to learn to measure their breath intake so as to not get light-headed.³

The sounds of Inuit throat singing range from deep guttural growl-like action to high-pitched throat whistles. Voiced and voiceless sounds are used in all parts of the vocal range, producing a huge variety of pitched frictions in different parts of the throat. This makes for countless expressive options for imitating environmental sounds, to tell a story, or simply to out-manoeuvre one's partner. Use of articulators of the mouth multiplies the options for sounds emerging from the throat.⁴ Although viewed as a good-natured contest, particularly skilled participants are recognized as such. Practitioners like Karin and Kathy Kettler, and Samantha Metcalfe, insist that throat singing can only be learned from another person.⁵

As the phrases are sung with a very short delay between the pair of singers, the voices end up sounding as though they are one. The listener is challenged to discern which of the two singers is creating which sound. Indeed, the effective imitation of the natural sound in question, depends on the blending of the two voices. Some phrases are word-based, and some are not.

Depending on the region, some throat songs have a narrative structure. According to ethnomusicologist Jean-Jacques Nattiez, the variety called katajjaq, which is practiced in Arctic Québec and Baffin Island, has no narrative. He explains: "Netsilingmiut (Netsilik), Iglulingmiut (Iglulik; Iglulik) and Kivallirmiut

¹ [Samatha Metcalfe \(2016\)](#)

² [Tanya Tagaq \(2009\)](#)

³ [Kathy Kettler \(2004\)](#)

⁴ [Tanya Tagaq \(2009\)](#)

⁵ [Karin Kettler \(2013\)](#), [Samantha Metcalfe \(2016\)](#)

(Caribou Inuit), vocal games do not necessarily feature the throat sounds typical of *katajjaq* that are so striking; and they often refer to a narrative text absent from *katajjaq*".⁶

Throat Singing in Performance

In recent years, several Inuit throat singers have opted to fuse throat singing with other musical genres, such as punk rock, folk or electronic dance music. This performance practice is gaining traction, as indigenous peoples forge a path into mainstream culture, resisting stereotyping and primitivization that has been imposed on them for several generations. What follows is a series of vignettes, featuring three artists who are currently innovating musically using throat singing. As is the case whenever I think, write or present about music, the process of study always feels incomplete. There is always more to say. My intention here is to use these examples to show the complexity and variety of these musical practices, to shine a light on artists who I think deserve more recognition. And full disclosure, the feminist in me wants to show the work of women, because it's about time we did more of that in the realm of popular musics.

[Tanya Tagaq](#)⁷



Tanya Tagaq is a singer, novelist and painter, born in Nunavut in 1975. She breaks from throat singing tradition by singing it in solo performances. Her style can be described as a mixture of Inuit throat singing with experimental and improvisational punk rock. She has been acclaimed for her virtuosic and uninhibited vocals. Her vocalizations are intense, and often aggressive, and she makes no apologies for tackling difficult themes, such as rape, capitalism, environmental apocalypse and colonialism. She does not shy away from controversy and uses her voice creatively to speak out in the name of the causes she espouses.

⁶ [Nattiez, Jean-Jacques \(2016, 2005\)](#)

⁷ [Retribution by Tanya Tagaq](#)

She has won numerous prestigious awards, including a Polaris prize and two Juno awards.⁸ She is lauded for her fearless singing, which she accompanies with unconstrained movement of her body. She is a ground breaker and is the go-to throat singer for high-profile musical productions of all kinds, both in Canada and internationally. I would encourage anyone to get to know her work, if only to be rattled out of one's complacency.

[Aasiva](#)⁹



Colleen Aasiva Nakashuk, who goes by Aasiva, is a multi-instrumentalist singer-songwriter. Her eponymous debut album was released in 2018. It subsequently received nominations for Indigenous Music Awards in two categories.¹⁰ This young talent from Pangnirtung, Nunavut is making head-way with her soft-spoken vocals and playful tunes. In an interview with CBC's Tom Power, she humbly reports "I can play several instruments. And when I was attending Nunavut Sivuniksavut in Ottawa, they have a music room. So I walked in and I looked around and I realized there were two instruments that I couldn't play." She jokes "...so I chose the bass guitar."¹¹ She actually chose the ukulele.

She goes on to explain that her mission is to perform and to teach music to as many young people as possible, to give them the same opportunities she has had, and to "help them find themselves through music." She also wants to pursue a career in music therapy.

Like Tagaq, Aasiva uses throat singing in solo performance, but their styles could not be more different. Aasiva's musical style is described as "airy and lively," "fresh, buoyant," "her melodious voice set against playful ukulele."¹² This folk-based album also includes the sounds of steel pan, adding a Caribbean feel to the song Aniiq (Play in the Snow) in a cheerful juxtaposition of the hot climate instrument with the cold climate lyrics. The song Uumamtiga (Hurt Heart), begins with an introduction on the violin which segues

⁸ [Laura Stanley, *The Canadian Encyclopedia* \(2019\)](#)

⁹ [Qaulnaat Nunanganiit by Aasiva](#)

¹⁰ [CBC Radio 1, *q.* with Tom Power \(May, 2019\)](#)

¹¹ [CBC Radio 1, *q.* with Tom Power \(May, 2019\)](#)

¹² [Aakuluk Music](#) (n.d)

into throat singing accompanied by a Celtic-sounding ostinato pattern on an unidentified wind instrument. Although the lyrics speak of questioning why people hurt each other with lies, she interjects with the sound of laughter and ends with the lesson: “Why can’t we just show love? We are all human beings.” Similarly, her other song lyrics include recognition of hardships along with a message of hope and inspiration.

She performs several segments of throat singing, at times using the rhythms and syllabic mouth actions of throat singing, but with a pitched melody instead of the breath generated sounds of traditional katajjaq. Most of her song lyrics are in Inuktituq. She also includes some spoken word in English, and a child’s singing voice. Her simple messages of love are effectively disarming.

Riit¹³



An up and coming artist by the name of Rita Clair Mike-Murphy, or Riit, is changing the throat singing landscape, melding throat singing with electronic dance beats. Like Aasiva, this Pangnirtung native now resides in Iqaluit. She hosts a children’s television show called *Anaana’s Tent*, the only show of its kind fully in Inuktituq.

Riit’s first full-length album, *Ataataga*, was released in 2019 and is dedicated to her father. It is a mixture of original songs and cover songs by other Inuit artists, such as legendary Inuit rock band Northern Haze, only she performs it as an electro-pop duet with Josh Q. Her songs explore themes of family, life and love.¹⁴ Stuart Derdeyn of the Vancouver Sun says: “Throughout the album, the use of drones, slashing

¹³ [Qaumajuapik by Riit](#)

¹⁴ <https://www.riitmusic.com/about>

electronic percussion and floating background vocals evokes a definite sense of place.”¹⁵ The album was nominated for a Juno award this year.

Riit’s use of throat singing is in keeping with the tradition of singing in pairs, even though her single name appears as the headliner. And she says that she would like to emulate the singing of elders, stating that many of the elders’ sounds “got lost over time.” She describes those sounds as guttural and fast-paced, and says that her goal has always been to sound like them. ¹⁶

I will be following this young woman’s career closely, as I am quite certain that she is going places.

My observations

In 2011, I attended a workshop on throat singing, given at the International Council on Traditional Music conference at Memorial University in St-John, Newfoundland. The women who gave the workshop told us that if the technique is done right, there is no damage to the vocal cords. I cannot help but notice that all three of these women have soft speaking voices. Even Tanya Tagaq, who is anything but relaxed in her singing, has a smoothness to her spoken voice that makes me want to know more about how throat singing affects, well, the throat. I did ask one of our teachers this question, and she said the sound had to be very deep in order to not damage the vocal cords. If a study of this matter exists, I have not yet found it, but I would be very interested to know of the long-term effects of such a vocal production. That said, part of the answer may be in Riit’s comments, that she aspires to sound like an elderly woman.

Those words hold a different meaning to her than they would in my culture, where “sounding like an elderly woman” would be equal to “sounding frail.” It makes me think that we, in the south, have much to learn about the value of age and voice, from the people of the north.

About the author

Rachel Beausoleil (PhD) is a French-Canadian worldly jazz chanteuse, born and raised in Montreal. Rachel is known for her love of languages, world musics and her drama flair. She studied with bass-baritone Ingemar Korjus, and JUNO winner Jeri Brown. In Brazil she studied with living legend Rosa Passos, who gave her a thumbs-up. She toured with the Panamérica Canção Project in 2013, in Ottawa and throughout the state of São Paulo. Since the late 1980s, Rachel has been part of many vocal groups, jazz and Latin combos. Her latest album is called *Brazz* (2020). Rachel’s previous recordings are *Close to My Heart* (2001), and *The Dawning* (2009). www.rachelbeausoleil.ca

¹ [CBC Radio 1, q. with Tom Power \(June 2020\)](#)

¹⁵ [Stuart Derdeyn, *Vancouver Sun* \(Oct. 2019\)](#)

¹⁶ [CBC Radio 1, q. with Tom Power \(June 2020\)](#)

OF NOTE:
VISION & COLLABORATION:
CREE COMPOSER ANDREW BALFOUR



Andrew Balfour - Manitoba, Summer 2020

*Submitted by Jenny Crober,
Artistic Director/Conductor, VOCA Chorus of Toronto*

I first came across the music of Cree composer Andrew Balfour in June 2018 in St. John's, Nfld. at the opening session of the national Podium Choral Conference & Festival. The first selection of this session was *Ambe*, a 'welcome song', sung in Ojibway. My husband and I were captivated by the power and potency of this exuberant, rhythmically-driving piece, which was masterfully performed by Edmonton's Chronos Vocal Ensemble, directed by Jordan Van Biert.

I knew then that I had to find out more about this work - and this composer.

When I met Andrew at a workshop the following day in St. John's, he showed a clear interest in working with the choir I conduct, VOCA Chorus of Toronto. Soon afterwards, I chose *Ambe* as the opening selection of our May 2019 "Earth, Sea & Sky II" concert, and in preparation for this performance, I invited Andrew to conduct a March 2019 workshop with VOCA. This event became one of the most moving and inspirational sessions which I have ever been involved with. I'll be referring to this workshop again at the end of this article.

Andrew Balfour was a ‘Sixties Scoop’ child, taken from his Cree mother when he was an infant in 1967, then adopted when he was six months old and raised in Winnipeg. He considers himself very fortunate that his adoptive parents were a loving and supportive couple, who shared their love of music with him (but also notes that many others who were taken from their families were not so lucky, and became stuck in a revolving door of foster homes). At an early age, he sang in the men’s and boys’ choir at his father’s church, All Saints’ Anglican Church in Winnipeg (which is where he learned to love early music), and began to play the trumpet, an instrument he later studied at university.

During the early nineties, he went through what he refers to as a “very dark period” of his life. VOCA chorister Carol Toller, in her perceptive and in-depth Globe & Mail article about the composer (“Choral maestro Andrew Balfour pursues his Indigenous identity through music”, May 19, 2019) wrote about his recollections of this dark period: “At one point, an elder invited him to participate in a sweat lodge, an experience he found overwhelming. In the darkness of a forest that felt ‘like a womb’, he put forth the question, ‘Who am I? And what am I meant to become?’ He recalls a profound sense of feeling protected, as if something were watching over him and the other men attending the lodge. A message of sorts arrived about a week later, when he had what he describes as a vision: ‘It felt like a near-death experience’, he says, in which he was visited by people he’d known throughout his life, who spoke to him. None of it made sense at the time ... but he’s certain about this: ‘It was another power, another spirit ... something telling me that life was going to be okay. And from then on, that’s how I felt. And I knew that I wanted to pursue my identity through music.’ ”

That conviction helped him commit to more fully acknowledging his Cree background, and to a career as a professional musician, where, particularly through music and writing, he could more fully explore his identity.

These crucial, life-altering decisions led Andrew Balfour to a highly successful and varied professional music career. He is an innovative composer/conductor/singer/sound designer with a large body of choral, instrumental, electro-acoustic and orchestral works, including *Take the Indian (A Vocal reflection on Missing Children)*, *Notinikew (Going to War)*, *Empire Étrange: The Death of Louis Riel*, *Migiis: A Whiteshell Soundscape*, *Bawajigaywin (Vision Quest)*, *Gregorio’s Nightmare*, *Wa Wa Tey Wak (Northern Lights)*, *Fantasia on a Poem by Rumi*, *Missa Brevis*, *Medieval Inuit*, *Quamaniq* and *Manitou Sky-An orchestral tone poem*. His new Indigenous opera, *Mishabooz’s Realm* was recently premiered in Montreal and Haliburton, Ontario, commissioned by L’Atelier lyrique de l’Opéra de Montréal and Highlands Opera Workshop.

He has also been commissioned by the Winnipeg, Regina and Toronto Symphony Orchestras, Ensemble Caprice, Groundswell, the Winnipeg Jazz Orchestra, the Winnipeg Singers, the Kingston Chamber Choir, Camerata Nova and the VOCA Chorus of Toronto, among many others. His works have been performed and/or broadcast locally, nationally and internationally. Andrew’s 2019 season included premieres by New York City’s innovative vocal ensemble, Roomful of Teeth, Toronto’s Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra and the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir (TMC). *Mamachimowin (the act of singing praises)*, conducted by David Fallis, was premiered by the TMC with members of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in Oct. 2019 at Koerner Hall.

Andrew Balfour is also the founder and artistic director of the innovative, 14-member vocal group Camerata Nova, an ensemble which started with 5 friends and a mutual love of singing, and which now spans over two decades, offering annual concert series in Winnipeg which focus on early, contemporary

and Indigenous-infused vocal chamber concerts. With this ensemble, he specializes in creating innovative “concept concerts”, many with Indigenous subject matter (*Wa Wa Tey Wak (Northern Lights)*, *Medieval Inuit, Chant!*), exploring themes through an eclectic array of music, including new works, arrangements and innovative inter-genre and interdisciplinary collaborations.

Andrew designed and directed a three-concert “Truth & Reconciliation Series” for Camerata Nova, beginning with “Taken” (2017). This performance, which dealt with the subject of Indigenous children being taken from their homes and the stripping of their culture by residential schools, featured Polaris Prize-winning artist Jeremy Dutcher, hip hop artist Eekwolfrom Muskoday, throat singer Madeleine Allakariallak and cellist Leanne Zacharias.

“Fallen” (2018), the second concert of this series, explored the contributions of Indigenous soldiers during the First World War, featuring a choral drama entitled *Notinikew* (a Cree word meaning *Going to war*), written by Balfour, and featuring the composer as narrator/performer. Camerata Nova was joined by Indigenous cellist Cris Derksen, traditional drummer and singer Cory Campbell, the Winnipeg Boys’ Choir and conductor Mel Braun.

“Captive”, the third and final concert, will feature new works on the theme of captivity, expressing the power and sadness of Indigenous incarceration, with a focus on the arrest and imprisonment of Chief Poundmaker in Saskatchewan in 1885. This event, which was originally scheduled to be performed this past May, will feature numerous Indigenous artists, including electro-acoustic specialist Eliot Britton and cellist Cris Derksen.

Andrew has also become increasingly passionate about music education and outreach, particularly on northern reserves and inner-city Winnipeg schools, where he has worked on behalf of the National Arts Centre, Camerata Nova, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra and various Winnipeg school divisions for over a decade. He was Curator and Composer-in-Residence of the WSO’s Indigenous Festivals in 2009 and 2010, and in 2007 received the Mayor of Winnipeg’s Making a Mark Award, sponsored by the Winnipeg Arts Council to recognize the most promising midcareer artist in the City. In 2017, Andrew was awarded a Gold Medal by the Senate of Canada for his contribution to Canada’s Indigenous and music communities.

More recently, he was invited by the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir (TMC) to be the guest curator for their November 11th “A Program of Remembrance: A Choral Perspective of Canada’s Indigenous Veterans”, a presentation which reflected on Indigenous experience through music and poetry, with conductor Simon Rivard and Elder Dr. Duke Redbird. The centrepiece of the evening was a remounting of four portions of *Notinikew*, movements which were sung by Camerata Nova and by the TMC. Other works included *Ambe*, and the composer’s hauntingly beautiful setting of Sir Wilfrid Owen’s WWI poem *Anthem For A Doomed Youth*. Reviewer Ken Stephen wrote that this concert “swept away Remembrance Day’s more conventional expressions of heroism and sacrifice, and forced the audience to confront difficult truths that cut uncomfortably close to home”.

Shortly before this Remembrance Day event with the TMC, Andrew joined the VOCA Chorus of Toronto for a compelling Interview/Question & Answer Zoom session. He spoke on a wide range of issues, including his start in life as a ‘Sixties Scoop’ baby, his good fortune at being adopted by a loving and musically-supportive couple, his choral singing (including his time as a counter tenor, and his long-time love of early music, especially Bach) and trumpet playing, as well as the early days of Camerata Nova. He also spoke about his upcoming Remembrance Day event with the TMC, and particularly about the

horrendous treatment of Indigenous soldiers after their return to Canada from the First World War battlefields. Indigenous men, who had been actively scouted to become soldiers overseas, became disenfranchised and lost their status upon returning to this country. He also spoke of Reconciliation being “not a destination but an ongoing journey”.

During this Q&A (and in discussions with me), Andrew also shared his concerns about cultural appropriation, and his firmly-held belief that collaboration with Indigenous artists is absolutely key in how to approach working with the performance of Indigenous music. Having allies - people who are sensitive to Indigenous issues and who are excited about collaborating with him and other Indigenous artists - within the various artistic communities is absolutely crucial, and long overdue. “Collaborations with members of the Indigenous community are now the future for all organizations. You have to be able to listen ... give them the space to feel welcome and safe, and be aware of their concerns.” It should be noted that his overriding message during this discussion was one of optimism and hope.

In the summer of 2019, invigorated by a very exciting invitation to the VOCA Chorus of Toronto from Roy Thomson Hall to perform in its 2019-2020 Noon Hour Choir & Organ Concert Series, I began fleshing out a concert program which I entitled “Star Songs”. During my research, I came across an Algonquin story about the myriad stars representing grandmothers, who were looking down upon their families, protecting them, wishing them love, comfort and safety. I immediately contacted Andrew to ask if he would be interested in composing a work about stars for this concert. He enthusiastically agreed, telling me he has always been fascinated by stars and the night sky. His creation for VOCA, *Anang (A Star)*, composed for SATB choir, piano and glockenspiel, and written in both Ojibway and English, is serene, reflective and very beautiful. (I clearly recall that my hands were shaking as I opened the PDF for my first glance at his score.)



*Andrew Balfour with Jenny Crober: TMC's premiere of Mamachimowin (the act of singing praises).
Koerner Hall, Toronto, October 2019*

One of the many major disappointments of the March 2020 lockdown was that VOCA had been planning to hold a late March workshop on *Anang (A Star)* with Andrew and percussionist Jamie Drake. This highly-anticipated event, along with our “Star Songs” concerts at both Roy Thomson Hall and our regular venue at Eastminster United, had to be postponed due to COVID-19. We are so looking forward to performing the world premiere of Andrew’s work - as soon as the pandemic will allow - in a concert featuring some wonderful guest artists: Shawn Grenke, organ, Colleen Allen, sax and Jamie Drake, percussion.

Carol Toller’s insightful May 2019 Globe & Mail article finishes by referring to Andrew Balfour’s exceptional *Ambe* workshop with VOCA in March 2019. Like so many of the choristers who were there that day, I still have vivid, unforgettable memories of this event.

He spoke to us - quietly, intensely - of his fervent hope that collaboration with Indigenous artists, so crucial and long overdue, would become much more commonplace: “For me, meeting with you like this is so important. This is what needs to happen.” He then spoke in detail about key aspects of the work: how honoured he was to share the text of this welcome song (“Come in, all two-legged humans, there is good life here”) which was gifted to him by his dear friend, Ojibway drummer and singer Cory Campbell. He spoke about the significance of the rhythmical, repetitive, chant-like sections (particularly in the tenor and bass sections) representing the drum - the heartbeat of Mother Earth. He also referred to the ascending first soprano line (which often soars above the rest of the writing) as a representation of a powerful but graceful eagle in flight. Andrew’s messages of collaboration, empathy and hope, along with his use of vivid analogies and imagery, created a profound presence in the room that afternoon. We then sang *Ambe* one final time (a performance which, I believe for many of us, was a gift to him). As Carol wrote last May: “He listened to the choir sing the piece one more time, nodding as it built to a thundering, almost rapturous crescendo. Then he turned to address the choristers and a smile cracked his face: ‘To hear you singing this work, with so much warmth and energy and respect ... This is the Canada that I want to be part of.’ ”

Quotations were used with permission from Andrew Balfour and Carol Toller.

Jenny Crober has had a richly varied professional music career of over 40 years as a choral conductor, collaborative pianist, coach, clinician, teacher, choral arranger, adjudicator, dance accompanist/composer, recording artist and a cappella jazz vocalist.

She accompanied singer Patricia O’Callaghan on her debut CD, “Youkali”, recipient of a prestigious Billboard Magazine Critics’ Choice Review.

Since 2004, Jenny has been the artistic director/conductor of VOCA Chorus of Toronto, for which she has programmed a wide variety of classical and contemporary selections (including Canadian premieres), featuring some of Canada’s finest musicians. Notable choral conductors she has worked with include Elmer Iseler and Ivars Taurins; world-renowned composers include Ola Gjeilo and Bob Chilcott.

Jenny co-conducted Scott Macmillan’s *Celtic Mass for the Sea* at Carnegie Hall in 2015. Following a 2016 VOCA workshop with Ola Gjeilo, the composer invited her to assemble a group of choristers to perform as part of a mass choir in a concert featuring his major work, *Dreamweaver*, at Carnegie Hall in April 2018. She was honoured to conduct the Canadian premiere of *Dreamweaver* with VOCA in Toronto in May 2018.

www.vocachorus.ca

ELIOT BRITTON, COMPOSER

Submitted by Gerald Martindale

Eliot Britton (b. 1983) integrates electronic and instrumental music through an energetic and colourful musical language. His creative output expresses an eclectic musical experience from gramophone to videogames, drum machines, orchestras, and electronic chamber music.

Rhythmic gadgetry, artistry, personal history and colours of technology permeate his work. By drawing on these sound worlds and others, Eliot Britton's compositions tap the newly available resources of the 21st century.

He is passionate about Canadian musical culture, seeking new and engaging aesthetic directions that connect with a post digital audience. One day, Britton gave his computer students at the University of Toronto an assignment - to compose a sound. One student chose a TTC station announcement. Another held up a microphone to their cat as it meowed. Someone captured the gentle rattle of an umbrella being closed and shaken. Britton wanted his students to think deeply about what it means to compose music in the digital age.

A proud member of the Manitoba Métis Foundation, Eliot Britton recently completed his PhD in music research and composition at the Schulich School of Music at McGill University. He is the recipient of numerous prizes and scholarships. Currently Britton is working as an assistant professor of composition at the University of Toronto, co-director of Manitoba's Cluster New Music and Integrated Arts Festival. He continues to produce music for a variety of labels, companies, and music houses. His recently completed projects include a commission from the Royal Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra entitled, "Heirloom Bison Culture," as well as a commission for the Plumes ensemble and Quasar quartet.

Elliot has recently been commissioned by the Amadeus Choir of Greater Toronto to create a work that will be an interactive experience with audio and visual components. Entitled, "Home Comfort Advisor," the piece will be a playful take on a smart home system where online audience members will be able to tailor their own experience of the work. The piece will later be adapted for live performance. Visit www.amadeuschoir.com for updates.

FEATURE:

GIUSEPPE VERDI'S *QUATTRO PEZZI SACRI*



Oliver Balaburski

Submitted by Oliver Balaburski

When I got the invitation to do the reading of any choral piece for CAMMAC for some unexplainable reason *Quattro Pezzi Sacri* by Giuseppe Verdi immediately popped out as an idea. Even though I was aware of the complexity of the piece, I thought that such a rarely performed piece and its characteristics would be perfect to broaden the experience of people who love singing and singing together.

I remember 2001 in Macedonia, the homeland from which I immigrated, when I decided to perform this composition with the Macedonian Opera and Ballet Company. It caused a very interesting positive reaction and curiosity among the musicians but also the wider audience.

So, why this piece is interesting? It is written in a span of 10 years and was never meant to be performed as a whole piece. Each section is written as a separate entity but [the work] became one complete piece.

The first section, *Ave Maria*, was a composer's challenge by Adolfo Crescentini, a professor of music at the Bologna Conservatory. He published the so-called "enigmatic scale" in major, minor and augmented seconds, in the *Gazetta Musicale di Milano* in 1888, so that it could be harmonized. And it was, not very successfully, by many teachers of harmony. Verdi's composition, first performed in Parma in 1895, was successful and has lasted.

Quattro Pezzi Sacri

I. Ave Maria

Scala enigmatica
armonizzata a 4 voci miste

1071
G. Verdi
1813-1901

Moderato (♩ 84) poco cresc.

Soprano
A - ve Ma - ri - a, gra - ti - a ple - na, Do - mi - nus te - cum, be - ne - di - cta

Alto
A - ve Ma - ri - a, gra - ti - a ple - na, Do - mi - nus te - cum, be - ne - di - cta

Tenore
A - ve Ma - ri - a, gra - ti - a ple - na, Do - mi - nus te - cum, be - ne - di - cta

Basso
'Scala enigmatica'
A - - - - - ve Ma - - - - - ri - - - - - a,

9 *p dim.* *ppp* dim. sempre morendo

tu in mu - li - o - ri - bus, et be - ne - di - ctus fru - ctus ven - tris tu - i, Je - sus.

tu in mu - li - o - ri - bus, et be - ne - di - ctus fru - ctus ven - tris tu - i, Je - sus.

tu in mu - li - o - ri - bus, et be - ne - di - ctus fru - ctus ven - tris tu - i, Je - sus.

A - - - - - ve, A - - - - - ve Ma - - - - - ri - - - - - a.

17 *p* *p* *p*

'Scala enigmatica' San - cta Ma - ri - a, ma - ter De - i, o - ra pro no - bis, pro -

A - - - - - ve Ma - - - - - ri - - - - - a,

San - cta Ma - ri - a, ma - ter De - i, o - - - - - ra pro no - bis pec - ca - to - ri - bus

San - cta Ma - ri - a, ma - ter De - i, o - - - - - ra pro

If somebody wants to hear angels sing, *Laudi alla Vergine Maria* is the work that would be the closest to that description. Written on a text by Dante's *Paradiso*, it was composed in the period between the completion of *Othello* and *Falstaff*. It is written for 4 solo female voices but is often performed with the full female part of a choir. In this piece, Verdi shows, as he does also in other vocal compositions, his mastery and knowledge in the female voice. Pure, beautiful, heavenly harmonies and voices that intertwine in a very natural way, truly bringing Heaven to Earth.

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3. Laudi alla Vergine Maria

Tolte dall' ultimo canto del "Paradiso" di Dante
per 4 voci femminili, sole

Moderato (♩ = 84)

Soprano I
Ver-gi-ne ma-dre, fi-glia del tuo Fi-glio, u-mi-le ed al-ta più che cre-a-

Soprano II
Ver-gi-ne ma-dre, fi-glia del tuo Fi-glio, u-mi-le ed al-ta più che cre-a-

Alto I
Ver-gi-ne ma-dre, fi-glia del tuo Fi-glio, più che cre-a-

Alto II
Fi-glia del tuo Fi-glio, u-mi-le ed al-ta più che cre-a-

-tu-ra, ter-mi-ne fis-so d'e-ter-no con-si-glio, *ppp poco allarg.*

-tu-ra, ter-mi-ne fis-so d'e-ter-no con-si-glio, *ppp*

-tu-ra, ter-mi-ne fis-so d'e-ter-no con-si-glio, *ppp*

-tu-ra, ter-mi-ne fis-so d'e-ter-no con-si-glio, *ppp*

2. Stabat Mater

Sostenuto (♩ = 60)

3 Flauti I/II/III
2 Oboi
2 Clarinetto (B♭) I/II
4 Fagotti III/IV
4 Corni (C) I/II/III/IV
3 Trombe (C) I/II/III
Tromboni IV
Timpani
Gran Cassa
Arpa
Soprano
Alto
CORO
Tenore
Basso
Violino I
Violino II
Viola
Violoncello
Contrabasso

Stabat ma-ter do-le-re sa-jux-ta cru-cem la-cry-mo-sa, dum pen-de-bat
Stabat ma-ter do-le-re sa-jux-ta cru-cem la-cry-mo-sa, dum pen-de-bat
Stabat ma-ter do-le-re sa-jux-ta cru-cem la-cry-mo-sa, dum pen-de-bat
Stabat ma-ter do-le-re sa-jux-ta cru-cem la-cry-mo-sa, dum pen-de-bat

dim sempre morendo

*Tutto questo pezzo dovrà eseguirsi in un solo tempo come è indicato dal metronomo. Ciò malgrado in certi punti per esigenze di espressione e di esecuto converrà allargare o stringere, ritardando però sempre al primo tempo.

The whole of this piece should be performed at the same basic tempo as indicated by the metronome mark. But in spite of this it is admissible at certain points to slow down or speed up for the sake of expressiveness and coloring, always returning to the original tempo.

Das ganze Stück ist in ein und demselben Tempo auszuführen, wie es durch das Metronom vorgeschrieben ist. Wenn auch Ausdruck und Tonfärbungswünsche allargare oder stringere fordern, kehrt man doch immer wieder zum Tempo I zurück.

Te Deum and *Stabat Mater* are written after the first performance of *Falstaff*. Verdi himself was very specific about the performance of *Stabat Mater*. In the letter he wrote to Giovanni Tebaldini, the choirmaster at S. Antonio in Padua, he wrote:

The opening lends itself to [rejoicing], for Heaven and Earth rejoice: "Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth"; but towards the middle it changes tone and expression. "Tu ad liberandum". It is Christ born of the Virgin, who opens to humanity "regna coelorum". Humanity believes in the "Judex venturus", invokes Him in

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

Submitted by President of CAMMAC Toronto Region, Gerald Martindale

Because of the COVID-19 virus, readings will not be held in January and February. The Management Committee hopes that readings may be held in April, May and June depending on the health and safety guidelines in place at that time.

CAMMAC TORONTO REGION NOTICES

INSTRUMENTS FOR SALE:

- Czech made cello, pernambuco bow and hard case; Asking \$2,200.00
- 4/4 Violin, pernambuco bow and case; made in West Germany; plays with a bold sound.
\$1,200.00 violin kit

If interested, please contact Sarah Lapp

Email: sbcello7@gmail.com

Cell # 416 559-6565

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Piano and Organ

The church I have gone to for over 40 years has disbanded and the building and the rest of its contents was to have been demolished October. We are selling an organ for \$400 (or best offer) and speakers that go with it. We also have a piano that is free. If anyone is interested, please contact me via my cell phone (416.505.8450) or email me at pjfell@rogers.com.

For pictures and information please contact:

Pamella Fell
CBSO Violinist & Board Member
416.505.8450

Editor's Note: Some of the following instruments may now be gone.

WHAT IS CAMMAC?

CAMMAC (Canadian Amateur Musicians/Musiciens amateurs canadiens) is a National organization with regional sub-groups in Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto. CAMMAC helps amateur musicians of all ages (both singers and instrumentalists) improve their abilities by offering programs which allow them to make music together in a relaxed and non-competitive environment under the guidance of qualified professional musicians. The CAMMAC Music Centre, in the Laurentian Mountains just North of Montreal on Lake MacDonald, offers seven summer workshop weeks as well as other activities during the year. We also offer online programming and classes throughout the year. It is possible to rent the centre's facilities for events.



TIME ON YOUR HANDS?

**DO YOU WANT TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEWSLETTER AS A WRITER
EDITOR OR PROOF-READER?**

CONTACT THE NEWSLETTER EDITOR.

SEE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

LAST PAGE OF THIS EDITION FOR CONTACT INFORMATION

PLAYING AND SINGING OPPORTUNITIES

TEMPO 2019-2020

Toronto Early Music Players Organization

"The Toronto Early Music Players Organization (TEMPO) holds nine Sunday afternoon meetings between September and May. We play under the guidance of a professional coach and welcome intermediate and advanced recorder and viol players. Due to restrictions on gatherings because of Covid-19, all the sessions for 2020-2021 will be held online. Please refer to our website for details on how to participate: <http://tempotoronto.net>."

CONCERT NOTICES AND UPCOMING EVENTS

(all groups listing an event must include at least one CAMMAC member; only events received by the Editor by the Newsletter Deadline will be published)

The Newsletter welcomes short announcements in Playing Opportunities and Concert Notices from all CAMMAC members. Please send details to the Editor by next Newsletter deadline.

The Singing Out Choir presents @HomeForTheHolidays, a virtual holiday concert.

Included is a hauntingly beautiful arrangement of "Silent Night," and a lively pop song, "What Christmas Means to Me." Free tickets are available from Eventbrite at:

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/homefortheholidays-tickets-130131854881>

Saturday, December 5, at 7:30 pm.

Annex Singers "A Child's Christmas in Wales," featuring actor Richard Partington, soprano Melanie Conly, and tenor Joshua Clemenger. The choir will sing "Song of a Winter's Night", and the concert will include favourite Christmas carols. Register at annexsingers.com. Free admission, donations appreciated. **Saturday, December 12, at 7:30 pm.**

Amadeus. Sing along with members of the Amadeus Choir from your own home! You'll receive a copy of our holiday e-songbook and be invited to tune in to a live-streamed event with special guests Tyler Duncan & Erika Switzer, performances by the Amadeus Choir, and lots of festive cheer. . For tickets: <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/virtual-carolling-party-tickets-129941355091>

Tuesday, December 15, 2020, at 7:30pm.

**Next CAMMAC Newsletter deadline
No newsletter materials including Playing Opportunities or Concert Notices
will be accepted after January 15, 2021**

ADVERTISING RATES

Full page	\$90 (max. 6 ½ W x 7 ½ H)
Half page	\$50 (max. 6 ½ “W x 4 5/8” H)
Quarter page	\$30 (max. 3 ½” W x 4 5/8” H)

Advertising is subject to space availability. Neither publication nor positioning is guaranteed

CAMMAC TORONTO REGION MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 2020 – 2021

President:	Gerald Martindale	647-458-0213	gmartindale76@gmail.com
Past President:	Tim Moody	416-605-2793	tim@timmoody.com
Treasurer:	Marion Wilk	416-386-0258	marion.wilk@gmail.com
Secretary:	Marion Wilk	416-386-0258	marion.wilk@gmail.com
Newsletter Editor*:	Sheila MacRae	705-559-7672	smmoboe@gmail.com
Publicity Coordinator:	Barbara Adams	905-877-0671	brbr.adams@gmail.com
Musical Chairs:	Gerald Martindale	647-458-0213	gmartindale76@gmail.com
Soloist Coordinator:	Peter Solomon	416-781-4745	peter.solomon@utoronto.ca
Member-at- Large:	Lynda Moon	416-482-6562	ptriovc@gmail.com
Member-at- Large:	Cristina Oke	416-489-7563	c.oke@alum.utoronto.ca

OTHER CONTACTS

Webmaster:	Barbara Adams	905-877-0671	brbr.adams@gmail.com
CAMMAC membership	Toll Free	888-622-8755	national@cammac.ca
CAMMAC website			www.cammac.ca

*Toronto Region Representative to the CAMMAC Board of Directors