

Canadian Opera Company Orchestra conducted by Johannes Debus

Wednesday, May 24, 2017 at 8:00 pm

Post-concert Chat

This is the 731st concert in Koerner Hall

Johannes Debus, conductor

Emily D'Angelo, mezzo-soprano

Andrew Haji, tenor

Richard Van Camp, librettist & narrator

Rosa Mantla, Tłjchq translation & diction coach

Canadian Opera Company Orchestra

Elmer Iseler Singers

21C Ensemble

PROGRAM

Brian Current: *Naka* (Northern Lights) (world premiere)

Matthew Aucoin: *The Orphic Moment* (Canadian premiere)

Samy Moussa: *Kammerkonzert*

INTERMISSION

Unsuk Chin: *snagS&Snarls*

Brian Current: *The Seven Heavenly Halls* (Ontario premiere)

Naka commissioned by The Royal Conservatory/Koerner Hall and generously supported by Kris Vikmanis & Denny Creighton

The Seven Heavenly Halls commissioned by The Azrieli Foundation

Brian Current

Composer

Brian Current studied music at McGill University and UC Berkeley (PhD 2002). His music, lauded and performed internationally as well as broadcast in over 35 countries, has been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Barlow Prize for Orchestral Music (USA), the Italian Premio Fedora for Chamber Opera, the Azrieli Commissioning Prize, and a Selected Work (under 30) at the International Rostrum of Composers in Paris. His pieces have been programmed by all major symphony orchestras in Canada and by dozens of ensembles and orchestras internationally, including the Indianapolis Symphony, the National Symphony of Taiwan, the Estonian National Philharmonic, the New York City Opera, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, the Oakland Symphony,

the St. Lawrence String Quartet, Fort Worth Opera, the Warsaw National Philharmonic, the American Composers Orchestra (Carnegie Hall), Monday Evening Concerts (Los Angeles), and others.

Brian Current is active as a conductor and regularly leads programs of contemporary music performed by top professional ensembles. He is the ensemble conductor of Continuum Contemporary Music (Toronto) and has appeared on the podium with dozens of ensembles and orchestras, including Symphony Nova Scotia, the National Arts Centre Orchestra, the Thunder Bay Symphony, and the Windsor Symphony. He is on the faculty of The Glenn Gould School of The Royal Conservatory, where he conducts the graduate-level New Music Ensemble and teaches contemporary music performance, and students are encouraged to champion the music of our time throughout their careers.

Naka (Northern Lights)

Naka, the Tłı̄ch̄q word for Northern Lights, forms part III of *The River of Light*, a large-scale multi-movement cycle in progress for choir, orchestra, and soloists. Made up of seven separate pieces, *The River of Light* is about transcendence and is based on the texts of several traditions (Hindu, Christian, Jewish, First Nations Canadian, Sufi, Maori, and Chinese) that describe mystical journeys towards an exalted state.

Writers from various communities in Canada have been contributing texts to the project and I was grateful to meet the remarkable Tłı̄ch̄q Dene author and storyteller Richard Van Camp, who is quite justly treated like royalty wherever he goes in the Northwest Territories. Spending just one minute listening to Richard's stories is to be immediately put under his spell. Thanks to a residency grant from the Ontario Arts Council, I was fortunate to spend some time in the NWT working with Richard, meeting new friends, learning about the Dene relationship to the Northern Lights and, most importantly, had the honour of working with Tłı̄ch̄q Dene Elder Rosa Mantla on the translation and pronunciation of the language. Rosa was kind enough to let me record her reading the text and it was a pleasure to spend time writing her speech out in musical notation.

I am so grateful to Richard and Rosa for sharing their background, language, and culture, and I could not be more proud to set this text as the Canadian segment of *The River of Light*.

The Seven Heavenly Halls

I became interested in the *Zohar* (the Book of Enlightenment) while researching texts for *The River of Light*, a large-scale multi-movement oratorio for choir, orchestra, and soloists. The name of the cycle comes from Dante's *Paradiso*, where the Pilgrim enters the glowing core of heaven and declares: "And I saw a light in the form of a river, radiant as gold, between banks painted with wondrous springs." My frequent collaborator and librettist, Anton Piatigorsky, has written several plays inspired by Jewish mysticism, so I asked him if he knew of any historical texts from the Jewish tradition that were similar in theme to Dante's journey. He introduced me to the *Zohar*, which he described as the most central book in the Kabbalah and the most mysterious of Jewish mystical texts.

It is a beautiful document largely attributed to Rabbi Moses de León (1250-1305) writing as Simeon bar Yochai in the 2nd century. While reading through the *Zohar*, I immediately heard turbulent and gestural music full of orchestral colours: "When the King conceived ordaining He engraved engravings in the lustre on high. A blinding spark flashed within the Concealed of the Concealed from the mystery of the Infinite, a cluster of vapour in formlessness, set in a ring, not white, not black, not red, not green, no colour at all. When a band spanned, it yielded radiant colours. Deep within the spark gushed a flow imbuing colors below, concealed within the concealed of the mystery of the Infinite."¹

Even more inspiring and brimming with musical possibilities was the *Zohar's* reference to The Seven Heavenly Halls, a series of ecstatic stages where each vision is marked by a different colour. After passing through each of the coloured halls a mystical traveller will, much like Dante's Pilgrim, enter a seventh and "colourless" state. Colour in music refers to the timbre of a sound as created by different combinations of overtones. Sounds with high

¹ Matt, Daniel Chanan, trans. *Zohar, The Book of Enlightenment*. Ramsey, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1983, p. 49

overtones produce very bright musical colours and sounds with lower overtones create darker ones. Like many composers, I like to create colours across the entire orchestra, so I envisioned a piece made up of seven ecstatic stages represented by different musical colours and textures. With the addition of three introductory movements, the piece is divided into 10 sections, to be performed with little or no pause between them:

1. *Introduction: The Enlightened will Shine Like the Splendour of the Sky*
2. *This is the Light*
3. *The Seven Heavenly Halls*
4. *Hall One: Yesod (Foundation)*
5. *Hall Two: Hod (Splendour)*
6. *Hall Three: Netzach (Victory)*
7. *Hall Four: Gevura (Strength)*
8. *Hall Five: Ahava (Love)*
9. *Hall Six: Ratzon (Will)*
10. *Hall Seven: Kodesh Ha Kadashim (Holy of Holies)*

Throughout, the tenor soloist acts as both our guide through The Heavenly Halls and as our medium into the texts of the *Zohar*. In calmer moments he sings in a style resembling cantillation, using scales based on the traditional *Ahavah Rabbah*, *Magein Avot*, and *Adonai Malach* modes. The chorus, on the other hand, is envisioned as a myriad voices within the texture of the orchestra so that the music is layered with the sounds of the traditional Sefirot: *keter*, *binah*, *chochmah*, *da'at*, *chesed*, *gevurah*, *tiferet*, *hod*, *netzach*, *yesod*, and *malchut*. These are placed stereophonically in the choir in columns of right, middle, and left as they are traditionally configured (S=soprano, A=alto, T=tenor, B=bass):

Keter (T3,B3)
Binah (S3) Chachmach (A3)
Gevurah (S2) Hesed (A2)
Tiferet (T2,B2)
Hod (S1) Netzach (A1)
Yesod (T1, B1)

Many thanks to Anton Piatigorsky for introducing me to and adapting these beautiful texts, to Yehoshua Rosenthal in Jerusalem for translating them, and to the scholars Daniel Matt (UC Berkeley), Nathan Wolski (Monash University), and Arthur Haberman (York University) for helping me find and interpret them. A big thank you as well goes to the Montreal Symphony and Chorus for premiering the work with the stellar Frédéric Antoun in the tenor role. And the biggest thanks of all goes to The Azrieli Foundation for all their work behind the scenes and for their visionary example of patronage which I am sure will inspire many others to support artists for years to come.

- Brian Current

Matthew Aucoin

Composer

Matthew Aucoin is an American composer, conductor, writer, and pianist. He studied at Harvard College and The Juilliard School, and is currently Artist-in-Residence at Los Angeles Opera.

In recent seasons, Aucoin has conducted the premieres of two of his operas: *Crossing*, at Boston's American Repertory Theater, and *Second Nature*, at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. *Crossing* will have its West Coast premiere at the Los Angeles Opera in 2018 and *Second Nature* has subsequently been heard at the Music Academy of the West and the Canadian Opera Company.

His orchestral music has been performed by Zurich's Tonhalle Orchestra, Salzburg's Mozarteum Orchestra, the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, the Alabama Symphony, and the Knoxville Symphony, among others. The performers of his chamber music include cellist Yo-Yo Ma, violinist Jennifer Koh, tenor Paul Appleby, countertenor Anthony Roth Costanzo, and members of the Chicago Symphony.

Aucoin graduated *summa cum laude* from Harvard College in 2012, and subsequently earned a graduate diploma from The Juilliard School. He began his professional career as the youngest assistant conductor in the history of the Metropolitan Opera and went on to study with Riccardo Muti as the Solti Apprentice of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

In recent seasons, he has made conducting debuts with the Chicago Symphony, the Los Angeles Opera, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Salzburg's Mozarteum Orchestra, the Teatro Petruzzelli in Bari, Italy, the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, the Rome Opera Orchestra, and Juilliard Opera.

The Orphic Moment

The story of Orpheus is music's founding myth, its primal self-justification and self-glorification. On Orpheus's wedding day, his wife Eurydice is fatally bitten by a poisonous snake. Orpheus audaciously storms the gates of hell to plead his case, in song, to Hades and his infernal gang. The guardians of death melt at his music's touch. They grant Eurydice a second chance at life: she may follow Orpheus back to earth, on the one condition that he not turn to look at her until they are above ground. Orpheus cannot resist his urge to glance back; he turns, and Eurydice vanishes.

The Orpheus myth is typically understood as a tragedy of human impatience: even when a loved one's life is at stake, the best, most heroic intentions are helpless to resist a sudden instinctive impulse. But that is not my understanding of the story. Orpheus, after all, is the ultimate aesthete: he is the world's greatest singer, and he knows that heartbreak and loss are music's favourite subjects. In most operas based on the Orpheus story – and there are many – the action typically runs as follows: Orpheus loses Eurydice; he laments her loss gorgeously and extravagantly; he descends to the underworld; he gorgeously and extravagantly begs to get Eurydice back; he is granted her again and promptly loses her again; he laments even more gorgeously and extravagantly than before.

So might this backwards glance be a conscious gesture? Might Eurydice's second death be not an accident but a kind of murder? Or, if Orpheus does look back out of a sudden impulse, might that impulse be the aesthetic one, the seductive and amoral tendency to value art above one's fellow human beings? I take this interpretation to an extreme in *The Orphic Moment*, a "dramatic cantata" that shines a magnifying glass on the final moments before Orpheus turns around. Up to the moment when the piece begins, Orpheus's conscious intentions have been noble: he has risked his life to rescue Eurydice, he has succeeded, and they are walking toward the light. But, as the piece begins, he has a second thought: "It has been life to lose you," he says. "It has been life to go without ..." He muses on what would happen if he lost Eurydice again. A second death ... the loss of Eurydice at the very moment when she was about to be granted life ... nothing could be more tragic than that. It is bound to inspire the greatest music ever.

The solo violin is Eurydice, wordlessly calling to Orpheus, growing more and more unsettled as she senses his emotional withdrawal. In the second half of the piece, Orpheus calculates the perfect moment to aim his gaze backwards at Eurydice. Patiently, coldly, he waits until light from the world above begins to filter down through the soil. He slowly turns his head. The scene goes dark.

- Matthew Aucoin

Unsuk Chin

Composer

Unsuk Chin was born in 1961 in Seoul, South Korea, and has lived in Berlin since 1988. Her music has attracted international conductors, including Simon Rattle, Gustavo Dudamel, Kent Nagano, Esa-Pekka Salonen, David

Robertson, Peter Eötvös, Neeme Järvi, Markus Stenz, Myung-Whun Chung, George Benjamin, Susanna Mälkki, François -Xavier Roth, Leif Segerstam, and Ilan Volkov, among others. It is modern in language, but lyrical and non-doctrinaire in communicative power. Chin has received many honours, including the 2004 Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition for her Violin Concerto, the 2005 Arnold Schoenberg Prize, the 2010 Prince Pierre Foundation Music Award, and the 2012 Ho-Am Prize.

She has been commissioned by leading performing organisations and her music has been performed in major festivals and concert series in Europe, the Far East, and North America by orchestras and ensembles such as the Berlin Philharmonic, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, Ensemble Intercontemporain, Ensemble Modern, Kronos Quartet, and Arditti Quartet. In addition, Unsuk Chin has been active in writing electronic music, receiving commissions from IRCAM and other electronic music studios.

In 2007, Chin's first opera *Alice in Wonderland* was given its world premiere at the Bavarian State Opera as the opening of the Munich Opera Festival and released on DVD by Unitel Classica. Her second opera *Alice Through the Looking Glass* is commissioned by The Royal Opera in London for premiere in the 2018-19 season. Since 2006, Chin has overseen the contemporary music series of the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, a series which she founded herself. Since 2011, she has served as Artistic Director of the Music of Today series of the Philharmonia Orchestra in London. Portrait CDs of her music have appeared on Deutsche Grammophon, Kairos, and Analekta.

Unsuk Chin's works are published exclusively by Boosey & Hawkes.

snagS&Snarls

The song cycle *snagS&Snarls*, after texts from Lewis Carroll's *Alice*-books, was commissioned by the Los Angeles Opera Orchestra and premiered under the direction of Kent Nagano at the Ojai Festival in August 2004. Unsuk Chin considers it a preliminary study for the opera *Alice in Wonderland*, which was premiered in 2007 at the Bavarian State Opera. All the songs from *snagS&Snarls* – except the first – were incorporated in the opera, albeit in modified form.

The unusual title is made up of the words *snag* and *snarl*. Among other things, the noun **snag** can be defined as an “unexpected obstacle” or as a “rough, sharp object.” **Snarl**, on the other hand, means either a “tangle” or a “confused state” or to “speak in a bad-tempered voice” or (of dogs, etc.) to “show the teeth and growl angrily.” (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 5th edn., 1995)

The title refers to a chapter heading in the book *Metamagical Themas* by the cognitive scientist Douglas R. Hofstadter in which he writes about self-referentiality. Incidentally, Unsuk Chin discovered Lewis Carroll's *Alice* stories through Hofstadter's cult book *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid. A Metaphorical Fugue on Minds and Machines in the Spirit of Lewis Carroll*. With this, the composer joined the long line of artists, scientists, and other readers who learned to appreciate Lewis Carroll's *Alice* as a highly complex philosophical creation and as a classic of modern literature. This is not surprising, seeing as Lewis Carroll thematized fundamental philosophical questions in that in *Alice* “classification criteria [of any sort] such as space and time, rationality and moral, identity and communication, the hierarchy of man, animal, and matter [get caught in] the maelstrom of a subversive destruction” (Eberhard Kreutzer, *Lewis Carroll: “Alice in Wonderland” und “Through the Looking-Glass”*, Munich, 1984). He accomplished this feat by means of a unique creative linguistic achievement: plays on words and logical conclusions that are just as rigorous as they are absurd become the basic principles and building blocks of an absurd mode of thought. By means of this, Carroll presents a perceived experience that “appears to stand in the same capricious relationship of dependency [to every-day reality] as do waves and particles in quantum mechanics” (Frank Harders-Wuthenow, “A propos Alice,” unpublished manuscript, 2007).

Carroll's transboundary, philosophical-poetic cosmos appears to be tailor-made for Unshuk Chin. Like Carroll's *Alice*, Chin's music is simultaneously informed by virtuoso artistry, rigorous-logical constructiveness, and at times overdrawn humour. Like Carroll, Chin is also fascinated by word and number games: one need only consider the palindromes, crab canons, and anagrams – to name just a few – that in *Miroirs des temps* or *Kalá* become musically self-explanatory codes for infinity, death, or mental border regions. Another example would be the boisterous-ironic, self-referential vocal work *Cantatrix Sopranica* in which the musical processes are often created by means of experimental linguistic combinatorics (and vice versa).

In *snagS&Snarls* a new aspect is added: Lewis Carroll's intertextual processes are musically mirrored by multiple stylistic parodies and allusions. The musical language of this work therefore seems – at first glance – to be more simple and traditional than Chin's other works. However, appearances are deceiving in the same manner as in Carroll's *Alice*, in which the genre of the would-be children's story only provides the framework for an unconventional consideration of key philosophical questions.

The first song is a setting of the *Alice–Acrostic* poem with which Carroll concluded the second *Alice* book. The initial letters of the lines read in order form the name of the historical model for these stories: Alice Pleasance Liddell. The author recalls here the famous boat trip on which he told the stories to Alice and her sisters for the first time. The musical texture evokes a nostalgic, wondrous “Once upon a time ...” atmosphere and is predominantly consonant, whereby the tonal image is alienated by the delicate rhythmic-metrical shifts and the unusual instrumentation. This pensive beginning is followed by various scenes from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

The first of these scenes comes from the chapter “The Pool of Tears” and is called “**Who in the World am I?**” In this chapter, Alice, who has just arrived in Wonderland, experiences within a very short period of time extreme changes in her body size and other bewildering events that lead to a serious identity crisis. In her despair, Alice attempts to reassure herself by reciting a poem and other things learned at school, but she gets all the facts mixed up. Alice's confusion is musically mirrored in various ways, for example by means of rhythmical complexity, pauses consciously used as means of expression, or the isolated entrances of the various instruments.

“**The Tale-Tail of the Mouse**” is from the chapter “A Caucus-Race and a Long Tale.” The title alludes to a homonymic mix-up: Alice envisages the “mouse's **tale**” in the form of a “mouse's **tail**.” Carroll consequently penned the mouse's story in the form of a mouse's tail, and with that one of the most famous figural poems ever written. The composer translates this visual model and the atmosphere of the poem into music by various means: in the solo part through a quasi-expressionistic Sprechgesang (speech-song); in the instrumental accompaniment through the filigree trills and runs, the entwined, murmuring, descending lines, and the delicate instrumentation (mandolin, harp, harpsichord, and woodwind group).

The next scene, “**Speak Roughly to Your Little Boy**,” is from the chapter “Pig and Pepper.” The plot of the chapter is as follows: Alice enters the house of the Duchess which is a menacingly chaos. The Duchess's cook throws plates and dishes at everything within her range, while the Duchess, shaking and tossing her baby around, sings the song *Speak Roughly to Your Little Boy*, a parody of a lullaby. Alice ultimately remains alone with the baby who however then turns into a pig. Several commentators have wanted to see in this scene a statement about the “poisonous pedagogy” prevalent in Victorian England, but it is above all a burlesque grotesque. In *snagS&Snarls*, the Duchess's song consists of a very simple, almost obtuse melody and of howls that fittingly reflect its grotesque-nasty character. The composer added to the text verses from an earlier theater version of *Alice*, which give the scene a pseudo-ritual character – almost as if the parody of an evil fairytale witch were uttering a curse. The shabby character of this scene is also given expression by means of the instrumental ostinatos, the brass and vocal glissandos, the comically dull entries of the low instruments, and, not least, by the percussion, which increasingly dominates the tonal image: the percussionists must make use here of diverse household objects, “garbage percussion,” and a siren.

In contrast to this, the cycle concludes with “**Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star**,” which is based on the chapter “A Mad Tea-Party.” Here, Alice feels herself insulted by the presence of the guests at the “Mad Tea-Party,” since they keep asking her absurd, unanswerable riddles. The text parodies the well-known English children’s song of the same name; the composer has deconstructed it even further by means of tongue-twisting nonsense verses. The music unexpectedly develops out of the reduced and nearly infantile textures into a highly virtuoso musical fabric. A further example for how the composer, in accordance with Carroll’s intentions, transforms simple musical modes of expression into a musical wonderland. - © Maris Gothóni (translated from German by Howard Weiner)

Samy Moussa

Composer

Born in Montreal in 1984, composer and conductor Samy Moussa has collaborated regularly with a number of orchestras and ensembles in North America and Europe and, in 2010, he became Music Director of the INDEX Ensemble in Munich. His music is known for its clarity and power as well as its refined orchestration, and his conducting is characterised by an energetic and inspired style.

Samy Moussa studied composition and conducting at the Université de Montréal where his principal teacher was José Evangelista, in addition to conducting studies in the Czech Republic with Paolo Bellomia. He was also invited to study in Finland with Magnus Lindberg. In 2007, he settled in Germany where he was enrolled at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater München studying with Matthias Pintscher and Pascal Dusapin. Additional studies include the Royaumont Voix Nouvelles course and lessons from Salvatore Sciarrino.

His commissions include two operas: *L’autre frère*, premiered at the 12th Munich Biennale in 2010, and *Vastation*, premiered at the Munich Biennale in 2014 with the Regensburg Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by the composer and staged by Christine Mielitz, with subsequent performances in Regensburg. His music for orchestra has been championed by world-renowned musicians such as Kent Nagano, who has commissioned five works for the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, and Pierre Boulez, for whom he wrote *Crimson*, premiered in 2015 at the Lucerne Festival.

Samy Moussa was awarded the Bayerischen Kunstförderpreis 2012 for his work as conductor with the INDEX Ensemble, the Composers’ Prize 2013 from the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation, the 2017 Hindemith Prize, and was named Québec’s Composer of the Year in 2015.

Kammerkonzert

Samy Moussa was a student at Université de Montréal when *Kammerkonzert* received its premiere in 2006. The title, meaning “chamber concerto,” is actually a contradiction with the content of the work, as the ensemble is almost always playing. Except for sparingly in the flute and viola parts, there are no real solo lines featured and, for most of the work, the ensemble is playing as a block. This block technique in the orchestral writing makes the piece consistently loud, which adds to the gravity of the ascending and descending gestures, and implies the absence of tempo. The revision of 2008 was minor in scope, adding a second percussionist and a few very minor tweaks.

- Max Rubino

Johannes Debus

Conductor

German-born conductor Johannes Debus was appointed Music Director of the Canadian Opera Company in 2009, having already established himself in many of the great opera houses and festivals of Europe. He made his COC debut in 2008 conducting *War and Peace*, and has captivated Toronto and international critics alike in the years since his appointment to the COC. In recent seasons with the COC, he has conducted Barbara Monk

Feldman's *Pyramus and Thisbe* (with Monteverdi's *Lamento d'Arianna* and *Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*), as well as Wagner's *Siegfried* and Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. When he is not conducting at the COC, Mr. Debus is very active with international engagements that include appearances with the BBC Proms, the orchestras of Boston, Cleveland, Aspen, the National Arts Centre, Houston, and Toronto; at the Spoleto, Bregenz, and Tanglewood festivals; and at opera companies that include San Francisco, Berlin Staatsoper, Komische Oper Berlin, Opera Frankfurt, and Bayerische Staatsoper, among many others. Most recently, he made his Metropolitan Opera debut conducting *Salome*. During the 2016-17 season, Mr. Debus returned to the COC podium to conduct *Ariodante*, *Götterdämmerung*, and *Louis Riel*.

Emily D'Angelo

Mezzo-soprano

Italian-Canadian mezzo-soprano Emily D'Angelo won First Prize and Audience Choice Award at the Canadian Opera Company's 2015 Ensemble Studio Competition and is a winner of the 2016 Metropolitan Opera National Council Audition Finals. She made her European debut in 2016 at the Spoleto Festival dei Due Mondi as Cherubino in *The Marriage of Figaro* under the baton of James Conlon. She received her bachelor of music in performance from the University of Toronto in 2016, where she was the recipient of the Jim and Charlotte Norcop Prize in Song and the Tecumseh Sherman Rogers Graduating Award. Additionally, she is a 2016 grant recipient of the Jacqueline Desmarais Foundation. A passionate recitalist, the 2015-16 season saw her perform in the Canadian Opera Company's Free Concert Series for the Performing Arts in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre, the Toronto Arts and Letters Club, and WFMT Chicago classical radio station with repertoire ranging from Schumann's *Frauenliebe und – leben* to Messiaen's *Poèmes pour mi*. She was invited by the Weill Music Institute at Carnegie Hall to sing in The Song Continues workshop with Marilyn Horne, and was a two-time fellow at the Ravinia Steans Institute in 2015 and 2016. Her 2016-17 season included recitals in Toronto at Koerner Hall and the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre as well as singing the role of Second Lady in the Canadian Opera Company's production of *The Magic Flute*.

Andrew Haji

Tenor

Canadian tenor Andrew Haji is quickly becoming one of the most sought-after voices on both the operatic and concert stages. A graduate of the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble Studio, his recent operatic roles include Gabriel Dumont in Harry Somers's *Louis Riel*, Tamino in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, Hélios in Félicien David's *Herculanum*, Rodolfo in Puccini's *La bohème*, Alfredo in Verdi's *La traviata*, Count Almaviva in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*, Rodriguez in Massenet's *Don Quichotte*, and Ferrando in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*.

Mr. Haji has performed the role of Count Almaviva with the Salzburg Festival Young Singers Project in July and August 2015 and, in the summer of 2014, he sang Rodolfo in *La bohème* at the Centre for Opera Studies in Italy (COSI). He had previously attended COSI, performing Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* and Nemorino in *L'elisir d'amore*. He has also sung Tamino in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, both at the Music Academy of the West in 2013 and at the Accademia Europea dell'Opera in 2012.

His numerous prizes include the Grand Prix, the Press Prize, and the Junior Jury Prize at the 50th International Vocal Competition in The Netherlands, an Encouragement Award in the Marilyn Horne Song Competition, and the second prize at the Canadian Opera Company's second annual Ensemble Studio Competition.

His oratorio activities include Handel's *Messiah*, Haydn's *The Creation*, Verdi's *Requiem*, Puccini's *Messa di gloria*, Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Rossini's *Petite messe solennelle*, Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, and Mozart's *Requiem*, *Great Mass in C Minor*, and *Coronation Mass*.

Richard Van Camp

Librettist & narrator

Richard Van Camp is a proud member of the Tłı̨chǫ Dene from Fort Smith, Northwest Territories. He is the author of two children's books with the Cree artist George Littlechild: *A Man Called Raven* and *What's the Most Beautiful Thing You Know About Horses?* His novel, *The Lesser Blessed*, is now a feature film with First Generation Films; his collections of short fiction include *Angel Wing Splash Pattern*, *The Moon of Letting Go and Other Stories*, *Godless but Loyal to Heaven*, and *Night Moves*. He is the author of four baby books: *Welcome Song for Baby: A Lullaby for Newborns*, *Nighty Night: A Bedtime Song for Babies*, *Little You* (now translated into Cree, Dene, and South Slavey!), and *We Sang You Home*, and he has two comic books out with the Healthy Aboriginal Network: *Kiss Me Deadly* and *Path of the Warrior*. He has four graphic novels: *Three Feathers*, about restorative justice, *The Blue Raven*, about mental health, *A Blanket of Butterflies*, about peacemaking where a grandmother is the hero of the story, and *Spirit*, about suicide prevention. His new novel, *Whistle*, is about mental health and asking for forgiveness.

Rosa Mantla

Tłı̨chǫ translation & diction coach

Rosa Mantla is a member of the Tłı̨chǫ Nation, and the only woman member elected to the present Tłı̨chǫ Government Assembly and Behchokò Community Council. She has lived her whole life on the land of her people, first with her family – mother, Elizabeth Rabesca, father, the late Paul Rabesca, grandparents, and then with her husband of 44 years, the late Henri Mantla, plus their six children and many grandchildren. She has great knowledge of her people's way of life and has pursued other knowledge through many means, including travel throughout her region, Canada, and internationally, and attendance at Aurora College, the University of Alberta, as well as the University of Victoria. Rosa Mantla has been a teacher and mentor to generations of children and teachers at Chief Jimmy Bruneau School and Elizabeth Mackenzie Elementary School, and she contributed to her community through service on the Housing Board, Friendship Center, and the parish council. She is currently a language and culture coordinator with the Tłı̨chǫ school board.

Since her young days by her grandmother's side, she has engaged in research into her language and culture, contributing to significant projects on Dene education and worldview, Tłı̨chǫ knowledge of land and place, Tłı̨chǫ knowledge of caribou, traditional Tłı̨chǫ stories, economy, and ecology, Tłı̨chǫ spirituality, and Tłı̨chǫ grammar and lexicon.

Canadian Opera Company Orchestra

The COC Orchestra is the oldest opera orchestra in Canada, and has received worldwide acclaim for its musical versatility and range of expression. Created in 1977, the orchestra has a permanent membership of more than 50 instrumentalists.

Elmer Iseler Singers

Elmer Iseler Singers (EIS), conducted by Artistic Director Lydia Adams for the past 19 years, are now in their 38th season. This 20-voice fully professional choral ensemble, founded by the late Dr. Elmer Iseler in 1979, has built an enviable reputation throughout Canada, the United States, and internationally through concerts, broadcasts, and recordings – performing repertoire that spans 500 years, with a focus on Canadian composers.

The Singers present a five-concert series in Toronto each season, and are featured at concerts, workshops, and festivals throughout Canada. Touring is also a major component of EIS activities, such as a six-city Western

Canada concert and workshop tour in April of 2017. Annually, EIS sponsors choral workshops through their GET MUSIC! Educational Outreach Initiative for secondary school conductors and choirs, concluding with a joint public performance.

The Elmer Iseler Singers are a 2014 national Choral Award recipient. Lydia Adams was the Artist Recipient of the 2013 Ontario Premier's Award for Excellence in the Arts and the 2012 winner of the Roy Thomson Hall Award of Recognition from the Toronto Arts Foundation.

The Elmer Iseler Singers are proud to be a 2017 Juno Awards nominee in the Classical Album of the Year: Vocal or Choral Performance category for their participation in the recording of Canadian composer Andrew Staniland's *Dark Star Requiem*.