



**Toronto  
Mendelssohn  
Choir**

**Oct 1, 2022  
7:30pm  
Trinity-St. Paul's  
United Church**



THE  
PILGRIM'S WAY

**Jean-Sébastien Vallée, Conductor  
Raneem Barakat, Mezzo-Soprano  
Toronto Mendelssohn Singers**



theWholeNote





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Jean-Sébastien Vallée  
Artistic Director

# The Pilgrim's Way

**Jean-Sébastien Vallée**, conductor

**Raneem Barakat**, soloist

**Irene Gregorio**, percussion

**Toronto Mendelssohn Singers**

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**Steal Away** – Spiritual, arr. Diedre Robinson

**I Forgive** – Shireen Abu-Khader (b. 1972)

Raneem Barakat, *mezzo-soprano*

**Lux æterna** – Edward Elgar (1857-1934), arr. John Cameron

**Path of Miracles** – Joby Talbot (b. 1971)

Roncesvalles

Burgos

Leon

Santiago

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This performance will run approximately 90 with no intermission.

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**Presented at Trinity-St. Paul's Centre For Faith, Justice and the Arts**

For the enjoyment of your fellow patrons and the artists on stage, please



No video  
recording



No flash  
photography



No noisy  
candy wrappers



Mute your  
cell phones



# Toronto Mendelssohn Choir

The TMChoir acknowledges that the land on which we perform is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.

We are honoured to share our music across these lands.

# PROGRAM NOTES

*[Content warning: The fourth paragraph of these program notes discusses homophobic violence and death by suicide]*

## Welcome to the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir's 2022–2023 Season!

Tonight's concert reflects on pilgrimages and journeys and quests of numerous natures. While one might be tempted to associate the term 'pilgrim' with the Mayflower pilgrims, given the upcoming Thanksgiving holidays, the narrative the TMC is offering tonight is meant to be much broader in scope. The repertoire combines to consider the pilgrim or wanderer as a universal figure – one with both historic and ongoing significance. The diversity of tonight's program reminds us that, though they may take different forms, we are likely all on some form of pilgrimage, whether what we seek on our journey is knowledge of the self or of the sacred, enlightenment, freedom from oppression, or social justice for our communities. At the same time, the entirely a cappella nature of tonight's concert also serves to remind us of the interactions pilgrims might take between lone voices and community, as well as of their profoundly personal and human nature.

The concert opens with Diedre Robinson's arrangement of the African-American spiritual "Steal Away." Couched in the language of – and for many, also about – a Christian journey towards Christ and the Kingdom of Heaven, the spiritual also implies and invokes a pilgrimage to freedom. Historically sung on plantations, the lyrics allowed enslaved people to sing of their longing for freedom without raising the suspicion of their enslavers, while also offering clues about how to escape to freedom through the Underground Railroad.

John Cameron's arrangement of Elgar's "Lux Aeterna" is a staple of choral repertoire. It draws on the musical material of "Nimrod," the ninth of Elgar's *Enigma Variations* (1899), meant to depict musical sketches of the composer's family, friends, and musical colleagues. Cameron's arrangement joins Elgar's music to the text of the *Lux Aeterna*, a communion antiphon from the Catholic Requiem Mass for the Dead, which prays that eternal light and eternal rest be granted to the departed, at the end of their life's journey.

Through her piece "I Forgive," (2022), the TMC's composer-in-residence, Shireen Abu-Khader, memorializes and celebrates the legacy of Egyptian activist Sarah Hejazi (1989–2020). A member of the 2SLGBTQIA community, Hejazi was arrested, detained, and tortured for three months throughout 2017–2018 as punishment for flying a rainbow flag at a September 2017 concert in Egypt. Though Hejazi was granted refugee status in Canada, her struggle with PTSD was ongoing, and she died by suicide on 14 June 2020. Abu-Khader's piece sets the text of Hejazi's final letter, in its original Arabic. Translated into English, the letter reads: "To my siblings – I tried to find redemption and I failed, forgive me. To my friends – the experience was harsh and I am too weak to resist it, forgive me. To the world – you were cruel to a great extent, but I forgive." The central goal of Abu-Khader's piece is to celebrate Hejazi's life and honour her legacy, something the composer also achieves by weaving the Egyptian folk song "El helwa di" (The Beautiful One) into the song's melody. However, the piece is also a reminder of the harrowing realities of journeys and lives marred by pain, trauma, and oppression, and of the pressing need to, in Abu-Khader's words, "have mercy for one another." To my mind, "I Forgive" is a reminder of the need to take care of one another on all of our pilgrimages – to walk together along the way, and to make sure no one gets left behind.

The four movements of Joby Talbot's *Path of Miracles* (2005) considers pilgrimages in their most traditional form, as the path in question is the Camino de Santiago, a major Christian pilgrimage route from medieval times through to the present. The Camino was established as a pilgrimage after the 9<sup>th</sup>-century discovery of relics along its path belonging to Saint James the Great (James the Apostle), and culminates at the Santiago de Compostela cathedral in Galicia, where, according to tradition and historic anecdote, the Saint's remains are buried. With routes through France, Portugal, and Spain, the pilgrimage remains sacred in the Christian tradition. However, particularly from the 1990s onward, the path has also become a popular pilgrimage undertaken for spiritual reflection or personal growth by people who belong to any number of – or to no – faith traditions, and is growing in popularity.

In Talbot's own words, the piece is meant to be "an hour-long a cappella exploration of the phenomenon of the Camino de Santiago," with the four movements "Roncesvalles," "Burgos," "León," and "Santiago" each depicting various parts of the trail. Featuring a libretto by Robert Dickinson, the text compiles excerpts of historic and sacred documents including the Book of Psalms, Codex Calixtinus, Mirages de Santiago, and selections from Catholic liturgy. Dickinson fuses these documents with his own words, and draws on Basque, English, French, German, Greek, Latin, and Spanish to set the text. The numerous languages of the libretto joined to the wide-reaching scope of Talbot's musical language suggests and alludes to the universality of the Camino. While drawing on the Christian tradition and the story of St. James, the music also encompasses and holds space for numerous realities and experiences of the pilgrimage – and by its depiction of the Camino, it also takes us, the listeners, on our own journeys through sound and personal reflection.

Ultimately, the music of tonight's concert reminds us that we are all on pilgrimages of some kind.

What do you want yours to look like?

—Rena Roussin, Musicologist in Residence

# The Toronto Mendelssohn Choir



## **Jean-Sébastien Vallée**, Artistic Director

Named as TMC's Artistic Director in May 2021 following an international search, Maestro Dr. Jean-Sébastien Vallée is an internationally recognized conductor, scholar, and pedagogue. In addition to his artistic leadership of the TMC, he is also Associate Professor of Music, Director of Choral Studies, and Coordinator of the Ensembles & Conducting Area at the Schulich School of Music of McGill University. Ensembles under his direction have toured throughout Europe and North America and Maestro Vallée's work has been broadcast internationally and can be heard on several recordings.



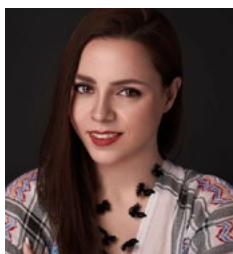
## **Shireen Abu-Khader**, Composer in Residence

Shireen Abu-Khader is a Palestinian Jordanian Canadian artist, composer and educator. She holds a PhD in Music Education from the University of Toronto, a Master's in Choral Music from the University of Southern California and a Bachelor of Arts in Music Education from Oberlin College Conservatory. In 2002, Shireen founded Dozan wa Awtar Music Establishment which has been an important venture in her personal development as well as the evolution of choral music in Jordan.



## **Irene Gregorio**, Collaborative Pianist

Pianist and chamber musician, Dr. Irene Gregorio recently returned home to Canada following a 15-year career in California where she was on the faculty of the California State University and served as pianist for the Los Angeles Children's Chorus, the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles, and the University of Southern California Chamber Singers. In Guelph, she now serves as the Director of Music Ministry at Dublin St. United Church, and Sessional Instructor of Piano at the University of Guelph.



## **Raneem Barakat**, Mezzo-Soprano

Raneem Barakat (she/her) is a Syrian Mezzo-Soprano based in Toronto. She has just earned her bachelor's degree in Voice Performance, with Honours, from the University of Toronto – Faculty of Music, under the supervision of Prof. Darryl Edwards. As a soloist, she performed with many orchestras and choirs, in Canada and around the globe, including the Syrian National Symphony Orchestra (SNSO), Toronto Youth Choir (TYC), and The National Youth Choir of Canada (NYCC). She recently took part in COSA Canada's concert (The Golden Harvest), after premiering Dr. Shireen Abu Khader's "I Forgive" at Podium 2022 with the NYCC.

# The Choir

The Toronto Mendelssohn Choir is proud to be one of Canada's oldest, largest, and best-known choral organizations. The Choir presented its first concert on January 15, 1895, as part of Massey Hall's inaugural season, and has been a leader in choral music in Canada ever since, commissioning works by Canadian composers, and presenting world and Canadian premieres. The Choir also regularly performs and records with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. In May 2021 Jean-Sébastien Vallée was named as Artistic Director, only the ninth conductor in TMChoir's 128-year history.

Through its performances, educational programs, and community engagement, TMChoir aspires to introduce its audiences to choral masterworks from the past and present — making both renowned and lesser-known pieces available, accessible, and inspirational to all.

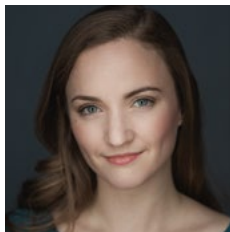
The TMChoir includes 24 professional singers and over 100 auditioned and experienced volunteer choristers and choral apprentices. Auditions are held in the spring and fall to welcome new members.

Our smaller professional ensemble, the Toronto Mendelssohn Singers (TMSingers) was created to deliver more intimate, nimble repertoire pieces in a variety of non-traditional venues, traversing the line between concert and experience and showcasing the individual expression of professional soloists.

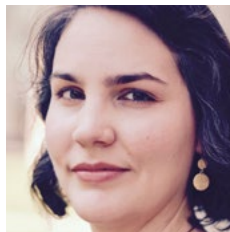
## TMSingers



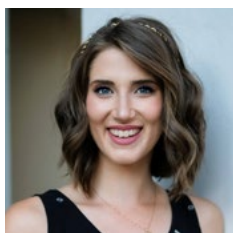
**Soprano**  
Lesley Emma Bouza



**Soprano**  
Rebecca Genge



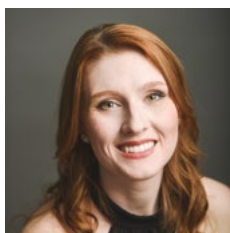
**Soprano**  
Teresa Mahon



**Soprano**  
Rebecca McKay



**Soprano**  
Emily Parker

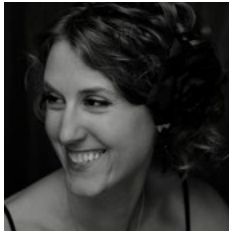


**Soprano**  
Sinéad White





**Alto**  
Julia Barber



**Alto**  
Rebecca Claborn



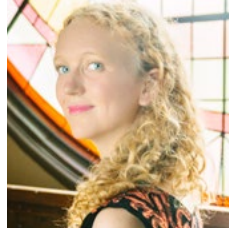
**Alto**  
Kirsten Fielding



**Alto**  
Simon Honeyman



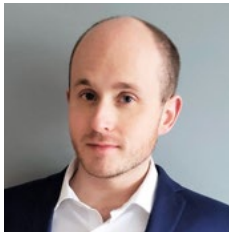
**Alto**  
Ryan McDonald



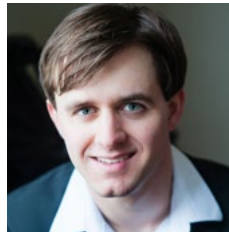
**Alto**  
Jessica Wright



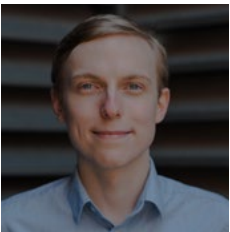
**Tenor**  
Jacob Abrahamse



**Tenor**  
Mitch Aldrich



**Tenor**  
Marcel d'Entremont



**Tenor**  
Nathan Gritter



**Tenor**  
Walter Mahabir



**Tenor**  
Nicholas Nicolaidis





**Bass**  
Neil Aronoff



**Bass**  
Dan Bevan-Baker



**Bass**  
Kieran Kane



**Bass**  
Jordan Scholl



**Bass**  
Paul Winkelmans



**Bass**  
David Yung

# Text & Translations

## STEAL AWAY – Spiritual, arr. Diedre Robinson

Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus.  
Steal away, steal away home, I ain't got long to stay here.

My Lord, he calls me, calls me by the thunder;  
ain't got long to stay here, my Lord.

Green trees bending, sinners stand a trembling.  
The trumpet sounds within my soul,  
ain't got long to stay here.

## I FORGIVE – Shireen Abu-Khader

To my siblings, I tried to make it, and I failed  
Forgive me

إِلَى إِخْوَتِي... حَاوَلْتُ النِّجَاةَ وَفَشِلْتُ ...  
سَامِحُونِي

To my friends, the journey was hard, and  
I was too weak to resist... Forgive me

إِلَى أَصْدِقَائِي... التَّجْرِبَةُ قَاسِيَةٌ وَأَنَا أَوْعَفُ مِنْ أَنْ  
أَقْوَمَهَا... سَامِحُونِي

To the world, you were harsh to a great  
extent, but I forgive

إِلَى الْعَالَمِ كُنْتُ قَاسِيًا إِلَى حَدِّ عَظِيمٍ ...  
وَلَكِنِّي أَسَامِحُ

The beautiful one, rose up with the dawn  
kneading dough

الْجَلِوَّةُ بِي قَامَتْ تَعْجَنُ بِالْبَدْرِيَّةِ

And the rooster calling, 'ku ku ku ku'

وَالدَّيْبُ بِبِنْدَةِ كُوْكَو كُوْكَو

## LUX ÆTERNA – Edward Elgar, arr. John Cameron

Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine,  
cum sanctis tuis in aeternum,  
quia pius es.

*Let perpetual light shine upon them, O  
Lord,  
with your saints for ever,  
for you are merciful.*

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,  
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

*Grant them eternal rest, O Lord,  
and let perpetual light shine upon them.*

# PATH OF MIRACLES – Joby Talbot

All texts are sung, except translations which are shown in parentheses

## 1. Roncesvalles

*Herr Santiagu  
Grot Sanctiagu  
Eultreya esuseya  
Deius aia nos.*

*Eodem autore tempore misit Herodes rex manus ut adfligeret quosdam de ecclesia  
occidit autem Iacobum fratrem Iohannis gladio.*

En aquel mismo tiempo el rey Herodes echó mano a algunos de la iglesia para maltratarles.

Y mató a espada a Jacobo, hermano de Juan.

*Aldi hartan, Herodes erregea eliz elkarteko batzuei gogor erasotzen hasi zen. Santiago,  
Joanen anaia, ezpataz hilarazi zuen.*

Ver ce temps-là, le roi Hérode se mit à persécuter quelques-un de membres de l'Église.

Il fit mourir par l'épée Jacques, frère de Jean.

*Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the  
church. And he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword.*

Um dieselbige Zeit legte der König Herodes die Hände an, etliche von der Gemeinde, sie zu peinigen. Er tötete aber Jakobus, den Bruder des Johannes, mit dem Schwert.

Before this death the Apostle journeyed,  
preaching the word to unbelievers.  
Returning, unheeded,  
to die in Jerusalem –  
a truth beyond Gospel.

*Jacobus, filius Zebedaei, frate Iohannis,  
Hic Spaniae et occidentalia loca praedicat,*

James, son of Zebedee, brother of John, at that time preached in Spain and the western places.

– *Breviarium apostolorum, 8th c.*

*foy el o primeiro que preegou en Galizia.*

He was the first to preach in Galicia

– *Mirages de Santiago, 15th c. (Gallegan)*

Herod rots on a borrowed throne,  
while the saint is translated  
to Heaven and Spain,  
the body taken at night from the tomb,

the stone of the tomb becoming the boat  
that carries him back ad extremis terrarum,  
back to the land that denied him in life.

*Huius beatissimi apostoli sacra ossa ad  
Hispanias translata;*

The sacred bones of the blessed apostle taken to Spain

– *Floro, 8th c.*

*Et despois que o rrey Eroles mãdou matar  
en Iherusalem, trouxerõ o corpo del os  
diçipolos por mar a Galiz.*

After King Herod killed him in Jerusalem, his disciples took the body by sea to Galicia.

– *Mirages de Santiago*

From Jerusalem to Finisterre,  
from the heart of the world  
to the end of the land in a boat made of stone,  
without rudder or sail.

Guided by grace to the Galician shore.

*abandonnant à la Providence la soin de la  
sepulture,*

Abandoning to Providence the care of the  
tomb. –*Legenda (Fr.)*

O ajutor omnium seculorum,  
O decus apostolorum,  
O lus clara galicianorum,  
O avocate peregrinorum,  
Jacobe, suplantatur viciorum  
Solve nostrum  
Cathenes delictorum  
E duc a salutem portum.

O judge of all the world,  
O glory of the apostles,  
O clear light of Galicia,  
O defender of pilgrims,  
James, destroyer of sins,  
deliver us from evil

and lead us to safe harbour.

At night on Lebedon  
by Iria Flavia  
the hermit Pelayo  
at prayer and alone

saw in the heavens  
a ring of bright stars  
shining like beacons  
over the plain

and as in Bethlehem  
the Magi were guided  
the hermit was led  
by this holy sign

for this was the time  
given to Spain  
for St. James to be found  
after eight hundred years

in Compostella, by the field of stars.

*Herr Santiago  
Grot Sanctiagu  
Eultreya esuseya  
Delius aia nos.*

## 2. Burgos

Innkeepers cheat us, the English steal,  
The devil waits at the side of the road.  
We trust in words and remnants, prayers and bones.

We know that the world is a lesson  
As the carved apostles in the Puerta Alta  
Dividing the damned and the saved are a lesson.  
We beat our hands against the walls of heaven.

St. Julian of Cuenca,  
Santa Casilda, pray for us.

Remember the pilgrim robbed in Pamplona,  
Cheated of silver the night his wife died;  
Remember the son of the German pilgrim  
Hanged as a thief at the gates of the town,  
Hanged at the word of an innkeeper's daughter.

Innkeepers cheat us, the English steal,  
The devil waits at the side of the road.  
We trust in words and remnants, prayers and bones.

*Santiago Peregrino:*

His arm is in England, his jaw in Italy,  
And yet he works wonders.  
The widower, the boy on the gallows –  
He did not fail them.  
One given a horse on the road by a stranger,  
One kept alive for twenty-six days,  
Unhurt on a gallows for twenty-six days.

His jaw is in Italy, yet he speaks.  
The widower robbed in Pamplona:  
Told by the Saint how the thief  
Fell from the roof of a house to his death.

His arm is in England, yet the boy,  
The pilgrim's son they hanged in Toulouse  
Was borne on the gallows for twenty-six days  
And called to his father: Do not mourn,  
For all this time the Saint has been with me.  
O beate Jacobe.

Innkeepers cheat us, the English steal.  
We are sick of body, worthy of hell.

The apostles in the Puerta Alta  
Have seen a thousand wonders;  
The stone floor is worn with tears,  
With ecstasies and lamentations.  
We beat our hands against the walls of heaven.

*Santiago Peregrino:*

The devil waits in a turn in the wind  
In a closing door in an empty room.  
A voice at night, a waking dream.

Traveller, be wary of strangers,  
Sometimes the Saint takes the form of a pilgrim,  
Sometimes the devil the form of a saint.

Pray to the Saints and the Virgen del Camino,  
To save you as she saved the man from Lyon  
Who was tricked on the road by the deceiver,  
Tricked by the devil in the form of St. James  
And who killed himself from fear of hell;

The devil cried out and claimed his soul.  
Weeping, his companions prayed.  
Saint and Virgin heard the prayer  
And turned his wound into a scar,  
From mercy they gave the dead man life.

Innkeepers cheat us, the English steal,  
We are sick of body, worthy of hell.  
We beat our hands against the walls of heaven  
And are not heard.

We pray for miracles and are given stories;  
Bread, and are given stones.  
We write our sins on parchment  
To cast upon his shrine  
In hope they will burn.

We pray to St. Julian of Cuenca,  
To St. Amaro the Pilgrim,  
To Santa Casilda,  
To San Millan and the Virgin of the Road.  
We pray to Santiago.

We know that the world is a lesson  
As the carved apostles in the Puerta Alta  
Dividing the damned and the saved are a lesson.  
We pray the watching saints will help us learn.

*Ora pro nobis, Jacobe,  
A finibus terrae ad te clamavi.*

From the end of the earth I cry to you.  
—Psalm 61

### 3. Leon

*Li soleus qui en moi luist est mes deduis,  
Et Dieus est mon conduis.*

The sun that shines within me is my joy, and  
God is my guide. –Anon, 13th cen.

We have walked  
In Jakobsland:

Over river and sheep track,  
By hospice and hermit's cave.

We sleep on the earth and dream of the road,  
We wake to the road and we walk.

Wind from the hills  
Dry as the road,

Sun overhead,  
Too bright for the eye.

*Li soleus qui en moi luist est mes deduis,  
Et Dieus est mon conduis.*

The sun that shines within me is my joy, and  
God is my guide. –Anon, 13th cen.

Rumours of grace on the road,  
Of wonders:

The miracles of Villasirga,  
The Virgin in the apple tree.

The Apostle on horseback –  
A journey of days in one night.  
God knows we have walked  
In Jakobsland:

Through the Gothic Fields,  
From Castrogeriz to Calzadilla,

Calzadilla to Sahagun,  
Each day the same road, the same sun.

*Quam dilecta tabernacula tua, Dominum  
virtutem.*

How admirable are thy tabernacles, O Lord  
of Hosts. –Psalm 84

Here is a miracle.  
That we are here is a miracle.

Here daylight gives an image of  
The heaven promised by His love.

*Beate, qui habitant in domo tua, Domine;  
In saecula saeculorum laudabant te.*

Blessed are they that dwell in thy house;  
they will still be praising be. –Psalm 84

We pause, as at the heart of a sun  
That dazzles and does not burn.



## 4. Santiago

The road climbs through changing land.  
Northern rains fall  
On the deepening green of the slopes of the valley,  
Storms break the summer's heat;  
At Foncebadon a pass can be lost,  
In one night, to the snow.

The road climbs for days through the highlands of Bierzo,  
to the grassland and rocks of the Valcarce valley.  
White broom and scrub-oak,  
Laburnum and gorse  
Mark the bare hills  
Beside the road.

At O Cebreiro, mountains.  
The road follows the ridgetop  
By meadows of fern, by fields of rye.

By Fonfria del Camino, by Triacastela.  
Towns are shadows  
The road leaves behind.  
It moves over the slate hills  
Palas do Rei. Potomarin.  
The names are shadows.

Then, from the stream at Lavacolla  
To the foot of Monte de Gozo,  
A morning;  
From the foot of Monte de Gozo  
To the summit of Monte de Gozo  
The road climbs,  
Before the longed-for final descent  
To Santiago.

*Herr Santiago*  
*Grot Sanctiagu*  
*Eultreya esuseya*  
*Deius aia nos.*

*Ver redit optatum*  
*Cum gaudio,*  
*Flore decoratum*  
*Purpureo;*  
*Aves edunt cantus*  
*Quam dulciter,*  
*Cantus est amoenus*  
*Totaliter.*

*Jacobo dat parium*  
*Omnis mundus gratis*  
*Ob cuius remedium*  
*Miles pietatis*  
*Cunctorum presidium*  
*Est ad vota satis.*

Longed-for spring returns,  
with joy,  
adorned with shining flowers;

The birds sing so sweetly,  
the woods burst into leaf,  
there is pleasant song on every side.  
–*Carmina Burana*

The whole world  
freely gives thanks to James;  
through his sacrifice,  
he, the warrior of godliness,  
is a great defense  
to all through their prayers.  
–*Dum pater familias*

*O beate Jacobe  
Virtus nostra vere  
Nobis hostes remove  
Tuos ac tuere  
Ac devotos adibe  
Nos tibi placer*

O blessed James,  
truly our strength,  
take our enemies from us  
and protect your people,  
and cause us, your faithful servants,  
to please you.

*Jacobo propicio  
Veniam speramus  
Et quas ex obsequio  
Merito debemus  
Patri tam eximio  
Dignes laudes demus.*

James, let us hope  
for pardon through your favor,  
and let us give  
the worthy praise,  
which we rightfully owe  
to so excellent a father.

At the Western edge of the world  
We pray for our sins to fall from us  
As chains from the limbs of penitents.

We have walked out of the lives we had  
And will return to nothing, if we live,  
Changed by the journey, face and soul alike.

We have walked out of our lives  
To come to where the walls of heaven  
Are thin as a curtain, transparent as glass,

Where the Apostle spoke the holy words,  
Where in death he returned, where God is close,  
Where saints and martyrs mark the road.

Santiago, primus ex apostolis,  
Defender of pilgrims, warrior for truth,  
Take from our backs the burdens of this life,

What we have done, who we have been;  
Take them as fire takes the cloth  
They cast into the sea at Finisterre.

Holy St James, great St. James  
God help us now and evermore.

–Robert Dickinson

# OUR COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT

The Toronto Mendelssohn Choir gratefully acknowledges the support of our government partners, corporate and foundation sponsors, and individual donors who, through their financial support, make it possible for the TMChoir to present outstanding high-quality performances, community engagement programs, and education opportunities.

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