

December 3 & 4, 2024 7:30pm Yorkminster Park Baptist Church



CAROLS

Festival of Carols

Jean-Sébastien Vallée, conductor
Jonathan Oldengarm, organ
Irene Gregorio, piano
Toronto Mendelssohn Choir

Run Time: 90 minutes, no intermission

If you enjoyed this evening's performance, please consider making a donation in support of Toronto Mendelssohn Choir.

tmchoir.org/donate-now

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

Sing-alongs are marked with an asterisk*

Traditional, arr. David Willcocks

Emily Parker, soprano

O Radiant Dawn

Lo, How a Rose/The Rose

Ding! Dong! Merrily on High

James MacMillan

Traditional, arr. Craig Hella Johnson

Traditional, arr. Mack Wilberg

Christus Natus Est

By-by Lullaby

Good News

World Premiere & TMChoir Commission

First Nowell*

Rosephanye Powell

Kelly-Marie Murphy

Aaron Manswell

Traditional, arr. Dan Forrest

Mary's Lullaby

Only in Sleep

Leslie Higgins, Soprano

Silent Night!*

John Rutter

Ēriks Ešenvalds

Traditional, arr. Stephen Paulus &

Jonathan Oldengarm

We Three Kings

Away in a Manger

Les anges dans nos campagnes*

John H. Hopkins Jr., arr. Philip Stopford

Traditional, arr. Bob Chilcott

Traditional, arr. Jonathan Oldengarm

Worthy Is the Lamb (from Messiah)

Joy to the World*

George Frideric Handel

Traditional, arr. John Rutter

PROGRAM NOTES

Welcome to the 25th annual Festival of Carols!

A beloved holiday tradition in Toronto that is now a quarter-century old, the Festival of Carols is a chance to mark the spirit of the season by communally listening to and singing Christmas carols. Historically, this performance brings together the old and the new, musically and otherwise: every year the evening combines well-known carols with lesser-known, contemporary holiday pieces. At the same time, the Festival brings together members of the TMChoir's long-term audience, who have made this event part of their own holiday traditions, with a large number of individuals who are often attending their first-ever TMChoir concert. Whether this is your first Festival of Carols, your fifth, your twentieth, or even your twenty-fifth: thank you for joining us!

Of course, having so many repeat attendees also means that one of the great challenges for me, as the TMChoir's Musicologist in Residence, is thinking about how to keep the Festival of Carols program notes from feeling repetitive year after year! And on this special anniversary year, I find myself thinking about the program notes a bit differently than normal. Musicologist that I am, when I think about how music connects to holidays, memories, tradition, and stories, I tend first to think about the origins of the music itself: what the composer wanted to communicate, and what stories, traditions, themes, and historical understandings that music conveys and connects us to.

This year, however, I find myself thinking instead of all the stories, memories, and traditions that all of you, our audience, bring to these songs, and to this event. Over the years, I've had the honour of hearing from several of you about what this event means to you. Some of you have told me that the Festival is a break amid busy holiday preparations, a moment of peace, a chance to reflect or recapture the joy of the season. For some of our younger audience members, it's inextricable from their memories of the holidays growing up, and is a reminder of childhood joy in the days leading up to Christmas. Yet the theme that always seems to echo across everyone's stories is that the Festival offers a special moment of community and connection, even (or sometimes especially) during years that held a particularly hard or lonely holiday season.



There's something to it, I think: to the act of singing and listening together each year; to coming back to old memories and traditions, and to making space for new ones. And this year's edition has all the standard favourites we expect from the Festival of Carols (including an excerpt from another beloved Christmas music tradition, Handel's Messiah), along with seven recently-composed pieces that are destined to become new favourites. Craig Hella Johnson's 2007 fusion of "Lo, How a Rose/The Rose" is a reminder that love and beauty can be found even in dark and challenging places. Sir James Macmillan's 2008 "O radiant dawn" uses repeated words and musical motifs to portray the longing for Jesus's advent and the arrival of a brighter world. Rosephayne Powell's 2019 "Christus Natus Est" sets a text by Harlem Renaissance poet Countee Cullen, fusing its message of social justice with musical motifs from the spiritual "Go Down Moses." Tonight's program also has a particularly strong focus on childhood and Iullabies. Ēriks Ešenvald's 2010 "Only in Sleep" joins Sara Teasdale's poem about recounting childhood memories in dreams to music evocative of child-like wonder. John Rutter's 1978 "Mary's Lullaby," a contemporary classic that was infamously composed in under 24 hours, depicts a lullaby at Christ's Nativity; by contrast, Kelly-Marie Murphy's 2022 "By-by Lullaby" depicts a similar scene, but draws on an anonymous traditional English text from 1530. Finally, tonight's performance also features a world premiere of Aaron Manswell's newlycomposed "Good News," which fuses the melody and textual concepts of J.S. Bach's "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" with Manswell's compositional influences from gospel and R&B.

The holiday season celebrates many things that are sacred. The birth of Jesus. Light emerging in darkness, particularly at the break of dawn after the Winter Solstice. Family, friendship, and community. Traditions, ceremonies, and memory. Perhaps what's so special about the Festival of Carols is the reminder that singing in community—something which is, unfortunately, an increasingly rare experience—is also something sacred. After all, in singing together, we join our voices, our stories, our heritage, and our traditions. And so, on behalf of the TMChoir singers and staff: thank you for singing with us and making us part of your stories and traditions—and for being part of ours. Happy Holidays!

-Rena Roussin, Musicologist-in-Residence



THE TORONTO MENDELSSOHN CHOIR

The Toronto Mendelssohn Choir (TMChoir) 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 premières. 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 eighth conductor in TMChoir's 130-year history.

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

The TMChoir includes a core of professional singers and more than 160 auditioned and experienced volunteer choristers. The smaller professional ensemble, the Toronto Mendelssohn Singers, was created to deliver more intimate repertoire in a variety of non-traditional venues. This 130th anniversary season includes a commercial recording Remember: 130 Years of Canadian Choral Music, available now, by ATMA Classique, and a recording with Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra and Orchestre symphonique de Québec celebrating the late composer Jacques Hétu.



Jean-Sébastien Vallée, Artistic Director and conductor

Jean-Sébastien Vallée is a renowned Canadian-American conductor, scholar, and pedagogue known for his expertise in vocal, choral, and orchestral repertoires. With a career spanning over several decades, Vallée has conducted numerous ensembles across North America, Europe, and Asia, and has prepared choruses for some of the world's most prestigious orchestras including the Chicago and Toronto Symphony Orchestras, l'Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, and the National Arts Center Orchestra in Ottawa.

Dr. Vallée is Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the renowned 160-voice Toronto Mendelssohn Choir and the professional Toronto Mendelssohn Singers. In addition, Jean-Sébastien is Full Professor of Music, Director of Choral Studies, and Coordinator of the Conducting & Ensembles Area at the Schulich School of Music of McGill University. He has previously served as the Director of Choral Studies at California State University, Los Angeles, and was on the choral faculty of the University of Redlands. Dr. Vallée holds degrees from Laval University, Sherbrooke University, the University of California, Santa Cruz, and a doctorate in conducting from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Vallée's recordings have been broadcast internationally and include Remember (ATMA, 2024), Distance (ATMA, 2021), Requiem (ATMA, 2018 – requiems by Fauré and Duruflé), and Lux (ATMA, 2017). His recent and upcoming engagements include concerts at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music in Budapest, concerts with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and a performance at Carnegie Hall with Distinguished Concerts International New York.



Jonathan Oldengarm, organ

Organist and chamber musician Jonathan Oldengarm is Minister of Music at Toronto's Metropolitan United Church where he oversees an extensive musical programme that includes multiple ensembles, two concert series, and numerous annual musical service highlights. He maintains an active solo performance, broadcast and recording schedule, and is a laureate of several international competitions. Jonathan holds degrees in organ and harpsichord performance from Wilfrid Laurier and McGill Universities; the Fellowship diploma of the Royal Canadian College of Organists; and studied at the Hochschule für Musik in Stuttgart, Germany.



Irene Gregorio, piano

Irene Gregorio enjoys a diverse and active musical life as a pianist, educator, and music director. As a pianist and chamber musician, she has collaborated with members of the LA Phil and San Francisco Symphonies. She has served as pianist for the Los Angeles Children's Chorus, LA Opera Education and Outreach, and the University of Southern California Chamber Singers, among others. Her performances as a collaborative pianist have taken her throughout North America, Europe, Cuba, and the Philippines, and she has also appeared on PBS, CBC Radio 2, and on film soundtracks in the LA area.

Dr. Gregorio has over 15 years of experience in the university setting, serving as staff/faculty in collaborative piano at the campuses of the California State University, East Bay and Los Angeles. She earned her DMA at the University of Southern California and recently returned home to Canada, where she serves as the Director of Music Ministry at Dublin St. United Church, and Sessional Instructor of Piano at the University of Guelph.

Irene Gregorio was named as the TMChoir Collaborative Pianist in August 2021 and was the pianist of the National Youth Choir of Canada in 2022.



Did You Hear the Carillon Ring?

Before this evening's performance, we were welcomed in by the brilliant sounds of Yorkminster Park's carillon, played by Naoko Tsujita, the church's first appointed carillonneur.

A carillon is a set of at least 23 bells arranged in chromatic sequence and tuned to produce concordant harmony when many bells are sounded together. The bells are cast in bronze and traditionally set in a tower and can be played on a keyboard with each key attached mechanically to a clapper inside a bell. Yorkminster Park's carillon was completed in 2023, marking Canada's 12th carillon installation.

Discover more at memorial-bells.yorkminsterpark.com.

TORONTO MENDELSSOHN CHOIR

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Paul Winkelmans * Albert Wong Isaiah Yankech Amos Yip David Yung * Bruce Yungblut

^{*} indicates TMSingers

TEXT AND TRANSLATIONS

*Sing-along

Once in Royal David's City – Traditional, arr. David Willcocks

Stood a lowly cattle shed, where a mother laid her baby in a manger for His bed: Mary was that mother mild, Jesus Christ her little Child.

He came down to earth from heaven who is God and Lord of all, and His shelter was a stable, and His cradle was a stall: with the poor, and meek, and lowly, lived on earth our Savior holy.

Not in that poor lowly stable, with the oxen standing by, we shall see Him, but in heaven, set at God's right hand on high; when like stars His children crowned all in white shall wait ground

O Radiant Dawn - James MacMillian

O Radiant Dawn Splendour of eternal Light, Sun of Justice: Come, shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.

Isaiah had prophesied, The people who walked in darkness have seen the great light upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone. Amen.

Lo, How a Rose/ The Rose - Traditional, arr. Craig Hella Johnson

Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming, from tender stem hath sprung! Of Jesse's lineage coming as saints of old have sung. It came, a flow'ret bright, amid the cold of winter, when half-spent was the night.

Isaiah 'twas foretold it, this Rose I have in mind. With Mary we behold it, the virgin mother kind. To show God's love aright, She bore to us a Savior, when half-spent was the night.

This flow'r whose fragrance tender with sweetness fills the air, Dispels in glorious splendor the darkness everywhere. True man, yet very God, From sin and death he saves us, and lightens every load.

Some say love, it is a river That drowns the tender reed Some say love, it is a razor That leaves your soul to bleed

Some say love, it is a hunger An endless aching need I say love, it is a flower And you, its only seed

It's the heart afraid of breaking That never learns to dance It's the dream afraid of waking That never takes the chance

It's the one who won't be taking Who cannot seem to give And the soul, afraid of dying That never learns to live

When the night has been too lonely And the road has been too long And you think that love is only For the lucky and the strong

Just remember in the winter Far beneath the bitter snows Lies the seed that with the sun's love In the spring becomes the rose

Ding! Dong! Merrily on High - Traditional, arr. Mack Wilberg

Ding dong, merrily on high! In heav'n the bells are ringing; ding dong, verily the sky is riv'n with angel singing. Gloria, hosannah in excelsis! Gloria, hosannah in excelsis!

E'en so here below, below, let steeple bells be swungen, And io, io, io, by priest and people sungen. Gloria, hosannah in excelsis! Gloria, hosannah in excelsis!

Pray ye dutifully prime your matin chime, ye ringers; may ye beautifully rhyme your evetime song, ye singers. Gloria, hosannah in excelsis! Gloria, hosannah in excelsis!

Christus Natus Est – Rosephanye Powell, words by Countee Cullen

In Bethlehem on Christmas morn, Christus natus est. The lowly gem of love was born, Christus natus est. Bright in her crown of fiery star, Christus natus est. Judea's town shone from afar, Christus natus est. Hosannah, Christus natus est.

For bird and beast he did not come, Christus natus est. But for the least of mortal scum, Christus natus est. Who lies in ditch? Who begs his bread, Christus natus est. Who has no stitch for back or head? Christus natus est. Hosannah, Christus natus est.

Who wakes to weep, lies down to mourn? Who in his sleep withdraws from scorn? Ye outraged dust, on field and plain, to feed the lust of madmen slain; Hosannah, Christus natus est.

The manger still outshines the throne; Christ must and will come to his own.

By-by lullaby - Kelly-Marie Murphy

In a dream late as I lay,

I thought I heard a maiden say, and speak so clear:

"My little boy with you I play." and then she sang by lullaby. Thus she rocked her tiny child.

Little baby, rocking, rocking. By, by, lullaby.

And then I marvelled much to see, a babe upon a virgin's knee. And thus she rocked her tiny child.

Thus she rocked her tiny child.

Good News - Aaron Manswell

There were shepherds in fields nearby. The angel came to report that night Don't you fear, I am only here to bring tidings, good tidings unto you. Christ the Saviour born today. You will find a baby who sleeps in hay. He is wrapped in cloth and I made this stop to bring good tidings unto you. I bring good news for you, for me. Christ is born. Born from Mary, the Son of God. He came to rescue the world with love. From David's town, He will bear the crown. We sing of good tidings unto you. I bring good news for you, for me. Christ is born.

First Nowell* - Traditional, arr. Dan Forrest

The first Nowell the angel did say was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay, in fields where they lay keeping their sheep, on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Refrain [All]

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, born is the King of Israel

Choir only

They looked up and saw a star shining in the east beyond them far; and to the earth it gave great light, and so it continued both day and night. [Refrain]

[AII]

Then let us all with one accord sing praises to our heavenly Lord, that hath made heaven and earth of nought, and with his blood our mankind hath bought. [Refrain]

Mary's Lullaby - John Rutter

See that child Mary bore On her lap so softly sleeping In a stable cold and poor Ox and ass their vigil keeping

Sing lullaby, sing lullaby My own dear son, my child Lullaby, sing lullaby Lullaby, my little baby

Flights of angels round His head Sing him joyful hymns of greeting Peace on earth, goodwill to men Each to each the song repeating

Shepherd's kneeling by his bed Offer homage without measure Wise men, by a bright star led Bring him gifts of richest treasure

Only in Sleep – Ēriks Ešenvalds

Only in sleep I see their faces Children I played with when I was a child Louise comes back with her brown hair braided Annie with ringlets warm and wild

Only in sleep Time is forgotten— What may have come to them, who can know? Yet we played last night as long ago And the doll-house stood at the turn of the stair

Only in sleep I see their faces Children I played with when I was a child Louise comes back with her brown hair braided Annie with ringlets warm and wild

Only in sleep Time is forgotten— What may have come to them, who can know? Yet we played last night as long ago And the doll-house stood at the turn of the stair

I met their eyes and found them mild— Do they, too, dream of me, I wonder And for them am I too a child?

Silent Night* - Traditional, arr. Stephen Paulus and Jonathan Oldengarm

[AII]

Silent night, holy night All is calm, all is bright Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child Holy Infant so tender and mild Sleep in heavenly peace Sleep in heavenly peace

Choir only

Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia,
Christ the Savior is born!
Christ the Savior is born

[AII]

Silent night, holy night Son of God, love's pure light Radiant beams from Thy holy face With the dawn of redeeming grace Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth

We Three Kings – Traditional, arr. Philip Stopford

We three kings of Orient are; bearing gifts we traverse afar, field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star.

Refrain [AII]

O star of wonder, star of light, star with royal beauty bright, westward leading, still proceeding, quide us to thy perfect light.

Born a King on Bethlehem's plain, gold I bring to crown him again, King forever, ceasing never, over us all to reign. [Refrain]

Frankincense to offer have I; incense owns a Deity nigh; prayer and praising, all men raising, worshiping God most high. [Refrain]

Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume breathes a life of gathering gloom; sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying, sealed in the stone-cold tomb. [Refrain]

Glorious now behold him arise; King and God and sacrifice: heaven sings alleluia, alleluia the earth and skies, [Refrain]

Away in a Manger - Traditional, arr. Bob Chilcott

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head; the stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay, the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes, but little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes. I love Thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky and stay by my side until morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask Thee to stay close by me forever, and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care, and fit us for heaven, to live with Thee there.

Les anges dans nos campagnes – Traditional, arr. Jonathan Oldengarm

Choir only

Les anges dans nos campagnes Ont entonné le chant des cieux; Et l'écho de nos montagnes reprend cet air mélodieux:

All [Chorus]

Gloria in excelsis Deo. Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Choir only

Bergers, pour qui cette fête? Quel est l'objet de tous ces chants? Quel vainqueur, quelle conquête Mérite ces cris triomphants?

All [Chorus]

Choir only

Ils annoncent la naissance Du Rédempteur, Roi d'Israël Et, dans sa reconnaissance, La terre chante avec le ciel:

All [Chorus]

Choir only

The angels in our countryside Have shouted the hymn of the heavens, And the echo of our mountains Repeat this melodious song:

All [Chorus]

Glory to God in the highest. Glory to God in the highest.

Choir only

Shepherds, for whom do you celebrate? What is the object of all these songs? Which conqueror, which conquest Deserves these triumphant cries:

All [Chorus]

Choir only

They announce the birth Of the liberator of Israel And full of recognition They sing on this solemn day:

ΑII

Angels we have heard on high Sweetly singing o'er the plains And the mountains in reply Echoing their joyous strains

All [Chorus]

Worthy Is the Lamb That Was Slain

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by His blood, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

Blessing and honour, glory and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.

Amen

Joy to the World* - Traditional, arr. John Rutter

[IIA]

Joy to the World, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King; Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room, And Heaven and nature sing, And Heaven and nature sing, And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the World, the Savior reigns! Let men their songs employ; While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace, And makes the nations prove The glories of His righteousness, And wonders of His love, And wonders of His love, And wonders, wonders, of His love.



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Dele Ibitove

Susan Worthington

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.

This list reflects donations from September 2022 to the present. We make every effort to ensure the accuracy of this list, however, if you notice an error or omission, please accept our apologies and contact Devon Klaas at devon.klaas@tmchoir.org

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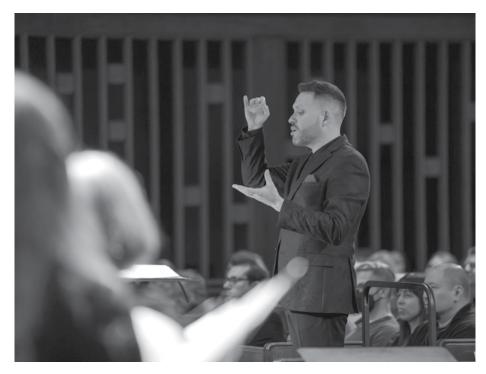
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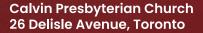
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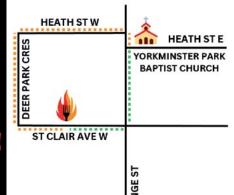
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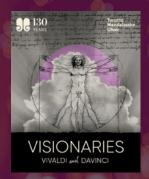
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