

# Wound Turned to Light

A woman is shown from the chest up, holding a large, glowing, paper lantern with both hands. The lantern is made of a translucent material and is illuminated from within, creating a warm, orange glow. The background is a dark teal color with a pattern of small, out-of-focus white lights, resembling bokeh or a starry night sky. The overall composition is vertical and centered.

October 13 & 14, 2023  
7:30pm

Heliconian Hall  
Toronto

Confluence  
Concerts

Larry Beckwith  
Curator

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# A Message from the Curator

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In August 2022, I was invited by my friend James Rolfe to an intimate evening at the Canadian Music Centre. In preparation for going into the recording studio, singers Alex Samaras, Andrew Adridge, and pianist Lara Dodds-Eden sang more than a dozen new songs by James, commissioned from the Governor General's Award-winning poet George Elliott Clarke and set to the poetry of a wide range of Canadian poets. Many of them were in attendance and rose to offer eloquent, humorous, touching stories surrounding their poems, and then they, or volunteers from the small audience, read the poems before we heard their musical settings.

It immediately struck me that this was a Confluence concert! The quality of the songs, offered so honestly and with such vulnerability by the performers, and the directness and integrity of each poet's short presentation made for an absolutely magical evening. The songs have now been recorded, and we are celebrating tonight the release of *Wound Turned to Light*, an unusual and generous gift that grew out of the strange isolation of the pandemic.

How fortunate we are to have such a stellar array of creative artists in our midst.

Larry Beckwith

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# Land Acknowledgement

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We acknowledge that the land we are gathering on is the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinaabe, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat, 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. As an organization dedicated to bringing artists and artistic traditions together, it is our duty and privilege to recognize the original caretakers of the land on which we live and work, to listen and to learn about how we can contribute to the spirit of reconciliation and resurgence, and to move forward in a good way.

# Program

*All music by James Rolfe (b. 1961)*

Namesake	Giovanna Riccio
Prelude	Astrid Brunner
Wound Turned to Light	Andrea Thompson
The Way Spring Jabs	Ayesha Chatterjee
Minuet I	Astrid Brunner
Songs of Joy	Psalm 126
Phoenix (IV)	Bānoo Zan
Last Paddle	Richard Sanger
To the Poet	George Elliott Clarke

## INTERMISSION

Bombastic	George Elliott Clarke
Spirit Tree	Anna Yin
Marigold	A. F. Moritz
For E. J. P	Leonard Cohen
V	Amatoritsero Ede
And Then a Second Dream	Luciano Iacobelli
After the Love at Victoria Street	Boyd Warren Chubbs
Moon	Choucri Paul Zemokhol
Set Me as a Seal	Song of Songs 8:6-7

## Performers

Andrew Adridge	<i>voice</i>	Patricia O'Callaghan	<i>voice</i>
George Elliott Clarke	<i>host (October 13)</i>	James Rolfe	<i>voice</i>
Larry Beckwith	<i>voice, host (October 14)</i>	Alex Samaras	<i>voice</i>
Lara Dodds-Eden	<i>piano</i>	Anika Venkates	<i>voice</i>

*and short contributions from poets*

*Ayesha Chatterjee, Albert Moritz, Giovanna Riccio, Andrea Thompson, Anna Yin, and Bānoo Zan*

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# Texts & Translations

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## Namesake

by Giovanna Riccio

I can still see the oak floor  
the teacher unrolling my r's  
clipping my name—Joan.

Joan? I don't know if that blunt  
one-syllable turned my head,  
but everywhere English flattened Italian,  
and when my father snipped  
my impractical long hair, I looked away,  
pretended those orphaned ringlets  
belonged to someone else.

Blonde, blue-eyed goddesses  
who never ate garlic filled the temples  
of the Golden Book Encyclopedia,  
the face of Ancient Rome  
belonged to our teacher now,  
but blinded statues in pictures, old sun  
threaded in the cracks of fallen ruins  
were calling me.

Later, my fingers clutched  
the boarding pass, I remember the airplane  
lifting me to a warm unknowing sleep,  
sudden morning opening onto old stone,  
July heat rusting on palm trees, wind cupped  
in the umbrella pines and everywhere taxis.

I rode  
back into my dusty body, into Rome's  
dusky fall echoing in the stone,

From the Italian stone  
my numbed blood flowed naturally,  
I heard my name calling from  
the balcony, Giovanna  
our old house-bound language, free  
in the rowdy streets, songs we hummed  
*sotto voce* singing at the top of their voices.

I rested, leaning  
on the smoky marble's mineral veins.

Impossible stone flowed  
everywhere that summer,  
familiar figures I had never seen before  
gestured to me from the rooftops  
and because I could accept the gesture  
the blunt sounds softened,  
my tongue, my bones, grew more porous  
and the child I had locked away  
flowed out of the hardness into my voice  
and gave me my name.

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## Prelude

by Astrid Brunner (from "Mary Magdalene: A Suite in B Minor")

she sees the roses wither  
and fall                      petal by petal  
into the ashes of her heart.

let us be friends  
says mary magdalene.

she hears the stars whisper  
and fall                      arrow by arrow  
into the ashes of her heart.

let us be friends  
says mary magdalene.

she feels the blood chant  
and fall                      tear by tear  
into the ashes of her heart.

let us be friends  
says mary magdalene

she knows the phoenix sleep  
and fall                      red by gold by blue  
into the ashes of her heart.

let us be friends  
says mary magdalene.

she unfolds her hair  
and waits                      patience by patience by patience  
over the ashes of her heart.

let us be friends  
says mary magdalene.

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# Texts & Translations

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## Wound Turned to Light

by Andrea Thompson

The light of witnessing existence  
makes everything beautiful again—

brings rebirth to those disowned parts of self  
those shattered fragments the world has deemed

unworthy—those darkened days and tired nights  
of soul-deep weariness become refreshed

through the act of simply  
recording what is

what it is to be ourselves, unabashed and  
naked, living on this crushed ball of stardust

what it is to be us—hurtling through the universe  
bouncing up against each other like ideological pinballs

at a time when the polarity of this planet has sent us all  
off on our own diametrical trajectory away from the core

when the weight of interpersonal animosity has become  
staggeringly crippling, when the term “respectfully disagree”

is about to become extinct. In this moment I bow down  
and thank God for bestowing us with the gift of creativity

for endowing all of us humans a life-giving method of release  
to the pressures of simply existing, a way to translate pain

into beauty, a way to open up the valve on it all  
and begin to let off steam—

what a gift it is to be given this  
moment, to be invited to express

all the colours of this jagged emotional palette  
without judgment, to simply say yes

to the raw red of rage, yes  
to the yellow of hope, yes

to the bruised-hearted blues, yes  
to the unfathomable purple, yes

yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes  
yes and amen to it all.

*[The title is inspired by a quote from the French artist Georges Braque: “Art is a wound turned into light.”]*

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# Texts & Translations

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## The Way Spring Jabs

by Ayesha Chatterjee

The way spring jabs at winter,  
each small leaf a soldier, death  
unthinkable. When the sickly honeysuckle  
thrusts its brown vine into the air  
no-one notices. Camouflaged,  
it curls like clay, but stays.

Death is everywhere, napkined in snow.  
So soft against the ear it must be a mistake.  
Still, we carry on, imagination  
shrinking with the rain, the coming warmth  
a myth to be believed.

In a sort of synchronicity, people open doors  
and close them, letting no-one in except themselves,  
lifting alter-egos out of boxes tinged

with disappointment. It is just enough to hold on  
to what is left as the first spiders skitter over tiles  
and set their endless traps, sparkling every now and then with dross.

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# Texts & Translations

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## Minuet I

by Astrid Brunner (from “Mary Magdalene: A Suite in B Minor”)

and although i want to go out into the snowstorm  
to stand there naked  
and to shout my love for you  
into the white howling wind

i too can write a letter  
with this and that  
in it.

and although i want to go out into the snowstorm  
to stand there naked  
and to fly into your arms  
through the white howling wind

i too can write a letter  
with this and that  
in it.

and although i want to ride into the snowstorm  
to shake my mane there naked  
and to ride into your body  
laughing on horseback  
at the white howling wind

i too can write a letter  
with this and that  
in it.

and although i want to ride into the snowstorm  
to melt my body naked into yours  
from the ice  
i have turned into  
mighty water  
with the heat of my love  
to melt my body naked into yours  
from the ice in your eyes  
i have turned into  
mighty water  
with the heat of my passion

should the ice return to the snowstorm  
to your eyes  
to my naked body

i too can write a letter  
with this and that  
and a saint or two  
in it.



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# Texts & Translations

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## Songs of Joy (Psalm 126)

When the Lord turned our gaze upon Zion, we thought we were dreaming.  
 Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with shouts of joy.  
 Fill us with grace, O Lord, like rivers in a dry land.  
 They who sow in tears shall reap with songs of joy.  
 Though they went out weeping, carrying the seed-bag, they shall return with songs of joy,  
 carrying their sheaves.

*[There's a back story to this. There was a German-Jewish composer from Berlin named James Simon, which by chance are my first two names. In 1944, at age 64, he was deported to Theresienstadt. He wrote his last work there, a setting of these words, Psalm 126. He was last seen sitting on his suitcase, jotting down music in his notebook, awaiting deportation to Auschwitz. —James Rolfe]*

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## Phoenix (IV)

by Bānoo Zan (from *Songs of Exile*)

With looks of fire and eyes of ice,	her womb blossoming and her breasts flowing,
uttering eloquent silence,	her body aroused and her spirit asleep,
disrobing me of my habit,	Life put Death in my hands.
Life put a dagger in my hands.	With a dagger in his heart and hemlock on his lips,
With lips labouring in love and heart beating hate,	philosophy in his groin and passion in his brain,
wrinkles young as yesterday beauty old as news and charisma alluring as pain—	silencing eloquent speech with celestial song,
Life put hemlock in my hands.	Death put Life in my hands.
With a face of stone and hands of water,	

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# Texts & Translations

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## Last Paddle

by Richard Sanger

Supper done and the August sun  
about to go, the two of you  
subtract yourselves from kitchen,  
from dishes and grandchildren,  
to take the blue canoe  
out for one last paddle  
round our summer sites,  
these swimming rocks and heron swamps  
north of Pointe-au-Baril.  
There's a lurch and a curse  
as you embark, old antagonists  
always ready to go  
another round, to skirmish  
as the canoe wobbles,  
to spar over ancient foibles  
or a loon that's just popped up,  
then laugh it off like drops  
off a duck's back, splish-splash,  
resuming your old truce  
with gentle, rhythmic strokes  
and the laughter I hear echo  
over the glowing water  
as I stand and watch you go—  
the two of you in silhouette  
in the blue canoe, now black,  
just an outline that merges into  
the dark islands, their ragged skyline  
of wind-tormented pines,

and re-emerges, as the sun  
consumes itself behind,  
yellow and orange and blazing red,  
and the two of you paddle on,  
paddle out towards the open,  
the great big Georgian Bay—there,  
there's no troublesome strip  
of earth to get in the way,  
no horizon left to hold you back,  
no more pain, or sorrow,  
no ego, it's all washed away  
in mist, in this grey-white glow  
the lake climbs right into the sky,  
as I stand and watch you go,  
your canoe just a speck  
in the silver distance,  
the whirls from your paddles  
undoing, unspooling like thoughts,  
or sentences trailing off  
on the lake's metallic surface  
little galaxies that spin  
and expend themselves  
and vanish into the dark,  
in which, having stood and watched  
you subtract yourselves from us,  
I see nothing but you gone—  
you are the darkness you've left  
and the evening's first faint star.

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# Texts & Translations

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## To the Poet

by George Elliott Clarke

Poet! Damn you if you crave public love!

People clap raucously, then fickle, stop.

Fools don scholars' tassels, bray their critiques,

While crowds' hoorays chill—or scald—your marrow.

Best to stand Caesar-calm, statue-austere:

It's majesty, yes, to dwell defiant,

Castled in your own soul, free and aloof!

Perfect your flowers, distill their dream liqueurs,

But ignore all praise of your past confections.

Judge for yourself your vineyard's heady wine:

Your strict taste dictates its vintage sweetness!

Do you want joy? Let the pack bay and howl:

Let them snarl and spit on your altar's flames

And breathe your temple's triumphant perfumes!

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# Texts & Translations

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## Bombastic

by George Elliott Clarke

The problem is, I'm bombastic—  
drastically bombastic,  
due to the minstrelsy, buffoonery,  
of being a yellowed, cartoon black,  
a secondhand black,  
a kind of discard, discounted black,  
being really only tan or brown,  
a souvenir of *Miscegenation*.

A signally colossal pygmy! A hunchbacked, Igbo Igor!  
*Talent* worth less than a chigger-plagued pig—  
*Talent* that's only a figment  
of my Pygmalion, gigolo vocab (itself not big)—  
Alluding to my obligatory pigment,  
my oil-crude, black-ass nib zigzags this white-sheet gig—  
my squibs unniggardly, yet niggling—  
see my mag-nagging *Ego*, jag and jig!

Always was I an ignoramus (like Cap'n Queeg)—meagre—  
if eager to league as a worthy figure—the “Antigone  
of Antigonish,” who ligatures together earthy swigs  
of igneous-molten spittle, grammar-beleaguered!

I was less *Zelig* than *Rigoletto*: Unambiguous  
roared the guffaws, as if lauding *Follies Ziegfeld*—  
dervishes all whirligigs, in trigonal shindigs—  
and applause—symphonic Edvard Grieg—contiguous.

What a stigma my *Intrigue* be! What ig'orant  
and brazen Bigotry to vaunt “Negro rigs”  
(these foul-spelled, triggering sprigs—  
iffy schlock) to spiffy, bewigged, Prufrock-like prigs!

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# Texts & Translations

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## Spirit Tree

after Priscila Uppal

by Anna Yin

In Prospect Cemetery,  
among poplar, cedar, maple,  
I hope you found your tree—  
a healing from heaven.  
Here, in another city,  
I see from my window  
a full-grown willow—  
ten years ago, it was a tiny twig  
dropped in the valley.

Two years ago,  
the year you passed, lightning  
hit the willow and split her in two.  
A year later,  
from the open wound,  
she grew new branches.

Have I found my spirit tree?  
A breeze blows—new green leaves  
touch me like a soft hand.

When winter comes,  
I collect the fallen leaves,  
slim, the shape of lips.  
I slip them into books  
of your poems.  
They cling to one another,  
a whispering forest of stories.

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## Marigold

By A. F. Moritz

The shining of gold, dark  
and blinding bright by turns,  
the sun falling from blue clouds  
into the ocean and noon and dawn,  
all unfolded and held up,  
carried, offered on motionless  
petals, fingers, rays, unchanged  
through all the day's seasons  
and the night under spectral  
low-wattted garden bulbs.

Unchanged, marigold, except you always  
are born, flower, last, and decay,  
and mummified, brown and stiff, stand  
in the snowy mud, shedding seeds.

Mary's gold, your flower primal  
gold above and red gold underneath,  
streaked with rust and blood,  
earth ochre, stain of red clay,  
knife wound, spike and spear thrust,  
wrists tightly bound, thorns,  
menses, a dripping scalpel line:  
the seven sorrows, seven darts  
that sum up all cuts  
lopping the human parts away  
perpetually: the darts that are your seeds,  
that grow in, pierce, harrow,  
fall from, and are, your heart.

*[from "Victory of the Flower"]*

*[from "Human Flower"]*

# Texts & Translations

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**For E. J. P.**

by Leonard Cohen

I once believed a single line  
 in a Chinese poem could change  
     forever how blossoms fell  
 and that the moon itself climbed on  
 the grief of concise weeping men  
     to journey over cups of wine  
 I thought invasions were begun for crows  
 to pick at a skeleton  
     dynasties sown and spent  
 to serve the language of a fine lament  
 I thought governors ended their lives  
     as sweetly drunken monks  
 telling time by rain and candles  
     instructed by an insect's pilgrimage  
     across the page—all this  
 so one might send an exile's perfect letter  
 to an ancient hometown friend

I chose a lonely country  
 broke from love  
     scorned the fraternity of war  
 I polished my tongue against the pumice moon  
 floated my soul in cherry wine  
     a perfumed barge for the lords of memory  
 to languish on to drink to whisper out  
 their store of strength  
     as if beyond the mist along the shore  
 their girls their power still obeyed  
 like clocks wound for a thousand years  
 I waited until my tongue was sore

Brown petals wind like fire around my poems  
 I aimed them at the stars but  
     like rainbows they were bent  
 before they sawed the world in half  
     Who can trace the canyoned paths  
     cattle have carved out of time  
 wandering from meadowlands to feasts  
 Layer after layer of autumn leaves  
     are swept away  
 Something forgets us perfectly

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**v**

by Amatoritsero Ede

this hung morning  
 the immobile weser  
 is sluggish with memories  
 of dead water  
 on the niger river delta  
 in nigeria

after shell shat shocked  
 oil impurities into it  
 till choked full of poisoned fish and algae  
 the creek reeks of dead fish and people

like the ogoni nine

a hung boat nation unable to swim  
 pollution and politics

and thus was strung short  
 and hung from killer nooses

the vertical nine were long dead  
 long before the long drop

by the life-stained hands  
 of abacha's henchmen hangmen hitlerites

nine necks cracked  
 life's spine popped  
 broken

nine lives shelled  
 the niger delta  
 shell-shocked into haunted silence

stifled wailing along waterways  
 and among mangrove swamp and fauna

muffled wailing  
 unlike the silence on the weser

a portentous silence  
 the quiet of still graves  
 sunk real deep

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# Texts & Translations

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## And Then a Second Dream

by Luciano Iacobelli

beached on my lawn where at night I cool my feet  
 (the small patch of grass miraculously stretched into a playing field)  
 was a decomposing whale  
 a stranded sublimity  
 an exiled size  
 a deleted portion of the sea's magnitude  
 a proportion decommissioned by the universe  
 an evacuation of all the blessings ever bestowed on the animal  
 exited the blowhole  
 a swarm of fireflies

had I known the water would creep this far inland  
 I would have moved to higher ground  
 avoided the putrefaction  
 the meat and blubber decaying into cracked icons and baptismal font  
 broken pews and organ pipes

and one of the eyes was an altar strewn with ashes and playing chips  
 scattered decks with disintegrating suits  
 evidence of a game terminated long ago  
 a smell of loss in the air weighing down the atmosphere  
 a failed and final gamble

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## After the Love at Victoria Street

by Boyd Warren Chubbs

There's a warm hand upon my head  
 This land and sea have given a hand to spread upon my head tonight  
 and I go down to the water to rock and sing of plentiful and certain things:  
 the rapid malt of spring and brooks;  
 trees that shook themselves furious;  
 curious phantoms upon the rain path;  
 lain passages of bone and earth;  
 birth of sundogs and lavender;  
 fogs more delicate than breath;  
 sweat from laughter and the spark and fire;  
 a beautiful liar tender among thieves;  
 sleeves of light climbing the berry hills;  
 sills handsome with paint and lace;  
 a trace of raw sienna in the swimming tickle;  
 a brace of storms, sermons upon the walking, talking trees, and all around, the fossil barrens, cairns  
 above home; the purple-grey stone staring; foam with its clothes, rolling the near shore  
 and a door thinning where, in a mesh of voice and strings, love goes.

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# Texts & Translations

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## Moon

by Choucri Paul Zemokhol

Moon, moon,  
your soft steps in the velvet of night  
circle my house,  
you smile at me as I look out my window.

Moon, moon,  
who knew me when I was young,  
masquerading for me each night,  
your veil slipping off so that I could see your honest face.

Moon, moon,  
I am a crumb in the palm of your hand.  
I feel your icy breath,  
give me one last kiss.

Moon, moon,  
I am coming to my last turns around your satin gown,  
one tug upon your hem  
and my bones dissolve.

Moon, moon,  
I offer you my hand,  
let us move through these nights like two old friends,  
not knowing who conjured who.

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## Set Me as a Seal

from Song of Songs 8:6-7

Set me as a seal upon your heart,  
as a seal upon your arm:  
for love is strong as death.

Many waters cannot quench love,  
nor can the rivers drown it.  
If you gave all your wealth for love,  
love would turn you down.



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## Our Artists

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### Andrew Adridge

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Andrew Adridge is a multidisciplinary artist and arts administrator based in Brampton, Ontario. A graduate of the University of Toronto, he holds a BMus. in Performance (2016), and an MM. in Opera (2018). He has been featured as an ensemble soloist at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts and on the Millennium Stage at the Kennedy Centre in Washington, D.C. Andrew has performed with Against the Grain in *La Bohème* and has been featured several times as the baritone soloist in Soundstreams' Electric Messiah. Andrew has participated in several young artist programs and was a 2018 finalist in Opéra de Montréal's Auditions Nationales. He maintains a directorial portfolio as a part of his artistic practice, working as an associate and assistant director with the Canadian Opera Company on Mozart's *Requiem*, *Carmen* under Joel Ivany, and *Macbeth* under Sir David McVicar.

Andrew will make his debut with the Ontario Pops Orchestra in March in a concert of opera and crossover music. Outside of his performing career, Andrew is the executive director of the Toronto Consort and the co-founder of the national arts collective Opera InReach.

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## Our Artists

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### Larry Beckwith

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Larry Beckwith has been a creative and varied contributor to Toronto's musical life as a conductor, violinist, singer, writer, educator, and programmer for over 30 years. He studied violin and musicology at the undergraduate and graduate levels at the University of Toronto, and has since performed and worked with most of this city's leading musical organizations. In 2003, Larry founded Toronto Masque Theatre, which under his tireless and imaginative artistic leadership from 2003 to 2018 presented over 70 innovative programs of interdisciplinary performing art, including a cycle of the five major music theatre works by Henry Purcell and stage works by Molière, Stravinsky, John Blow, John Beckwith, Monteverdi, Handel, Charpentier, and others. Through TMT, Larry commissioned and premiered new works by Canadian composers Abigail Richardson, James Rolfe, Omar Daniel, Juliet Palmer, Dean Burry, and Alice Ho, with texts/libretti by James Reaney, André Alexis, Steven Heighon, Pablo Neruda, Anna Chatterton, and Marjorie Chan. Ho's *The Lesson of Da Ji* won the 2013 Dora Mavor Moore Award for Best New Opera and was released on the Canadian Music Centre's Centrediscs label in a November 2015 recording conducted by Larry. Larry has appeared at a number of Ontario's summer music festivals, including Chamberfest in Ottawa, the Elora Festival, the Westben Festival, Toronto Summer Music, and the Festival of the Sound. In the summer of 2018, he conducted the successful Festival of the Sound world premiere and subsequent Ontario tour of *Sounding Thunder: The Song of Francis Pegahmagabow* by Timothy Corlis and Armand Garnet Ruffo; it was successfully remounted in the summer of 2022. Larry is a committed educator and runs the celebrated strings program at the arts-intensive Unionville High School in addition to conducting the Mooredale Senior Youth Orchestra.

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## Our Artists

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### Ayesha Chatterjee

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Born and raised in Kolkata, India, Ayesha Chatterjee has lived in five countries on three continents and is now based in Toronto. She is the author of the poetry collections *The Clarity of Distance*, and *Bottles and Bones*. Her work has appeared in journals across the world including *The Moth* (Ireland), *Magma Poetry* (UK) and *Exile Literary Quarterly* (Canada), and been translated into several languages. Chatterjee is a past president of the League of Canadian Poets.

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## Our Artists

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### George Elliott Clarke

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The fourth Poet Laureate of Toronto (2012–15) and the seventh Parliamentary/Canadian Poet Laureate (2016–17), George Elliott Clarke hails from Windsor, Nova Scotia, as of 1960. He is a pioneering scholar of African-Canadian literature, with two major tomes to his credit—*Odysseys Home: Mapping African-Canadian Literature* (2002) and *Directions Home: Approaches to African-Canadian Literature* (2012). A professor of English at the University of Toronto, Clarke has taught at Duke, McGill, the University of British Columbia, and Harvard. He holds eight honorary doctorates, plus appointments to the Order of Nova Scotia and the Order of Canada at the rank of Officer. He is also a Fellow of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society. His recognitions include the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Centre Fellowship (US), the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Fellows Prize, the Governor General’s Award for Poetry, the National Magazine Gold Award for Poetry, the Premiul Poesis (Romania), the Eric Hoffer Book Award for Poetry (US), and 2019 International Fellow Poet of the Year, Encyclopedic Poetry School (China). His acclaimed titles include *Whylah Falls* (1990, translated into Chinese), *Beatrice Chancy* (1999, translated into Italian), *Execution Poems* (2001), *Blues and Bliss* (selected poems, 2009), *I & I* (2008), *Illicit Sonnets* (U.K., 2013), *Traverse* (2015), *Canticles II (MMXX)* (2020), *Canticles III (MMXXII)* (2022), and *J’Accuse...!* (*Poem versus Silence*) (2021). Clarke penned the libretto for James Rolfe’s triumphant, tragic opera *Beatrice Chancy* (1998), plus two lyrics for Four the Moment’s 2022 Polaris Heritage Prize-winning album, *We’re Still Standing* (1987).

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## Our Artists

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### Lara Dodds-Eden

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Australian pianist Lara Dodds-Eden’s musical career has spanned three continents and encompassed hundreds of collaborations. Now based in the UK, Lara completed (in 2020) doctoral studies with Lydia Wong at the University of Toronto, focused on singing art song in translation. Before entering that program, she completed a 20-week residency in Banff as Collaborative Pianist and Associate Artist in 2013–14. Countless performances, with artists as diverse as Broken Social Scene’s Kevin Drew and Charles Spearin, the Australian Chamber Orchestra, soprano Ilana Zarankin, tenor Charles Sy, violinist Sheila Jaffe, pianist Helen Becqué, and cellist Raphael Wallfisch, were highlights of this Canadian adventure, along with touring the Danube with soprano Danika Lorèn, recording with Dr. Hilary Apfelstadt and the Macmillan Singers, and touring Spain, Australia, New Zealand, and Newfoundland with the Toronto Children’s Chorus. Lara considers meeting and performing with Alex Samaras one of the greatest gifts Toronto has given her, and these songs by James Rolfe speak to the best of this collaboration. “It is a great pleasure to have been invited to reprise these songs with a new retinue of artists for this evening’s launch,” says Lara.

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## Our Artists

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## Patricia O'Callaghan

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Soprano Patricia O'Callaghan, a Confluence Concerts artistic associate, is something of a wandering minstrel, having released six solo albums and participated in many interesting collaborations along the way. A speaker of French, Spanish, and German, her early recordings focused on European cabaret, but one of Patricia's unique talents is the ability to blend a variety of languages and musical genres seamlessly in her concerts, and to completely embody whatever style she is singing at any given moment. "This Toronto soprano can sing a 100-year-old German tune so lustily that you almost don't need a translation to know that someone's about to get his throat cut or get laid or both" (*National Post*). "O'Callaghan sings her diverse material as if it was always meant to go side-by-side and by the end of the evening, it's easy to believe" (*Chart Attack*).

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## Our Artists

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### Giovanna Riccio

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A poet, teacher, and independent scholar, Giovanna Riccio was born in Calabria, Italy, and immigrated to Canada as a child. A graduate of the University of Toronto, she majored in philosophy. She is the author of *Vittorio* (Lyricalmyrical Press, 2010) *Strong Bread* (Quattro Books, 2011), and *Plastic's Republic* (Guernica Editions, 2019), which was a finalist for the 2022 Bressani Prize. Her poems have appeared in national and international publications as well as numerous anthologies, and have been translated into six languages. She regularly participates in literary events and has performed at Blue Met, the Edinburgh Fringe, and the University of Calabria's Italian Diaspora Conference, to name a few. Giovanna is the 2021 winner of the Venera Fazio Poetry Prize.

[giovannariccio.com](http://giovannariccio.com).

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## Our Artists

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### James Rolfe

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The music of Toronto composer James Rolfe has been commissioned and performed by ensembles, orchestras, choirs, theatres, and opera companies in Canada, the US, Europe, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand. He has been recognized with a Guggenheim Fellowship, the K. M. Hunter Music Award, the Louis Applebaum Composers Award, the Jules Léger Prize for New Chamber Music, Choral Canada's Outstanding Choral Work Award, and the Johanna Metcalf Performing Arts Prize. James is a composition instructor at the University of Toronto, and he frequently serves as a composer mentor. His operas have been performed in Toronto, Halifax, Vancouver, Banff, Edmonton, and New York. *Beatrice Chancy* (with librettist George Elliott Clarke) played to sold-out houses and rave reviews; *The Overcoat*, which was premiered by Tapestry Opera with Canadian Stage and Vancouver Opera, was nominated for 10 Dora Awards. His solo CDs *raW* and *Breathe* (nominated for a JUNO Award) are available on the Centrediscs label; *Wound Turned to Light*, a songbook setting works by contemporary Canadian poets, is available on Redshift. Upcoming projects include compositions for the Canadian Children's Opera Company (with writer Anna Chatterton); Soundstreams (with writer André Alexis); Guelph's ANIMA and Halifax's Vocalypse (both with poet Luke Hathaway); and a song cycle with British poet and artist Sophie Herxheimer.



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## Our Artists

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### Alex Samaras

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Alex Samaras is a singing artist. His output as a performer and recording artist span every genre and style. Alex leads his own band, Tryal, and has released two recordings since 2017. His vocal group Grex, which he founded in 2010, explores the extremes of the human voice and the body/voice connection. Alex sings with the Queer Songbook Orchestra and is a singer and piano player on tour with Beverley Glenn Copeland. He has premiered new operas and created roles in new musicals, including *The Cave* by Tomson Highway and John Millard, and he has performed Claude Vivier's *Musik für das Ende* and *Love Songs* in Berlin and London with Soundstreams. Alex loves collaborating with people of all ages. He has taught at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music in the Jazz and Classical Department and at Humber College, and he is also the founder of the PAL Chorale, a community choir for seniors at the Performing Artists Lodge in Toronto.

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## Our Artists

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### Andrea Thompson

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Andrea Thompson is a writer, editor, educator, and spoken word artist. She was featured in the critically acclaimed documentary *Slamnation* and was host of the Bravo TV series *Heart of a Poet*. Andrea was the 2009 Canadian Festival of Spoken Word's Poet of Honour; in 2005 her spoken word album, *One*, was nominated for a Canadian Urban Music Award; in 2019 her album *Soulorations* earned a Golden Beret Award; and in 2021 she received the Pavlick Poetry Prize. Her collection *A Selected History of Soul Speak* was nominated for the Pat Lowther, Raymond Souster, and Robert Kroetsch awards. Andrea is the creator and instructor of the first spoken word course offered through the University of Toronto's English & Drama department. Her most recent works are *The Good Word*, a spoken word album that explores the intersection of Black history and faith, and *Complex*, a video poem series about mental health.

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## Our Artists

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### Anika Venkatesh

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Hailing from Coast Salish Territories, Anika Venkatesh is a genre-defying vocalist currently based in Tkarón:to and a recent graduate of the University of Toronto under the tutelage of Laura Tucker. Recent stage credits include the world premiere of Chan Ka Nin's *Dragon's Tale* (Tapestry Opera & Soundstreams Choir 21), scenes in Tapestry Opera's Songbook XII, alto soloist in R. Nathaniel Dett's *The Ordering of Moses* (Nathaniel Dett Chorale and the Rochester Oratorio Society), and Drusilla in Verdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (NUOVA Vocal Arts). Along with their classical, operatic, and choral skill sets and special interest in contemporary music, Anika is also a jazz and R&B musician and is venturing into stage acting. Upcoming performances include Craig Hella Johnson's *Considering Matthew Sheppard* with Concreamus Chamber Choir, the premiere of Quote Unquote Collective's production *Universal Child Care* at Canadian Stage in February 2024, and Mahler's *Symphony No. 3* with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir in June 2024. Through musical storytelling, Anika hopes to garner curiosity, reflection, kindness, play, connection, tenderness, intimacy, and strength.

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## Our Artists

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### Anna Yin

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Anna Yin was born in China and immigrated to Canada in 1999. She was Mississauga's Inaugural Poet Laureate (2015–17) and the Ontario representative for the League of Canadian Poets (2013–16). She has authored five poetry collections and two books of translations, including *Mirrors and Windows* (Guernica Editions 2021). Anna won the 2005 Ted Plantos Memorial Award, two MARTYs, two scholarships from the US, and grants from Ontario Arts Council and Canada Council for the Arts. Her poems/translations have appeared in the *Queen's Quarterly*, *ARC Poetry*, *New York Times*, *China Daily*, *CBC Radio*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Literary Review of Canada*, and other publications. She has read on Parliament Hill, at the Austin International Poetry Festival, during the Edmonton Poetry Festival, and at universities in China, Canada, and the US. Anna has designed and taught Poetry Alive educational programs since 2011 in addition to her daily job in IT. In 2020, she started Sureway Press, offering translating, editing, and publishing services.

[annapoetry.com](http://annapoetry.com)

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## Our Artists

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### Bānoo Zan

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Bānoo Zan is a poet, translator, essayist, and poetry curator with more than 280 published pieces and three books to her name, including *Songs of Exile* and *Letters to My Father*. She is the founder of Shab-e She'r (Poetry Night), Canada's most diverse and brave poetry open mic (inception 2012). It is a brave space that bridges the gap between communities of poets from different ethnicities, nationalities, religions (or lack thereof), ages, genders, sexual orientations, abilities, poetic styles, voices, and visions. Bānoo, along with Cy Strom, is the co-editor of the poetry anthology *Woman, Life, Freedom: Poems for the Iranian Revolution* (deadline for submitting poems is March 2024).

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Larry Beckwith, Artistic Producer  
Jennifer Collins, Managing Director  
Vivian Moens, Acting Managing Director

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Andrew Downing  
Teiya Kasahara  
KöNG Duo:  
Hoi Tong Keung and Bevis Ng  
(2023–24 Young Associates)  
Patricia O’Callaghan  
Suba Sankaran

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Tom Flint  
William Couzens

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Ed Hanley

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Chara Tan

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# Coming Next

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November 22 & 23, 2023  
7:30pm  
(6:45 pre-show chat)

Heliconian Hall,  
Toronto

[Tickets](#)

A 20th-anniversary celebration of the Indo-Fusion band, featuring Suba Sankaran, Dylan Bell, and Ed Hanley.

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