



AT FIRST *Light*

EXULTATE  
CHAMBER  
SINGERS

At First Light (2021)\*

**Music:** Mari Alice Conrad 🍁

**Text:** Anna Marie Sewell 🍁

Duration: 5:06

You Wave (2018)\*

**Music:** E.K.R. Hammell 🍁

**Text:** Emily Sanford 🍁

Soloist: Sadie Menicanin

Duration: 6:01

Antara (Between) (2021)\*

**Music:** Tracy Wong 🍁

**Text:** Mohd Fairuz Bin Mohd Tauhid

Duration: 3:39

Les Ormes (2020)\*

**Music:** Katharine Petkovski 🍁

**Text:** Hector de Saint-Denys Garneau 🍁

Duration: 3:26

Speak to Us of Joy (2021)\*

**Music:** Sami Anguaya 🍁

**Text:** Khalil Gibran

Duration: 6:15

Like as the Waves (2021)

**Music:** Jeff Enns 🍁

**Text:** William Shakespeare

Soloist: June Higgins

Duration: 5:01

Be Still, My Heart (2021)\*

**Music:** Matthew Emery 🍁

**Text:** Rabindranath Tagore

Duration: 1:36

Sailing to Byzantium (2021)\*

**Music:** Virginia Kilbertus 🍁

**Text:** William Butler Yeats

Duration: 5:53

🍁 Canadian

\* Commissioned by Exultate Chamber Singers

# At First Light

## NEW MUSIC AND NEW VOICES

All the music on this album was the direct result of commissioning by Exultate Chamber Singers and friends. Much of it was created at a time during the COVID-19 pandemic when we were unable to sing together. As gathering restrictions began to lift, this was the music that brought us back together—and the music we were first able to share once again with our live audiences. We are proud to be supporting the work of Canadian composers and hope you enjoy exploring this new music as much as we have.

– Mark Ramsay, Artistic Director



## ABOUT THE CHOIR

**Exultate Chamber Singers is an adult mixed-voice chamber choir located in the heart of downtown Toronto.** The ensemble is enriched not only by the strong musicianship of its members but also by their varied ages, cultural backgrounds, and academic and professional credentials. Together they form a passionate, committed ensemble with a wide-ranging repertoire.

The choir is a three-time winner of the Healey Willan Grand Prize in the CBC National Radio Competition and was awarded first place in the chamber choir category of Choral Canada's 2019 National Competition for Canadian Amateur Choirs. Exultate was proud to have been selected to perform at PODIUM 2022, Canada's national choral conference and festival.

In addition to presenting its annual concert series, Exultate has made regular appearances around Ontario, toured in Canada, collaborated with dozens of artists, released six albums, and enjoyed airplay on CBC Radio. Exultate is committed to showcasing new Canadian choral music through commissioning and programming.



# At First Light

**Music:** Mari Alice Conrad

**Text:** Anna Marie Sewell

*at first, light shocks  
sound shining from leaf  
to leaf, and one upturned  
vessel of bright hope*

*strawberry blossom  
born before may*

*at first light, then  
darkening lines whirl  
describing thermals  
over the city, around again*

*cranes and snow geese  
aloft, whistling to themselves*

*a thousand thousand  
blossoms, wings, windows  
means of greeting the song.*



**Mari Alice Conrad** is an emerging, award-winning composer from Edmonton, Alberta, currently studying music composition at University of Alberta. She has composed works for artists across Canada, including Pro Coro Canada (Edmonton), Bab I Choir (Toronto), Standing Wave Ensemble (Vancouver), and Soprano Maghan McPhee and pianist Valerie Dueck (Ottawa). Mari Alice's compositional practice shines light on the human condition and fosters curiosity, authenticity, and collaboration creating a compelling experience for performers and audiences alike.

*At First Light*

...captures the moments of new beginnings. It is about hope, renewal, connection, and stopping to appreciate nature. To me, hope is found in the light and beauty of seemingly small moments where we can forgo neglecting one another and reach out to nurture, appreciate, and help each other blossom into the beautifully diverse and unique humans that we are.

**MARIALICECONRAD.COM**

# You Wave

**Music:** E.K.R. Hammell

**Text:** Emily Sanford

*Come slowly to sit with me on the shore  
look out at the horizon  
the dazzling motion of waves –*

*light dapples watercrests  
in shimmerings that trick the eye.  
You wave,*

*pause, bend  
for beach glass, saltwater  
tumbled, bit of frost.*

*It seems like the summer  
you were here,  
gleaming.*

*Waves, one by one, slow,  
tumultuous and cumulative.  
Tidal flow –*

*rising water, I know –  
you wave.  
I always know you're here  
and feel you go*



**E.K.R. Hammell** (Evan/he/him) is a Canadian composer and arranger in the pursuit of unstoppable forward momentum. A finalist in the International Young Talented Composers Competition and Winner of the Lloyd Carr-Harris prize, his frequently commissioned original music and arrangements have been heard across Canada, USA, UK, and Spain. Originally from P.E.I., Evan is currently based in Toronto.

*You Wave*

... is a piece about memory, setting an evocative text by Toronto writer Emily Sanford. Fragmented piano gestures underlie a gently lilting vocal melody, intending to illustrate nostalgic—yet imperfect—images of a unique moment in time. The lulling motion of the tide ebbs and flows in an almost seamless exchange with the feelings of the narrator as they recall this deep, shared personal experience with a special individual.

**EKRHAMMELL.COM**

# Antara (Between)

**Music:** Tracy Wong

**Text:** Mohd Fairuz Bin  
Mohd Tauhid

*Antara*

*Dari duduk oh berdiri*

*Cabar hati Kuatkan jati*

*Dari pegun oh berlari*

TRANSLATION:

*Between*

*from sitting to standing*

*challenge (your) heart*

*strengthen your inner self*

“ ————

*Strength, in times of  
conflict, comes from  
recognizing our growth  
and embracing  
discomfort.”*



**Dr. Tracy Wong** hails from Malaysia and is a conductor, educator, composer, vocalist, and pianist. She is Assistant Professor of Choral Studies at Western University, London, Ontario, and conductor of the Grand Philharmonic Youth Choir, Kitchener, Ontario. Dr. Wong is passionate about helping choral educators to provide unique experiences for their students through collaborative commissions, customized workshops, festivals, and artist residencies. Her choral works are available on Cypress Choral Music, Graphite Publishing, and Young Choral Academy.

*Antara (Between)*

... is a musical expression of being in between and the celebration of human resilience. The music reflects this through texts by Malay lyricist Mohamad Fairuz bin Mohamad Tauhid, which suggests that strength, in times of conflict, comes from recognizing our growth and embracing discomfort. This is explored through asymmetry (being in limbo), pedal points (stillness), and rhythmic drive (anxious/anticipation/excitement). The loose rondo form allows the theme "antara" to return in between sections of these musical thoughts.

[TRACYWONGMUSIC.COM](http://TRACYWONGMUSIC.COM)

# Les Ormes

**Music:** Katharine Petkovski

**Text:** Hector de Saint-Denys Garneau

*Dans les champs  
Calmes parasols  
Sveltes, dans une tranquille élégance  
Les ormes sont seuls ou par petites familles.*

*Les ormes calmes font de l'ombre  
Pour les vaches et les chevaux  
Qui les entourent à midi.*

*Ils ne parlent pas  
Je ne les ai pas entendus chanter.  
Ils sont simples  
Ils font de l'ombre légère  
Bonneement  
Pour les bêtes*

## TRANSLATION:

*In the fields  
Calm parasols  
Slender, in a quiet elegance  
Elms are alone or in small families.  
  
The calm elms cast shade  
For cows and horses  
That encircle them at noon.*

*They do not speak  
I never heard them sing  
They are simple  
They cast a light shade  
Simply  
For the beasts.*



**Katharine Petkovski** is a composer, pianist and producer from Ontario, Canada. As a formally trained pianist, Katharine developed an interest in music creation and began experimenting with production from an early age. Katharine is especially passionate about scoring music for multimedia and has written music for a variety of films spanning diverse genres. Katharine holds a Bachelor of Music in Composition and a Master's Degree in Composition from the University of Toronto.

*Les Ormes*

I was commissioned by Exultate in 2019 to write a piece, and I chose a text by the French-Canadian poet and painter, Hector de Saint-Denys Garneau (Les Ormes). I was drawn to the poem for its flawless ability to connect the imagery of nature with the nature of self and admired its simple yet effective use of language. When COVID hit, the premiere was postponed, and I wasn't sure when I'd have the opportunity to hear it performed. Two years later, it was definitely worth the wait!

[KATHARINEPETKOVSKI.COM](http://KATHARINEPETKOVSKI.COM)

# Speak to us of Joy

**Music:** Sami Anguaya

**Text:** Kahlil Gibran

*. . . Speak to us of Joy and Sorrow.*

*And he answered:*

*Your joy is your sorrow unmasked.*

*And the selfsame well from which your laughter rises was oftentimes filled with your tears.*

*And how else can it be?*

*. . . When you are joyous, look deep into your heart and you shall find it is only that which has given*

*you sorrow that is giving you joy.*

*. . . Some of you say, "Joy is greater than sorrow," and others say, "Nay, sorrow is the greater."*

*But I say unto you, they are inseparable.*

*Together they come, and when one sits alone with you at your board, remember that the other is asleep upon your bed.*

*Verily you are suspended like scales between your sorrow and your joy.*

*Only when you are empty are you at standstill and balanced . . .*



**Sami Anguaya** is a singer, composer, and recent graduate of the University of Toronto's Master's in Composition program. He had the pleasure of being part of Toronto's East Chamber Music Emerging Composer Festival and was excited to have "Speak to Us of Joy" showcased at PODIUM 2022. Sami's graduate work focused on integrating elements of his Kichwa heritage (Ecuador) into his music and exploring methods of positive cross-cultural collaborations with other Kichwa artists.

## *Speak to Us of Joy*

... is about celebrating the beauty of life and the importance of acknowledging one's sorrow in order to appreciate moments of joy. The piece is a vibrant rhythmic setting of Kahlil Gibran's poem "On Joy and Sorrow" from *The Prophet*, and is inspired by the driving choral works of Moses Hogan and the exciting South American grooves the composer grew up around. Through passages of exclamation and gentle reflection, it is a reminder that joy and sorrow are deeply connected, as Gibran writes, "Your joy is your sorrow unmasked."

[SAMIANGUAYA@GMAIL.COM](mailto:SAMIANGUAYA@GMAIL.COM)

# Like as the waves, Sonnet 60

**Music:** Jeff Enns

**Text:** William Shakespeare

*Like as the waves make towards the pebb'd shore,  
So do our minutes hasten to their end;  
Each changing place with that which goes before,  
In sequent toil all forwards do contend.*

*Nativity, once in the main of light,  
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crown'd,  
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,  
And Time that gave doth now his gift confound.*

*Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth  
And delves the parallels in beauty's brow,  
Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth,  
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow:*

*And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand,  
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.*



**Jeff Enns** hails from Waterloo, Ontario, where he studied organ, viola, and composition at Wilfrid Laurier University. His music has been commissioned by choirs across North America and performed and broadcast around the world. He sings with the Elora Singers and the Canadian Chamber Choir, for which he is also composer-in-residence. Jeff is the head of the music department at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in Kitchener and organist and choir director at Holy Saviour Anglican Church in Waterloo, Ontario.

*Like as the Waves*

...is a setting of Shakespeare's achingly beautiful sonnet (no. 60) about the journey of life. It is often a perilous journey that unavoidably leads to our own mortality. The piece starts with some gentle imagery of waves lapping which change as we enter the different stages of life, from birth through youth, and into maturity. With such a rich text, there are many opportunities for musical word painting. The poem and piece come to a hopeful conclusion that we will be remembered beyond our time here on Earth.

*Commissioned for Exultate by Jake Neely in tribute to Howard and Maggie Dyck for their many years of dedication to choral music in Canada.*

**JEFFENNS.COM**

# Be Still My Heart

**Music:** Matthew Emery

**Text:** Rabindranath Tagore

*Be still my heart, these great trees are prayers.*

“

*The music is an anthem of stability, a reminder that we are joined by our connection to the earth and to each other.”*



**Dr. Matthew Emery** is a Canadian composer who writes with an "honesty which enchants" (*Vancouver Sun*), and whose music is "profoundly beautiful and moving" (*CBC Music*). His music has been performed in twenty-eight countries, and recent performance venues include the Great Wall of China, the White House, and the Musikverein. Matthew studied at the University of British Columbia (B.Mus.) and the University of Toronto (M.Mus., D.M.A.). His over sixty publications are published by G. Schirmer, Boosey & Hawkes, Hal Leonard, and many others.

*Be Still, My Heart*

...is a work for mixed chorus, and though only a few measures long, it is enough to temporarily transport and uplift us to a place of comfort. I wrote the music during a time when the world was in flux; there were many unknowns, and I looked to my immediate surroundings for comfort and for inspiration. The short, fleeting thought by Rabindranath Tagore perfectly captured the sentiment and feeling I sought. The music is an anthem of stability, a reminder that we are joined by our connection to the Earth and to each other.

**COMPOSERMATTHEWEMERY.COM**

# Sailing to Byzantium

**Music:** Virginia Kilbertus

**Text:** William Butler Yeats

*I | That is no country for old men. The young  
In one another's arms, birds in the trees,  
—Those dying generations—at their song,  
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,  
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long  
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.*

*Caught in that sensual music all neglect  
Monuments of unaging intellect.*

*II | An aged man is but a paltry thing,  
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless  
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing  
For every tatter in its mortal dress,  
Nor is there singing school but studying  
Monuments of its own magnificence;  
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come  
To the holy city of Byzantium.*

*III | O sages standing in God's holy fire  
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,  
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,  
And be the singing-masters of my soul.  
Consume my heart away; sick with desire  
And fastened to a dying animal  
It knows not what it is; and gather me  
Into the artifice of eternity.*

*IV | Once out of nature I shall never take  
My bodily form from any natural thing,*

*But such a form as Grecian  
goldsmiths make  
Of hammered gold and  
gold enamelling  
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;  
Or set upon a golden bough to sing  
To lords and ladies of Byzantium  
Of what is past, or passing,  
or to come.*



**Virginia Kilbertus** is an award-winning and Emmy-nominated composer for film and television. Her most recent accomplishments include the original scores for Seasons 1 and 2 of the Hulu series *Endlings*, the score for the feature film *Astronaut* starring Richard Dreyfuss, and the original score for the upcoming series *Psi Cops*. Virginia's music draws on her own eclectic influences, fusing rich, classical orchestrations with electronics, jazz, and extended techniques to create a sound that is uniquely her own.

## *Sailing to Byzantium*

... was written in late 2021, nearly two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, and is based upon the Yeats poem of the same name. The poem speaks of mortality—something everyone was forced to confront, no matter their age—when the fragility of the human race was brought into such a harsh reality. The latter half of the poem speaks of liberating the soul when the physical body begins to wither and conveys a beautiful feeling of exaltation and liberation.

[VIRGINIAKILBERTUS.COM](http://VIRGINIAKILBERTUS.COM)



*Shelby Lisk*

MULTIDISCIPLINARY ARTIST | FILMMAKER | PHOTOGRAPHER

**Shelby Lisk** is a multidisciplinary artist, filmmaker, and photographer from Kenhtè:ke (Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory) whose art practice explores her connection to and place in the world as a Kanyen'kehá:ka woman. Lisk currently works as a multimedia journalist covering Indigenous current affairs in Ontario.

**Shelby Lisk** nia'té:kon tsi naho'ténshon yeweyen:te, yeráhstha ne tahontierón:nion, ronwatiya'táhrha ó:ni, Kenhtè:ke (Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory) nitiakawé:non, tsi nahò:ten yakoyó'te ne wathró:ris tsi nón:we nieien:tha ne ohontsâ:ke tsi Kanyen'kehá:ka yakón:kwe naeya'tó:ten. Nón:wa nikahá:wí's tiókonte tsi yakoyó'te ne Lisk ne yerihowanátha tsi niyoterihwatié:ren ne Onkwehón:we akorihwa'shón:'a Ontario nón:we.

[SHELBYLISKPHOTO.COM](http://SHELBYLISKPHOTO.COM)

*Shelby's photography appears on the cover and page 2 of this booklet.*

# Exultate CHAMBER SINGERS

Mark Ramsay

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR

Mira Jung

PIANIST

Sami Anguaya, *tenor*

Brad Barnham, *tenor*

Rachel Bagues, *soprano*

Matthew Boutda, *tenor*

Julia Brotto, *soprano*

Reid Brownscombe, *bass*

Scott Brubacher, *bass*

Thomas Burton, *tenor*

Elaine Choi, *alto*

Michael Denomme, *bass\**

Andrew Foster, *tenor*

Ryan Garbett, *bass*

Nathan Gritter, *tenor*

Francesca Hauser, *alto*

June Higgins, *soprano*

Lynn Janes, *soprano*

Bina John, *alto*

Mira Jung, *alto*

Jim King, *bass*

Rabekah Lauren, *alto\**

Rachel MacEwan, *soprano*

Sadie Menicanin, *soprano*

Vivian Moens, *soprano*

Lindsay Naft, *alto*

Josh Patlik, *bass*

Katharine Petkovski, *alto*

Brian Prinzen, *bass*

Jeff Reynolds, *bass*

Michael Rowland, *tenor*

Duncan Stuart, *tenor*

Mishaal Surti, *tenor*

Tracy Wong, *soprano\**

*\*substitute singer*

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## CREDITS

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and mastered by Ron Searles,  
Red Maple Sound

### Producer

Mark Ramsay

### Session Producers

Tracy Wong, Matthew Emery

### Coordinating Producer

Vivian Moens

### Photography

Shelby Lisk Photography  
(cover and inside cover)

Sam Moffatt Photography  
(choir photos)

### Album booklet design

KBP Creative



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THE FOUNDATION ASSISTING CANADIAN TALENT ON RECORDINGS  
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