



**COUNTERPOINT
COMMUNITY
ORCHESTRA**

FOUNDED 1984

**Guest Conductor
DANIEL MANLEY**



WINTER MOSAIC

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2025, 7:30pm
EASTMINSTER CHURCH 310 DANFORTH TORONTO**

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge the land we are meeting on 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 Metis peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.

We are grateful to the care-takers of this land and grateful to live and perform music here.

COUNTERPOINT COMMUNITY ORCHESTRA

PRESENTS

WINTER MOSAIC

Guest Conductor

Daniel Manley

Solo Soprano

Rebecca Gray

Paul Willis Concertmaster Chair

Gemma Donn

Guest Concertmaster

Erick Oliver Waswerkiewicz

Programme

*Jean Coulthard, Selections from **Canada Mosaic** [1974]*

- I. Lullaby for a Snowy Night
- II. Mademoiselle Québécoise
- IV. Harbour Sounds
- VII. Happy New Year

*Richard Strauss, **Four Last Songs** [1948], soprano Rebecca Grey*

- I. Frühling [Spring]
- II. September
- III. Beim Schlafengehen [When Falling Asleep]
- IV. Im Abendrot [At Sunset]

Intermission

*Refreshments available in back lobby.
No food permitted in the Sanctuary please.*

*Franz Liszt, **March of the Three Holy Kings** [1873]*

*Danny Elfman, **Nightmare Before Christmas** [1993]*

*Brian Balmages, **Fantasia of We Three Kings** [2013]*

Tonight's performance was made possible in part through a generous gift from an anonymous donor

**SAVE THE DATES: CCO concerts March 7 [Guest Conductor Dr. Samuel Tam]
& June 6 [Guest Conductor Mr. Issac Page]**



COUNTERPOINT COMMUNITY ORCHESTRA

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MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

Welcome to the first concert of the CCO's 42nd season. For Canada's first 2SLGBTQIA+ orchestra, such longevity is truly remarkable. It has provided the Queer community and its allies with safe and respectful spaces to perform music for over four decades!

Our former Conductor's tenure ended with the end of our last season and the CCO began a search for a new Music Director/Conductor. The orchestra has benefitted from many talented Music Directors: Doreen Rao, Rosemary Thompson, Judith Yan, Terry Kowalczyk, and Andrew Chung. Each has contributed in their own way. We are grateful to Mr. Chung for re-building the orchestra after the pandemic closures and making the CCO musically stronger.

Tonight is the first of three audition concerts that Guest Conductors will programme, rehearse and present. Our first Guest Conductor, Mr. Daniel Manley, is a long-time supporter of the CCO, and its' tuba player in many concerts. December 6 is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Our featured soloist, soprano Rebecca Gray, has dedicated her performance of the moving *Four Last Songs* to the memory of the 14 young women who died in 1989 at the Ecole Polytechnique. The programme then turns to festive works including a fun film score and two works celebrating those three holy kings we hear so much about at this time of year.

As always, we thank the many volunteers who work behind the scenes to ensure the CCO continues to exist and perform. Too many to name, but we acknowledge the hard work of the Directors, committee members, set up crew, Librarian, and concert volunteers. Their time, hard work, and welcoming smiles are the backbone of the CCO.

And, of course, we appreciate you – our audience. At the intermission, our musicians will thank you with refreshments. The opportunities to purchase 50/50 raffle tickets and make donations are reminders that the CCO continues to depend on your generosity to thrive for another 42 years!

2024-2025 Board of Directors

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Tuba	Sam Bigelow+
Percussion	Brad Kilpatrick+, Phil Yetman+
Piano	Zain Solinski+

* Principal | + Guest musician | ** Bill McQueen Scholarship recipient



Daniel Manley

Guest Conductor

Daniel Manley's musical journey began as a tuba player, a path he studied at the University of Ottawa. Though ultimately going into a career of software engineering, his passion for orchestral music grew via membership in community orchestras including Counterpoint Community Orchestra.

Curious as to what the rest of the orchestra was doing, Daniel began collecting conductor and study scores. While quietly observing from the back row of the orchestra, he inadvertently made the leap to the podium when he founded The Brass Conspiracy, a symphonic brass ensemble.

Excited about the potential in this new experience, and after moving to Haliburton County, he applied to be co-conductor with the Highlands Wind Symphony in 2009. In this role, Daniel developed his technique and style, concentrating on orchestral transcriptions for wind ensemble and symphonic repertoire, and further solidified his technical and practical experience through formal apprenticeship roles, notably serving as an apprentice and rehearsal Conductor with Orchestra Toronto. This proven expertise in musicianship and leadership led to his subsequent appointment as Music Director of the Highlands Chamber Orchestra shortly after its founding in 2012.

Daniel's love of community orchestras runs deep — he firmly believes in their ability to nurture a sense of belonging and family, foster musical growth and grant amateur players the opportunity to perform amazing, challenging repertoire often reserved for professional groups.

Today, Daniel lives in the beautiful Haliburton Highlands, along with his partner Collin, two cats, Hildie and Levi and their energetic dog, Larry. There, his time is spent as a software developer, music director of the Highlands Chamber Orchestra and co-founder/board member of the Haliburton Highlands Arts Centre Foundation, working to establish a purpose-built performing arts centre in the region.



Rebecca Gray

Soprano Soloist

Rebecca Gray is delighted to be returning to the CCO, where, as a student, she played violin, and where, in 2023, she was the soprano soloist at the holiday concert. On this White Ribbon Day, Rebecca is dedicating her performance of Strauss' *Four Last Songs* to the victims of the Montreal Massacre.

Rebecca Gray is a soprano, composer and improviser passionate about performing and creating both classical and contemporary repertoire, when she can bringing queerness and feminism to what she does. Rebecca's creativity, energy and perfect pitch are sought after in the creation of new work, and she has performed with Pacific Opera Victoria, Musique 3 femmes, Tapestry Opera, OperaQ, Esprit Orchestra, Highlands Opera, and Code D'accès. She premiered the lead in "Pomegranate" (2019) with Buddies in Bad Times Theatre. As a member of FAWN chamber creative, she performs genre-bending vocal music, and has appeared as a finalist at the Eckhardt-Gramatté Contemporary Music Competition in Manitoba. With Pacific Opera Victoria, she composed, performed and directed an original opera video, "Jess", subsequently named a winner of Opera America's Awards for Excellence in Digital Opera.

Rebecca's distinctive compositional voice marries tunefulness and experimental music making. She loves finding the grandiose operatic moments in otherwise sorry peasant lives, and her work blends earnestness, absurdism and dark humour. She received an Opera America Discovery Grant and Canada Council support to develop "BUS Opera", an absurdist fantasy about millennial alienation set on public transit, excerpts of which were premiered by New Music Concerts in Toronto. She has composed unique, narrative-driven choral work for Voces Boreales, Pro Coro, Soundstreams, and the Capital Chamber Choir.

Rebecca's "Heaven was not Home," a Wuthering Heights inspired choral work, was a first prize winner in the 2024 SOCAN awards for Young Composers. As a winner of the Mécénat Musica Prix 3 Femmes, she collaborated with writer Rachel Gray to compose "Raccoon Opera" – a fable of the housing crisis. Excerpts of "Raccoon Opera" were presented at Salle Bourgie in Montréal in 2024, where Rebecca performed the titular role at the Banff Centre and at Highlands Opera. Rachel and Rebecca also collaborated to create "TransBliss TM", a dystopian opera which was named runner-up in Atlanta Opera's 96 hour opera competition.



Selections from Canada Mosaic [1974], Jean Coulthard

Jean Coulthard (1908-2000) was born in Vancouver and began composing working with her mother at an early age. She trained in London and New York with prominent teachers like Vaughan Williams, Copland, and Milhaud. Coulthard's music is characterized by strong tonal centers and lyricism combined with experimental techniques like bitonality and serialism. She was known both as a composer and teacher and was one of the first faculty hired at the Department of Music at the University of British Columbia in the mid-1940s. Coulthard was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1978 and was awarded the Order of British Columbia in 1994.

Canada Mosaic was commissioned for a visit from Chinese government authorities to Vancouver in 1974 and was premiered by the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra. The goal of the piece was to represent a range of folk music traditions in Canada and present them together in an accessible idiom. To this end, the piece uses folk melodies from Quebec and the Ottawa valley, Ukrainian folk music brought by immigrants in Saskatchewan, and Coast Salish tunes. In an unused program note from the premiere, Coulthard describes the piece as follows:

"[the work] is based on folk materials from virtually all Canadian regions and many ethnic groups in Canada (not simply the few tried-and-true folk melodies that seem to appear whenever Canadian composers turn to folk themes). I also decided to produce something of a concerto for orchestra with virtuoso solos for all the orchestral instruments (even the more unlovely ones). The work was intentionally designed as light music in the best sense of the word, an attractive, audience-pleasing composition with no great profundity, but one hoped, taste and a certain originality."



Four Last Songs [1948], Richard Strauss

Richard Strauss (1864-1949) was a renowned German composer and conductor, often considered one of the key figures of late-Romantic music. Born in Munich to a musical family, Strauss showed promise at a very young age and began composing at the age of six. During his lifetime, Strauss was celebrated across Europe and North America as a composer of widely performed symphonic poems and operas and as a conductor of Romantic composers like Liszt and Wagner.

Strauss' legacy remains somewhat controversial due to his esteemed position in musical cultural development in Nazi Germany and his perceived willingness to collaborate with the government's efforts to exploit Germany's esteemed music and musicians as a form of soft power. Despite this, Strauss made several efforts to defy Nazi cultural policies and defend Jewish friends and collaborators, including his longtime Jewish librettist Stefan Zweig. The end of the war saw many German musical institutions such as the Munich National Theater, where Strauss' father worked, destroyed and Strauss' assets from his illustrious career frozen, perhaps influencing the nostalgic and melancholic nature of many of his works from late in his life.

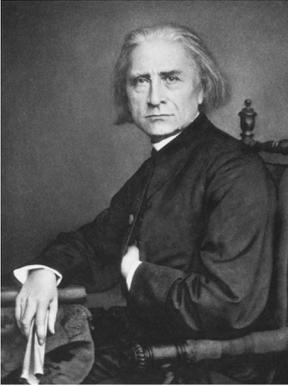
Four Last Songs consists of four of Strauss' final works completed before his death, subsequently compiled and published posthumously in 1950. The first three songs: *Frühling* (Spring), *September*, and *Beim Schlafengehen* (When Falling Asleep), are settings of poems by contemporaneous German-Swiss writer Herman Hesse while the last song *Im Abendrot* (At Sunset) is a setting of a poem by 19th century Romantic writer Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff. The texts contemplate themes of peace and contentment with the meaning of death and are set in densely textured orchestration brimming with rich harmonies. The piece celebrates the soprano, Strauss' favored voice type throughout his career and that of his wife, and the instrument his father played, the French Horn.



Fantasia of We Three Kings [2013], *Brian Balmages*

Brian Balmages (b.1975) is an American composer, producer, and conductor. His work spans a wide variety of skill levels, and he is best known for composing educational pieces for wind ensemble and orchestra. Balmages is active in the music publishing industry and conducts with all-state, university, and professional groups around the world.

Fantasia on We Three Kings is based on the Christmas carol written by American Episcopal clergyman and hymnodist John Henry Hopkins Jr. in 1857. The carol is notable for being the first American composed carol to achieve widespread popularity and was even published in the United Kingdom in 1878. Balmages' treatment of the musical material in the original carol provides a journey through a variety of musical styles and moods, from the sparse, mysterious opening to a triumphant, glittering finish.



March of the Three Holy Kings [1862-1866], Franz Liszt

Franz Liszt (1811-1886) was a Hungarian composer and renowned pianist who was profoundly influential on Romantic music. He began his musical career as a pianist and achieved a celebrity-status due to his virtuosity and physical appearance plus a fandom which was so fervent that it spawned the term 'Lisztomania'. Liszt is credited with the invention of the solo recital as well as the genre of the symphonic poem, a one-movement piece of music meant to evoke the content of a non-musical source like a painting or philosophical idea.

After a series of family tragedies, Liszt decided to focus on living a solitary life primarily dedicated to the Church and sacred music. During this period, Liszt received the four minor orders of the church and composed a variety of hymns, masses, and oratorios intended to rejuvenate interest in liturgical music.

March of the Three Holy Kings is part of Liszt's *Christus* oratorio which he composed over a period of several years in this time of his life. In its original context, the piece serves as the last movement of the *Christus*' first section, the Christmas Oratorio, which describes the birth of Jesus in the manger. Compared to the dramatic chromaticism that characterises many of Liszt's earlier, more famous works, the Christmas Oratorio focuses more on lyricism and calm intensity. *March of the Three Holy Kings* moves from a mysterious opening section depicting the Kings' journey guided by the star of Bethlehem to a comforting slow section where they witness Jesus' birth and then ends with a triumphant brass fanfare.



Nightmare Before Christmas [1993], *Danny Elfman*

Danny Elfman (b. 1953) is an American musician and prolific film composer. Elfman began his musical career as the frontman in new wave band Oingo Boingo in 1979 and he began scoring films in the mid-1980s. After his first collaboration with Tim Burton on the soundtrack for 1989's *Batman*, Elfman became well-known in the film industry for his quirky, fast-paced scores with varied, colorful instrumentation.

The Nightmare Before Christmas is a 1993 stop-motion animated film which tells the story of Jack Skellington, a beloved figure in Halloweentown, who becomes bored with delivering frights alongside his fellow residents on Halloween each year. After stumbling upon a mysterious door in the forest, he is transported to Christmas town, where he is treated to a smorgasbord of new sights and sounds and becomes obsessed with discovering what the holiday means. This culminates in a doomed attempt to take over Christmas planning from Santa Claus, resulting in a terrifying holiday and ultimately Jack's resumption of his role as the Pumpkin King with new gusto and fresh scares.

Elfman provided both the musical score for the film and the singing voice of Jack Skellington. His work on the film was inspired by musical theatre composers like Kurt Weill and Cole Porter, who both integrated jazz elements into their work. It was also inspired by Gilbert and Sullivan, whose influence can be most clearly heard in the rapid-fire delivery of "What's This?", the second song heard in the orchestral suite of *Nightmare Before Christmas*.

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The **CCO** thanks **The 519 Community Centre** for its generous and long-standing contribution of the CCO's rehearsal space



Whiskful Thinking
Bakery

Thank you to **Whiskful Thinking Bakery** for its delicious intermission goodies. You can find more treats at **72 Wellesley Street East**.

THE CCO: A WELCOMING MUSICAL SPACE

Counterpoint Community Orchestra was founded in 1984 by musicians at the Metropolitan Community Church to create a safe, respectful and inclusive space for members of the Queer community and their allies to rehearse and perform. It became the first 2SLGBTQIA+ orchestra in Canada. Since its inception, the CCO has welcomed musicians of various skill levels from their late teens to their late 80's. During its 40th anniversary season in 2024, the Directors counted over 600 community musicians who had performed with the CCO over the years! Today, the CCO continues to honour the mission statement of its founders. It is closely tied to the 519 Community Centre and is proudly active in Pride events. The CCO contributes to its vibrant community by regularly awarding small scholarships to music students, mounting mini-concerts in Allan Gardens Park, and commissioning new works from Canadian composers that expand the musical repertoire available to all community orchestras.

The CCO welcomes new musicians and new volunteers. Volunteers work at our concerts, and serve as Directors and committee members, dealing with social media, advertising, programmes, etc. Interested? Contact us at ccorchestra.org.

DONATING TO THE CCO

Donations of \$20 and more receive a tax receipt. In addition, our supporters receive:

- Name recognition in three programmes for donations of \$20 and more
- An MP3 recording for donations of \$100 or more
- One ticket to 3 consecutive concerts for donations of \$500 to \$999
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