

The Bel Canto  
& Singers  
& Elm City  
String Quartet

# Char pen tier

Messe de minuit  
pour Noël

Saturday Dec.2 • 7:30pm  
Christ Church Cathedral



**Virtual Program**

*Includes vocal and instrumental  
scores, more information and  
links to further reading and  
listening.*

# Unaccompanied Appetizers

*The Bel Canto Singers*

## Im Advent

(*Sechs Sprüche Op. 79, #5*)  
Felix Mendelssohn

**Listen For:**  
*The art of the fugue in a master's hands.*

*Let us rejoice! The redeemer is coming!*  
Bach-inspired Romanticism with exuberant, rich, harmonic voicing and texture, from an oft dismissed genius. Rarely performed, these tiny but challenging *Sechs Sprüche* are Mendelssohn at his most intellectual, and most austere.

## Unser lieben Frauen Traum

(*Acht geistliche Gesänge, Op. 138 #4*)  
Max Reger

**Listen For:**  
*A poignant shift in meter and dynamic to emphasize the text of the final chorale: "hat er uns all erlöst" (he has redeemed us all).*

Mary dreams of a tree growing under her heart. Ancient words, set to an original melody, combining Romantic expressiveness and neoclassic form. No matter which side of the critical fence you're on with regards to Reger, this is inarguably thoughtful, gorgeous work.

## Kindlein Zart

(*Traditional Austrian Christmas song*)  
Franz Wüllner

**Listen For:**  
*Your inner child, longing for Christmas morning.*

Just close your eyes. Can you smell it? That mixture of pine, marzipan and hope? *Schlafe, mein Herzchen, schlafe...*

## Weinachten

(*Sechs Sprüche Op. 79, #1*)  
Felix Mendelssohn

**Listen For:**  
*Mendelssohn's fondness for seventh chords, and the wonderful cascading Hallelujas.*

Mendelssohn serves up his post-Bach training again, but gives us a bit of Romantic tension in several unresolved retardations. The *Sechs Sprüche* are terse statements: very short for motets (which they are) and as a *cappella* for double chorus, are among his more demanding choral works.

## Bogoroditse Devo

(*From The All Night Vigil Op. 37*)  
Sergei Rachmaninoff

**Listen For:**  
*A triumphant (and very Slavic) bass entry on "yáko Spása rodilá yesí dush násbikh" (thou hast born the saviour of our souls).*

The Russian Orthodox *Hail Mary* is wrapped in a thick, warm, rapturous blanket of Rachmanonoff's modally and chromatically infused inventiveness. Big words, for a big piece, that contains one of the most moving climaxes in choral music.

## O Magnum Mysterium

Morton Lauridsen

**Listen For:**  
*The altos singing a dissonant appoggiatura G-sharp on the word "Virgo" - the musical equivalent of lighting a match in a dimly-lit room.*

Lauridsen's internationally-acclaimed, contemporary masterpiece of liturgical awe. Simple, harmonious melodies layer themselves like rippling water, and echo the serenity of the Latin text. *O great mystery, and wondrous sacrament.* That he based the whole thing on a relatively obscure 17th Century Spanish oil painting just kind of adds to the mystery in its global appeal.

## My Lord Has Come

Will Todd

**Listen For:**  
*A searing soprano F-sharp at the bursting "His love will hold me" that hangs in the air, begging for resolution.*

Best known for combining jazz and blues with liturgical choral music, Will Todd's *My Lord Has Come* does have a whiff of this in close and sometimes unresolved harmonies, but at its core is just pure Christmas. With heartfelt words also by the composer, it asks us to join him in contemplating the curious image of a tiny, marvelous King of Peace in a simple, common stable.

# Noël sur les Instruments

*The Elm City String Quartet with Yvonne Kershaw and Yunjia Dai, Flutes*

**Listen For:**  
*These folk melodies as they appear in the Messe de minuit*

**Joseph est bien marié** (Kyrie I)  
**Or nous dites Marie** (Christe Eleison)  
**Une jeune pucelle** (Kyrie II)  
**Laissez-pâître vos bêtes** (Offertoire)



Intermission

## From our new Artistic Director

Childhood Christmases for me were about stillness, candlelight and contemplation, but also exuberance, and bright celebration. When considering repertoire for my first program with Bel Canto, I wanted to capture this.

At the heart of the concert stands Marc-Antoine Charpentier's scintillating *Messe de Minuit pour Noël, H.9* and *Noël sur les instruments, H.534*. The *Messe's* charming, playful nature reflects his stroke of genius in acknowledging the popularity of Christmas with both the cosmopolitan nobility, and the rustic, common man. In five *Messe* movements, Charpentier quoted 10 *noëls*, or carols, that would have been very familiar to all listeners of his time.



Always thirsty for such ingenuity, 17th century French listeners would certainly have been charmed, as we are today, by how Charpentier innovatively braided these popular tunes into magnificent vocal polyphony, bold harmonies, dissonances, suspensions, resolutions and complex counterpoint with such great finesse.

In contrast, the first half of the program presents several quiet, a capella pieces. Sweet serenades from the Romantic period combine with the contemplative awe of contemporary composers, and while all are sacred in content, simply listening to the music is a fulfilling, meditative experience for the soul. The beauty of the choral instrument is at the forefront of all these magical compositions, and will invite the audience to float along with the soaring voices.

Finally, I would like to express my excitement at the choir's collaboration with a great group of Fredericton musicians joining us tonight, who will also delight the audience with the *Noël sur les instruments*, which introduce the *noëls* they will later hear in the *Messe*. What fun to discover them again weaving in and out of the "Kyries" and "Glorias"!

## Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1643 - 1704)



### Noël sur les instruments H. 534

Charpentier was a singer, not an instrumentalist. And never having been attached to the court of Louis XIV, was relegated to composing mainly for the church, the theatre, and other secular purposes. This meant composing *instrumentation*, not instrumentals. Nonetheless, his catalogue contains many preludes to motets and psalms (and one instrumental mass) as well as a host of overtures, dances, and *entre-acte* pieces. The *Noëls sur les instruments*, composed and performed over the course of his career, were often played at Midnight Mass in tandem with "dialogues." A rare example of his work for instrument ensemble alone, they are certainly the most popular.

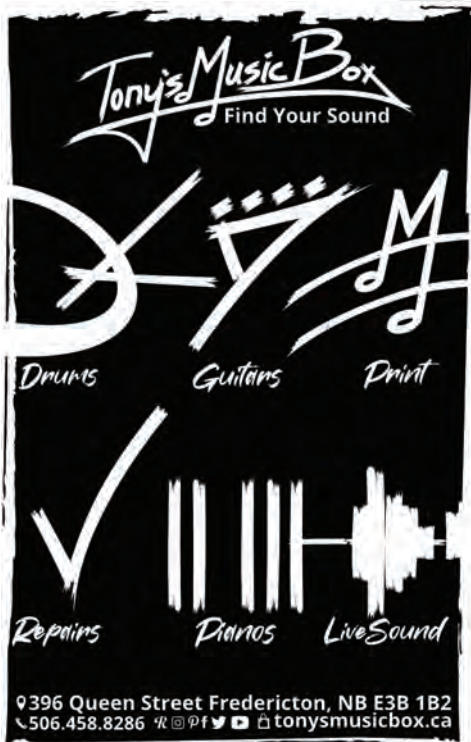
### Louis XIV Wasn't a Fan

At a time when his contemporaries were composing conservatively in reaction to what they saw as the crude and overly emotional Italian style, Charpentier, after studying in Rome for five years, began to inject colour and operatic flamboyance into a refined, but arguably timid French Baroque scene. He embraced dissonance to create tension and heighten harmonics, mixed and matched ensembles and placement, and made extensive use of popular folk melodies.

Charpentier's dominance in the Baroque era - in the ballpark of 800 opus numbers - despite the cultural monopoly famously imposed by Louis XIV's court, stands witness to the power of creativity, and the borderlessness of music.

### Messe de minuit: A "Parody Mass"

The use of "parody" here is not caricature or lampooning, but refers simply to the quotation of secular chansons, which are rhythmically linked to Renaissance and early-Baroque dances. Charpentier's Mass plays with the interaction between the borrowed, or parodied, non-metrical *noëls* and the metrical organization of his newly composed music, and creates something that remains unique in its ingenuity. From the opening Kyrie, based on "Joseph et bien marié" the mass is a seamless combination of dance, and formal liturgical writing.

A black and white graphic for Tony's Music Box. At the top, it says "Tony's Music Box" in a stylized font, with "Find Your Sound" underneath. Below this are three musical instruments: a drum set labeled "Drums", a guitar labeled "Guitars", and a piano labeled "Piano". At the bottom are three more instruments: a violin labeled "Repairs", a piano labeled "Pianos", and a speaker labeled "LiveSound". At the very bottom, it provides the address "9396 Queen Street Fredericton, NB E3B 1B2", the phone number "506.458.8286", and social media icons for Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, along with the website "tonysmusicbox.ca".

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**Don't Miss:**  
**QUARTET BY CANDLELIGHT**  
DECEMBER 21-23  
SAINT JOHN MONCTON FREDERICTON

## Tonight's Instrumentalists

Established in 2019, the **Elm City String Quartet** was brought together by their passion for chamber music and a desire to share their love of quartet repertoire with their home town of Fredericton. With **Victor Vivas** and **Mercedes Salazar** on violin, **Mark Kleyn** on viola, and **Emily Kennedy** on cello, the ECSQ's exciting and broad programming pairs works by today's composers alongside celebrated quartet classics. Mark your calendars for the rest of their 2023-24 season!

### Yunjia Dai - Flute

Born in Nanjing, China, Yunjia Dai has been playing flute since the age of 11. A testament to her commitment and skill, she has appeared with *Symphony New Brunswick*, and has been a member of the *Fredericton Symphony Orchestra* and *Saint Andrews Gala Festival Orchestra* since 2019, as well as various local chamber groups and bands.

### Yvonne Kershaw - Flute

American-born bassoonist Yvonne Kershaw has a wide range of performance experience in both Canada and the U.S. She has extensive teaching experience, adjudicates music festivals, and teaches bassoon, flute and oboe at the *UNB Centre for Musical Arts*. She performs regularly with *Symphony New Brunswick*.

### Thomas J. Gonder - Organ

A virtuoso organist, church musician and composer, since his arrival in Fredericton in January 2020 to take the helm as organist and choirmaster at Christ Church Cathedral, Thomas has quickly become a fixture of the music scene, and a must-have accompanist. Thomas's acclaimed mastery of French Romantic and Post-Romantic organ repertoire make his participation in tonight's concert a particular delight.

# Messe de minuit pour Noël H.9

## Marc-Antoine Charpentier

Victor Vivas	<i>Violin</i>	Yvonne Kershaw	<i>Flute</i>
Mercedes Salazar	<i>Violin</i>	Yunjia Dai	<i>Flute</i>
Mark Kleyn	<i>Viola</i>	Thomas J. Gonder	<i>Organ</i>
Emily Kennedy	<i>Cello</i>		

### Associated Noël's Kyrie

*"Joseph est bien marie"* Kyrie I  
*"Or nous dites, Marie"* Christe eleison  
*"Une jeune pucelle"* Kyrie II

### Gloria

*"Tous les bourgeois de Chartres"* Et in terra pax  
*"Où s'en vont ces gais bergers"* Laudamus te  
Gratias agimus tibi  
Domine Deus Rex coelestis  
Quoniam tu solus Sanctus  
Amen

### Credo

*"Vous qui désirez"* Patrem omnipotentem  
*"Voici le jour solennel de Noël"* Deum de Deo  
*"A la venue de Noël"* Gentium non factum  
Et incarnatus est  
Crucifixus  
Et ascendit in coelum  
Et in Spiritum Sanctum  
Et unam sanctam

### "Laissez-paître vos bêtes" Offertoire

*"O dieu ! Que n'était-je en vie"* Sanctus

### Benedictus

*"A minuit fut fait un réveil"* Agnus Dei

Hospice Fredericton  
**Memorial Holiday Tree Lighting**  
DECEMBER 13<sup>TH</sup> @ 6:00PM  
Betty's Garden - Hospice House  
621 Churchill Row, Fredericton

Please join us as we light Hospice Fredericton's Memorial Holiday Tree for the very first time! Gather in Betty's Garden out back of Hospice House to listen to carols performed by The Bel Canto Singers, enjoy refreshments, and watch as our tree lights up the night. Each light on the tree will signify a donation made to Hospice Fredericton in memory of a loved one.

To purchase a light or donate to this campaign, check out our website or give us a call at 506-472-1640. All funds raised will directly support the programs and services at Hospice Fredericton.

## Acknowledgments

*Bel Canto would like to thank our many anonymous sponsors who make it possible for us to share our love of choral music with people.*

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*Further financial support provided by:  
Anne Hunt • Leo Macneil • Carolyn Nielsen  
Rachel Savidge • Roger Smith*

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## Tonight's Concert Sponsors:

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Christ Church Cathedral  
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*The Bel Canto Singers are members of the  
New Brunswick Choral Federation*

## Bel Canto Singers are:

### \*Soloists this evening

#### Soprano

Tetiana Deordica  
Irene Hunchyk  
Carolyn MacDonald  
Rachel Savidge  
\* Olivia Spahn-Vieira  
\* Oksana Tesla  
Lindsay Underhill  
Vivien Zelazny

#### Artistic Director

Kathrin Welte  
Accompanist  
Thomas Gonder

#### Tenor

Matthew Dinan  
\* Brad Horncastle  
Roger Smith  
Vince Zelazny  
\* Shane M Scott

#### Bass

\* Darrell Brewer  
Anthony Brown  
Mike Francis  
Leo Macneil  
Joe Horton  
Kit Hunt

#### Alto

Jane Blakely  
Sabina Horton  
Anne Hunt  
Carolyn Nielsen  
Ruth Savidge  
Beth Snow  
Debbie West

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