

# Meeting Places I

i Coristi  
Chamber Choir

## i Coristi Chamber Choir

**Dr. Rob Curtis, conductor**

**Kimberley McMann, assistant conductor**

**Ariane Lowrey, piano**

**Dr. Deepak Paramashivan, Sarangi**

Saturday, 17 November 2018, 7:30 pm

Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Edmonton

**2018 - 2019  
SEASON**  
*25th Anniversary*





John Lypian, photographer



## i Coristi Chamber Choir

Now celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> season, *i Coristi Chamber Choir* is one of Edmonton's premiere chamber choirs. Membership is by audition and encompasses a broad cross-section of the population: accountants, teachers, computer programmers, nanotechnologists, designers, theologians, administrators, office personnel - singers for whom music is their vocation, and singers for whom music is their avocation!

The name *i Coristi* is Italian, "The Choral Singers". Noted for its unique, eclectic

programming, the choir focuses on a cappella masterpieces from the Renaissance to the 21st century, presented in three main concerts each season; the choir also performs at seniors' facilities and various local businesses and gatherings. *i Coristi* has been heard on national and regional broadcasts of CBC Radio.

Twice 2nd-Prize winners (2006 and 2008) in the Mixed-Voice Adult Chamber Choir category of the National Competition for Canadian Amateur Choirs, *i Coristi* was awarded **1st Prize** in July 2013.

*i Coristi* has performed with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, toured to Ontario and Manitoba, and been invited to perform in Toronto, Winnipeg and Edmonton at Podium, the national biennial conference of Choral Canada/Canada Choral. During the summer of 2009, *i Coristi* completed a highly successful tour to England and Wales, which included a performance at the prestigious International Eisteddfod Festival in Llangollen, Wales. In July of 2011, *i Coristi* performed at Festival 500 in St. John's Newfoundland.

The choir has recorded four CDs, including *Paths*, released in 2016.

Founded by Dr. Debra Cairns, the choir is currently led by Music Director Dr. Rob Curtis.

*i Coristi Chamber Choir is a proud partner of  
Choir Alberta, and  
Choral Canada/Canada Choral*

i Coristi Chamber Choir

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# 2018 - 2019 SEASON

*25th Anniversary*

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## i Coristi Chamber Choir

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Wayne Poon      Emilian Groch\*

Russ Wilkinson      Adam Kristenson

\*Michael Woodside      Gordon McCrostie

Erwin Veugelers

*\*on leave*



## Biographies

### *Dr. Rob Curtis*

#### MUSIC DIRECTOR

Born in Edmonton, Rob grew up making music and in 1999 began a degree in piano performance at the University of Alberta, later earning a master's degree in choral conducting. In November, 2015, he received his Doctor of Music degree from the University of Alberta, where his research centred on elements of place and space in the choral music of Malcolm Forsyth.



Rob has worked with a number of choirs in Edmonton and beyond; from 2006 to 2010 he was the Artistic Director and Conductor of Sine Nomine Chamber Choir, and from 2010 to 2013, the Assistant Conductor of the Richard Eaton Singers. He has also led the Alberta College Women's Choir, gives frequent workshops and is an active church musician and festival adjudicator. Rob conducted the University of Alberta Concert Choir from 2011 to 2018, and in 2014 he was honoured for his work with that ensemble with the Faculty of Arts Graduate Teaching Award. In addition, he has frequently appeared as a singer with Pro Coro Canada, Edmonton's professional chamber choir.

In addition to the works of Malcolm Forsyth, Rob's research interests include acoustics and the science behind choral sound, as well as physical and spatial elements in choral music. He is in great demand as an engaging and dynamic teacher and conductor and is thrilled to have the opportunity to work with the extraordinarily talented voices of *i Coristi* Chamber Choir.



## *Kimberley McMann*

### **ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR**

Kimberley grew up in Riverview, New Brunswick, where she began her performing career as a Celtic musician. After releasing her first recording “The Dark Island,” opening for the late John Allan Cameron, and performing at the Canada Winter Games, she pursued her classical music education at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, studying Vocal Performance.

She then moved to Edmonton and received her Master’s degree in Choral Conducting from the University of Alberta in 2011. During that time, Kimberley was the Assistant Conductor of the University of Alberta Concert Choir, the Assistant Conductor of the University of Alberta Madrigal Singers, a soloist with Alberta Baroque Ensemble, and with Edmonton’s award-winning chamber choir *i Coristi*. In 2011 Kimberley moved to the UK where she taught, directed music at St. Patrick’s Catholic Church, and founded Spiritus Community choir. She returned to Canada in August of 2013 and has since been busy working with ensembles such as Pro Coro Canada, Da Camera Singers, *i Coristi* Chamber Choir, Sine Nomine, Accord Ensemble, and Vocal Alchemy, as a singer, soloist, clinician, and conductor.



## *Ariane Lowrey*

### **RESIDENT ACCOMPANIST**

Born and raised in the Smoky River Region of Alberta, Ariane Lowrey received her Bachelor of Music Degree in piano performance at the University of Alberta in 2003, studying with Ayako Tsuruta and Janet Scott Hoyt. In the summers of 2001 and 2002, she attended the Summer Festival at the Orford Art Centre in Quebec, studying with piano professors Jean-Paul Sevilla, Jean Saulnier, and Richard Raymond. After completing her undergraduate degree, Ariane studied at the Université de Montréal with Paul Stewart and completed her Master of Music degree in piano performance in 2005. She then traveled and worked in the UK and Europe before returning to Edmonton in 2007.



Ariane is actively involved in accompanying and collaborative work as well as teaching. She has performed with various chamber groups, choirs, vocalists, solo instrumentalists, dance and musical theatre productions in both Edmonton and Montreal. Her first foray into choral music (both as a singer and accompanist) was with the University of Alberta’s Concert Choir, under the direction of Dr. Debra Cairns. She then went on to accompany the King’s University College Concert Choir with Dr. Melanie Turgeon where she also worked as collaborative pianist for the voice repertoire class and for instrumentalists. Ariane joined the Alberta College Conservatory of Music Piano Faculty in 2007.

## Programme Notes

Welcome to i Coristi's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary season! We'll be celebrating this milestone in a small way at each of our concerts this year, with a larger celebration at the season's final concert in May. To celebrate our anniversary tonight, we're launching a new series of concerts: "Meeting Places", at which we'll explore the intersections between choral music and other genres and art forms, especially those collaborations "which suggest new and interesting possibilities. Tonight we're joined by a world-class Sarangi player, Dr. Deepak Paramashivan, who will introduce us to this rare instrument in the second half of the concert. We believe this is the first ever collaboration between a Western choir and the Sarangi, and after the intermission we'll be bringing our two traditions together to create something entirely new.

To begin the concert, we look back about 100 years to an earlier synthesis of Western choral music and the art and culture of India. Gustav Holst had a strong interest in Indian literature and mythology, and a number of his works are based on this subject matter, including the *Hymns from the Rig Veda* and several early operas. *The Cloud Messenger* was initially, in Holst's daughter's words, "a dismal failure", and Holst is said to have quite depressed at the lack of success of the first performance. The work was forgotten for many years, as a full score was not published until 1990, so it could only be performed from manuscript copies—and may not have been performed at all between 1940 and 1990. Despite its rocky beginnings, it is a compelling piece full of beautiful and bold writing, with the story carefully told through musical means with leitmotifs and precise text-setting.

The poem on which *The Cloud Messenger* is based was written by Kālidāsa, a Sanskrit writer who lived during the fourth or fifth century. Kālidāsa is widely regarded as the greatest Sanskrit poet, and this poem in particular was so famous and respected that it spawned an entire genre of poetry: Sandesa Kavya ("messenger poems"). The poem tells the story of a nature spirit, banished from home by the King for a year; he convinces a passing cloud to bear a message home to his wife. To convince the cloud, he describes the beautiful sights that the cloud will see along the way. The poem was first translated into English in 1813, and a number of other translations followed; Holst used a prosaic translation by R. W. Frazer to compile the text for this piece. The setting clearly comes from an early 20th-century British Empire and, in places, a colonialist perspective is clear—in addition to some gratuitous exoticism—but Holst's genuine fascination with and respect for Indian culture is clear throughout.

After the intermission, you will hear a demonstration of the Sarangi, a bowed string instrument of India. The Sarangi has three strings that are directly bowed, and several dozen sympathetic strings which resonate as the bowed strings are played, and which can also be strummed. The Sarangi is an extremely difficult musical instrument to learn, as it is played not with the fingertips but rather with the nails and cuticles, and it takes a great deal of time (and blood!) to toughen the skin enough to play. This is an instrument closely related to vocal music; the sound is similar to the human voice, and the instrument is able to perform many of the vocal ornaments that are characteristic of Hindustani music.

The genesis of tonight's concert was a U of A Concert Choir fundraiser where I heard Deepak playing Sarangi and singing a traditional lullaby, accompanied by classical guitar. The performance was supposed to be

background music during a reception, but it was so beautiful that every person in the room stopped talking, turned to listen, frozen by the gorgeous sound—it was a fantastic moment. I asked Deepak if he thought we could one day try something similar with choral accompaniment in place of the guitar, and he was all for it. And so, i Coristi's assistant conductor, Kimberley McMann, using a recording of that original performance as a starting point, has created an arrangement for choir that can be used to accompany an improvised performance based on that same lullaby. The choir does have specific notes on the page to perform, but the movement from one section of the piece to the next is flexible, and while the performers all have a general idea of the structure of the piece, they will be making decisions together in the moment as they put together tonight's version of the lullaby for you in real time.

One of the challenges in programming a concert for a combination of instruments that has never before performed together is that there is, by definition, no music written for that combination! One of the ideas that Deepak and I came up with in brainstorming tonight's program was to take an existing piece for choir and solo instrument, and to adapt it such that the Sarangi could perform the solo part. After some searching, I found ***O Inexpressible Mystery*** by Canadian composer Tawnie Olson, originally written for choir and viola. I reached out to Tawnie to see what she thought of the idea, and luckily for us she was very supportive of the idea, and even provided some suggestions for the adaptation of the viola part. In the end, the part didn't need to be adapted very much; the Sarangi plays a few passages in a different octave, and we add some rubato and subtle ornamentation to make the part more idiomatic for the instrument. The end result is very effective, and gives an idea of what new pieces for choir and Sarangi might be like.

Another idea that Deepak and I kept coming around to in our brainstorming was that of improvisation, which of course is an important part of traditional Sarangi playing. The challenge, of course, is to find a way to improvise effectively with so many people together on stage. To guide our improvisation, I wrote a few melodic cells that I thought the choir and Sarangi could use as raw material in improvising together. Then, it occurred to me that it might be helpful to write out some kind of a framework for us all to guide the structure of the improvisation as a whole. And then it seemed to make sense to write out a few passages to connect the various sections together. And some lyrics for the choir to sing. And some dynamics. At some point, I realized that what I had actually done was to accidentally write an entire piece—and I'm delighted to be able to share it with you tonight. ***The Moving Finger Writes*** is a study on various ways that a choir can improvise together. At times, the singers are working with small melodic units, listening to the overall sound and trying to add to what they're hearing or to move the group sound in different directions. At times, they're working in smaller groups—duets, trios and quartets—creating small ensembles that combine to form something larger. And later, they're listening primarily to the singers immediately beside them, changing pitches one singer after the other such that whenever the soloist sings a new pitch, it cascades across the choir. The text for this piece speaks to what the experience of improvising together is like, and it also happened to be a favourite text of my late grandfather's. It's particularly special for me to hear it sung about a week after what would have been his 91<sup>st</sup> birthday.

-Rob

### **Dr. Deepak Paramashivan, Sarangi**

Dr. Deepak Paramashivan had his training in Sarangi from Mr. Faiyaz Khan, and later he perfected his skills under maestros Pandit Ramnarayan and the Grammy winner, the late Pandit Dhruba Ghosh.



He has performed in Europe, USA, Canada, UK, New Zealand, Singapore, and South Korea both as a soloist and collaborating with world-renowned artists such as Ustad Aashish Khan, Pandit Anindo Chatterjee, Pandit Yogesh Samsi, Abbas Kosimov and Pandit Birju Maharaj. He has played the Sarangi for Oscar winning music composer A R Rehman's Roli seaboard and for the Hollywood music director Rick Boston's upcoming movie *Messiaen*.

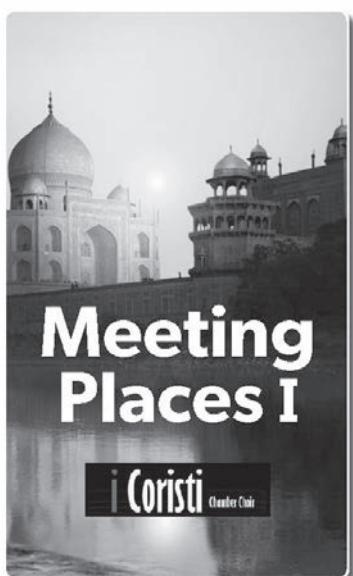
He is a recipient of the Killam Award, Andrew Stewart Award and the Edmonton Arts Council award. Deepak has a PhD in energy and climate engineering with a gold medal. After serving a stint at the University of Alberta as an NSERC climate scientist, he switched gears completely and currently he is pursuing a second PhD in Ethnomusicology at the University of Alberta.

### **Meeting Places I**

Thank for you joining us for the first concert in i Coristi's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary season, and for the first concert in our new "Meeting Places" series. These concerts, which are planned as a series over several years, explore collaborations and interactions between choral music and other artists who might not normally share the stage with a choir.

Tonight we are privileged to be joined by a world-class player of the Sarangi, a rare instrument of India, one of the most difficult instruments to play and one of the most beautiful and expressive to hear. It has been a fascinating process to discover new musical sounds together, and we are thrilled to have the opportunity to share this brand-new music with you for the first time tonight!

-Rob



# Programme

2018 - 2019  
SEASON  
*25th Anniversary*

## **The Cloud Messenger** (1910–12)

Gustav Holst (1874–1934)

Ariane Lowrey, piano

INTERMISSION (20 MINUTES)

i Coristi Chamber Choir with Dr. Deepak Paramashivan, *Sarangi*

## **Alap in Raag Mishra Kirwani**

traditional

## **Tore Bina Mohe**

traditional

## **Traditional lullaby from the desert region of Rajasthan, India**

arr. by Kimberley McMann

Kimberley McMann, conductor

## **O Inexpressible Mystery** (2009)

Tawnie Olson (b. 1974)

*Originally for choir and viola;*

*re-imagined for choir and Sarangi with the permission of the composer*

## **The Moving Finger Writes** (2018)

Rob Curtis (b. 1981)

Erwin Veugelers, baritone

## Holst – *The Cloud Messenger*

text: Kalidasa (4th or 5th century)

translation: Gustav Holst, after the work of R. W. Frazer (1854–1921)

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O thou, who comest from heaven's king,  
Scion of a noble race,  
Who wearest wondrous forms at will,  
O glorious cloud, I welcome thee.

Where'er thou goest, lonely wives, who pine in solitude with closebound hair,  
will arise and gaze along the road.  
Thou bringest home their absent husbands, who will loosen their tresses  
and fill their hearts with joy.

Save one!  
In the city of the Great God my wife sits alone, counting the days that creep wearily on.  
In his anger the Great One has banished me.  
For a year I must wander, bereft of her who is my second self.

Bringer of rain to the thirsty land,  
Bringer of joy unto those in sorrow,  
thou goest to the city that lies 'mid th'eternal snows of the Himalaya,  
The city whose groves are bathed in the glory of the Great God.

Thou dost ride the wind proudly,  
Thou art surrounded by wild birds who sing thy praises,  
With thee cometh thy dazzling bride the Lightning,  
joyously playing at thy side.

O Cloud, O harbinger of joy, bear a message to my love.  
Tell her of the longing that burns my soul.

Tarry not, O cloud, tarry not!  
Rushing northward through the sky thou seemest a mountain peak,  
torn from its roots and hurled onward by the wind.

At the sound of thy thunder the hills rejoice.  
In gratitude they reach out toward thee. Veil their heads in thy embrace.  
Pour down thy rain in huge torrents upon them,  
Quench the fierce forest fires that assail them.

At the sound of thy thunder the birds rejoice.  
They rise up hailing thee and fly with thee toward the Himalaya.

At the sound of thy thunder the lonely worker rejoices.  
He leaves his toil in the field and seeks home.

See how all greet thee. Yet stay not, let not each hill beguile thee  
with the scent of the flowers thou hast revived.

Tarry not, O cloud, tarry not!  
Leave the highlands, sweep down on to the plains.  
Behold the villages, the hedges white with flowers,  
the trees in the sacred groves whose branches hang down heavy with nesting birds.

Village wives gaze on thee with tender pleading eyes  
that know not how to woo thee wantonly.  
Here you may rejoice in the fragrance of the earth newly ploughed.

As the rain descends, green shoots appear.  
On marshy banks the plantains arise.  
Sprinkle the buds of the jasmine that grow near the forest river.  
Spread thy cool shade over the burning cheeks of the maidens who gather flowers.

The birds fly up in thousands, circling round, drinking thy raindrops, filling the sky with thy praises.  
The sound is wafted by the south wind filled with the fragrance of the opening lotus.

Tarry not, O cloud, tarry not!  
Bow thy head! Thou art come to the foot of the Himalaya,  
from whose peaks, white with everlasting snow, springs the Holy Mother Ganga.  
Tarry not, O cloud, ascend the mighty pass.

With thee come those who are freed from sin,  
journeying to their last home in the sacred city on Mount Kailasa.  
And hark! Afar off thou canst hear the singing maidens chanting the praises of their Lord.  
The sound is mingled with the music of the wind-blown reeds growing at the riverside.

Ascend ever higher! Tarry not, O cloud!  
Lo! Thou hast reached the snowy peaks of Kailasa.  
Behold the sacred city, round which flows Ganga like a maiden's robe clinging to her form.  
There the vast temple spires reach up to kiss thee, glittering with jewels that shine like thy rainbow.

There the gentle breeze that bears thee onward is heavy with incense and the fragrance of the lotus.  
There in the temple are the dancers, fair as thy bride the lightning,  
their tresses bound in jasmine, their dark eyes flashing with joy as they greet thee.  
There at even the minstrels assemble to sing the praises of their Lord.

And see! The Great God himself whose tread shakes the mountains,  
He descends and begins his solemn dance. O cloud, great is thy honour!

Join thy deep voice to those of the singers.  
Let thy thunder, rolling o'er hilltops, echoing through caves,  
beat out the measure for the dancing of Him who holds the Three Worlds in his grasp.

# i Coristi

Chamber Choir

Yet tarry not, O cloud, tarry not!  
When the dancers are weary,  
And the minstrels sink down to slumber,  
When the temple drum rolls out its deep voice for the last time,  
steal o'er the roofs of the palaces, covered with gems and swaying lotus leaves.

From afar thou wilt see an arched gate,  
in front a pond with swans eagerly awaiting the coming of the rain.  
Sink gently down, let thy lightning gleam faintly as 'twere the glittering of fireflies,  
for there is my love's home, joyless as a lotus bereft of the sun.

Therein is my second self pining as a storm-swept flower.  
Wearied by sorrow, she seeks relief in slumber.  
As she smiles, let thy voice be silent, lest, in her dream, my arm should be unwound from her neck.

Wait near her flower-covered window until her eyes, half-opened, rest on thee.  
Let thy cool breeze, scented with the moist earth and the jasmine blossom, play gently on her cheek.  
Then, with the soft voice of thy thunder, breathe these words in her ear:

"I, the bringer of rain, who with deep-sounding thunder  
call the traveler to return to his home,  
to hasten and unbind his wife's braided hair,  
I, the cloud, bring thee tidings of him who is ever thine.

"Men say that love perishes through separation, but loneliness increases his love.  
At night-time in his dreams he comes to thee and knoweth joy again.  
But in the day his form is wasted like thine, his face tear-stained like thine,  
sighs deep as thine fall from his lips, the days crawl on wearily for him as for thee.

"He who once whispered words of love in thine ear,  
now sends thee a message from his heart's grief:

" 'Beloved! In the forest creeper I see the tender grace of thy form,  
in the startled look of the doe the glance of thine eye,  
in the ripple of the waters lies the loving play of thy brow.  
I fain would paint my remembrance of thee but the tears fall fast and blind me:  
Only in my dreams can I behold thee.

" 'Yet who hath perpetual joy or sorrow?  
Our lot doth go now up, now down like the rim of a wheel.  
No yearning can shorten the days of my exile that still remain.  
Let this my message bring thee comfort as the messenger bringeth comfort to the parched earth.' "

2018 - 2019  
SEASON  
*25th Anniversary*

**Olson – *The Cloud Messenger***

text: St. Gregory Nazianzen (ca. 329–390)  
translator unknown

O Inexpressible mystery and unheard-of paradox!  
The invisible is seen; the intangible is touched;  
the Eternal Word becomes accessible to our speech;  
the timeless steps into time;  
the Son of God becomes the Son of Man.

**Curtis — *The Moving Finger Writes***

text: Omar Khayyam (1048–1131)  
translation: Edward FitzGerald (1809–1883)

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,  
Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit  
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,  
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.

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Lorna Arndt  
David Garber  
Cameron Dyck

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John Brough and Janette Chambers,  
*Holy Trinity Anglican Church*  
Corey Haberstock, *Recording Engineer*  
Corporate Copy  
TIX on the Square  
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Upper Crust Cafe & Caterers



The screenshot shows the i Coristi Chamber Choir website. At the top, there's a large logo with "i Coristi" and "Chamber Choir". Below it, the text "Music Director: Rob Curtis" is visible. The main content area has a dark background with white text. It starts with "Did you know...". Below that, it says "Your donations are used to support several valuable programs offered by *i Coristi*:". There are four sections listed: "Assistant Conductor" (with text about hiring a conducting student), "Legacy Scholarships" (with text about supporting singers for the National Youth Choir of Canada), "Choral Commissions" (with text about enabling new choral music), and "National Competition in Choral Composition" (with text about a biennial competition). Each section has a small "Financial award presented to the winner of *i Coristi*'s biennial competition" note at the bottom.



**Edmonton**



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We have made every effort to acknowledge all donations received since November 1, 2017. Please contact us in case of error or omission.

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**i Coristi Chamber Choir**

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Edmonton Metropolitan Orchestra presents



# Music from the Dark Island

Kimberley McMann, Conductor

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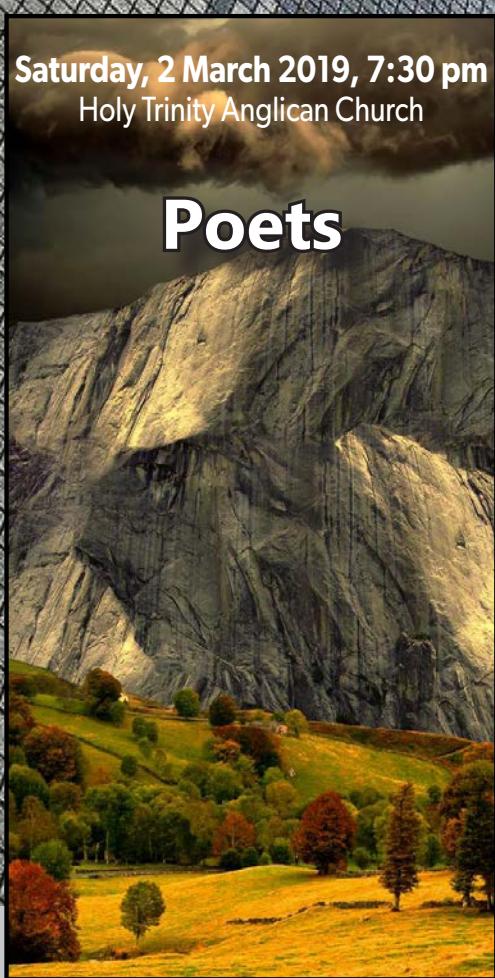
2018 - 2019  
SEASON

25th Anniversary



Saturday, 2 March 2019, 7:30 pm  
Holy Trinity Anglican Church

## Poets



Saturday, 18 May 2019, 7:30 pm  
Holy Trinity Anglican Church

## i Coristi Gone Wild



A concert program focusing on texts and lyricists, rather than on the composers. Poets will include E. Pauline Johnson (in a setting by Christine Donkin), Pablo Neruda (set by American composer Shawn Kirchner), Shakespeare (settings by Charles Wood, Bob Chilcott, Ward Swingle), and others.

The celebration of i Coristi's 25th anniversary will be a "wild" performance with a program of pieces about birds and animals, including Eric Whitacre's *Animal Crackers*, Passereau's *Il est bel et bon*, Trent Worthington's arrangement of *Blackbird*, and more. The choir will also be joined by alumni from previous seasons to perform a set of music conducted by our founding director, Dr. Debra Cairns.

Tickets

Advance \$20; Door \$25

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