

The U of M Bison Men's Chorus presents our annual

# SPRING CONCERT

SUNDAY, April 29, 2018 at 3 pm

Gordon-King Memorial United Church

127 Cobourg Ave. (near Henderson Hwy and Johnson)

Admission \$15.00 at the door

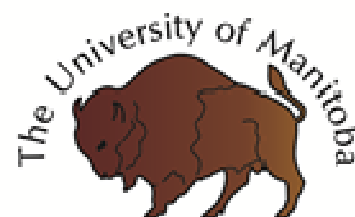
Children under 12 free

Wheelchair accessible

Come and meet our new Chorus Director, Stuart Sladden

[www.bisonmenschorus.ca](http://www.bisonmenschorus.ca)

## Bison Men's Chorus



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## **Annual Spring Concert**

*Folk Inspirations*

April 29, 2018

3:00 PM

Gordon-King Memorial United Church

Stuart Sladden, Conductor

Cary Denby, Collaborative Accompanist



UNIVERSITY  
OF MANITOBA



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# Program

*Fünf Lieder*, op. 41 (1, 3-5)  
Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

*Five Slovak Folksongs*  
Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

*A La Una Yo Nasi*  
Arr. Michael Isaacson (b. 1946)

~ intermission ~

*God be in my Head*  
Jackson Berkey (b. 1942)  
Soloist: Keith Tipples

*Wood River*  
Willi Zwozdesky  
Soloist: Jim House

*Away from the Roll of the Sea*  
Arr. Diane Loomer (1940-2012)

*Finnan Haddie*  
Vijay Singh  
Guitar: Steve Denby  
Soloists: Tim Sale, Brian Doob

*Fogarty's Cove*  
Arr. Ron Smail

*Dirait-on*  
Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943)

*Four Strong Winds*  
Arr. Larry Nickel (b. 1952)

*Drinking Song*  
Ralph Vaughan Williams

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## The Chorus

### Tenor:

Richard Ball, Bob Bond, Jack Bornholdt, Jim House, Ian Hughes, John Long, Gary Martin, Patrick Mathews, Ron Metcalfe, Harvey Peltz, Ray Plaitin, Tim Sale, Bert Smith, Peter Spencer, Ross Tallman

### Baritone:

Phil Barnett, Victor Boudreau, Richard Ellis, Greg Giesbrecht, Bill Guenter, Bill Kawka, Keith Love, Brian Oleson, José Peralta, Martin Reed, Bill Smith, Joe Stephanson, Hugh Stephens, Harvey Stevens, Keith Tipples, Neil Tipples, Chas van Dyck, Stirling Walkes, Gene Walz

### Bass:

Bob Dojack, Brian Doob, Paul Hope, John Janzen, Bob Kellow, Ted Redekop, Ed Reynolds, Bob Stewart, Barry Warrack, Herman Yaeger, Jack Zonneveld

The Bison Men's Chorus has been active in Winnipeg since the fall of 1985. It is a non-auditioned, community-based chorus made up of students, faculty, staff, and alumni of the University of Manitoba and men from Winnipeg and the surrounding area. The goal of the ensemble is to foster University and Community relations by providing expanded choral opportunities for its members. The chorus performs a broad selection of repertoire from traditional male chorus repertoire to jazz and pop songs, and even has performed original and commissioned works. The chorus's season begins early in September and runs until the end of April, with regular rehearsals on Tuesday evenings from 5-7 PM, on the U of M, Fort Garry Campus. We are always looking for new members! The only real requirement for membership in the ensemble is a love for singing. With an excellent series of rehearsal aids provided, you will learn as you go, and the best part, aside from being part of this welcoming community, is that your first year is on the chorus. This gives you an opportunity to get to know the current members, sing with us, and experience what a season is like with this active ensemble. If you, or someone you know, is interested in joining us or would simply like more information please check out our website, [www.BisonMensChorus.ca](http://www.BisonMensChorus.ca), or send us an email at [info@BisonMensChorus.ca](mailto:info@BisonMensChorus.ca), and we would be happy to answer any questions you have.

We would like to acknowledge the continuing support of the Desautels Faculty of Music, at the University of Manitoba, and for the generous use of their facility for our weekly rehearsals.

**Conductor: Stuart Sladden**, born and raised in the Greater Toronto Area, recently returned to Winnipeg after spending the last few years in Edmonton working on a Doctor of Music degree, specializing in choral conducting, at the University of Alberta, where he is currently a Doctoral Candidate. He has completed a Master of Music degree from the University of Manitoba, also in choral conducting, and a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Toronto in jazz performance. Over the last twenty-two years he has enjoyed working with a variety of classical, jazz, and church choirs as a singer, conductor, and clinician. During his studies, Stuart has continued to be active as a professional musician, working with both the Bison Men's Chorus and Joie de Vivre, he is a singer with the Winnipeg Singers, and is a sessional instructor with the Faculty of Music at the University of Manitoba.

**Collaborative Accompanist: Cary Denby** graduated from the Faculty of Music at the University of Manitoba in 1990 and since then, has made her living as a freelance accompanist. A versatile musician, Cary maintains a busy schedule, being fortunate to work with many local singers and instrumentalists as well as the Manitoba Opera, various ensembles at the University of Manitoba, Canzona, the Gilbert and Sullivan Society, and Saskatoon Opera.

# Program Notes

Welcome and thank you for joining us for our final concert of the 2017-2018 season. I am especially excited about today's performance, as it is my first full concert with the Herd since becoming their conductor in January. We have had a good semester, celebrating Steve Denby's eighteen-year tenure with the Herd and performing as part of the Winnipeg Music Festival in March, and we are actively working on the details for our upcoming season. To stay up to date on our performance schedule, including our annual Feeste, winter, and spring concerts, I encourage you to check out our web page often, [www.BisonMensChorus.ca](http://www.BisonMensChorus.ca). Also, we are always looking for new singers. If you, or someone you know, is interested in joining us please send us a quick email ([info@BisonMensChorus.ca](mailto:info@BisonMensChorus.ca)), or speak to one of the choristers. All are welcome and there is no audition requirement to be part of this ensemble.

When I took over the chorus in January I could not help but notice that the Chorus had a number of Folk Songs (song's that originate in traditional popular culture or that are written in such a style), or Folk-like piece, in its current repertoire. These songs inspired the creation of the program you will hear today. As the repertoire took shape it became evident that we were largely focusing on two types of folk songs, ones that are more militaristic in nature and those that focus on love and the sea. The program has been divided along these lines, with the first half featuring the more militaristic folk songs with the second half featuring the love and sea themed folk songs, along with a few additional folk-related pieces. You will notice this division musically in the program by the nature of how the texts have been set to music. The more militaristic pieces tend to include musical characteristics we associate with the military, including march-like rhythms and angular melodies, while the love and sea folk songs tend to be more melodically driven with lilting rhythms.

We begin our program with a rarely performed song cycle by Johannes Brahms (1833-1897), *Fünf Lieder*, op. 41. This cycle is the first of only three works that Brahms wrote for male chorus and is the only one of the three that is unaccompanied. The other two works, *Rinaldo*, op. 50, and the *Alto Rhapsody*, op. 53, are both accompanied by a full orchestra and include soloists. Four of the five pieces in this cycle (movements 2-5) are settings of poems by Karl Lemcke (1831-1913) and are quite dated militaristic poems. Brahms set these texts during the height of the nationalistic fervour surrounding Otto von Bismarck's (1815-1898) plans to unite the German empire in the late 1860's. It is not a surprise that Brahms would set these highly nationalistic texts during this time because he idolized Bismarck. The idea of finding a "national identity" was not unique to Germany during this period. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw nationalist movements in countries all over the world, however neither Brahms nor Lemcke could possibly have known just how far the idea of German nationalism would go in the next century. It is unfortunate that this cycle is often seen through the lens of events that occurred during the twentieth century, decades after they were written, and is a likely reason they are not often performed. Today, we will be presenting four of the five pieces in this cycle, nos. 1, and 3-5. The first movement is unique in the cycle. It is a gorgeous setting of an old German poem set in an archaic style. Unlike the other pieces in this cycle this movement is not overtly militaristic. It speaks to a hunter giving up on the hunt for a deer only to be satisfied with a hare. The third movement deals with the harsh reality of a soldier's life, in that during war it can often lead to death. This poem begins by asking the question "What comforts has a seasoned soldier?" and answers that it is the three-gun salute over his grave. The last stanza of the poem speaks to the reality of war saying that these soldiers fought bravely together and that the deceased soldier's comrades will soon follow. The character of poems shifts for the fourth movement, which present a rather silly stereotype of a soldier. The poem portrays a bored soldier, or a Barrack only soldier, itching to get out into battle. This movement is also different from the others in that it is the only one to make use of a repeated refrain, which goes through the ranks (corporal, sergeant, captain, lieutenant colonel) and concludes with the statement that "Us soldiers, we want to march on." The final movement of the cycle expresses a different angle to the military life, that of warning and being prepared. It warns that the "enemy awaits you" and the soldier should trust in both God and in the sharpness of your sword. That it is the soldier's duty to fight for "right and truth" and to protect the land of their fathers. Brahms adds to the gravity of this piece with the inclusion of yet another unique musical characteristic in this cycle. That is, a continuous (*ostinato*) warning of *Geht acht* (beware) heard between the bass and baritones while the two tenor parts continue with the text of the poem.

The next song cycle on the program is another rarely performed work, this time by Béla Bartók (1881-1945), *Five Slovak Folksongs*. Along with his colleague Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967), Bartók was an avid collector of folk songs. As a result of his work and analysis of these folk songs he is widely considered as one of the founders of comparative musicology, which later became the discipline we know today as ethnomusicology. Unlike Brahms though, Bartók composed a number of choral works for male voices. It has been suggested that this is because of the both lack of competent treble (women and children) choirs and the abundance of good male choirs in Hungary during the early part of the twentieth century. These five pieces have been set to run together like a single work, with texts that are generally concerned with the life of the soldier. Most of the songs in the cycle are happy depictions of the camaraderie between soldiers, but there are some darker overtones as well in the references to the horrors of war and the soldier's fear of death. You will hear that the first and fourth movements of the work share the same melody, which like all the other movements is modal. The harmony Bartók employs throughout the cycle is quite simple and is derived from the modal melodies themselves. Bartók once said of his harmonies that they are "vertical projections of the previous horizontal forms." The horizontal forms being the melody with the vertical projections being the harmony he employs. The text for all movements, but especially seen in the first and fourth movements, is set in a *parlando*, or speech-like, style, which is typical of folk songs, or as Bartók referred to them, peasant songs.

## Program Notes (continued)

We conclude the first half of the program with ***A La Una Yo Nasi***. With the exception of perhaps the opening movement of the Brahms this is piece features the most lyrical melody of the first half. It is a Jewish folk song, though the text is not Hebrew or Yiddish. Yiddish is a language used by Jewish people in central and Eastern Europe before the Holocaust and was originally a German dialect, with words from Hebrew and several modern languages. The text for the piece we are presenting today, though, is Ladino. This is a Judeo-Spanish language that is primarily spoken by the Sephardic Jews who were historically established in areas of modern Spain and Portugal. This folk song begins by describing the life of a man, using the hours of a clock to represent the movement of time: at 1, I was born, at 2, I grew up, at 3, I met my intended, and at 4, I married her. The militaristic part of the folk song comes in the second stanza where the man speaks of heading off to battle, but not before a goodbye kiss for both his mother and his love. Each of the two stanzas ends with a lament about how life has flown by.

We begin the second half of our program today with a folk song-like piece, Jackson Berkey's (b. 1942), ***God be in my Head***. This piece was commissioned for the Singing Statesmen of the University of Wisconsin and features a chant-like melody, much like the *parlando* style of the Bartók cycle, which is modally derived. Both of these features are seen in many folk songs. The text is taken from the *Sarum Primer* (1545), which is a collection of prayers and worship resources developed in Salisbury, England, during the thirteenth century.

We continue our program with four folk songs that are water or maritime related beginning with an arrangement of Connie Kaldor's (b. 1953), ***Woodriver***. This piece does not centre around the ocean like the next three do, rather it centres on a slowly meandering river found in southern Saskatchewan, Kaldor's home province. The text of this piece paints a tranquil picture of a lazy river going nowhere where lovers gather to share the dreams found in their hearts.

***Away from the Roll of the Sea***, is a contemporary folk song from Nova Scotia arranged by the late Diane Loomer (1940-2012). This folk song describes life at the sea, however its text has a hidden meaning. The opening of the folk song presents the scene of a serene harbour where the boats moored are still and serene and give no indication of where they have been. On the surface, the boats cannot share the tales of their journeys outside of the breakwater, as the second stanza shares, "... never they whisper of journeys afar." The underlying message here is that like the boats, we cannot tell by looking at a person what their journey's may have been – calm and serene like the boats in the harbour or rough and tossed about like the boats in the open ocean.

The next folk song, ***Finnan Haddie***, takes us to the Northeast coast of Scotland to the town of Findon, which is in Aberdeenshire. It is the tale of a young fisherman falling in love with a woman who only sees, and smells, him as a fisherman. More specifically she spurns his advances by telling him that he smells like finnan haddie, which is cold-smoked haddock, smoked with green wood (recently cut) and peat moss.

For our performance today we welcome back our former conductor, Steve Denby, on the guitar. For the last of the folk songs in this group we return to the coast of Nova Scotia with Stan Rogers (1949-1983) folk song, ***Fogarty's Cove***. The text of this contemporary folk song uses a triple-barrelled narrative that is common in Maritime lyricism; love for your home, pride in your work, and the knife-twisting need to ship away to keep working.

We continue our program with the fifth movement of Morten Lauridsen's (b. 1943), ***Les Chansons des Roses, Dirait-on***. This cycle sets the poetry of Bohemian-Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926). Lauridsen writes of this cycle, "... Rilke wrote nearly 400 poems in French. His poems on roses struck me as especially charming, filled with gorgeous lyricism, deftly crafted and elegant in their imagery." These poems are described as Light, joyous, and playful and Lauridsen suggests that he has tried to capture and enhance these characteristics in his musical settings. Of the fifth movement Lauridsen writes, "... is set as a tuneful *chanson populaire*, or folksong, that weaves together two melodic ideas first heard in fragmentary form in preceding movements of the choral cycle." It is interesting to note that this final movement is the only accompanied movement in the entire work.

The next folk song on our program comes from one of our close prairie neighbours, Alberta, ***Four Strong Winds***. This song is a melancholy reflection on a failing relationship, "but our good times are all gone and I'm bound for moving on." The main character has decided to move on to Alberta and talks about the nice fall weather, the cold winter winds, and possible work opportunities available to him. The main character shares his desire of a possible reconciliation, "You could meet me if I sent you down the fare," but is realistic that this will likely never happen as the couple has "already been through that one-hundred times or more."

We conclude our program this afternoon with a standard in the male chorus repertoire and a good romp of a piece, ***Drinking Song***, by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958). This piece is the second movement of a larger cycle called ***In Windsor Forest***. This piece is the only one in the cycle that is scored for men's chorus. The first in the cycle is scored for women's chorus with the remaining movements scored for mixed chorus and was adapted from the opera, ***Sir John in Love*** as a stand-alone work. The movement we are sharing with you today has been described as "scherzo-ish in its wit, tempered by a folkish character in its rollicking gruffness." An apt description for this piece that describes a night at the pub!

Once again, thank you for joining us today and we hope that you enjoy our folk inspired presentation. Please remember to keep up to date with us by visiting our website often and by checking out (and subscribing) to our YouTube channel. We hope to see you again soon.