

# The Romance of Araby

Ottawa Choral Society - Monday, February 20, 2012

## BACKGROUND:

### **Kevin REEVES, Associate Music Director**

Kevin Reeves is honoured to be the new Associate Director of the Ottawa Choral Society. He is also director of the Ottawa Regional Youth Choir and founding director of Ottawa's premiere chamber choir, Seventeen Voyces. He has led that choir on national radio and television, and was one of three conductors for CBC television's *Easter Sunrise* in 2003. He has also prepared choirs for renowned conductors, including Trevor Pinnock, Franz Paul Decker, Lydia Adams, Jiri Belohlavek, Iwan Edwards, Robert Cooper, Jean-François Rivest and Pinchas Zukerman.

In addition, Kevin is a highly respected vocal coach. He has sung and toured as a tenor soloist and chorister with the Notre Dame Cathedral Choir, the Anglican Chorale, La Chapelle of Quebec City, the Winnipeg Singers, the Tallis Choir and St. Simon's Choir of Toronto, the Cantata Singers of Ottawa, and St. Matthew's Choir. His personal repertoire ranges from Monteverdi's *Vespers* to Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* and *St. John Passion*, Haydn's *Creation*, and Britten's *Saint Nicolas*.

Kevin is President of Zephyrus Productions Ltd., which has won numerous awards for its television drama and documentaries. He is also a published author and caricaturist of note. Presently, he is composing an opera based on the life of Grey Owl and is waiting patiently for an enlightened patron to happen by.

### **Andrew AGER, composer**

Incidental music from Ager's opera-in-progress "The Wings of the Dove", which was premiered by Ottawa's Thirteen Strings in January 2011 and conducted by Kevin Mallon, received the following review in the Jan. 24, 2011 Ottawa Citizen, which describes nicely the composer's style: "...Gorgeous...Ager's writing is subtly layered, its emotions being persistent and powerful without ever venturing into a hint of melodrama." Ager's choral style is similarly evocative and has been noted as such, as in Toronto Star critic John Teraud's review of a recent CD of folksong arrangements by The Exultate Chamber Singers: "...my favourite is Andrew Ager's haunting re-tuning of 'The Nova Scotia Song'".

Born in Ottawa to a musical family, Andrew Ager distinguished himself as a piano student in music festivals and began to compose seriously at the age of sixteen, writing a piano fantasy for a friend. His teachers in Ottawa included Joan Milliken, Etoile Naysmith, and Jean-Paul Seville; Derek Holman in Toronto; Stephen Tittle and Walter Kemp in Halifax; and at Carleton University, the late composer Patrick Cardy.

The recipient of numerous commissions, Ager has worked with The Hannaford Street Silver Band, the Elmer Iseler Singers, The Elora Festival Singers, the Mississauga Symphony, The Exultate Chamber Singers, The Toronto Chamber Choir, The National Arts Centre Orchestra, The Canadian Brass, and The Penderecki Quartet. He was Composer-in-Residence for The Colours of Music Festival (Barrie, 2002), The Viva Youth Singers of Toronto (2004), The Georgian Bay Symphony (2004-6), The Cathedral of St. James (2005-10), and Polyphony (New Mexico, 2011). He holds the degrees of Bachelor of Music - Composition (Dalhousie University), and Masters of Music - Composition (University of Western Ontario)

Andrew's music has been performed in Germany, Spain, England, and the United States and plans are underway for the European premiere of his Organ Concerto in Monaco in fall 2013, and of his second opera "The Wings of the Dove", commissioned by the Centre for Opera Studies in Italy, in Sulmona in summer 2013.

Ager's first opera "Frankenstein", with a libretto by Toronto writer William Whitla based closely on the original texts of Mary Shelley's 1819 version of the novel, was premiered by Tryptych Productions in Toronto in January 2010, receiving excellent reviews. Ager recently completed a full orchestration of the work, which has a performance time of 90 minutes in one act. The opera is at present being considered for further production in the U.S. and, in a German translation, in Germany and Austria. Excerpts of the opera are available on Youtube.

Andrew Ager's website address is [aager.com](http://aager.com)

### **Wallis GIUNTA, mezzo-soprano**

A **Metropolitan Opera** Lindemann Young Artist, Ottawa mezzo-soprano, Ottawa-born Wallis Giunta's career is in its ascendancy with 2012 debuts with **Fort Worth Opera**, at **Roy Thomson Hall's gala** Bravissimo! and Opéra **de Montréal's** LEGALA. In 2011, she participated in Dame Kiri Te Kanawa's **Solti Te Kanawa Accademia di Bel Canto** and recorded for **Bavarian Radio** with Edith Wiens' **Internationale Meistersinger Akademie**. A graduate of the **Canadian Opera Company** (COC) Ensemble Studio, she was Zweite Dame in *Die Zauberflöte*, the English Lady in *Death in Venice*, covered roles in *Nixon in China* and *Cenerentola* and made her New York debut in Stravinsky's *The Nightingale* at the **Brooklyn Academy of Music**.

She has appeared in recital with the **New York Festival of Song**, the **Caramoor Festival**, and on CBC Radio's **In Concert**. A 2010 Grand Prize Winner of the Ottawa Choral Society's **New Discoveries Auditions**, Ms. Giunta is a recipient of awards from the **George London Competition** and the **Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions**.

As a contemporary interpreter, she created the title roles of Dean Burry's *Pandora's Locker* and R. Murray Schafer's *The Children's Crusade*, and as a concert artist, appeared in the premieres of Jonathan Willcocks' *Lux Perpetua* and Derek Holman's *Requiem*.

For more about Wallis : <http://deanartists.com/vocal/mezzo-soprano/wallis-giunta.html>

## **Jesse CLARK, baritone**

Described by critic Roderick Dunnet (Coventry UK, Covent Garden) as “*supremely inspired, poised, vivacious and vocally gripping*”, Jesse Clark is enjoying a busy career on the opera stage. Recent roles include the Count in Mozart’s *Il Nozze Di Figaro*, Harlekin in Richard Strauss’ *Ariadne Auf Naxos* at Aldeburgh, the Aide-de-Camp in COC’s production of Prokofiev’s *War And Peace*, Péléas in Debussy’s *Péléas et Mélisande* (cover), and Schaunard in *La Bohème*.

Jesse’s artistry made a strong impression when he performed at the 2008 OCS New Discoveries Auditions, and it was with his voice in mind that Matthew Larkin composed the two solo movements of his poignant song cycle *wife in winter*. As a concert artist, Jesse has performed with many prestigious organizations including Boston’s Florestan Project, Toronto’s Aldeburgh Connection, the Greenwich Music Festival, and the Marlboro Music Festival, in repertoire that includes Bach’s *Magnificat*, Mozart’s *Coronation Mass*, Schubert’s *Mass In A*, Beethoven’s *Choral Fantasy*, Britten’s *Gloriana*, Vaughan Williams’ *Hodie* and Britten’s *War Requiem*.

Jesse has participated in the Tanglewood Music Festival and the Stearns Institute at Ravinia. Master classes at the Britten-Pears Program in Aldeburgh, England, with Malcolm Martineau, Ann Murray, Philip Langridge and Graham Johnson culminated in a recital of Schubert and Britten at London’s Wigmore Hall.

Visit Jesse at: <http://gossageartists.com/>

## **The Ottawa Choral Society**

The Ottawa Choral Society (OCS) gave its inaugural concert 71 years ago to raise money for the War Charities. Since that time, the 100+ voice choir has evolved into one of Canada’s most prominent symphonic choruses, presenting the choral masterworks as well as new compositions on its annual subscription series.

The OCS appears each season with the NAC Orchestra and regularly collaborates with the Ottawa Symphony Orchestra. The choir ardently supports Canadian music and regularly commissions and programs the works of Canada’s leading composers. As well, the ‘OCS New Discoveries Auditions for Young Artists’ provides an invaluable platform for emerging Canadian artists, while the Society’s choral bursaries and professional chorister programmes provide valuable assistance to emerging Canadian soloists and choral musicians who are pursuing a career in music.

The OCS is a non-profit organization administered by a volunteer Board of Directors and its committees. In addition to ticket revenue, the choir is supported by the City of Ottawa, the Ontario Arts Council, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, its patrons and corporate sponsors, and the proceeds of its fundraising campaigns.

Please visit the choir at [www.ottawachoralsociety.com](http://www.ottawachoralsociety.com)