

THE ROCA REPORT

"The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails."

-William Arthur Ward

It goes without saying that none of us in ROCA, or the wider community, likes how the current health crisis has changed our world. Ever optimistic, we look forward to the day when we can again sing and perform in concerts for our loyal audiences. But until then, we will look for new ways to be together musically. This newsletter is intended to keep all of our ROCA friends up to date on plans for the chorus and orchestra. We hope you enjoy learning a little more about the ROCA family. If you have any questions or comments please do not hesitate to contact us at roca.office@gmail.com.

From the Chorus Artistic Director: Brigid Coult



It's hard to believe that we last sang together in March – and since then most of the choirs of the world have been on hiatus, for the good of us all. Early in the pandemic it was established that singing was a possible conduit for passing the virus around. We now know that, careful as we need to be about sanitizing, we also need to be very careful around each other because, as we breathe out, our exhaled breath carries droplets and aerosols. We see this clearly on a cold day, but the fact that we don't see it on a warm day doesn't mean it's not there! Droplets are small, but large enough that they don't go far – gravity takes over and they fall to the ground. Aerosols are tiny droplets, smaller than grains of pollen – and we're all well aware of how that hangs suspended in the air!

So what are the most important issues for the Richmond Chorus?

- We are a COMMUNITY chorus – we need to bear our community in mind, and consider its needs. We have to find a way of being community even if we can't all meet in person.
- We are a community CHORUS – we need to sing. That may not be as we've done it in past years, but singing in unison can teach us as much as singing in parts.

We have no concerts scheduled for this season yet, and concerts are usually what we're focused on. This season we're going to focus on the journey and not the destination. We need to learn new things and not just new music; we need to improve our skills so that we come out of this as better musicians. We will be working together primarily on the Zoom conferencing platform and if it is possible, do some live rehearsals. The Richmond Chorus will find ways to be together, in person or online. As soon as possible we look forward to performing concerts again and being together with our audience. In the meantime, we're hoping that this series of newsletters will help you to get to know us in new ways.

- Brigid Coult, Chorus Artistic Director

For a complete version of Brigid's message, visit our website at www.roca.ca.

From the Orchestra Artistic Director: James Malmberg

For the orchestra's April 2021 concert **Isabel Lago** was to join us in a performance of the Sibelius Violin Concerto. She will be graduating from the Glenn Gould School in Toronto and our concert was to celebrate her four years at university studying violin performance. Isabel performed the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto with the orchestra four years ago when she graduated high school and was ready to head off to Toronto and the orchestra members (and I am sure the audience as well!) were all amazed at her wonderful performance. We were so looking forward to this season's performance but have received assurance that she will return when the "Great Intermission" is over.



In the mean time, as a requirement of her degree, Isabel recorded a solo recital this summer at South Arm Church that you may enjoy.

Watch Isabel's performance at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sc9H0t9UVOE&t=2092s>

- James Malmberg, Orchestra Artistic Director

OUR ROCA FAMILY

The ROCA singers and musicians come from diverse backgrounds and experiences. As we can't share our music at present, we would like to share a little of ourselves outside of the musical world.

Laura Rhead (Soprano)



Laura is one of our oldest-youngest members! When she joined the ROCA family at age 17, she was fresh out of high school, looking for a group to sing with. Richmond Chorus became a fixture in her life - every Tuesday, singing with 'older and wiser' new friends who really developed to be more like aunts and uncles! Now, in 2020, Laura has served as a ROCA volunteer and singer for more than 23 years, practicing her organizing and delegating skills as an organizing member for our social/party committee, our Board, three Chorfest executives, in addition to working as a teacher and principal in Vancouver.

Laura's favourite moments are all of them: Richmond Chorus performances, ensemble and sectional rehearsals at members' homes, parties and events honouring various members, chorus road trips, New York City and Carnegie Hall, several BCCF Chorfest events and countless friendships and fun moments. Her parents, Mark and Merrilyn Rhead, have attended EVERY concert for over two decades!

Laura enjoys playing guitar and singing casually with friends outside of ROCA. She looks forward to learning to play the piano one day- a goal for her 40s! This summer she also became a mother and she thoroughly enjoys the advice and loving support of the ROCA family. We hope that Baby Maggie, now 6 weeks old, will grow up loving music and singing, just as much as her mum! She is certainly surrounded by wonderful people here in the Richmond Chorus!

Dragana Hajduk (Principal Flute)

Before I start the story about my journey as a musician, I would like to give you a short context of the national-geographic environment that I grew up in, as it largely impacted my musical upbringing.

I was born in Sombor, a beautiful town in the north of Serbia's province of Vojvodina, bordering Hungary to the North and Croatia on the West, across the Danube river. Sombor belonged to the Austro-Hungarian empire until the end of WWI, which is the reason why performing arts, visual arts and beautiful architecture were always important to the community. Sombor has over 18,000 trees making Sombor the greenest city in Serbia, and for its size, surely among the greenest cities in the world, which makes the citizens of Sombor very proud.



From the very young age, I was immersed in music that depicts three diverse cultural influences: classical music from the north (Mozart, Bach, Strauss), Middle Eastern harmonies, and Balkan's mixed rhythms. On top of all this, there was also a lot of dancing, from Vienna waltzes to Balkan folk dances. At our home, the radio was on from the early morning until bed time. My father loved to listen to and sing Serbian folk songs, while my mother enjoyed classical music. I remember one summer evening when I was coming home, I heard music coming from our house. The windows were wide open, and my mom was enjoying Carerras, Pavarotti and Domingo in the Three Tenors Concert. It was very loud, but she did not mind, and neither did our neighbours. That was the environment that I grew up in. When I was 7 years old, my mom asked me if I would like to go to the music conservatory, and that was the beginning of my musical journey with the flute. I was invited to join to our Community Orchestra when I was 12 years old. It was a challenge for me as other musicians in the Orchestra were professional musicians, and some of them were teaching at the Music Conservatory. As I was not aware of the dress code (white-black) and being a teenager, I came to my very first concert with the orchestra wearing tight jeans and pink velvet top. The conductor, who was also the Principal of the Conservatory, just rolled his eyes and continue to conduct! I stayed with the Sombor Orchestra for 8 years and enjoyed every moment playing a vast repertoire.

When the time came for me to go to University, my father was against the idea of me being a professional flutist. Luckily, I had other passions in my life, too. After obtaining a degree in Psychology, I chose to study Body Psychotherapy. My wish was to become a Psychologist at the Music Conservatory. As a psychologist, I worked with young musicians helping them deal with the many components of music performance that are related to our psychological well being. I presented my work "Emotional quality of musical performance" at the World Congress of Psychotherapists in Vienna in 2002.

In addition to playing flute I have always loved to sing. I was a member of Sombor Mixed Youth Choir Iuventus Cantat. The choir managed to attain a great reputation in the country and abroad in a short period of time. It was the winner of numerous first and special prizes, charters and diplomas at domestic and foreign choral festivals and competitions.

In 2003 I moved to Vancouver and studied flute at Douglas College. I now teach flute and perform as a freelance musician, and play with the Serbian Folk Orchestra in Vancouver.

Two years ago I joined the Richmond Orchestra. The idea of having the choir around, resonated with me deeply as a singer and flutist. What I love the most about it is the positive and joyful atmosphere of the rehearsals that reminded me on the time when I started to play flute. Through my experience, I have noticed that a conductor's personality makes a big impact on the atmosphere and the quality of the rehearsals. We are all blessed having James who is deeply aware of what playing music means to each of us. It is to have fun and enjoy! I would not be able to imagine my life without playing music as the music always has been a sparkle in my life that keeps me going.