



ROY THOMSON HALL

PROGRAMME

Roy Thomson Hall presents

**26TH Annual Free Noon Hour
Choir & Organ Concerts**

HAMILTON CHILDREN'S CHOIR

with Brent Fifield, organ

What the Light Knows

MON JUN 1, 2026 • 12PM



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MELANIE TELLEZ, *Artistic Director & Conductor*

BRENT FIFIELD, *Organist*

We are thrilled to be able to offer this free concert series thanks to the tremendous support of the Edwards Charitable Foundation and our community of education and outreach donors. Help us share the gift of music with our community by making a donation today or by donation upon arrival at the Hall. Your support ensures we can continue delivering free programming like Choir & Organ for years to come.

Roy Thomson Hall's Free Choir and Organ Concerts celebrate the artistry of outstanding Canadian choirs and organists and feature the magnificent Gabriel Kney pipe organ.

For information about the 2025–26 season,
visit roythomsonhall.mhrth.com/choir-and-organ.

KAHKIYAW OSKÂYAK	Sherryl Sewepagaham
WAU BULAN	Malaysian folksong, arr. Tracy Wong
IKAN KEKEK	Malaysian folksong, arr. Tracy Wong
ALLEGRO MAESTOSO (FROM ORGAN SONATA NO. 1)	Edward Elgar
TXIMELETAK	Eva Ugalde
WHEN THE EARTH STANDS STILL	Don Macdonald arr. Phillip Darley
DINDARU DANDARU	Latvian folksong, arr. Laura Jēkabsone
CANTIQUE DE JEAN RACINE	Gabriel Fauré
PASĖJAU DOBILĄ	Lithuanian folksong, arr. John Govedas
TOCCATA (FROM 'UZBEKISTAN SUITE')	Georgi Mushel
SNOW ANGEL, MOVEMENTS III-IV	Sarah Quartel
ITKEN POIS	Anna-Mari Kähärä

What the Light Knows

Today's program travels across languages, landscapes, and generations. Across these works, we encounter songs carried through communities for decades and centuries—songs of youth, of butterflies, fish, and clovers, alongside anthems of grief, prayer, stillness, and faith.

Though each piece comes from a distinct tradition, they share a common impulse: to notice the world closely, and to pass something meaningful onward. Again and again, the music turns toward movement—wings in the air, branches overhead, voices rising together, sorrow released through song. Together, these works remind us that music helps us make meaning of being alive: to gather, to bless, to mourn, and to wonder.

We begin with ***Kahkiyaw Oskâyak*** (All The Young People), a vibrant Cree anthem by Cree/Dene musician and composer Sherryl Sewepagaham, of Little Red River Cree Nation in Alberta. The piece honours young people not simply as the future, but as people already carrying strength, responsibility, and possibility. In Sewepagaham's words, the work "blesses and guides our future leaders in their journey as they sing in unity."

From there, we move to Malaysia through two folk songs arranged by Malaysian-Canadian composer and educator Tracy Wong. ***Wau Bulan*** celebrates the beauty of the traditional Malaysian moon-kite, rising and dipping through the sky. Performed in the Dikir Barat style—combining seated singing with synchronized movement—the piece feels communal, rhythmic, and joyful.

Like many Malay folk songs, ***Ikan Kekak*** carries its wisdom indirectly. Built on the poetic structure of the pantun, the song wanders through playful images before revealing its deeper message: wisdom grows through kindness, humility, and hard work.

At the magnificent Gabriel Kney pipe organ, Brent Fifield performs the ***Allegro maestoso*** from Organ Sonata No.1 by Edward Elgar. Grand and symphonic in scale, the work fills the hall with sweeping brilliance and energy, revealing why this monumental sonata later found new life in orchestral form.

Butterflies rarely move in straight lines. Basque composer Eva Ugalde captures that same unpredictable beauty in ***Tximeletak***—music that flutters, hovers, darts, and shimmers with energy. The playful choreography performed today was created in joyful collaboration with movement specialist Joanne Chow, a beloved part of HCC's creative team.

In ***When the Earth Stands Still***, West Coast composer Don Macdonald invites us into stillness and presence. Arranged uniquely for Hamilton Children's Choir by Phillip Darley, the piece gently reminds us to notice the quiet gifts surrounding us—rain, wind, silence, and one another.

Latvian composer Laura Jēkabsons transforms the folk song ***Dindaru Dandaru*** into something sparkling and exuberant. Beneath its infectious energy lies a dreamlike weaving together of birds, branches, flowers, and the search for light through shadow.

The singers then join the organ for ***Cantique de Jean Racine*** by Gabriel Fauré. Composed when Fauré was just nineteen years old, the work pairs flowing accompaniment with long, luminous choral lines. Though beloved by singers of all ages around the world, there is something especially moving about hearing young voices inhabit music written by a young composer standing at the beginning of his own artistic life.

Lithuanian folk traditions come alive in ***Pasėjau dobilą***, arranged with dazzling vitality by John Govedas. Built from a deceptively simple text about the planting and growing of clover, the piece blossoms into a virtuosic celebration of rhythm, momentum, and play.

From Uzbekistan, we hear the relentless energy of ***Toccata from Uzbekistan Suite*** by pianist and composer Georgi Mushel. Driving rhythms and surging momentum propel the music forward with exhilarating force.

Ontario composer Sarah Quartel's ***Snow Angel*** explores themes of love, beauty, and renewal with warmth and intimacy. Today we perform movements III and IV of the five-movement work, joined by Phillip Darley on cello and Jamie Drake on percussion.

We close with ***Itken Pois*** (I Weep Away) by Finnish composer Anna-Mari Kähärä, rooted in the traditional lamenting practice of itkuvirsi. Raw, physical, and deeply human, the work gives voice to grief, rage, tenderness, and release—emotions so often carried privately. Through music and movement, the piece becomes not only a lament, but an act of collective witnessing.



ILUMINI, HAMILTON CHILDREN'S CHOIR

Now in its 51st season, Hamilton Children's Choir (HCC) continues to inspire through passion, creativity, and community. With nearly 250 singers across six progressive choirs, HCC offers children and youth - from toddlers to young adults - a rich musical education and transformative performance experiences. The organization is devoted to nurturing artistry, fostering belonging, and empowering young people through the act of singing together.

Under the artistic leadership of Melanie Tellez, HCC has expanded both its reach and its imagination, redefining what a children's choir can be. The choir is recognized nationally and internationally for its expressive sound, dynamic movement, and innovative programming. Highlights include our 2026 invitation to perform at the World Symposium on Choral Music Macau, China, 2026), multiple prizes at the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod (Wales, 2024), a sold-out featured collaboration with the National Arts Centre Orchestra (Ottawa, 2025), and Europa Cantat Junior (Ghent, Belgium, 2023).

HCC is also deeply committed to artistic collaboration. Its projects have brought together musicians, poets, choreographers, and visual artists, including Hamilton Philharmonic and Youth Orchestras, McMaster University School of the Arts, Supercrawl Music Festival, along with many national and international composers, artists, choirs and conductors.



BRENT FIFIELD

Organist

Brent Fifield has enjoyed a very successful career as a multi-faceted musician. A native of St. John's NL, he earned his B.Mus (Organ) and B.Ed from Western University and subsequently earned an MMus in Organ Performance from the University of Toronto. He is highly regarded for his musical sensitivity, both as an Accompanist, Conductor, Baritone, and teacher. As an organist, he has performed in recitals across Canada

and the UK, a number of which have been broadcast on national radio. As a Baritone, he sang with the Grammy and JUNO award-winning Elora Festival Singers, and Exultate Chamber Singers of Toronto, two-time winners of the CBC National Choir competition. From 2001-2010 Brent held the position of Organist and Director of Music at Christ's Church Cathedral in Hamilton. Since 2010 Brent has been Organist and Director of Music at Trinity Anglican Church in Cambridge (Galt). Brent is the founder and Conductor of Ensemble Lyrica, a Hamilton-based chamber choir whose profits are donated to local charities. Previously, he has conducted the Brock University Chorus, the Redeemer University Concert Choir, and the Pro Musica Choir of Burlington.

Brent has had a varied teaching career: he has taught choral conducting at Western University, music analysis at McMaster University, and from 2009-2014 he was an adjunct lecturer in music at Redeemer University. Currently, Brent is teaching music in the Montessori, Junior, and Middle Schools at Hillfield Strathallan College in Hamilton. In addition, he is a conductor and pianist with Hamilton Children's Choir, Komenci Choir.



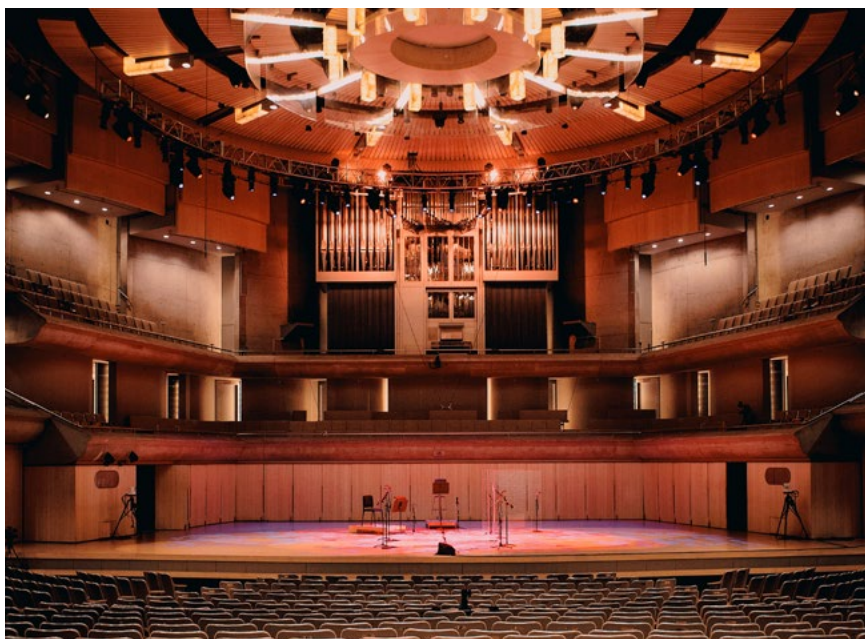
MELANIE TELLEZ

Artistic Director & Conductor

Melanie Tellez brings a joyful, engaging approach to her work as a choral artist, inspiring singers to trust themselves and one another through shared music-making. As Artistic Director of the renowned Hamilton Children's Choir, she leads nearly 250 singers and an exceptional artistic team in performances, tours, collaborations, and creative projects that nurture artistry and confidence.

Under her leadership, HCC has celebrated highlights including an invitation to perform at the World Symposium on Choral Music (IFCM) in Macau, China during August 2026, prize-winning performances at the 2024 Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod, participation in Europa Cantat Junior 2023 in Ghent, Belgium, and a collaboration with the National Arts Centre Orchestra in 2025.

Melanie also serves on the music faculty at McMaster University's School of the Arts, where her choirs earned the Lady Dorothy Mayer Memorial Trophy at the 2025 Cork International Choral Festival, and are frequent collaborators with Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra. She holds degrees in voice and choral conducting from Dalhousie University (Bmus) and the University of Alberta (Mmus), and remains active as an adjudicator and clinician across Canada.



CHOIR & ORGAN CONCERT SERIES AT ROY THOMSON HALL

Roy Thomson Hall's beloved **Choir & Organ Concert Series** is a treasured tradition that brings the power and beauty of choral and organ music to the heart of Toronto. Presented as a **free noon-hour concert series**, these performances offer an accessible and inspiring musical experience for all members of the community. Designed to celebrate the artistry of Canada's finest choirs and organists, the series showcases the versatility and grandeur of Roy Thomson Hall's renowned **Gabriel Kney pipe organ**, one of the most distinguished instruments of its kind in North America.

Join us for this extraordinary celebration of sound and spirit—a midday musical escape that has become a cherished part of Toronto's cultural calendar.

Choir & Organ is supported by the Edwards Family Foundation.

