

i Coristi Chamber Choir – The Second Ten Years

The traditions of setting milestones and constantly growing in stature and recognition as a musical ensemble, begun in the choir's first ten years, continued unabated throughout *i Coristi's* second ten years (2004-2013). The choir also continued such practices established in the first ten years as pre-concert performances at senior's residences, inviting Edmonton area artists to perform as guests in our concerts, mingling with our audience guests over intermission snacks, orally introducing sections of the program, collecting donations for the Edmonton Food Bank at concerts, and printing choir member bios, and later photos, in each program (a tradition begun in 2002, after attending a chamber choir concert in Toronto while performing there for Podium).

The first season of *i Coristi's* second decade began with the absence, once again, of its founding music director, Dr. Debra Cairns, as she took a sabbatical leave from both her work at the University of Alberta and *i Coristi*. It was a fruitful year for her on an academic/musical level, as well as a personal level: in November 2004 she married Jerry Paravicini, who was subsequently affectionately referred to by choir members as Jerry Cairns! During this **2004-2005** season, *i Coristi* performed two concerts, the first being Handel's *Messiah* with the Edmonton Symphony, conducted by the effervescent and inspiring Ivars Taurins. The second concert was conducted by *i Coristi's* assistant conductor, Michael Kurschat, in a program entitled *...on the move*. The program featured works by British composers from the Renaissance to the twentieth century, as well as Carl Nielsen's *Tre Motetter*, Canadian composer Leonard Enns's *Three German Folksongs*, and spirituals, all focused on moving on...to another world. Michael's assistant for this program was none other than Rob Curtis! During this season the choir also performed at the Czardas Ball and at the Canadian Medical Association General Meeting. On the administrative side, the executive spearheaded implementing changes to our bylaws in preparation for an eventual application for a casino licence.

The choir's **2005-2006** season began and ended with two significant milestones. In celebration of Alberta's Centennial, *i Coristi* was invited to join Greenwood Singers and the Richard Eaton Singers in an October program at the Winspear Centre that also included a mass choir made up of singers from across the province. It was a wonderful opportunity for *i Coristi* to perform for these musicians, and the packed audience, in our solo segment of the program (*O Sonno*, by de Rore; *Weep You No More, Sad Fountains*, by Willan; two movements from Poulenc's *Sept Chansons*; and *When Mary Thro' the Garden Went*, by Stanford). The following May, *i Coristi* competed as a finalist in the Chamber Choir category of the CBC National Radio Competition for Amateur Choirs. This was a REAL milestone since the final level of the competition involved a live-to-air performance! Although Debbi had to fly in from a UA Concert Choir tour to the east coast, and Michael Kurschat had to journey in from his parents' home in Fort St John, BC, these travels were definitely worthwhile since *i Coristi* came second in this most hotly contested category of the competition. Losing to the stellar Phoenix Chamber Choir was an honour! On many levels, the 2005-2006 season was a pivotal one for *i Coristi*, catapulting it into a greater position of respect and recognition within the local, provincial and national communities.

Between these bookend highlights of the season, *i Coristi* performed two concerts. The February program, entitled *Marian Mementos*, was devoted to music in praise of Mary, and featured

Reger's *Vier Marienlieder*, Caldara's *Stabat Mater*, and Leonardo Leo's *Magnificat*. For this program we were joined by the Strathcona String Quartet, comprising George Andrix (vln 1), Monica Stabel (Vln 2), Miriam Lewis (vla) and Josephine van Lier (vlc). *Elizabethan Enchantments* concluded the season, and included musical delights from the quill of sundrie madrigalists and poets, including the bard himself--Shakespeare! I still remember our wonderful accompanist, Kevin Dill, burning up the keyboard for the concluding jazz-inspired piece, *Love's Answer*, by Bengt Hallberg!

Extra to the 2005-2006 season was an invitation from the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra to join them and Da Camera Singers in a June performance of Mozart's *Requiem* as part of the ESO's three-day *Mozart Effect* celebration of the composer's birthday. This was again excellent exposure for the choir, particularly since the audience comprised high profile members of the Canada Council and the Orchestra Association of Canada, as well as a broad cross-section of the Edmonton community.

This same season included a new community outreach offering from *i Coristi* in the form of conducting workshops for the Alberta music community. Two one-day workshops and one two-day summer workshop attracted participants from Fort McMurray to Lethbridge. *i Coristi* served as a very supportive, welcoming host and ensemble for the conductors, and I think individual choir members even learned some conducting concepts too! The two-day summer workshop concluded with a mini concert featuring all workshop participants conducting *i Coristi*, followed by a famous *i Coristi* potluck for conducting participants and the choir at the Cairns-Paravicini home. Each workshop was well attended and enthusiastically received, and so the executive determined that *i Coristi* would, on an ongoing basis, offer a one-day workshop each year, and a two-day summer workshop every second year.

Following such a busy year, the **2006-2007** season was pared down to consist of only our normal three-performance offering. *In honour of St. Cecilia* began the performance year and featured Britten's challenging but beautiful *Hymn to St. Cecilia*, Kodaly's *An Ode for Music* (not idiomatically easy to grasp!), Elgar's *Go, song of mine*, Parry's *Music, when soft voices die*, Sametz's poignant *I have had singing*, and lighter fare in Belmont's *If music be the food of love* and Finzi's *My spirit sang all day* (both favourites of the choir, I think, from previous years). As had become somewhat of an *i Coristi* tradition, the middle concert of the season explored alternate styles and means of music making. In this season, we invited University of Alberta Drama professor, David Ley, to recite Robert Service's *The Cremation of Sam McGee* within a program setting that evoked the ambience of *Fireside Songs & Stories*. Interspersed between sections of the poem were such evocative, playful and whimsical pieces as Schafer's *Epitaph for Moonlight*, Debussy's *Trois chansons de Charles d'Orléans*, David McIntyre's *Five Songs for Mixed Chorus* (with texts that offer humorous interpretations of nursery rhymes), Sled's *Jing-ga-lye-a*, Mäntyjärvi's *Pseudo-Yoik*, and a foray into Icelandic repertoire, since we had our very own language coach in bass Dadi Sverrisson. Guest harpist, Nora Bumanis, added yet another layer of sonic atmosphere to the evening.

The concluding concert of the season, entitled *In Honour of Those we Love*, was inspired by the death of my mother in 2005. Other choir members had also experienced recent loss, and so it seemed fitting to celebrate the lives of the departed, and honour life and love and hope through

music. Highlights of that repertoire for me were Howell's soulful *Requiem*, which the choir subsequently recorded for our third CD, Pearsall's *Lay a Garland*, Daley's *In Remembrance*, and Vaughan Williams' *Rest*.

Sadly, the 2006-2007 season was the final one for our long-time pillar bass-baritone and assistant conductor, Michael Kurschat. As *i Coristi's* first assistant conductor, Michael set the bar high as a musician, mentor and leader--his many talents so generously shared over the years were deeply appreciated by me and the entire choir. On a happier note, *i Coristi* was finally successful in its application for a casino licence, the benefits of which would begin to be realized in the next season.

In August 2007, *i Coristi* was invited to première *Breathe on me, breath of God* by Alberta composer, Robin King, at the national convention of the Royal Canadian College of Organists--*Windspiration*--being held in Edmonton that year.

i Coristi's 2007-2008 year was termed the "Progressive Venue Season". For the past several seasons, *i Coristi* had performed its concerts at McDougall United Church in Edmonton's downtown. While the acoustics there were wonderful, the audience sight lines were good, the staff were helpful, and the backstage areas were very accommodating, the actual performance space for our largely *a cappella* programs had become more challenging due to the permanent placement of large keyboard instruments on stage. As a result, the choir decided to look for a potential new performance venue. Our first concert of this season was at McDougall, but our second was at Knox-Metropolitan United Church in Old Strathcona, and our third was at First Presbyterian Church in downtown Edmonton. We ultimately selected First Presbyterian Church as our new performance home. Joining us as assistant conductor in the 2007-2008 season was Evelyn Pfeifer, a member of the alto section in the early years of *i Coristi*, and joining us as accompanist was Ariane Maisonneuve (soon to be Lowrey, after her marriage to bass, Alden Lowrey!).

Evoking the Spirit opened the 2007-2008 season with a program that was designed to follow the liturgy of a mass. The foundational work for the first half of the program was Rheinberger's *Missa Brevis in G (St. Crucis)*; between the mass movements motets by Renaissance and nineteenth- and twentieth-century composers were inserted for the Introit, Gradual, Offertory, Psalm, Pater Noster, Communion, and *Ite, missa est* portions of the mass proper (my years of teaching Graduate Choral Literature were showing through here!). Also included in the program was Barber's *Agnus Dei*--the composer's own choral transcription of his *Adagio for Strings*--the long phrases of which proved challenging for only 23 singers to seamlessly maintain! György Orbán's demonic *Daemon irrepit callidus* presented challenges of another kind in the spritely text, rhythm and note delivery!

In our second concert, we again 'stepped out [of the box]' and invited Edmonton's EKOS to join us in a program that ranged from jazz to folk to classical music. We took a Chance on Love and made Jaberwocky nonsense with EKOS, and generally made Much More Ado about Nothing in a light hearted program that included guest pianist Charlie Austin and guest conductor Bruce Cable (who was substituting for EKOS' regular conductor, Paula Roberts).

i Coristi created a musical landscape in the concluding program, entitled *Of Flowers & Nature*. Featuring Finzi's *Seven Poems of Robert Bridges* and Britten's challenging *Five Flower Songs*, the program ranged from Renaissance madrigals to twentieth-century part songs, all devoted to flora and various aspects of nature.

An unexpected highlight of the 2007-2008 season was again being selected as a finalist in the Chamber Choir category of the CBC National Radio Competition for Amateur Choirs. *i Coristi* sang impressively in the live-to-air finals, and again placed second, this time to the Vancouver Cantata Singers. Another honour for us, and another feather in our musical cap!

At the beginning of July, *i Coristi* hosted its second two-day summer conducting workshop. Sixteen conductors participated in individual coaching sessions, group sessions, and hands-on conducting experience in front of *i Coristi*. As well as Debbi, the teaching staff included our assistant conductor, Evelyn Pfeifer, our accompanist, Ariane Lowrey (formerly Maisonneuve!), and our very supportive lab choir, *i Coristi*! A mini concert and pot luck concluded the weekend.

Long recognizing the need to take administrative pressure off the executive and choir members, and finally being granted a casino licence, *i Coristi* advertised for and hired its first (part-time) general manager, Laura Grantham, in the spring of 2008.

i Coristi's 15th Anniversary season, 2008-2009, marked many firsts for the choir: we had our first general manager (Laura Grantham) to oversee administrative aspects of the choir; we changed our graphic designer to Halkier & Dutton Strategic Design, who created impressive, professional-looking promotional material and programs; we made First Presbyterian Church in downtown Edmonton our new concert home (our rehearsal home remained St Timothy's Anglican Church in the west end, where the choir had gathered for Tuesday night rehearsals since 2004); we worked our first casino; we were accepted to participate in (with excellent results) our first international choral competition (the *Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod*); and we embarked on our first international tour. We also launched our third CD.

This celebratory season featured programs that honoured *i Coristi*, Alberta composers whose works have enriched the choral landscape, and pieces from previous centuries that have come to form the canon of choral chamber music masterworks. In the first of these concerts--*Celebrating i Coristi*--the choir performed Bach's motet *Der Geist hilft unsrer Schwachheit auf*, with guest artists Marnie Geisbrecht (organ) and Amy McClary (cello), and featured the women of the choir in Holst's *Hymn to the Dawn* and the men of the choir in Schubert's *Die Nacht*. Spanning renaissance repertoire to jazz, the concert provided a microcosm of the type of programming *i Coristi* performs over an entire season. Included in this evening that specifically celebrated *i Coristi*, we launched our third CD, *Songs of the Soul*, a disc comprising 20 tracks recorded over four sessions in 2007 (who will ever forget the sunburn that Aynsley Schilbe [née Crouse] got through the church windows in one session, or the special libations that Michael Woodside brought for our lunch potluck in another session!).

Celebrating Alberta Composers, our second concert, was a momentous affair for us since all but one composer (Marco Burak) featured in the program were present: Malcolm Forsyth, John

Estacio, Allan Bevan, Jacobus Kloppers, Allan Gilliland, and Robin John King. There was no small pressure on the choir to excel with these illustrious personages in attendance! Our guest artists for the concert were the Canadian harp duo, Nora Bumanis and Julia Shaw. In preparation for the concert, we were honoured (and terrified!) to have Malcolm Forsyth attend a rehearsal of his *Hesperides*; many memorable comments--humorous and poignant--emerged from Malcolm that night!

Capping the concert season was a program entitled *Celebrating Choral Chamber Music*, which encompassed motets by Renaissance masters, and mass segments and secular works by nineteenth- and twentieth-century English, European and Scandinavian masters.

Extra to this season's regular concert offerings were a performance in *A Grand Piano Gala Evening* at the University of Alberta's Faculty Club, organized by Professor Emerita and long-time *i Coristi* supporter, Alexandra Munn; Handel's *Messiah* with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra and Da Camera Singers, conducted by Bernhard Gueller; and a trek to outer space as the "Sci-Fi-Ettes" for the ESO's Sci-Fi Spectacular, with George Takei (aka Sulu in *Star Trek*), conducted by Jack Everly. This season also marked the final one with Evelyn Pfeifer (now Grieger, having married one of our long-time basses, Terry!) as assistant conductor.

To cap it's 15th Anniversary celebratory season, *i Coristi* embarked on its first International Tour! Accepted to compete in the prestigious *Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod*, *i Coristi* engaged the services of KI Concerts to organize a tour to Wales and England, in conjunction with our appearance at the festival. We shared a concert in Cardiff with the Cardiff Blues Choir, and in Caerphilly Castle with the Caerphilly Welsh Male Voice Choir (who will ever forget Kari Heise's particularly poignant solo in Estacio's *Ella Sunlight* that night?). We also performed at Wesley Methodist Church in Chester, and The Priory Church of St Bartholomew the Great in London (wonderful acoustics and beautiful setting). The Llangollen Festival provided challenges for us since the music had to be memorized and the performance occurred in a large outdoor tent. I was very proud of the high level of music making that the choir achieved, and the professionalism with which each singer deported themselves. In the Chamber Choir category, we placed in the top five (out of 10 choirs), and only six marks behind the winning choir! That was a significant accomplishment, and it was an experience which helped us all to grow as musicians, and as an ensemble.

Riding on the energy and experience of our Llangollen adventure, and perhaps emboldened by it, in **2009-2010** we cavalierly embarked on our regular three-concert season, PLUS Handel's *Messiah* with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Jean-Marie Zeitouni (due to a solid core of returning singers who knew the *Messiah*, fewer rehearsals were needed to prepare the music, although it still took time to get the passagework back into our voices so that we did not "go astray"!). Tormis' *Autumn Landscapes* (*Sügismaastikud*) was the inspiration for the title of the fall concert, a program which also featured Brahms' *Fünf Gesänge, Op 104* (a work that I had long wanted to perform with *i Coristi*), and part-songs by Holst, Bartók, Barber and Canadian composer, Stephen Smith. Our featured guests in this concert were none other than the husband-wife duo, Alden and Ariane Lowrey (both singing members of the choir, Ariane doubling as our accompanist) in repertoire for trombone and piano. This concert was recorded

by CBC Radio Two for national broadcast, another aspect of *i Coristi's* growing national reputation for excellence.

Sorrows of Mary was another program filled with repertoire I had long wanted to perform with *i Coristi*: Rheinberger's *Stabat Mater in G*, a Bach cantata (in this case, BWV 150--*Nach Dir, Herr, Verlanget Mich*), Lotti's *Crucifixus*, and Byrd's *Ave Verum Corpus*. The women of the choir were featured in Eleanor Daley's *In His Mother's Eyes*, and the men in Diane Loomer's *Ave Maris Stella*. Our guest artists were the Onyx String Quartet, comprising Anna Kozak (vl 1), Aiyana Anderson-Howatt (vln 2), Rhonda Henshaw (vln) and Colin Ryan (cello). Also joining us for the Bach were Diane Persson (bassoon) and Jeremy Spurgeon (organ).

Our final concert of the season, *Cross Country Check-Up!*, featured music from coast to coast to coast of Canada, including two works by *i Coristi* basses: an original setting of U of Alberta professor, Ted Blodgett's poem, *One Unfolding Rose*, by Gordon McCrostie, and an arrangement of Wayne Chaulk's *Saltwater Joys* written especially for *i Coristi* by our returning assistant conductor/bass Michael Kurschat. Other featured works were the humorous *Five Songs for Mixed Chorus* (reprinted from 2008) by Saskatchewan composer, David McIntyre, and the playful *Figures de danse* by Quebec's titan composer, Lionel Daunais.

In July 2010 *i Coristi* again offered a two-day summer choral conducting workshop, with Michael Kurschat and myself as instructors. Sadly, it had to be cancelled due to insufficient registrations.

More milestones were set in *i Coristi's* 17th season--**2010-2011**: our *Borealis* concert was recorded by CBC Radio Two for national broadcast; *i Coristi* was accepted to perform at *Festival 500* in St John's Newfoundland; we added yet another language--Russian--to our lengthy list of ones we have tackled; we welcomed Margaret (Peg) C. Matheson to write program notes, which she preferred to refer to as "About the Music"; and we established a new "Concert Home" at Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Old Strathcona.

A program entitled *Magnificat* opened the season with Marian texts set by composers ranging from Palestrina, Bruckner and Palestrina to Finnish composer Rautavaara, Swedish composer Sjöberg, Norwegian composer Gjeilo, New Zealand composer Griffiths, and even *i Coristi's* own tenor, Michael Woodside. Rounding out the program was Ruth Watson Henderson's *Magnificat*, featuring Jeremy Spurgeon at the organ. While the program sounds straightforward, I would be remiss if I did not mention that Rautavaara's *Canticum Mariae virginis* is written with lengthy *divisi* sections that left many singers on one person per part--another (somewhat-terrifying-for-the-singers) milestone!

Our *Borealis* concert featured works by composers of northern lands: Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Iceland, Russia...and Canada! I suspect the choir was grateful that some of the texts were in Latin; but we did manage to sing in five other foreign languages, as well as English. The work selected for the "Canadian Borealis" segment of the program was a set of arrangements by Edmonton composer and *i Coristi* supporter, Trent Worthington, entitled *Three Alberta Folksongs*. Providing a visual backdrop for our *aural borealis* was a video presentation of the northern lights (aurora borealis) prepared by basses Paul Ney and Michael Kurschat. This

program was picked up by CBC Radio Two for national broadcast, and it sounded wonderful both live and over the air waves!

Our concluding program of the season was performed at our long-time rehearsal venue, St Timothy's Anglican Church, in support of their Choral Scholar program. Entitled *Verdure*, the program featured more Scandinavian repertoire (and languages!), as well as Brahms' *Weltliche a cappella Gesänge, Op 93a*, Badings *Trois chansons Bretonnes* (which provided much harmonic, rhythmic and text consternation for some singers!), and a set of madrigals that included Ward Swingle's jazz-inspired *It was a Lover and his Lass*. A highlight of the evening was the presence of Edmonton Juno award winning composer, Dr Malcolm Forsyth, for our performance of his *Three Love Poems of John Donne*. It was to be his last public appearance before passing away of cancer July 5. ***i Coristi*** was honoured to subsequently be asked to sing one of these pieces, *Holy Sonnet XVII*, at Dr Forsyth's memorial service August 23, 2011.

Extra to the season was an invitation by Kalman Kovacs to perform segments of Pál Esterházy's *Harmonia Caelestis* for the Wirth Institute Christmas Concert.

But wait, there's more! On June 26 ***i Coristi*** gave a concert at St Matthew Lutheran Church in Stony Plain before embarking on our ten-day trip to *Festival 500*. While on tour in St John's, we made our mark at the Festival opening ceremonies with a performance of Trent Worthington's entertaining *The Alberta Homestead*. And we continued to give impressive performances for each of our solo programs, occurring in three concerts shared with other choirs (one concert was recorded by CBC Radio 2 and Espace Musique for national broadcast), and as the featured performers in a Sunday service broadcast live across the province. Choir members also participated in a mass choir for the preparation and performance of Vaughan Williams' *Dona Nobis Pacem*, conducted by Fred Sjöberg, and collaborated in this performance with *Rajaton* for two of their arrangements--a memorable experience. Our Newfoundland adventures included whale watching, hikes, walks, restaurants, visits to Signal Hill, Cape Spear, Qidi Vidi, and the warmth and generosity of our St John's hosts, Phil and Franky Hanley. The tour highlights for me were: having Jussi Chydenius (of *Rajaton* fame) attend one of our concerts to hear our performance of his *I am the Great Sun*, conducted by Michael Kurschat (no pressure, Michael!); our evening concert in which we sang Malcolm Forsyth's *Holy Sonnet XVII*, exquisitely, in his memory; and the impromptu east coast singing, led by Michael and Gillian Kurschat and Trent Worthington, at Phil and Franky's home after their extraordinary hospitality in hosting the entire choir for a BBQ!

During this season we bid a sad adieu to our general manager, Laura Grantham, and a happy hello to her replacement, ***i Coristi*** bass David Garber! And at the end of the season we bid farewell to our long-time assistant conductor and bass extraordinaire, Michael Kurschat, as he embarked on a career in classroom teaching, and our stellar accompanist of four years, Ariane Lowrey, as she embarked on the adventures of motherhood.

The **2011-2012** season marked a change in rehearsal venue from our long-time rehearsal "home" of St Timothy's Anglican Church, to Holy Trinity Anglican Church, the venue of our new "concert home", as of the previous season. An added bonus to having Holy Trinity as our rehearsal and performance venue, was gaining some much needed "office" space, and so we

moved our expanding music library from my office at the University of Alberta, to Holy Trinity Anglican Church. This season also marked the beginning of Irene Apanovitch's tenure as our assistant conductor, and Megan Crane's as our accompanist.

Our 2011-2012 concert season did not offer the normal type of programming our audiences, and singers, had come to expect. Anticipating being on sabbatical (and thus away...again) during the 2011-2012 season, and to fill in a portion of my anticipated absence, I encouraged the choir to accept an offer from the ESO to appear as their guests in performances of the *Messiah* in December, and choral masterpieces (Poulenc *Gloria*, Mendelssohn *Psalm 42*, Bach *Cantata #55--Ich Armer Mensch, ich Südenknecht*) in February. (In the end I did not go on sabbatical, but became Chair of the Music Department instead!) ESO resident conductor, Bill Eddins, conducted both of these performances. An additional appearance in this season was *i Coristi's* invited performance as part of Music Conference Alberta, held in Red Deer in October.

The framing concerts of the 2011-2012 season were devoted to other-worldly essences--*Muses* and *Spirits*. Celebrating the sources of creative inspiration in the former, the featured works were Whitacre's evocative *Leonardo Dreams of His Flying Machine* and Britten's ethereal *Hymn to St Cecilia*, as well as smaller works devoted to music, eternity, stars and nature. In *Spirits* we explored the animating essence of the soul and the supernatural through Bach's *Der Geist hilft unsrer Schwachheit auf*, Frank Martin's playful but challenging *Songs of Ariel from Shakespeare's 'The Tempest'*, Leonard Enns' *I saw Eternity*, Fauré's *Les Djinns*, and other smaller works exploring the spirit. We welcomed back as our guest artists Marnie Giesbrecht (organ) and Josephine van Lier (baroque cello).

Once again *i Coristi* offered a two-day summer choral conducting workshop; Evelyn Grieger was the instructor for Level 1 and I was the instructor for Level 2. Sadly, low registrations precluded offering the course, and as a result, it was decided to put this community offering on hiatus for a few seasons.

In the summer of 2012 I announced that I would be retiring from the University of Alberta and stepping down from *i Coristi*, permanently, at the end of the **2012-2013** season in order to go off into the (Victoria) sunset with hubby, Jerry. Because I would be away for January and February 2013, my final concert with the choir was in November 2012. Trent Worthington accepted the invitation to be our guest conductor for the second concert, and Irene Apanovitch, our assistant conductor, directed *i Coristi* for the final concert of the season. During the fall we initiated a search for my replacement. A search committee was struck, an advertisement was prepared, applications were reviewed, a short list of three candidates from amongst a very strong pool of applicants was determined, the choir was gathered for the auditions and interviews, and by the end of March 2013 a candidate was happily selected in the person of Rob Curtis! Rob had been *i Coristi's* assistant conductor in 2004-2005; he had also sung with me in the UA Concert Choir, and took over from me as conductor of that ensemble few years ago, and he had been one of my graduate conducting students.

But back to the concerts. The November program--*Earth, Wind & Water*--comprised *i Coristi's* trademark eclectic mix of composers, languages and styles. The concert began with a reading of Lampman's sonnet *Voices of the Earth* read by *i Coristi* alumnus, Peter Malcolm. The Earth

element was represented through Poulenc's *Un soir de neige* and Howells' haunting *Take Him, Earth, for Cherishing*. The atmospheric element of the Wind was experienced in Monteverdi's *Ecco mormorar l'onde*, two part-songs by Elgar, and Sandström's primal *Biegga Luohte* (a Yoik to the Mountain Wind). And the meteorological presence of Water was expressed in selections by Finzi, Robinovitch's *Canciones por las Americas*, culminating in Whitacre's *Cloudburst*, for which we were joined by members of Leduc Composite High School and St. Albert Evangelical Lutheran Church to provide the percussion and handbell effects, respectively.

Our normal intermission reception became, for the first time, a post-concert reception at which I was beautifully and touchingly feted through a variety of heart warming spoken and written tributes, thoughtful mementoes of my time with *i Coristi* (amongst them a beautifully bound 1890 edition of *The Shorter Poems of Robert Bridges*, containing 6 of the 7 poems that Finzi set as a collection, of which two were sung in that evening's concert), and the extraordinary announcement that the choir had established, through the Alberta Choral Federation, "The Debra Cairns - *i Coristi* Chamber Choir Legacy Scholarship" to provide support for four Alberta singers selected to participate in the biennial National Youth Choir. I will always remain profoundly touched by this lasting tribute which so perfectly weds my local, provincial and national involvements and interests over the years. Thank you, *i Coristi*!

Our February concert fit the 'out-of-the-box' type of programming that has tended to comprise the middle performance of the season. Featuring music written, arranged and conducted by Edmonton's Trent Worthington, you knew the minute the men walked on stage in outrageous wigs that something special and enjoyable was about to happen! As usual, Trent put together a witty program that ranged from a piece (*Tango of Clean*) inspired by a shampoo label, to *Yukon Hymn* (written for *i Coristi*'s Michael Kurschat when he conducted the Yukon Summer Music Camp), to the words of Einstein (*And Einstein said*) written for Pro Coro Canada, to *Three Winter Songs* (words by Sara Teasdale) written specifically for *i Coristi* for this concert. This last piece was subsequently nominated for an Outstanding Choral Composition national award, given by the Association of Canadian Choral Communities. Joining the choir for the jazz inspired portion of the program was the Andrew Glover Trio (Andrew Glover, piano and guitar; Glen Yorga, bass; Scott Anderson, drums).

The final program, entitled *Journeys*, featured our assistant conductor, Irene Apanovitch, as guest conductor in a well-thought out program whose repertoire highlights included Tarik O'Regan's challenging *The Spring*, *Two Lenten Motets* by Łukaszewski, *Vier Doppelchörige Gesänge* by Schumann, and *Romancero Gitano*, by Castelnuovo-Tedesco, with guest artist David Grainger Brown (guitar). The baton was fittingly passed on to the next generation in this program (conducted by one of my master's choral conducting students--Irene), with the announcement of *i Coristi*'s new Music Director--Rob Curtis (one of my undergraduate and master's/doctoral students).

Perhaps the culminating honour to cap my time with *i Coristi* was the national announcement in July that *i Coristi*'s submission of selections from our November 2012 program resulted in our WINNING the Chamber Choir category of the National Competition for Canadian Amateur Choirs! After placing second for several years, it was a true honour to finally place first!

With the final season, **2013-2014**, of *i Coristi's* second ten years, a new beginning occurs: Rob Curtis takes to the podium with assurance as *i Coristi's* new Music Director, programming repertoire that is eclectic, interesting and challenging--all hallmarks for which *i Coristi* has become recognized. In celebration of *i Coristi's 20th Anniversary*, the choir commissions a new work to be premiered in the final concert of the season (more about that later), and creates a special category of member--Honorary Member (I hope the By-Laws were appropriately changed!). Three individuals who played significant and meaningful roles throughout the life of the choir were selected as recipients of this recognition, and each one was individually celebrated in one of the season's programs. The first Honorary Member award was given to our long-time supporter and more recently our "About the Music" writer, Margaret (Peg) Matheson. Sadly, the award was given to her family posthumously since Peg died unexpectedly in August 2013. The second Honorary Member award was given to long-time *i Coristi* bass, alumnus and supporter, Peter Malcolm. And the third Honorary Member award was given to yours truly, Debra Cairns! Each recipient was presented with a framed certificate, and Peter and I were also given a beautiful glass sculpture, entitled "Flame", created by Darren Petersen (through Rowles & Company). In lieu of a sculpture, but to honour Peg, a donation in her name was given to the Alberta Choral Federation.

Lives was the fitting title for Rob Curtis's inaugural concert with *i Coristi*, suitably kicking off the choir's 20th Anniversary season. In a program that connected the audience to real and fictional people through music they inspired, the choir performed a varied program that ranged from Ravel's *Trois chansons*, Estacio's *Eulogies*, and Whitacre's *The City and the Sea*, to works by Polish composer Łukaszewski, spirituals, and Renaissance madrigals.

Progressing from the expressions of individual people to those of broader communities and cultures of peoples, the second program--*Voices*--included music reflective of Newfoundland (Somers' *Five Songs of the Newfoundland Outports*), Germany--or rather Hungarian Romas via Germany (Brahms' *Zigeunerlieder*), Canada's north (Forsyth's intriguing *Auyuittuq*, a study of which formed part of Rob's doctoral capping essay), Sweden (Mäntyjärvi's playful *El Hambo*, inspired by Swedish folk dance and Norwegian folk music), and the Baltic Ingrian people (Tormis' *Ingrian Evenings*). This latter nine-movement piece was memorized and staged, marking a HUGE and impressive milestone for *i Coristi*--bravo!

The concluding program--*Primavera*--of the 20th Anniversary season had as a special highlight the world premiere of Trent Worthington's *Jag Vill Möta*, commissioned by *i Coristi* to mark this milestone in the choir's life. A beautiful, profound work that uses the words of Swedish poet Karin Boye as text, it is bound to become part of Canada's choral canon of masterpieces. Other highlights of the program were Tarik O'Regan's *Beloved, All Things Ceased*, and the concluding energetic *The Passing of the Year*, by Jonathan Dove--a fitting conclusion to not only the current season, but also *i Coristi's* second ten years, and with it, the ringing in of a new era!

Over its second ten years, *i Coristi* stabilized in membership (indeed many members have been singing in the choir for 10 to 15 years), and matured and blossomed musically as an ensemble. As a result, *i Coristi* developed a strong reputation and healthy level of respect locally, provincially, nationally and internationally. As I look back on these past ten years, I am struck by the many accomplishments and initiatives of which we can be very proud: we became regular

guest artists with the ESO; we were heard on regional and national broadcasts of the CBC; we were regular finalists, second-prize winners, and finally first-prize winner in the hotly-contested Chamber Choir category of the CBC National Radio Competition for Amateur Choirs (later named the National Competition for Canadian Amateur Choirs); we were invited to perform at the national conference of the Royal Canadian College of Organists, to compete in the prestigious *Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod* (Wales), and to perform at *Festival 500* in Newfoundland; we embarked on our first international tour (to Wales and England), and a national tour that took us to Canada's most easterly province--Newfoundland; we produced our third CD; we began hosting conducting workshops open to conductors across the province; we added new languages to our arsenal of those in which we have sung (bringing the total number to 20, fittingly enough!). We also stayed true to our four foundational practices and trademarks: engaging performers from across Edmonton's arts community to participate in our performances; performing, for free, at senior's facilities or extended care facilities the evening before our concert; serving refreshments at intermission so that we can mingle with our 'guests' in our 'concert home'; and orally introducing sections of the program in order to break down the barrier between choir and audience. At our concerts we also continued to collect donations for the Edmonton Food Bank. On the administrative and staffing side, we successfully applied for a casino licence, which enabled us to hire a part-time general manager, and to start offering more competitive honorariums for our music director, assistant conductor (who is also a singing member of the choir), and resident accompanist (who is also a singing member of the choir). We successfully managed the transition from *i Coristi's* founding music director to a new director who will hopefully be the visionary music leader of *i Coristi* for many years to come.

So from humble beginnings, *i Coristi* has grown to be a well-established choral ensemble in our city, and one that is well-respected and well-recognized nationally and internationally. I am very proud of our accomplishments over the years. I am also proud of our niche within Edmonton's very vibrant choral community, carved through our signature eclectic programming of masterpieces from all eras, countries and cultures, and through our particular focus on repertoire that is seldom heard. I am pleased that we have become recognized for our warmth of tone, our blend, and our attention to textual nuances and musical colours, and that we have been referred to by one of our dedicated audience members as "the choir for choral connoisseurs". I am proud of our assistant conductors and resident accompanists, and have been blessed by sharing rehearsals and performances with these talented young people. And I am proud of the dedication, talent, and human goodness of each member of *i Coristi*. So, I thank each of you, past and present--singers, accompanists, assistant conductors, guest conductors--for sharing my dreams and vision, for enabling me to study and perform with you repertoire that intrigued me. Thank you for accepting the challenges (musical and linguistic and scheduling) and successfully conquering each new challenge; thank you for your good humour; thank you for the energy that you gave to me in rehearsals and performances; thank you for your musicianship; thank you for your attention to detail; thank you for not letting me get away with things I shouldn't; thank you for asking musical and interpretive questions that showed me you were involved and wanted to make our music making the best that we could; thank you for your excellent culinary skills that you shared in creations for our famous potlucks and weekly snack time at rehearsals; and perhaps most importantly, thank you from the bottom of my heart for your warm, caring humanity and your friendship. I am deeply enriched by each person and each experience that has been a part of my nineteen years with *i Coristi*, and I look with enthusiasm to the future,

knowing that *i Coristi* will continue to move forward because of where we have been, because of who we are, and because of those who have been a part of our history!

Debra Cairns
Founding Music Director (September 1994-June 2013)

I Coristi's Guest Artists (second ten years)

2004-2005

- Edmonton Symphony Orchestra (we were their guest artists!), Ivars Taurins, conductor

2005-2006

- Strathcona String Quartet (George Andrix, violin 1; Monica Stabel, violin 2; Miriam Lewis, viola; Josephine van Lier, cello)

2006-2007

- Nola Shantz, piano
- Nora Bumanis, harp; David Ley, storyteller

2007-2008

- EKOS (EKOSingers), Paula Roberts, conductor, Bruce Cable, guest conductor; Charlie Austin, piano

2008-2009

- Marnie Geisbrecht, organ; Amy McClary, cello
- Nora Bumanis, harp; Julia Shaw, harp

2009-2010

- Alden Lowrey, trombone; Ariane Lowrey, piano
- Onyx String Quartet (Anna Kozak, violin 1; Aiyana Anderson-Howatt, violin 2; Rhonda Henshaw, viola; Colin Ryan, cello); Diane Persson, bassoon; Jeremy Spurgeon, organ

2010-2011

- Jeremy Spurgeon, organ

2011-2012

- Marnie Geisbrecht, organ; Josephine van Lier, baroque cello

2012-2013

- Peter Malcolm, reader; percussion members of Leduc Composite High School (Andrew Brander, Trey Gardner, Sarah Hurnard, Jeff McKinley); handbell members of St. Albert Evangelical Lutheran Church (Marlis Gunderson, Doris Erikson, Colleen Malanchen, Evelyn Raham, Jerry Paravicini)
- Trent Worthington, guest conductor; Andrew Glover Trio (Andrew Glover, piano & guitar; Glen Yorga, bass; Scott Anderson, drums)
- Irene Apanovitch, guest conductor; David Grainger Brown, guitar

I Coristi Personnel 1994-2013:

Music Directors

- Debra Cairns (1994-2013)
- Rob Curtis (2013-)

Assistant Conductors

- Michael Kurschat (2003-2007)
- Rob Curtis (2004-2005)
- Evelyn Pfeifer (2007-2009)
- Michael Kurschat (2009-2011)
- Irene Apanovitch (2011-2015)

Resident Accompanists

- Nola Shantz (2000-2001)
- Carol Bartel-Nickel (2001-2004)
- Ryan Kolodziej (2004-2005)
- Kevin Dill (2005-2006)
- Ryan Kolodziej (2006-2007)
- Ariane Lowrey [née Maisonneuve] (2007-2011)
- Megan Crane (2011-2012)
- Ariane Lowrey (2012-2013)
- Megan Crane (2013-2014)

General Managers/Administrative Directors

- Laura Grantham (2008-2011)
- David Garber (2011-)

Recording Engineers

- Garth Hobden (1995-2010)
- Corey Haberstock, Ron Yachimec (2010-2011)
- Paul Ney (2011-2012)
- Ron Yachimec (2012-2013)
- Corey Haberstock (2013-)

Other:

Languages performed (1994-2013)

- English (including old English)
- French
- German
- Latin (with Roman, German, French pronunciations)
- Italian
- Spanish
- Hungarian
- Polish
- Estonian
- Swedish
- Danish
- Norwegian
- Finnish
- Icelandic
- Russian
- Church Slavonic
- Chinese
- Korean
- Maori
- Sanskrit

Rehearsal Venues (1994-2013)

- University of Alberta, Fine Arts Building, Rm 1-29 (1994-2003)
- Trinity Lutheran Church (2003-2004)
- St Timothy's Anglican Church (2004-2011)
- Holy Trinity Anglican Church (2011-)