

THE CANADIAN RENAISSANCE MUSIC SUMMER SCHOOL

The Canadian Renaissance Music Summer School 2019 Report

Greg Skidmore, Artistic Director

Peter Phillips, Patron

Another year, and more Renaissance polyphony!

CRMSS 2019 built on the successes of the previous year, welcoming more participants from across the country and internationally. The list of musical activities and the scope of opportunities grew as well, and our theme, 'Musica Transalpina', allowed us to explore repertoire from both sides of the Alps. The same wonderful sense of comradery and joy carried us through the week as in 2018; we reinvigorated old friendships and formed new ones, all the while exploring new ways of making beautiful Renaissance music come alive and singing our hearts out.

"CRMSS 2019 exceeded my expectations, as it did in 2018!"

The 3rd annual Canadian Renaissance Music Summer School will take place from **Saturday, May 9th to Sunday, May 17th 2020**. More information can be found at crmss.org or by emailing info@crmss.org

Dates and Venues for CRMSS 2019

From May 19th to 26th, 2019, the chapel of Huron University College, and several classrooms at Brescia University College were filled with the sound of singing. Each morning saw the full ensemble rehearse multi-part sacred repertoire in Huron chapel, while in the afternoons the participants broke into small groups to rehearse one- or two-on-a-part secular madrigals. Participants were also given individual singing lessons by a CRMSS tutor. For the first two days, CRMSS was joined by one of Canada's leading lutenists, Lucas Harris.

Each evening the entire course gathered together to sing Compline in Huron chapel, as a peaceful and beautiful end to the busy days. We also sang Choral Evensong at All Saints Hamilton Rd. on Thursday, May 23rd, in a wonderful reminder of all our time spent there in 2018. It was a very special privilege to sing Choral Vespers at St. Peter's Seminary on Friday, May 24th, the magnificent architecture and acoustic of this hidden gem really lifting our performance. Our final public concert on Saturday, May 25th took place in another wonderful building - St. Peter's Basilica in London Ontario's beautiful downtown area. The last event of CRMSS 2019 was Choral Eucharist at St. Paul's Cathedral on Sunday morning, May 26th.

"CRMSS is an amazing institution and a great treasure for Canada."

Tutors and Participants

There were six tutors at CRMSS 2019:

- **Greg Skidmore**, founder and Artistic Director
- **Dr. Kate Helsen**, administrator and part of the academic team
- **Matt Long**, soloist coordinator
- **Emily Atkinson**, small groups coordinator
- **Andrew Pickett**, singing teacher and small groups coach
- **Lucas Harris**, lute tutor and accompanist

A tutor's recital, exclusively for CRMSS participants, took place in Huron chapel at noon of the first full day of the course, Monday, May 20th, featuring Greg Skidmore, Matt Long, Emily Atkinson, and Andrew Pickett, all accompanied by Lucas Harris. The CRMSS 2020 tutors can be found at crmss.org/tutors.html

"The tutors' recital was beautiful beyond my imagination."

In an exciting increase of numbers from 2018, there were 47 participants at CRMSS 2019. They ranged in age from 18 to 67, with the most common age being 24 and all but 12 participants under 35. The overwhelming majority of participants had completed undergraduate music study, and many were currently practicing or seeking soon to enter professional music. We welcomed singers representing all of the major Canadian universities, as well as Yale, the University of Indiana, and Cambridge in the UK.

Our lutenist cohort also expanded in 2019, with three participants taking advantage of Lucas' teaching and guidance. A very special event was when three of our lutenists provided a gentle accompaniment to our Compline procession one evening.

The participants hailed from across Canada, representing all of Canada's major cities from coast to coast. There were some 'locals' (from London, Ontario) as well, and we again welcomed some Americans onto the course!

Repertoire

The *Musica Transalpina* theme at CRMSS 2019 afforded us with the opportunity to do a deep dive into two different, but linked, musical worlds: Renaissance Italy and Elizabethan England. The repertoire booklets printed specifically for this week featured Evensong music by William Smith, Thomas Tomkins, and Robert Parsons; Vespers repertoire by Lodovico Viadana, Robert White, and John Sheppard; and repertoire for the Choral Eucharist at St Paul's Cathedral included the Sanctus, Benedictus, and Agnus Dei movements from John Taverner's monumental *Missa Gloria tibi Trinitas*. Regularly over the course of the week, the large ensemble was divided in half, with two separate chamber choirs rehearsing and performing English anthems by William Byrd, Thomas Weelkes, John Dowland, Orlando Gibbons and Thomas Morley. Particular favourites from CRMSS 2019 were Robert White's wonderful *Magnificat* setting, Thomas Tomkins' irrepressible 7-voice *O sing unto the Lord*, and Byrd's powerful, urgent, and explosive *Tribue, Domine* with which we ended our final public concert.

"Going in, I didn't really understand what all the hype was about. However, by the end of the week I was head-banging to polyphony during the concert!"

Participants were also all placed in one-on-a-part or two-on-a-part consorts and assigned secular Italian madrigals, many of them being performed in the public concert. Composers like Cipriano de Rore, Sigismundo D'India, Carolo Gesualdo, Claudio Monteverdi, and Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina were featured in this part of the course, and each group met several times for half an hour each time, led by one of the CRMSS tutors.

Solo singing again was central to CRMSS 2019, with Matt Long leading the tutors in offering everyone a 30-minute one-on-one vocal technique lesson if they wished. Lucas Harris gave a lute song masterclass attended by the whole course, during which Gerry King and Vidita Kannicks sang beautifully and Joya Muma accompanied sensitively. After extensive coaching with Matt, Matthias Murphy sang some fantastic operatic music by Jacopo Peri in our final course concert, accompanied by Jonathan Stuchbery on the theorbo, and Matt also led a group of soloists in a verse anthem by Orlando Gibbons, accompanied by course participant Vanessa McCart on the chamber organ.

"Working with such talented singers and singing such fantastic repertoire day after day has only furthered my passion for all things musical."

Lectures

Featured speakers, each lecturing for about one hour, presented on a variety of topics:

- **Lucas Harris**, 'Musica Transalpina: The madrigal in Italy & England, c1600'
- **Dr. Kate Helsen**, 'Partly Useful: Renaissance notation' (in part-books)
- **Dr. Troy Ducharme**, 'Beyond Rules: Counterpoint Technique, Musical Meaning, and Style in Selected Works of Gesualdo.'

Socialising!

While CRMSS participants quickly got to know one another through rehearsals and tea breaks, on Tuesday, May 21st, everyone enjoyed a BBQ luncheon hosted in the excellent indoor / outdoor dining facilities at Brescia University College. After a delicious buffet meal that included barbequed kabobs, fish, and vegetarian (and gluten free!) options, we were invited to the firepit just outside where a campfire was burning. Two deer appeared in the field next to our gathering who were promptly serenaded with Palestrina's 'Sicut cervus', of course.

After the Saturday evening concert, most of the CRMSS gang spent a few more hours together in the common room at Brescia University College where several of the participants had been staying. As if there had not been enough singing even by that point, the composers among the group mustered some singers to perform their latest compositions, and a few of the small groups formed during the week took a less formal stage to serenade us one last time.

"My favourite part of the course? It's difficult to choose just one, as I found it all so stimulating, fulfilling, and rewarding!"

CRMSS 2020: Beyond the Ordinary!

The CRMSS vision continues to grow. In 2020, we look forward to welcoming you to an experience unlike any other summer music school in Canada. This year, we are excited to welcome our first CRMSS Guest Artist, Robert Hollingworth (Director of the UK madrigal specialists 'I Fagiolini') and five CRMSS International Scholars, all Master's degree performance students in the Solo Voice Ensemble Singing program at the University of York, in the UK. We will focus this year on the enormous wealth of Franco-Flemish repertoire that informed and influenced the whole period, and in particular three pieces based on the famous plainsong hymn 'Praeter rerum seriem': a motet by Josquin des Prez, a Magnificat setting by Orlande de Lassus, and an entire mass by Cipriano de Rore. We will also continue to work on secular music and lute song, as always, and we are especially looking forward to an invigorated ad hoc small groups experience. We will again sing Choral Vespers in the magnificent surroundings of the chapel at St Peter's Seminary, continue our nightly Compline services, and much more. Through it all, we will constantly engage with and commit to the magnificent music of the Renaissance, making it alive, challenging, rewarding, and enthralling. CRMSS' third session promises to be truly extraordinary.