

# THE LIFE AND WORKS OF FOUR FEMALE CANADIAN CHORAL COMPOSERS

RACHEL RENSINK-HOFF

Rachel Rensink-Hoff  
McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario  
[rensink@mcmaster.ca](mailto:rensink@mcmaster.ca)



Kathleen Allan



Sarah Quartel



Stephanie Martin



Ramona Luengen

Canada is a land whose multicultural demographic and geographical diversity provide tremendous artistic inspiration. Drawing from folk to classical traditions, colonial to indigenous customs, and coastal to prairie settings, the arts in Canada are rich. Likewise, the choral culture of Canada is remarkably vibrant. Choirs abound from coast to coast, and many Canadian composers have established themselves as prolific writers of choral music.

Certainly among the most recognized female choral composers of Canada are Eleanor Daley, Ruth Watson Henderson, and Nancy Telfer, all of whom have made significant contributions to the choral world. Equally admired across Canada for their successes both as choral composers and conductors are Stephanie Martin and Ramona Luengen. Both women have enjoyed significant performances of their choral works for many years now, and their music continues to thrive through their ongoing output of new, exciting choral compositions.

A further injection of energy into Canada's choral scene is a host of wonderful young talent. Choirs across the country are increasingly eager to obtain and perform the works of many emerging "up and coming" composers. Two such young women who have been making their mark nationwide are Kathleen Allan and Sarah Quartel. Each has enjoyed a surge of interest in their work both on the national and international stage. At the outset of their careers, Allan and Quartel have quickly established themselves within Canada's choral community.

# THE LIFE AND WORKS OF FOUR FEMALE

What follows is a synopsis of the life and work of these four choral composers. When asked what it means to be working as a musician in Canada, Kathleen Allan, Sarah Quartel, Stephanie Martin, and Ramona Luengen shared the tremendous level of support and inspiration they experience as Canadian composers. “Performing Canadian compositions as well as commissioning Canadian composers is something that is simply done,” says Luengen, who describes the choral culture as “open-minded and supportive.”<sup>1</sup> Looking to the impact of geography on Canadian life, Quartel is grateful for the “incredible diversity” and “growth of tremendous relationships with choirs across the country who see their landscapes, homes or even themselves in [her] music.”<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Allan cites the “simultaneous beauty and danger that the north entails...a distinctly Canadian and northern dichotomy.”<sup>3</sup> The climate of our northern country also has its impact,

as remarked by Martin, whose creative work, she says, is absolutely shaped by the changing seasons, particularly in the shift from winter to spring.<sup>4</sup>

The following questions were also posed:

*What drew you to choral writing?*

*Can you describe your process of composing?*

*What inspires or guides your selection of texts?*

*How would you characterize your compositional style?*

*Which of your works has (or have) particular meaning to you and why?*

*In what ways does your identity as a Canadian inform your work as a composer?*

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Responses to these questions are woven into the composer profiles that follow, providing a glimpse into who these women are and how they engage with their art form.



**Kathleen  
Allan**

A native of St. John's, Newfoundland, Kathleen Allan (b.1989) moved to Vancouver in 2007 to study composition at the University of British Columbia. Allan's early reputation as a choral composer was marked by a number of honors, the first of which was in 2006, upon earning first place in the Canadian Broadcasting Cooperation's (CBC) national composition contest in honor of Mozart's 250th birthday. Several years later, she was commissioned by Lady Cove Women's Choir of Newfoundland for "Maid on the Shore," a work that would later be featured in their performance at the 2011 World Symposium on Choral Music in Argentina.

Having completed her master's degree in choral conducting at Yale University, Allan continues to enjoy an increasingly prolific career in composition. Her many commissions include those received from the Vancouver Chamber Choir, Chor Leoni Men's Choir, Elektra Women's Choir, the Eastern Wind Ensemble, Quintessential Vocal Ensemble, Newman Sound, and Lady Cove. In 2012, she was awarded an Emerging Composer Residency by the Canadian Music Centre (CMC) and the Canadian League of Composers (CLC).<sup>5</sup>

Allan views her compositional activity as a natural extension of her lifelong involvement with music. Even as a young child, she enjoyed stringing notes together into melodies and writing short songs as gifts for her parents. Through her participation in the Newfoundland Symphony Youth Choir (now Shallaway) and from there, school choirs and the Holy Heart Chamber Choir, she grew increasingly captivated by the power of communal singing. These experiences early on, she says, provided an invaluable platform and safe environment for experimentation and expression in her compositional journey.

For Allan, the process of composing is often a slow

one. She spends considerable time seeking the most fitting musical means by which she might elevate a text to express it in a way that is both meaningful to her and authentic to the text. A favorite poet of Allan's is Sara Teasdale, whose poetry she cites as being particularly musical. She has also enjoyed setting texts written by her husband, Benton Roark, an accomplished poet and composer. Allan describes her compositional style as one that "grasps for beauty, [is] painful at times, [and] exuberant at others," and one of her most treasured and increasingly performed compositions, *In Paradisum*, is certainly an embodiment of this description.<sup>6</sup>

## Featured Works

### *In Paradisum*

*In Paradisum*, published in 2014 by Cypress for an advanced SATB choir and soprano soloist, was written during Allan's first year in Vancouver and was inspired by her first encounters with the Pacific coast while struggling with the declining health of her grandfather, suffering from chronic lung disease thousands of miles away in her native town, St. John's, Newfoundland. Writing the poem, says Allan, "allowed me to musically express my awe at natural beauty, my grappling with transition, life and loss, and the profound sense of hope the ocean, regardless of coast, represented to me."<sup>7</sup>

A macaronic setting, this work beautifully weaves Allan's own commemorative English text with the traditional Latin antiphon, "In Paradisum." The piece opens with "a breath of sunset" set against the rocking movement emulated in the accompanying Latin text. (Figure 1) Moments of stillness, musically and textually, then frame a soprano solo and duet with the soprano section, taking listeners beyond the sea to the sky, as suggested in the text, introducing here one of two short motifs to emerge from the texture in the remainder of the piece. The ranks of angels [*chorus angelorum*] follow, set in a more chordal, homophonic texture, returning again to the English text, where waves are depicted with a sudden shift in meter to 3/4. The climactic moment features the two previously introduced motifs now in an expanded and thickened texture, seamlessly connecting Allan's prayer, "lead you up away," with the liturgical "et cum Lazaro" [and with

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**S** *p* A breath of sun - set, a snap shot of fresh air.

**A** *p* In pa-ra-di - sum, in pa-ra-di - sum, in pa - ra - di - sum, pa-ra-di - sum de -

**T** *p* In pa-ra-di - sum, in pa-ra-di - sum, in pa - ra - di - sum

**B** *p* In pa - ra - di - sum

Figure 1. Kathleen Allan, *In Paradisum*, mm. 1–6.

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**S** *f more urgent* tide. Cho - rus an - ge - lo - rum te su - sci - pi - at, cho - rus an - ge - lo - rum *no breath* an - ge - lo - rum

**A** *f more urgent* Cho - rus an - ge - lo - rum te su - sci - pi - at, cho - rus an - ge - lo - rum

**T** *f more urgent* Cho - rus an - ge - lo - rum te su - sci - pi - at cho - rus an - ge - lo - rum

**B** *f* waves Cho - rus an - ge - lo - rum te su - sci - pi - at et cum La -

**S** *f* Ah. Breath - ing be - yond ho - ri - zons framed (eh) *mf* pau - pe - re (eh)

**A** *f* lead you up a - way et cum La - za - ro quon - dam pau - pe - re *mf*

**T** *f* ci - vi - ta - tem sanc - tam et cum La - za - ro quon - dam pau - pe - re (eh) *mf*

**B** *f* za - - - - ro quon - dam pau - pe - re quon - dam pau - pe - re (eh) *mf*

Figure 2. Kathleen Allan, *In Paradisum*, mm. 70–81.

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37

S1 lights in the win-dows of all the oth-er hous-es on our hill ris-ing.

S2 lights in the win-dows of ah ah and hear the mu-sic ris-ing from

A1 in the win-dows of all the oth-er hous-es on our hill, and hear the mu-sic ris-ing from

A2 in the win-dows of all, ah ris-ing

44

S1 mu-sic ris-ing from them up the long night, the long stead-y

S2 them up the long, stead-y fall-ing night, the long stead-y

A1 them up the long, stead-y fall-ing night.

A2 up the long stead-y fall-ing night.

Figure 3. Kathleen Allan, *The Close and Holy Darkness*, mm. 37–52.

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Lazarus]. (Figure 2) The piece closes with a return to the opening rocking figure, pairing the Latin “aeternam habebas requiem” [grant eternal rest] with the final words of Allan’s poem, “Your flash is welcome.”

## “The Close and Holy Darkness”

“The Close and Holy Darkness,” commissioned by the Savridi Singers Women’s Choir in 2012, features text from “A Child’s Christmas in Wales” by Dylan Thomas. Allan takes this narrative and sets it beautifully to depict its imagery, consistently crafting the nuance of the text through the character of the music. This work is accessible and works well for any treble choir that can manage four-part harmony.

One can imagine the wind howling outside in the opening “ooo’s” of the choir as the narrator peers through the window. The music literally “rises” as the texture expands

and the melodic line ascends, succumbing again quietly to the “long, steady falling night.” (Figure 3) The text, “O magnum mysterium,” is effectively introduced to further invoke the quiet mystery of the darkness, layered with a percussive “doon doon” vocal accompaniment in the other voices to draw out this moment of wonder. The vocal ranges are quite narrow in this work and a tight harmonic language is employed throughout, particularly through the use of dissonance with the tonic (using both the seventh and second scale degree). The ending is no exception to this. The final lines of text, set with a series of harmonic suspensions, unfold quickly but gently: “I turned the gas down, I got into bed. I said some words to the close and holy darkness, and then I slept.” (Figure 4)

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116 *rit.* *Più lento* ♩ = 72, *freely*  
S1 I got in - to bed. I said some words to the close and  
S2 I got in - to bed. I said some words to the close  
A1 I got in - to bed. I said some words to the close and  
A2 I got in - to bed. I said some words to the close and

122  
S1 ho - ly dark - ness and then I slept.  
S2 ho - ly dark - ness and then I slept. *unis.*  
A1 ho - ly dark - ness and then I slept.  
A2 ho - ly dark - ness and then I slept.

Figure 4. Kathleen Allan, *The Close and Holy Darkness*, mm. 116–128.  
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## Sarah Quartel

Sarah Quartel (b. 1982) began her composing career during her time as an undergraduate student at Western University in London, Ontario. Most notably, her work on *Snow Angel*, an extended choral work, launched Quartel into the Canadian choral spotlight at the outset of her career. Since then, she has garnered much praise from the Canadian choral community for her increasing body of choral works for choirs of all voicings.

Now residing in Eastern Ontario, Quartel continues to flourish as a composer. Her choral works, many of which are now being published by Oxford University

Press, have been featured by esteemed groups, including the National Youth Choir of Canada, the Nathaniel Dett Chorale, Lady Cove Women's Choir, and the internationally acclaimed vocal ensemble Rajaton. In the summer of 2014, the Hamilton Children's Choir featured Quartel's *Snow Angel* at the World Symposium on Choral Music in Korea, and her ACDA-commissioned *Wide Open Spaces* received its premiere performance at the 2015 National Conference under the direction of Bob Chilcott.<sup>8</sup>

Quartel describes choral music as an art form that has had a constant presence in her life. From a very young age, she was drawn to the harmonies created by the human voice, and as a teen she began writing her first solo and choral compositions. "Bringing sounds to life through choral voices was one of the most exhilarating and satisfying things I had ever experienced," comments Quartel, feeling fortunate that inspiration to compose has

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always come quite easily. Commissions are coming in at an increasing rate, and with each one, a core lyric, melody, or chord progression usually comes to mind fairly quickly. “But before I put anything on paper,” she comments, “I like to have a full sketch of the work in my head and ear so I know the structure of the piece is sound and any major kinks or self-indulgences have been worked out.”

Quartel takes great care in selecting texts that resonate and that evoke images of personal significance, and when writing her own lyrics, that draw on the spirit and character of the commissioning ensemble or the event for which the piece is being written. Until recently, she composed many of her own texts, but in discovering the poetry of others, she has found her works taking on a greater diversity of color and sound. Her compositional style has an energetic, contemporary flavor to it, and her works typically embrace sweeping, charming melodies supported by a fresh, harmonic language.<sup>9</sup>

## Featured Works

### Alice

*Alice*, an accompanied SSA work published by Oxford, was commissioned by Marie Anderson, former conductor of La Jeunesse Women’s Choir of Cobourg, Ontario. Based on the Alice books of Lewis Carroll, this imaginative work, suitable for both young and mature choirs, recounts Alice’s story of her encounters with the White Rabbit, the Cheshire Cat, and the Hatter. Adding to the spirit of adventure is a lively piano accompaniment depicting the rushing and scurrying of Alice as she follows her every whim through the fantastical Wonderland. While the story is indeed child-like, the musical setting is sophisticated and certainly suitable for more advanced choirs.

The piece is framed by “dum-diddle-diddle” scale passages that carry the listener in and out of Alice’s



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able for both the treble (SA or SSAA) and mixed choir. This is a composition well suited to choirs of all levels. In the words of the composer, the piece “weaves together [through song, and narrative by Lisa Helps], stories of love and light, rebirth and rejuvenation and highlights the strength and beauty a child’s voice can bring to our often troubled world.”<sup>10</sup> The central movements, “God Will Give Orders/Sweet Child,” are arguably the most suitable for extraction for performance on their own; the two work beautifully as a pair and function well beyond the context of the larger work.

The cello opens this movement with a sparse piano accompaniment, perfectly setting up the uplifting text that

follows: “God will give orders to his angels about you.” (Figure 7) The vocal texture thickens and the lyricism of the text unfolds. Midway through the movement, the piece shifts into a catchy, swinging style, enhanced by the rhythm of the djembe. The second sopranos (or altos in SATB) take on a prominent role to carry the message of the text: “Faith like a child can hear the song that falls on ears of those who wait like a child for peace to come...” (Figure 8) The movement builds steadily in intensity, culminating in a ten-measure groove of unaccompanied four-part harmony: “Sweet child, hear my song, I will show you how to love.”

95

S1 mad in here, we're all mad in here, we're all mad! We're all

S2 mad, fa la la la la, we're all mad, fa la la la la, we're all stark rav - ing mad!

A la la la la la la la la la la la la stark rav - ing mad!

98

S1 mad in here, we're all mad in here, we're all mad in here, we're all

S2 mad, fa la la la la, we're all mad, fa la la la la, we're all mad, fa la la la la, we're all

A la la la la la la la la la la la la

cresc.

Figure 6. Sarah Quartel, *Alice*, mm. 95–100.

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Figure 7. Sarah Quartet, *Snow Angel III*, mm. 31–38.

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Figure 8. Sarah Quartet, *Snow Angel VI*, mm. 97–100.

© 2002 Sarah Quartet. Used by permission.



## Stephanie Martin

Composer and conductor Stephanie Martin (b. 1962) holds degrees from the University of Toronto and Wilfrid Laurier University and makes her home in Toronto. She is the conductor of Schola Magdalene and Toronto's esteemed Pax Christi Chorale. An Associate of the Royal Canadian College of Organists, Martin has been the

recipient of many awards, including first prize in the Exultate Chamber Singers' composition competition (2009) and in the Association of Anglican Musicians composer's competition (2010). In 2011 she was accepted as an Associate Composer of the Canadian Music Centre (CMC) and in 2012 was named Composer in Residence for the Barrie Music Festival.

Martin's works are performed extensively by choirs within Canada and beyond, including countless commissions, most recently of which by Voces Capitulii (Antwerp, Belgium), the Canadian Men's Chorus, Toronto Diocesan Choir School for Girls, and the Summer Institute of

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Church Music. A new choral work commissioned by the British choir Ex Cathedra, *The Portinari Nativity*, included a performance at St. John's Smith Square, London, and in 2012, Christ Church Cathedral of Victoria B.C. commissioned one of her more recently published works, *The Legend of the Bird*. Many of her compositions can be found in the catalogues of Cypress, Kelman Hall, Fairbank, UtReMi, Royal Canadian College of Organists, and the Canadian Music Centre. A visit to Martin's website also offers the opportunity to obtain monthly complimentary scores of her unpublished works.<sup>11</sup>

When asked what drew her to the art of choral writing, Martin explains that growing up in her family, singing was as "natural as breathing and eating." She began composing as a young child but temporarily abandoned writing as she grew into adulthood to pursue a career in church music, teaching, and choral conducting. As her career progressed, Martin gradually returned to her love of composing, focusing on the instrument she had grown to know most intimately—the choir. One very powerful source of inspiration was the church where she was employed for many years until recently, the Church of St. Mary Magdalene in Toronto. "SMM," she explains, "inspired me to write since there was a clear purpose for the music, a wonderful choral instrument, a glorious acoustic, and supportive listeners." She goes on to say that St. Mary Magdalene "opened a creative portal" for a body of sacred motets written specifically for that choir. And in all of her writing, she keeps foremost in her mind the performers; they, she says, provide the true source of inspiration for the writing process.

For Martin, it is her love of words that guides her approach. A "musical picture," as she puts it, typically emerges from the text—"somehow," she comments, "the words always suggest the music." Favorite poets include some of the classics: including George Herbert, John Donne, and Milton and Alfred Tennyson, but also Canadian contemporaries Douglas LePan and Cori Martin, Stephanie Martin's sister. Martin's compositional style is shaped by her love of choral masters spanning the centuries, from Josquin to Byrd and Palestrina, Bach, Mendelssohn and Brahms, Britten and Vaughan Williams, and of course, Healey Willan. With an affinity for medieval polyphony, folk songs, Gregorian chants, and

hymnody, she writes works that feature soaring melodic lines, instinctive voice leading, and compelling harmonic progressions.<sup>12</sup>

## Featured Works

### "Hear My Prayer"

"Hear My Prayer," published in 2009 by Cypress, is a gripping work for the more advanced SATB choir. Setting the text of Psalm 102, Martin masterfully crafts the shift in the text as the psalmist evolves from a state of despair

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and pleading to one of deep resolve and enduring faith. The work opens with crunchy, dissonant harmonies in the key of f# minor to capture the angst in the words, “hear my prayer, O Lord.” The section that ensues continues in this vein, with antiphonal entries, stepwise motion and repeated notes of pain and lament. At the point at which some may say that the poet has hit rock bottom, as uttered with the words, “For I have eaten ashes for bread, and mingled my drink with weeping,” Martin offers a most poignant and highly chromatic harmonic shift, pitting the soprano and bass against one another to sing with frequency the interval of a minor second, until at last

the voices arrive at an f# minor chord on the final word, “weeping.” (Figure 9)

“But Thou O Lord shall endure for ever and ever” is the assuring text of the contrasting second half of the piece, set in F# major. The phrase is repeated four times, with gradually increasing intensity, both in dynamic level and in the increased expanse of the four-part texture as sopranos soar to the top of their range into the final section, marked *maestoso*. (Figure 10) Here, the text “forever and ever” is repeated again and again, subtly referencing the minor key but ultimately ending in F# major, moving to an understated but deeply powerful close.

The image displays a musical score for four voices: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 26 to 32, and the second system covers measures 30 to 32. The lyrics are: "For I have eaten ashes for bread and mingled my drink with weeping." The score includes dynamic markings such as *p* (piano) and *f* (forte). The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The score is written in a standard musical notation with lyrics underneath the notes.

Figure 9. Stephanie Martin, *Hear My Prayer*; mm. 26–32.

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44 *mp et cresc...*  
S But Thou O Lord shall endure for ever and ever  
A But Thou O Lord shall endure for ever and ever  
T But Thou O Lord, O Lord shall endure for ever and ever  
B Thou O Lord shall endure

47 *mf et cresc...*  
S But Thou O Lord shall endure for ever and ever  
A But Thou O Lord shall endure for ever and ever  
T But Thou O Lord shall endure for ever and ever  
B Thou O Lord shall endure for ever and ever.

50 **Maestoso** *f* *ff*  
S Thou O Lord shall endure for ever and ever, for ever and ever *unis.*  
A But Thou O Lord shall endure for ever and ever, for ever and ever  
T But Thou O Lord shall endure for ever and ever, for ever and ever  
B Thou, Thou O Lord shall endure for ever and ever for ever and ever

Figure 10. Stephanie Martin, *Hear My Prayer*; mm. 44–53.

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## “Tantum Ergo” and “Alleluia”

“Tantum Ergo” and “Alleluia” are published by Cypress as a set, but can be performed individually and with any combination of voicings. It is a beautifully accessible and flexible setting for choirs of all types. The first move-

ment, in three parts, sets homophonically the opening words of the last two verses of the Medieval hymn “Pange Lingua” by St. Thomas Aquinas. This setting is gentle and expressive, evoking the quiet reverence of the text. (Figure 11) Stunning in its simplicity, the “Alleluia” that

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follows is in five parts and can be approached in a variety of ways—as a processional or a performance piece, with or without congregation or audience participation. The piece opens in unison and commences with a layering of

the four remaining voices, one by one. Upon the entry of the fifth voice part, the textual buildup is reversed with a gradual removal of each part, ending with the exquisite opening unison melody. (Figure 12)

$\text{♩} = 68$ , *espressivo, sostenuto*

1  
Tan - tum er - go sa - cra - men - tum ven - ne re - mur cer - nu - i  
There - fore, we - be - fore Him - bend - ing this - great sac - ra - ment re - vere:

2  
Tan - tum er - go sa - cra - men - tum ven - ne re - mur cer - nu - i  
There - fore, we - be - fore Him - bend - ing this - great sac - ra - ment re - vere:

3  
Tan - tum er - go sa - cra - men - tum ven - ne re - mur cer - nu - i  
There - fore, we - be - fore Him - bend - ing this - great sac - ra - ment re - vere:

5  
1  
Es an - ti - quum do - cu - men - tum no - vo - ce - dat ri - tu - i  
Types and sha - dows have their end - ing for the new - er rite is here:

2  
Es an - ti - quum do - cu - men - tum no - vo - ce - dat ri - tu - i  
Types and sha - dows have their end - ing for the new - er rite is here:

3  
Es an - ti - quum do - cu - men - tum no - vo - ce - dat ri - tu - i  
Types and sha - dows have their end - ing for the new - er rite is here:

Figure 11. Stephanie Martin, *Tantum Ergo*, mm. 1–8.

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$\text{♩} = 66$

5th voice  
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

1st voice  
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

2nd voice  
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

3rd voice  
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

4th voice  
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Figure 12. Stephanie Martin, *Alleluia*, mm. 1–4.

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**Ramona  
Luengen**

Born in Vancouver, Canada, Ramona Luengen (b. 1960) received degrees in composition from the University of British Columbia and a doctor of music in composition from the University of Toronto. Luengen has enjoyed an illustrious career as a composer and conductor and continues to be performed regularly by choirs of national and international reputation, including Chanticleer, Choeur de femmes Calliope (France), Chor Leoni, Coro El León de Oro (Spain), Elektra Women's Choir, Elora Festival Singers, musica intima, National Youth Choirs of Canada, Phoenix Chamber Choir, San Francisco Girls' Chorus, and Toronto Children's Choir. Her publications are many, including those available through Avondale Press, Classica, Cypress, earthsongs, and Gordon V. Thompson.

Still making her home on the west coast, Luengen has been recognized for her accomplishments with numerous awards for composition, including the Association of Canadian Choral Conductors' Outstanding Choral Composition and Choral Event of the Year awards for *Stabat Mater* in 1996 and the Associated Publishers award for her *Mésange* in 2000. In 2006, the British Columbia Choral Federation awarded her the Herbert Drost Award for her distinguished service and support of the choral arts. An associate of the Canadian Music Centre, Luengen is also a member of the Canadian League of Composers and the Association of Canadian Women Composers. Her music has been broadcast nationally and internationally, and recordings of her work abound, particularly of her *Salve Regina*, *Missa Brevis*, *Celebremus!* and *Stabat Mater*.<sup>13</sup>

Luengen explains that the impetus for her writing of choral and vocal works is "always, first and foremost, the text." Of this, she says, "I generally search for my own [text], even in a commission situation, for I find there needs to be an essential compatibility of language between the poet and the composer." For Luengen, it is the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke that has been a particular source of inspiration: "The innovative and rich imagery, his unique and provocative syntax, and the depth and sensitivity of

his observations" are what have compelled her to set a number of Rilke's texts to music. At times she wonders about the brazenness, as she puts it, of composers to set music to autonomous, self-contained poems; but as a composer, she has grown to cherish the process of repackaging self-sufficient texts in ways that complement and elucidate the words, and through this, "allowing hearts to be moved by not one, but two art forms."

Below is a list of other notable established and emerging female Canadian composers whose choral works, published and unpublished, are well performed across Canada and deserving of a wide choral audience. Either the composer's website is listed or a feature on a publisher's website is provided.

Eleanor Daley

[www.alliancemusic.com/people/details.cfm?iPeopleID=4](http://www.alliancemusic.com/people/details.cfm?iPeopleID=4)

Christine Donkin

[www.christinedonkin.com](http://www.christinedonkin.com)

Allison Girvan

[www.allisongirvan.com](http://www.allisongirvan.com)

Laura Hawley

[www3.telus.net/rtmp/hawley.html](http://www3.telus.net/rtmp/hawley.html)

Ruth Watson Henderson

[www.musiccentre.ca/node/37309](http://www.musiccentre.ca/node/37309)

Larysa Kuzmenko

[www.larysakuzmenko.com](http://www.larysakuzmenko.com)

Elise Letourneau

[www.eliseletourneau.com](http://www.eliseletourneau.com)

Jocelyn Morlock

[www.jocelynmorlock.com](http://www.jocelynmorlock.com)

Kelly Marie Murphy

[www.kellymariemurphy.com](http://www.kellymariemurphy.com)

Amy Stephen

[www.amystephenmusic.com](http://www.amystephenmusic.com)

Nancy Telfer

[www.musiccentre.ca/node/37343](http://www.musiccentre.ca/node/37343)

Leslie Uyeda

[www.leslieuyeda.com](http://www.leslieuyeda.com)

Carol Ann Weaver

[www.musiccentre.ca/node/37730/showcase](http://www.musiccentre.ca/node/37730/showcase)



# THE LIFE AND WORKS OF FOUR FEMALE

Luengen also turns frequently to traditional sacred texts because of their ability, she suggests, “to speak universally...Latin, because it does not carry with it the nuances, preconceptions and/or connotations (conscious or not) of the modern languages we use to communicate on a daily basis, allows us to be engaged in a more elemental way; it allows us to travel to an almost visceral and intuitive realm of spirituality.” In all languages, though, Luengen’s choral writing consistently and skillfully fortifies the character and nuance of the texts she sets.<sup>14</sup>

## Featured Works

### “Mésange”

Luengen’s “Mésange,” published in 2013 by Cypress, is one of her more recent compositions for the advanced mixed choir. The French poem penned by Rainer Maria Rilke contemplates the extraordinary of a rather ordinary bird, the chickadee—tender and resilient in the grip of a harsh winter. In her setting, Luengen carefully manages the nuance of the text to invoke the many qualities poeti-

10 *p* *pp* *mp* *p*

S po - ses sur les ar - bres en pleurs, je con

A po - ses lan - ter - ne de vi - e, sur les ar - bres en pleurs, je con

T1 po - ses, ten - dre lan - ter - ne de vi - e, sur les ar - bres en pleurs, je con

T2 ten - dre lan - ter - ne de vi - e, sur les ar - bres en pleurs, je con

B po - ses, de vi - e, sur les ar - bres en pleurs, je con

16 *accél. poco a poco* *f* *rit.*

S tem - ple ce feu qui t'al - lu - me à tra - vers ton plu - ma - ge dru, et moi et

A tem - ple ce feu qui t'al - lu - me à tra - vers ton plu - ma - ge dru, et moi, et

T tem - ple ce feu qui t'al - lu - me à tra - vers ton plu - ma - ge dru, et moi, et

B tem - ple ce feu qui t'al - lu - me à tra - vers ton plu - ma - ge dru, et moi, et

Figure 13. Ramona Luengen, *Mésange*, mm. 10–20.

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# CANADIAN CHORAL COMPOSERS

cally ascribed to the small bird.

This unaccompanied work is voiced for the SATB choir, with minimal division in the tenor and bass lines. The ranges are quite moderate and the pitches accessible, but the work requires skilled attention to the length and shading of Luengen's characteristically lyrical phrases as to the fluidity and flexibility of tempo needed to effectively communicate the mood of the text. (Figure 13) Her acuity for text setting is perhaps best exemplified in her approach to meter, frequently, but covertly shifting, always in service to the integrity of the text. Similarly, the use of non-chord tones offers a wonderful array of textural possibilities for choral balance and weight, particularly at phrase endings.

Overall, the harmonic language of "Mésange" consistently reinforces "g" as the tonal center, in both modal and minor forms. Yet at the end, the g functions to tonicize C, leaving the listener with a sense of incompleteness or of "more to come," pointing perhaps to the anticipated dawn of spring. (Figure 14)

## "How the Blossoms are Falling"

"How the Blossoms are Falling" was commissioned in honor of the late Diane Loomer on the occasion of her retirement from the internationally acclaimed Ele-

42

S vain, mais nous qu'un-e fla - me pro - tē - ge, *mp* *mf*

A vain, mais nous qu'un-e flam - me, qu'un-e flam - me pro - tē - ge. *p* *mp* *mf*

T vain, mais nous, qu'un-e flam - me pro - tē - ge. *p* *mp* *mf*

B vain, mais nous qu'un-e flam - me, qu'un-e flam - me pro - tē - ge, *p* *mp* *mf*

♩ = 52

47 *unis.* *p* *mp* *pp* *molto rit.*

S nous au - rons la joie, la joie de de - main. *pp*

A la joie, la joie de de - main. *mp* *pp*

T nous au - rons la joie, la joie de de - main. *p* *mp* *unis.* *pp*

B la joie, la joie de de - main. *mp* *pp*

Figure 14. Ramona Luengen, *Mésange*, mm. 42–52.

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ktra Women's Choir. Composed in 2008, the work was recently published (again by Cypress) in 2014. It features the powerful poetry of Canadian poet Joy Kogawa and celebrates the exquisite beauty of fertility and growth as fruit trees come to full blossom.

The work opens with an extensive unaccompanied section, the piano not entering until measure 36, necessitating excellent intonation. Many of the phrases throughout begin in unison and unfold rapidly into a lush, four-part harmony. This, coupled with the use of seconds moving toward more extensive harmonies, offers a depiction of the gradual "coming to life" of the blossom in spring.

(Figure 15) Other forms of text painting abound, with wonderfully illustrated phrases, such as: "the skin swells to green, swells to red, swells to ripeness"/ "the wind thuds and seeds the earth" / "the rich brown soil receives the flight down"/ or "the blossoms are falling." Luengen masterfully supports the text with a musical language that strengthens the power of the message. A most poignant moment comes near the end, when the choir, singing in unison, signals the end of the journey: "and to walk at that moment in the orchard once again." (Figure 16)

The musical score for Figure 15 is for the first nine measures of the piece. It is written for a four-part choir (Soprano, Alto, Tenor 1, Tenor 2) and piano. The tempo is marked as  $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 69$ . The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The lyrics are: "The fruit takes from the sun, from the sun, from the sun, from the sun, the skin swells thin". The score shows the vocal lines and piano accompaniment. Dynamics include *p*, *mp*, and *unis.* (unison). The score is divided into two systems, with measures 1-4 in the first system and measures 5-9 in the second system.

Figure 15. Ramona Luengen, *How the Blossoms are Falling*, mm. 1–9.

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S and to walk at that mo - ment in the or - chard once a - gain, *mp*

A and to walk at that mo - ment in the or - chard once a - gain, *mp*

*p* *mp*

Figure 16. Ramona Luengen, *How the Blossoms are Falling*, mm. 76–81.

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## Conclusion

Kathleen Allan, Sarah Quartel, Stephanie Martin and Ramona Luengen are significant women on Canada's choral scene, and part of what makes their work so compelling is the range of choirs that can perform their work successfully. With few exceptions, their compositional output is one that appeals to choirs of all ages and ability levels. In my own work as a choral conductor, the repertoire of all four of these composers is consistently received with enthusiasm and met with great success. Each demonstrates a thorough understanding of the voice and reliably sets important and meaningful texts. Conductors seeking repertoire that is both musically enriching and sufficiently challenging can indeed rely on the superb choral output of this fine group of women.

For those interested in discovering more of what Canada's choral composers are writing, the Canadian Music Centre is an important hub of musical activity across the country, housing and lending countless unpublished Canadian choral works. Both Stephanie Martin and Ramona Luengen, for example, are associates of the CMC and many of their compositions can be found online through its website ([www.musiccentre.ca](http://www.musiccentre.ca)). Of course, many compositions are published each year by notable Canadian publishing companies including Cypress, Clas-

sica, Rhythmic Trident, Éditions GAM, Leslie Music and Kelman Hall. Likewise, a number of independent publishers, such as Silent Dawn Publishing are making their mark as “go to” places for conductors seeking newly written Canadian choral works. As well, the Association of Canadian Women Composers has formed an online Choral Collective where the biographies and works of female choral composers are being compiled ([www.acwc.ca](http://www.acwc.ca)). Finally, as we all know, many composers are ramping up their online profiles through helpful websites that feature sample PDFs of their compositions accompanied by sound files of recent performances. Each of the four composers discussed here have developed excellent websites for your perusal:

Kathleen Allan  
[www.kathleenallan.com](http://www.kathleenallan.com)

Sarah Quartel  
[www.sarahquartel.com](http://www.sarahquartel.com)

Stephanie Martin  
[www.stephaniemartinmusic.com](http://www.stephaniemartinmusic.com)

Ramona Luengen  
[www.ramonaluengen.com](http://www.ramonaluengen.com)

# THE LIFE AND WORKS OF FOUR FEMALE

<b>KATHLEEN ALLAN List of Works</b>		
<b>Mixed Choir</b>		
<b>Title (*multi-movement)</b>	<b>Voicing (unaccompanied unless otherwise noted)</b>	<b>Publisher</b>
*Al Pittman Suite	SATB	Self-published through MusicSpoke
A Christmas Bell	SATB + SSA (with brass quintet)	www.kathleenallan.com
Distancia	SATB + tenor and sop solo	Cypress Choral Music
The Frost	SATB	www.kathleenallan.com
Here the Tides Flow	SATB	www.kathleenallan.com
Il Pleut	SATB	Self-published through MusicSpoke
The In-Between	SATB	www.kathleenallan.com
In Paradisum	SATB	Cypress Choral Music
Like Barley Bending	SATB + unison children's choir	Self-published through MusicSpoke
Mother o'Mine	SATB	Self-published through MusicSpoke
The Seven Joys of Mary (arr.)	SATB	www.kathleenallan.com
Squid-Jiggin' Ground (arr.)	SATB	www.kathleenallan.com
Stars	SATB	www.kathleenallan.com
stars within	SATB	Self-published through MusicSpoke
Tu Voz (arr.)	SATB	www.kathleenallan.com

<b>Treble Choir</b>		
<b>Title</b>	<b>Voicing</b>	<b>Publisher</b>
the close and holy darkness	SSAA	Self-published through MusicSpoke
Deep River (arr.)	SA (with piano)	www.kathleenallan.com
Early Spring (arr.)	SSA	Cypress Choral Music
The Hummingbird	SSAA	www.kathleenallan.com
Joy	SSAA (with piano)	Self-published through MusicSpoke
The Linnet	SA (with piano, flute)	Self-published through MusicSpoke
The Maid on the Shore (arr.)	SSA (with percussion)	Self-published through MusicSpoke
O Holy Night (arr.)	SSAA	www.kathleenallan.com
On the Dunes	Unison (with piano)	www.kathleenallan.com
Ring out, ye Bells!	SSA	www.kathleenallan.com
The Sailor's Question	SSA	Alliance Music Publications

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Sainte Cécile	SSA (with piano)	Self-published through MusicSpoke
Shall We Gather at the River (arr.)	SSA (with organ)	www.kathleenallan.com
Song of Ronan	SSAA + narrator	www.kathleenallan.com
We Sing	SSA (with piano)	www.kathleenallan.com

## SARAH QUARTEL List of Works

### Mixed Choir

Title (*multi-movement)	Voicing	Publisher
Alice	SATB (with piano)	www.sarahquartel.com
God Has Heard Me	SSATBB	www.sarahquartel.com
Huron Carol (arr.)	SATB (with piano)	Oxford University Press
I Will Be With You	SATB	www.sarahquartel.com
Love is Patient	SATB (with piano, cello)	www.sarahquartel.com
My Own Two Feet	SSATBB	www.sarahquartel.com
On This Silent Night	SATB, children (with piano)	www.sarahquartel.com
One of These Days	SSATBB	www.sarahquartel.com
*Snow Angel	SATB (with cello, piano)	www.sarahquartel.com
Swept Away	SSATBB	www.sarahquartel.com
The Wind is My Shepherd	SATB (with organ and handbells)	www.sarahquartel.com
Trinity Alleluia	SATB	www.sarahquartel.com
Wide Open Spaces	SATB (with piano)	Oxford University Press
*Winter Solstice	SATB (with violin, piano)	www.sarahquartel.com

### Treble Choir

Title (*multi-movement)	Voicing	Publisher
Alice	SSA (with piano)	Oxford University Press
Algonquin Reverie	SSAA	www.sarahquartel.com
Eldorado	SSA (with guitar, cello, castanets)	www.sarahquartel.com
Follow On, Journey On	SSA (with piano)	www.sarahquartel.com
Here in My Heart	SSAA (with piano)	Oxford University Press
Here on These Branches	SSAA (with percussion)	Oxford University Press
I Remember	SA (with piano)	Oxford University Press

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Long Way From Home	SSA (with piano)	www.sarahquartel.com
Morning Light	SSAA	Oxford University Press
My Own Two Feet	SSSAAA	www.sarahquartel.com
Sactum: A Requiem on Vancouver Island	SSSAA	www.sarahquartel.com
Sister Song	SSA (with piano)	Oxford University Press
*Snow Angel	SSAA (with cello, piano)	www.sarahquartel.com
Songbird	SSA	Oxford University Press
Teach Me to Treasure	SSA (with piano)	www.sarahquartel.com
The Beat of a Different Drum	SA (with piano)	www.sarahquartel.com
Voice on the Wind	SSAA (with bodrán)	www.sarahquartel.com
*Winter Solstice	SSAA (with violin, piano)	www.sarahquartel.com

<b>Male Choir</b>		
<b>Title</b>	<b>Voicing</b>	<b>Publisher</b>
Sun Our Father	TTBB	www.sarahquartel.com
The Parting Glass (arr.)	TTBB	www.sarahquartel.com
Un Canadien Errant (arr.)	TTBB	www.sarahquartel.com

## STEPHANIE MARTIN List of Works

<b>Mixed Choir</b>		
<b>Title (*multi-movement)</b>	<b>Voicing</b>	<b>Publisher</b>
And As I Wake	SATB (with organ)	Kelman Hall
Ascension	SATB (with organ)	www.stephaniemartinmusic.com
At thy Great Name	SATB	www.stephaniemartinmusic.com
Ave Maria	SAB, SSA or TTB	www.stephaniemartinmusic.com
Ave Verum	SATB	Cypress Choral Music
*Babel	double choir, SSATB soloists (with full orchestra)	www.stephaniemartinmusic.com
Children of the Heavenly Father	SAB (with organ)	RCCO Publications
Cold is the Night	SATB	Cypress Choral Music
Drop Slow Tears	SATB	Fairbank Music
Gloria (from Missa Brevis for three voices)	SAB, SSA or TTB	www.stephaniemartinmusic.com
God so Loved the World	SATB (with flute, oboe)	UtReMi Publisher

# CANADIAN CHORAL COMPOSERS

Hear My Prayer	SATB	Cypress Choral Music
I Will Lay Me Down in Peace	SATB	www.stephaniemartinmusic.com
Kontakion	SATB	Cypress Choral Music
Legend of the Bird	SATB	Cypress Choral Music
*Missa Brevis for Three Voices	SATB	Cypress Choral Music
My Love is Like a Red Rose	SATB + tenor solo (with violin)	Kelman Hall
Now the Queen of Seasons	SATB (with brass quintet, organ)	www.stephaniemartinmusic.com
O Lord, Support Us	SATB	www.stephaniemartinmusic.com
O Sacrum Convivum	SATB	Cypress Choral Music
O Salutaris Hostia	SATB	Cypress Choral Music
Ring Out, Wild Bells	SATB	Kelman Hall
Rise Up, My Love	SATB	Canadian Music Centre
Selwyn Service: Magnificat & Nunc Dimitis	SATB (with organ)	Cypress Choral Music
Sicut Cervus	SATB	Cypress Choral Music
Tantum Ergo	SAB	Cypress Choral Music
The Glorious City	SATB	www.stephaniemartinmusic.com
The Rock Dove	SATB + children (with flute)	www.stephaniemartinmusic.com
They will pass through the land	SATB (with organ)	www.stephaniemartinmusic.com
*Winter Nights	SATB + tenor solo	Cypress Choral Music (1st mvmt only)

<b>Treble Choir</b>		
<b>Title (*multi-movement)</b>	<b>Voicing</b>	<b>Publisher</b>
Alleluia	SSAAA	Cypress Choral Music
Ave Maria	SAB, SSA or TTB	www.stephaniemartinmusic.com
Gloria (from Missa Brevis for three voices)	SAB, SSA or TTB	www.stephaniemartinmusic.com
I sing the mighty power of God	SA (with organ)	www.stephaniemartinmusic.com
Little Organ Mass	SA (with organ)	www.stephaniemartinmusic.com
*Missa Brevis for Three Voices	SSA	Cypress Choral Music
*Missa Lumen	SSAA	www.stephaniemartinmusic.com
Tantum Ergo	SSA	Cypress Choral Music



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Male Choir		
Title	Voicing	Publisher
Ave Maria	SAB, SSA or TTB	www.stephaniemartinmusic.com
Canterbury	solo baritone (with piano)	www.stephaniemartinmusic.com
Christe qui lux es et dies	TTBB	www.stephaniemartinmusic.com
Gloria (from Missa Brevis for three voices)	SAB, SSA or TTB	www.stephaniemartinmusic.com
When you are old	TBB or baritone (with piano)	www.stephaniemartinmusic.com

## RAMONA LUENGEN List of Works

Mixed Choir		
Title (*multi-movement)	Voicing	Publisher
Ave Maria	SATB (with optional organ)	www.ramonaluengen.com
Celebration	SATB	www.ramonaluengen.com
Frühlingslie	SATB	Alfred Music
*Grow Old with Me	SATB (with woodwind quartet)	www.ramonaluengen.com
In tiefen Nächten	SATB	www.ramonaluengen.com
Laudate Dominum	SATB (with piano)	classica Music Publishers
Laus Trinitati	SATB (with organ)	www.ramonaluengen.com
*Luo Zaho	SATB (w/ prepared piano, percussion)	www.ramonaluengen.com
Mésange	SATB	Cypress Choral Music
My World, My Heart	SATB	www.ramonaluengen.com
*O Lacrimosa	SATB	www.ramonaluengen.com
O Magnum Mysterium	SATB (with optional harp)	classica Music Publishers
O süßes Licht	SATB	www.ramonaluengen.com
Orpheus	SATB (with piano)	www.ramonaluengen.com
Padre Pio's Prayer	SATB (with piano)	www.ramonaluengen.com
Ruht wohl	SATB	www.ramonaluengen.com
Te Deum	SATB (with organ)	www.ramonaluengen.com
Tenebrae factae sunt	SATB	Cypress Choral Music
We Shall Hear the Angels Sing	SATB (with piano, handbells)	www.ramonaluengen.com

# CANADIAN CHORAL COMPOSERS

<b>Treble Choir (Children)</b>		
<b>Title</b>	<b>Voicing</b>	<b>Publisher</b>
Alleluja	Unison/optional 2-part (with piano)	www.ramonaluengen.com
Three Easy Songs	Unison (with piano)	www.ramonaluengen.com
Four Riddles for Children	Unison (with piano)	www.ramonaluengen.com
Seasons	2-part treble (with piano)	www.ramonaluengen.com
Three Haiku	2-part treble (with piano, small percussion)	www.ramonaluengen.com

<b>Treble Choir (Women)</b>		
<b>Title</b>	<b>Voicing</b>	<b>Publisher</b>
Assumpta est Maria	SSAA+ mezzo solo (with strings)	www.ramonaluengen.com
Ave dulcissima Maria	SSAA + soprano solo	www.ramonaluengen.com
Celebremus	SSAA (with piano)	Earthsongs
Du Fremde: Musik	SSAA	classica Music Publishers
How the Blossoms are Falling	SSAA (with piano)	Cypress Choral Music
*Missa Brevis	SSAA	Cypress Choral Music
Night	SSAA (with piano)	www.ramonaluengen.com
Preghiera	SSAA	www.ramonaluengen.com
Salve Regina	SSAA (with soprano or flute solo)	Cypress Choral Music
*Stabat Mater	SSAA + mezzo solo (with orchestra)	www.ramonaluengen.com
Surge illuminare Jerusalem	SSAA	www.ramonaluengen.com
Tenebrae Factae sunt	SSAA + alto solo (with strings)	www.ramonaluengen.com
To Everything There is a Season	SSAA (with piano)	www.ramonaluengen.com

<b>Men's Choir</b>		
<b>Title</b> (*multi-movement)	<b>Voicing</b>	<b>Publisher</b>
Ubi caritas	TTBB	Cypress Choral Music
Agape	TTBB	www.ramonaluengen.com
*Missa Brevis	TTBB	Cypress Choral Music

# FOUR CANADIAN CHORAL COMPOSERS

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Ramona Luengen, email interview with author, June 1, 2015.
- <sup>2</sup> Sarah Quartel, email interview with author, May 27, 2015.
- <sup>3</sup> Kathleen Allan, email interview with author, June 4, 2015.
- <sup>4</sup> Stephanie Martin, email interview with author, May 26, 2015.
- <sup>5</sup> <www.kathleenallan.com>. Accessed December 10, 2014.
- <sup>6</sup> Kathleen Allan, email interview with author, September 2 2014.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> <www.sarahquartel.com>. Accessed December 6, 2014.
- <sup>9</sup> Sarah Quartel, email interview with author, August 30, 2014.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>11</sup> <www.stephaniemartinmusic.com>. Accessed December 11, 2014.
- <sup>12</sup> Stephanie Martin, email interview with author, July 30, 2014.
- <sup>13</sup> <www.ramonaluengen.com>. Accessed December 16, 2014.
- <sup>14</sup> Ramona Luengen, email interview with author, July 21, 2014.

**For further reading on Canadian female composers and their choral music,  
see the following *Choral Journal* articles:**

Apfelstadt, Hilary. "An Interview with Composer Eleanor Daley." *Choral Journal* 51, no. 11 (June-July 2011): 16-32. The Canadian composer discusses her background, influences, and compositional process.

———. "Choral Works for Women by Prominent Canadian Female Composers." *Choral Journal* 54, no. 5 (December 2013): 6-32. An overview of the music of Eleanor Daley, Nancy Telfer, and Ruth Watson Henderson.

———. "Music of Canadian Composers for Women's Voices." *Choral Journal* 31, no. 5 (December 1990): 23-29. A list of thirty-two works from Canadian composers for women's voices.

Brendell, Janna. "Vocal Development in the Choral Rehearsal: An Interview with Nancy Telfer." *Choral Journal* 38, no. 2 (September 1997): 27-31. The Canadian composer discusses vocal technique and pedagogy.

Guelker-Cone, Leslie. "Music for Women's Voices by Contemporary Women Composers of the United States and Canada." *Choral Journal* 32, no. 10 (May 1992): 31-40. Thirty-six works composed by women for women.

Meredith, Victoria. "Through the Eyes of Three Female Canadian Composers: The Concert Mass." *Choral Journal* 42, no. 7 (February 2002): 9-17. Examines three multi-movement compositions: Eleanor Daley's Requiem, Ruth Watson Henderson's Missa Brevis, and Nancy Telfer's Missa Brevis.

Rensink-Hoff, Rachel. "She Sings: Extended Canadian Choral Works for Women's Choir." *Choral Journal* 47, no. 12 (June 2007): 10-27. An overview of choral works for treble voices by Canadian composers Eleanor Daley, Saul Irving Glick, Mark Sirett, and Ruth Watson Henderson.