

A woman with long, wavy red hair, wearing a black top, looking down with her hands near her hair.

# ...let me explain

A collection of Canadian art songs

Christina Raphaëlle Haldane



## ...let me explain

This collection of Canadian art songs came into fruition as a result of encounters. I have always been an avid explorer of contemporary classical vocal repertoire and have enjoyed and experienced many collaborations with composers along my musical journey to date. My curiosity about Canadian art songs within today's artistic landscape began developing recently, when I moved back to my native Canada, after spending most of my performing career based in the UK. So, what makes a Canadian art song?

Beyond the traditional merging of poetry and music, for me, the definition becomes personal. One of my first human encounters was the beginning of the relationship I have with my Dad Seán Haldane, British-Canadian award-winning novelist and poet. I have been musing on his words all my life and am delighted to be finally able to sing them! My chance encounter with producer and composer David Jaeger C. M. occurred three weeks after my move back to Toronto in the Fall of 2015. I was asked at the last minute to sing a recital of Handel arias at the Arts and Letters Club, and David happened to be in the audience that serendipitous day. An enriching collaboration and friendship has ensued, which led to the creation of THE ECHO CYCLE, a song cycle conceived for my solo soprano voice, set to six of my Dad's poems. David gravitated towards poems which celebrated sound and captured their sense of boundlessness. His thoughtful through composed settings are at times playful, yet with contrasting moments of gravitas. My delight in virtuosity was duly humoured in this cycle, and these songs fit me like a vocal 'glove.' I premiered the THE ECHO CYCLE in Toronto, on May 12, 2017.

One of my greatest partnerships has been the duo I formed with my cousin, the Acadian pianist Carl Philippe Gionet. I am Acadian on my mother's side, and my collaboration with Carl grew from strong family and musical ties. We have been musical partners in crime for a decade now, performing together in Canada, Italy and the UK. For a recital for Le Festival Acadien in New Brunswick in the summer of 2017, Carl produced for me at the last minute his magical arrangements of these THREE ACADIAN FOLKSONGS. He had memorised the compositions and I learned them aurally from him, the old-fashioned way, within a few days of their premiere performance for the festival. These beautiful folksongs are haunting, humorous and energetic, and Carl's settings bring them to life in a new and contemporary way. I'm humbled to interpret these songs and share their legacy within the Acadian community and beyond. Carl and I premiered THREE ACADIAN FOLKSONGS in Caraquet NB, on August 9, 2017.

During Carl's training at Université de Montréal, he encountered the talented young Canadian Lebanese composer and conductor Samy Moussa, at the time based in Montreal. Carl and Samy have remained firm friends, and when Carl sent me Samy's AHANIA'S LAMENT (premiered in Frankfurt in 2012), I fell in love with both its sense of drama and rich textural colours. The text, William Blake's mythical creation depicting Ahania's sense of loss when rejected by her lover Urizen, is expertly set by Samy, which drew me into this new interpretation of Ahania's world. Carl and I are grateful for Samy's support throughout the process, and we were able to actively exchange our initial live performance recordings with him, thus garnering his expertise and advice for our interpretation during our sessions at the Glenn Gould Studio.



My first venture into the world of jazz is a result of two encounters: the first with the renowned Canadian jazz double bassist Ross MacIntyre, and the second with the radiant young publicist, radio personality and musical advocate Céline Peterson and her mother Kelly Peterson, a dynamic music producer and jazz promoter. Ross and I met, as one does, on a date at the tender age of 18 during our training at the University of Toronto. Amusingly romance did not blossom, however a long-lasting friendship has endured.

Recently we were keen to join forces and perform together, inviting the talented and versatile jazz pianist Stu Harrison, to join us in a recital of classical music with a jazz twist. Upon my return to Toronto I encountered and formed a friendship with Céline & Kelly Peterson, the family of late jazz legend Oscar Peterson. When I excitedly told Céline about my upcoming collaboration with Ross and Stu, she kindly passed onto me a little known and beautifully tender love song called WHY THINK ABOUT TOMORROW, with text and music written by her Dad Oscar, in essence a true ‘art song’ in the jazz format. I thank both Céline and Kelly for their continued support in this project. It has been an honour and a challenge to stretch my boundaries by delving into Oscar’s music, which I think contributes wonderfully to the concept of Canadian art songs.

My compilation cannot begin to represent the entirety of the vibrant collaborations occurring between the many active Canadian composers, poets and performers today. However, I hope that my personal encounters will contribute to the canon, and that you enjoy these Canadian art songs as much as I do.

**Christina Raphaëlle Haldane**



When I first heard Christina Haldane sing, I knew instantly that I would have to compose for her and her wonderful voice. When I discovered the poetry of her father, Seán Haldane, I realized that the source of these songs lay right there, waiting in his poetry. I found all the melodies I would need, hidden in Seán Haldane's poems. Knowing that I would enjoy Christina's vocal virtuosity in the performance of these songs, I wrote the music exactly as I heard it in my mind's ear: vivid, magical, sincere and passionate. I feel that our collaboration has been a joyful journey, a real gift, and a creative wellspring!

**David Jaeger C. M.**



It has been a delight and an honour to hear Christina’s astonishingly pitch-perfect performance of six of my poems set impeccably and with great originality by our friend David Jaeger whose ear for poems is exceptional. Two of the poems are about listening to a blackbird, and there is something extraordinary about Christina singing a song about me listening to a song, the poem being a sort of liaison between the notes of the blackbird and the notes of David Jaeger. In listening to these six songs I have come to know the poems better, at several levels of sound: the poems, the music, and the voice of Christina.

**Seán Haldane**



### THREE ACADIAN FOLKLORES | Anon

#### L'Escaouette

C'est monsieur l'marié  
Madame mariée  
Qu'ont pas encore soupé  
Un p'tit moulin su' la rivière  
Un p'tit bateau pour passer l'eau  
Le feu su' la montagne  
Boy run boy run away  
J'ai vu le loup, le renard, le lièvre  
J'ai vu la grande cité sauter  
J'ai foulé ma couvarte aux pieds  
Awouène guenille, Ah! rescous ta guenille  
Awouène awouène nipaillons, Ah! rescous tes brayons!  
Tibouniche nabette...

It's monsieur the groom  
And madame the bride  
They did not have supper yet  
A small mill on the river  
A small boat to pass the water  
The fire on the mountain  
Boy run, boy run away  
I saw the wolf the fox the hare  
I saw the big city explode  
I trampled my blanket under my feet  
Come on, shake your rag!  
Tibouniche nabette...



#### Tout passe (Everything will pass)

Sous le firmament, tout n'est que changement, tout passe  
Et quoi que l'homme fasse, ses jours s'en vont courants  
Plus vite qu'un torrent, tout passe.

Grande vérité: hormis l'éternité, tout passe  
Faisons valoir la grâce, le temps est précieux  
Tandis que sous nos yeux tout passe.

Comme le vaisseau qui glisse au loin sur l'eau, tout passe  
Il n'en est plus de traces, ainsi vont les honneurs  
Les biens et les grandeurs. Tout passe

Tel est notre sort: il faut que par la mort tout passe  
Rien n'est plus efficace pour supporter nos maux  
Que ces deux simples mots: tout passe.

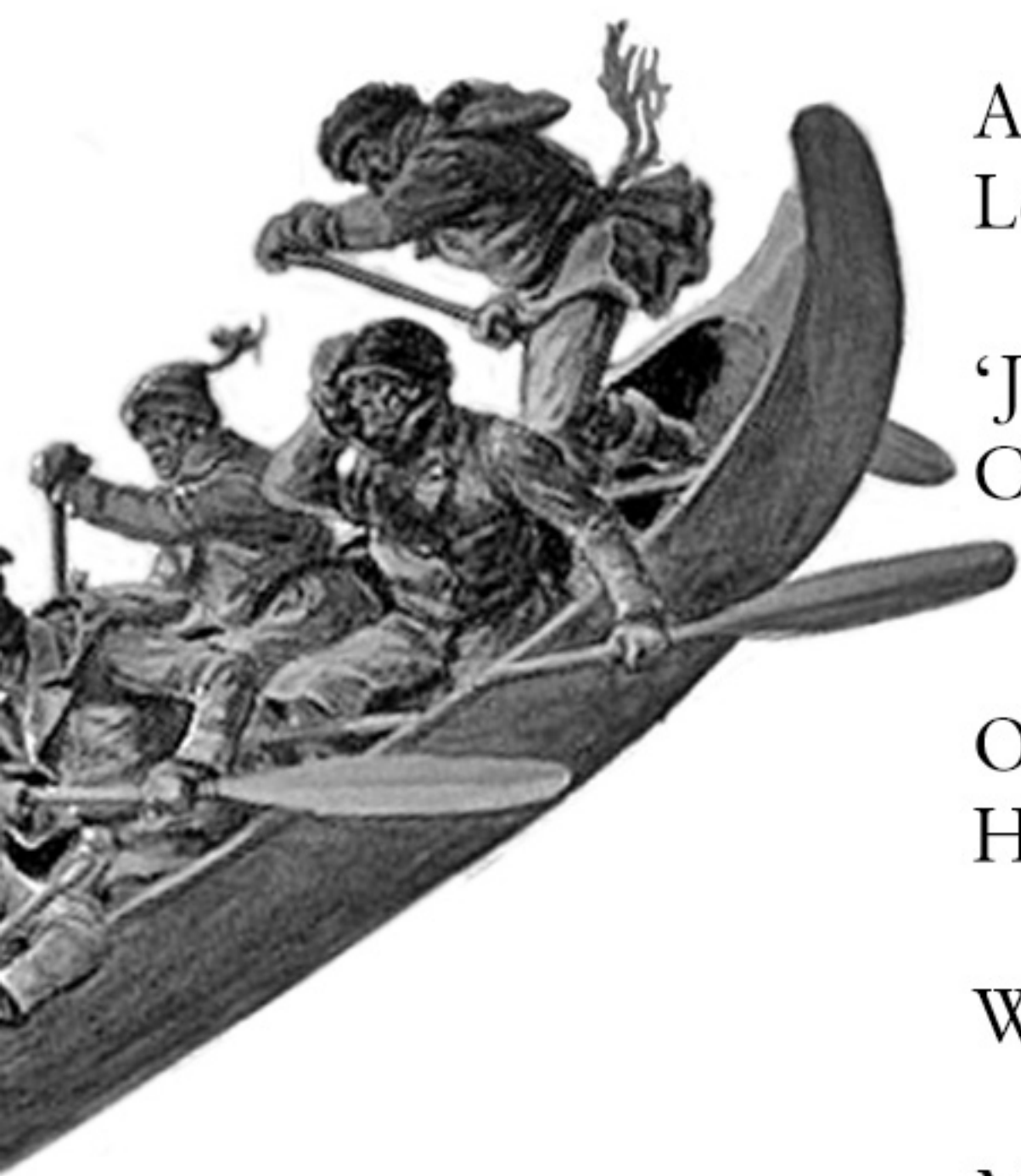
Under the skies all is change, everything will pass  
And whatever humanity does, their days go away  
Faster than a river: everything will pass.

Great truth: apart from eternity, everything will pass  
Let us make use of grace; time is precious,  
While under our eyes everything will pass.

Like a ship sliding away on water, everything will pass  
There is no trace of it. Thus goes the honors,  
Goods and greats: everything will pass.

Such is our fate: with death everything will pass  
Nothing is more effective to endure our ills  
Than these two simple words: everything passes.





Wing tra la ...

Dans mon chemin rencontre un gentil cavalier  
M'a parlé d'amourette, je lui ai dit d'entrer.

Wing tra la de li tralala de li tralala de la y dé...

Monsieur, prenez une chaise, monsieur, venez causer  
'Je ne veux pas de chaise, je veux me marier!

Avec la plus belle fille qui soit dans le quartier'  
Le père en haut qu'écoute s'est mis à tempêter.

'Je ne donne pas ma fille à un vil couturier  
Car avec son aiguille il pourrait la piquer.'

On my way I meet a gentle rider  
He spoke of love, I told him to come in.

Wing tra la de li tralala de li tralala de la y dé...

Monsieur, take a chair, Monsieur, let's talk  
'I do not want a chair, I want to get married!

With the most beautiful girl in the neighborhood.'  
Her father, upstairs, listening, began to rant:

'I will not give away my daughter to a vile dressmaker  
For with his needle he could prick her.'

AHANIA'S LAMENT from The Book of Ahania | William Blake (1757 – 1827)

The lamenting voice of Ahania,  
Weeping upon the void  
And round the Tree of Fuzon:  
Distant in solitary night  
Her voice was heard, but no form  
Had she; but her tears from clouds  
Eternal fell around the Tree;

And the voice cried:

[...] Love!  
Flower of morning! I weep on the verge  
Of Non-entity; how wide the Abyss  
Between Ahania and thee!

I lie on the verge of the deep,  
I see thy dark clouds ascend,  
I see thy black forests and floods,  
A horrible waste to my eyes!

[...]  
Why didst thou despise Ahania,  
To cast me from thy bright presence  
Into the World of Loneness [?]

[...]

Where is my golden palace [?]  
Where my ivory bed [?]

Where the joy of my morning hour [?]  
Where the sons of eternity singing

To awake Urizen, my king,  
To arise to the mountain sport,  
To the bliss of eternal valleys;

To awake my king in the morn  
To embrace Ahania's joy  
On the breadth of his open bosom,  
From my soft cloud of dew to fall  
In showers of life on his harvests [?]

When he gave my happy soul  
To the sons of eternal joy;  
When he took the daughters of life  
Into my chambers of love;



## AHANIA'S LAMENT...

Swell'd with ripeness and fat with fatness,  
Bursting on winds my odors,  
My ripe figs and rich pomegranates  
In infant joy at the feet,  
O Urizen, sported and sang.

[...]

The sweat poured down thy temples [;]  
To Ahania return'd in evening  
The moisture awoke to birth  
My mother's-joys, sleeping in bliss.

But now, alone, over  
rocks, mountains,  
Cast out from thy lovely bosom.  
Cruel jealousy, selfish fear,  
Self-destroying: how can delight  
Renew in these chains of darkness,  
Where bones of beasts are strown  
On the bleak and snowy mountains,  
Where bones from the birth are buried  
Before they see the light [?]



## THE ECHO CYCLE

Seán Haldane (1943 -)

### Weltsmerz

Pain of the world – Weltschmerz.

Turning toward extinction  
So intense the red  
Berry clusters of the rowan,  
New paint on the pillar box,  
Last geraniums of the year.

All will be leached, all bled –  
As from her lovely flesh, this dear  
Who walks in joyous pride  
As if there were no wintertide.

The world hurts.

### Echo

If you are Echo, I am a wall  
To which your voice can call  
And be returned but slightly changed,  
Not quite itself but rearranged  
In newer harmonies. What you will hear  
Is not what you might fear.

## The Blackbird in the Rain

The blackbird in the rain at dusk:  
I don't know how the drops settle on his wings.  
I am lost.  
I wish I knew the meaning of things.

I wish I knew whether or not to trust  
Myself in my (I think they are) delusions  
Of what or who you are –  
Or are they illusions?

My own voice from afar  
Says to the blackbird as he sings  
'I am you are I.'  
The rain falls darkening the dying sky.

### The Berserk Blackbird

Rickety-rackety goes the berserk blackbird,  
Riff on riff, perched on the cliff  
Of a locust tree, I'm caught  
In the torrent and debris of his song,  
His notes like jostling boats  
As they pour along.

I'd be breathless  
If I were he, I almost expect him  
To topple head-first to the ground,  
Killed by his own sound.



## THE ECHO CYCLE...

### The Sound of a Smile

There are noises at the limits of the ears,  
I'm not sure always if imagined or heard.  
For example the sound of a smile,  
Or the upper harmonics of a third.

The first is an almost silent swish,  
The second an almost seen sound.  
I can't recreate them as I wish.  
They slice across the usual ringing  
background.

The rustle of the dead in their graves,  
The hiss of an anthill that seethes.  
The hum of an aurora's waves.  
The sigh of a baby as it breathes.

These sounds aren't like the chewing of the cud  
By a cow in a distant field, which peering  
One deduces. I mean a real noise  
Out at the edges of my hearing –

Or inside my head – I don't care.  
The sound of a smile is surely there –  
As much as the harmonics of a third –  
As truly heard.

### The Sound of the Sound

The sound of the wind in the trees, and of  
the sound...  
Let me explain. We are in a clearing  
In the woods – birch, maple, spruce, fir – and  
the breeze  
Bends and sweeps, twists and turns the trees.  
They hiss, rustle, swish with unvoiced sound  
(The only voices ours). So far so good:  
These are the sounds of the wood.

But the other sound, from out in the bay  
(The sound) - not with us at low tide, a mile  
away,  
Then more like a change in the background:  
Not a roar (that cliché) nor the boom  
Of waves, it's a steady rushing  
As the tide engulfs the sandy, muddy ground.  
This is the sound of the sound.

## Why Think About Tomorrow?

Oscar Peterson (1925 – 2008)

Why think about tomorrow  
Since love has come our way.  
Forget our pain and sorrow  
Enjoy our love and play.

Why think about November  
Since this is only June.  
Let's dream until September  
October comes too soon.

The seasons fade away  
And soon a wintry day  
Is here to greet us  
With ice and snow.

But soon the chill is gone  
And then one early morn  
The flowers break through  
And start to grow.

Why think about tomorrow  
With our whole lives to live.  
We've many roads to follow  
And so much love to give.





## Christina Raphaëlle Haldane

Canadian British soprano Christina Raphaëlle Haldane enjoys an active career in the UK, Europe, Asia and North America. She is a bilingual English and French speaker, and her Canadian heritage is Acadian, from Caraquet, NB.

She has sung principle roles for The Finnish National Opera, Royal Opera House, Scottish Opera and Musica Viva Hong Kong, as well as for festivals Iford Arts, Longborough, Swansea City and Buxton, in the UK. Her roles include Cleopatra in Handel's Julius Caesar, the title role in Donizetti's La Fille du Régiment, Fiorilla in Rossini's Il Turco in Italia, Nella in Puccini's Gianni Schicchi, Adina in Donizetti's Elisir d'Amore, Clorinda in Rossini's La Cenerentola, Lucinda in Mendelssohn's Die Hochzeit des Camacho, both the Vixen and the Fox in Janáček's The Cunning Little Vixen, Rapunzel in Sondheim's Into the Woods, and Pamina in Mozart's Die Zauberflöte.

An accomplished concert performer, she has performed with many renowned orchestras, including the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and Capella Cracoviensis. Christina is also a dedicated interpreter of song repertoire, regularly performing on the recital platform in both the UK and Canada. In September 2015, Christina commenced the DMA in voice performance at the University of Toronto, under the tutelage of Prof. Darryl Edwards and She completed her DMA in 2019. Highlights from the 2016/ 2017 season include covering the role of Silvia in Thomas Adès' exciting new opera The Exterminating Angel, for both the Salzburg Festival and the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, and also covering the role of Sifare in Graham Vick's acclaimed production of Mozart's Mitridate, for the Royal Opera House Covent Garden.

Christina made her critically acclaimed Canadian operatic debut in Toronto in November 2017, performing the title role in Handel's Rodelinda for Operain Concert.







## Carl Philippe Gionet

Whether as a soloist or accompanist, Carl Philippe Gionet is a much sought-after collaborator, mainly in Europe and North America. The diffusion of classical music to all audiences is very important to him. Despite his numerous travels, he remains very involved in promoting music in his native New Brunswick. In 2013, he founded Musique sur mer en Acadie, an event dedicated to the education and promotion of classical music in francophone minority communities. Since 2014, he has been the collaborative piano professor and vocal coach for Biima (Breno Italy International Music Academy). Carl completed his doctorate in piano performance at Université de Montréal under the direction of Paul Stewart. He has received specialized training in collaborative piano in Austria and England, and participated in numerous prestigious summer programs.

Carl is an award recipient of the prestigious Sylva Gelber Music Foundation and has received numerous scholarships and grants from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Foundation des Jeunesses Musicales du Canada, the New Brunswick Arts Council, the Université de Moncton and the Université de Montréal. He recently received the Prix Émergence from the AAAUM, recognizing his career and achievements.

Along with his commitments in the field of classical music, he has performed in Canada and Europe as an accompanist and composer with many artists of the Francophonie. Carl is also a multi-disciplinary artist, working mainly with painting, photography and temporary installations.



## Ross MacIntyre

Toronto based acoustic and electric bassist Ross MacIntyre is one of the most sought after professional musicians in Canada. After attending the Berklee College of Music in Boston, he graduated from the University of Toronto's jazz program, and has since performed with elite musicians from Canada and around the world.

He has toured extensively throughout Europe, North America, Australia, and Asia with renown artists including Matt Dusk, Emilie-Claire Barlow, Jesse Cook, Heather Bambrick, Eliana Cuevas, Elizabeth Shepherd, Kellylee Evans, and the Shuffle Demons.

From 2000-2003 Ross was the musical director and composer for the Garden Brother's Circus, and has performed in numerous musical theatre productions with Canstage, Young People's Theatre, and Mirvish Productions.

Ross is the bassist on hundreds of recordings, 10 of which are JUNO award nominated, including 2012's Vocal Jazz Album of the Year winner 'Seule Ce Soir' by Emilie-Claire Barlow.

As a side musician, Ross has shared the stage with some of the world's great musicians including Guido Basso, Filo Machado, Warren Vaché, Wynton Marsalis, Ed Robertson, Jim Cuddy, Geoffrey Keezer, and many many more.

In 2011 Ross released a duet album with pianist Mark Kieswetter, to great critical acclaim. Of it The Whole Note Magazine writes: 'Kieswetter and MacIntyre have captured the true essence of what the best piano/bass duos are all about: elegance, economy, precision, fluidity, style, intimacy, grace, and that magical, intangible chemistry – the simpatico.'







## Stu Harrison

Stu Harrison was born and raised in South-Western Ontario, beginning piano instruction at the age of 3, completing his early studies through the Suzuki Method in London ON, and then studying with Harold Riddolls (RCM), he attained his ARCT by 16.

Following several years of competitive classical performance, he branched out into a wide variety of musical settings, from choir direction to church organist, and finally to jazz. He attended the University of Toronto's jazz performance program, graduating with Honours in 2003.

In 2003 he started Stu Harrison Music, a commercial and wedding music company that worked extensively throughout Ontario from 2003 – 2007, supplying music to a wide variety of high-profile clientele. During the same period, he was also music director and composer for Garden Brothers Circus, performing more than 1000 shows to well over 2 million people.

In 2006 he joined Merriam Music, the largest private music school in Canada as well as its highest volume piano dealer, and took on a variety of roles, including teaching, retailing, curriculum development, marketing, and eventually to the executive level where he serves as head of Sales, Marketing, and Strategic Development.

In October 2016, Stu released his debut album 'Volume 1' (One Nightstand Records), to critical acclaim, featuring Canadian legends Terry Clarke, and Neil Swainson.

Stu continues to perform, accompany, music direct, and arrange regularly throughout Canada.





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank my Dad Seán Haldane and David Jaeger C. M. for their creativity and support, and my musical collaborators Carl Philippe Gionet, Stu Harrison and Ross MacIntyre. I am grateful for the guidance provided by my voice teacher Prof. Darryl Edwards and vocal coaches Marc Packwood and Michael Rose. My technical team consisting of Paul Hodge and Matthew Perrier, as well as the team at the Glenn Gould Studio, were instrumental in creating this recording. I would not be able to do what I do without the love and support of my immediate family, my mother Ghislaine Lanteigne, my father Seán Haldane, my sisters Jessica and Maeve, and my partner Patrice Nicolas. My extended family on both the Lanteigne and Haldane sides are integral to my support system as well. Last, but not least, I wish to thank the arranger, composers and poets for sharing their music with me: Carl Philippe Gionet, Samy Moussa, David Jaeger C. M., Oscar Peterson and his family, Céline and Kelly Peterson, Seán Haldane, and William Blake.

This recording is dedicated to the bright light that was the late Nellie Lanteigne (née Butler), my Grandmaman, who passed in November 2017.

We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts.

Photography: Kristin Hoebermann (portraits of Christina)

Bill Beard (portraits of Ross and Stu)

Design: Peter Keighron - [www.wherebutwhen.com](http://www.wherebutwhen.com)

Christina's website: [www.christinahaldane.com](http://www.christinahaldane.com)



Canada Council  
for the Arts

Conseil des arts  
du Canada