

November 25, 2023

## COLLECTIF9 – RITUÆLS

Programme notes detailed

The notion of 'ritual' connects to a tradition of knowledge and practices, a transmission across time and across generations. Our connection to and appreciation of the passing of time is the source of our approach to this show. The pieces that we have brought together in **Rituæls** all have this element of continuity, whether it is a note held throughout a piece, a chord that imperceptibly transforms, or a group of continuously repeated notes. This simple element creates a common thread that accompanies us through a succession of emotional phases: the spiritual, the intimate, the fragile, the dismayed, the grandiose, the humble, and many more.

### PROGRAMME INFO (without intermission)

*Drone* (collectif9)

*O vis æternitatis* (Hildegard von Bingen, 12th century)

*Psalom* (Arvo Pärt, 1985)

*Another Living Soul* (Nicole Lizée, 2016) \* #

*Lament* (Michael Tippett, 1952)

*Aheym* (Bryce Dessner, 2009)

*The Beatitudes* (Arvo Pärt, 1990)

*Summa* (Arvo Pärt, 1977)

*Exaudi* (Jocelyn Morlock, 2004) \*

*Tenebre* (Bryce Dessner, 2011) \*

\* arrangement by Thibault Bertin-Maghit

# written for Kronos Performing Arts Association's Fifty for the Future: The Kronos Learning Repertoire

The minimalist sound universe that opens the programme is an opportunity to slow down and refocus our energies, creating a fertile ground from which the rest of the program can take root. This collective improvisation is inspired by the work of French composer Éliane Radigue (a pioneer in electronic music), whose works consist exclusively of drones, apparently motionless, while in constant transformation.

We begin with our own murmuring drone, from which the monodic chant of medieval composer Hildegard von Bingen slowly appears: **O vis æternitatis** (Oh force of eternity) is an expression of her devotion to holy powers, originally written for women's voices. Saint Hildegard was an abbess and polymath as well as writer, composer, philosopher, mystic, visionary, and medical writer and practitioner – a true feminist of the 12th century. The radically minimalist music of Estonian composer Arvo Pärt appears at two different moments in our programme. In **Psalom** we haven't strayed far from von Bingen, following a style reminiscent of medieval and renaissance music: here, the tonality is grounding, and his use of silence is as rich and eloquent as the sounds that come before and after. The

enigmatic **Summa** is based on the text of the Latin *Credo*, yet we are left only with whispers of its sacred origins in this instrumental form.

With **Another Living Soul**, Montréal composer Nicole Lizée creates a serene, yet intensely detailed world inspired by stop-motion animation. Her homage to this centenarian art form mimics the intimacy and scrutiny of stop-motion itself, creating a work that has its own life. “The impossible becomes possible – souls emerge from where once there were none.”

The journey between and beyond darkness and light guides us through the music of American Bryce Dessner. A Yiddish word that translates to “Homeward”, **Aheym** is a tormented pilgrimage that testifies to Dessner’s cultural identity and his connection to his family’s past as Jewish immigrants to America. Another example of a sacred idea turned secular, Dessner’s **Tenebre** is not based on the religious service, but rather the symbolism of life and light, inverting the usual form of the service to ascend out of darkness.

Grief is a central element in Michael Tippett’s **Lament**. He uses Henry Purcell’s aria *Ah! Belinda* (from his opera *Dido and Aeneas*) as a foundation – from the repeating motive in the basses to the tragic melody played by the violas – during which a solo violin comments with a barely recognizable variation on an Irish popular tune of the Renaissance, *Sellinger’s Round*. This lament can be seen as the juxtaposition of pain and heartbreak with the continuation of everyday life, changed as it may be.

Originally written for voices and cello, Jocelyn Morlock’s **Exaudi**, also an expression of grief, includes hope. In her all-embracing interpretation of grief and mourning, Morlock’s music “moves us from an inability to comprehend our loss to passionate cries of anguish, to acceptance and angelic reassurance.” Today, the idea of grief as it pertains to *Exaudi* is particularly vivid for us as the composer passed away this past March. Jocelyn was a beautiful and sensitive artist. She wrote deeply touching music and the loss of her voice is profoundly felt across the country. *Exaudi* is one of the many special examples of her humanity and compassion.

Constructed as a large artistic gesture, **Rituæls** calls on us as individual musicians to come together in movement and imagination. We hope that the collection of musical works and the attention to each action bring all of us together for a moment of communion and collective contemplation.

Andrea Stewart and Thibault Bertin-Maghit, collectif9

[Programme notes \(in English and French\) found here.](#)

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## **VIDEOS & PHOTOS**

> Trailer (EN): <https://vimeo.com/515468894>

> 30-sec teaser: <https://vimeo.com/487964213>

> Photos of the show and of the artists can be found [here](#).

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### **PRESS QUOTES**

“A sensory landscape that evokes timelessness... the real, the important.”

- Pan M 360

“It’s quite marvelous to discover something displaying genuine mastery, created with a deep understanding of the issues facing the audience.”

- Barcza Blog

“Moved, moved to tears, shivers, hairs standing up, the spine straightening on its own, the heart tightening, a smile forming, tenderness received, all senses on alert ... in the end, I just want to say thank you.”

- Audience member

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### **ON STAGE (2023.11)**

collectif9

**Chloé Chabanole**, violin

**John Corban**, violin

**Robert Margaryan**, violin

**TJ Skinner**, violin

**Cynthia Blanchon**, viola

**Xavier Lepage-Brault**, viola

**Jérémie Cloutier**, cello

**Andrea Stewart**, cello

**Thibault Bertin-Maghit**, double bass

### **OFF STAGE**

**Thibault Bertin-Maghit**, artistic direction and staging

**Andrea Stewart**, associate direction and communication

**Joëlle Harbec**, set design

**Renaud Pettigrew**, lighting design

Andrea Stewart performs on the 1824 McConnell Nicolaus Gagliano II cello, on loan by the Canada Council for the Arts Musical Instrument Bank.

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### **COLLECTIF9**

Known for their innovative programming and approach to chamber music, Juno-nominated Montreal string ensemble collectif9 performs “with an infectious energy and vigour that grabs an audience’s attention” (The WholeNote). Since their 2011 debut, collectif9 has performed numerous concerts across North America, Europe, and Asia. As performers of classical and contemporary music, the

ensemble combines the power of an orchestra with the agility of a chamber ensemble. collectif9 operates on the premise that a change of context can influence communication and experience.

collectif9 is grateful to the arts councils of Montreal, Quebec, and Canada, and to FACTOR for their continued financial support, but also to their local and Canadian community, thanks to whom our governments ensure support for the arts, an essential investment for the quality of our lives.

> <https://www.collectif9.ca/en>

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