

## Elizabeth Ekholm – Bio

Montreal composer Elizabeth Ekholm graduated from McGill University with a Ph.D. in Music Education, specializing in choral / vocal pedagogy. She has worked as a choral conductor and voice teacher for many years and her research in this field has been published in *The Journal of Research in Music Education* and *The Journal of Voice*, among others. She sings professionally in several ensembles, including the Opéra de Montréal Chorus, the Montreal Symphony Orchestra Chorus, Ensemble Scholastica and the Studio de Musique Ancienne de Montréal.

Ekholm has been involved in music all her life. Her first love has always been *a cappella* choral music, having grown up in the Russian Orthodox tradition where both her mother and uncle were distinguished choir conductors. Her father was a jazz bass player, who introduced her to jazz and American popular music. Both her parents loved opera. Thus her early musical influences – from liturgical chant to pop, jazz, folk rock and opera – all contributed to her palette of compositional materials. She was fortunate to have been able to study composition with Robert Fleming, one of the most prolific Canadian composers of his generation, at Carleton University in Ottawa, and with another eminent composer Robert Frederick Jones at McGill University. As a singer herself, she tries to write very singable music, in which each voice has melodic integrity even when the overall sound may be harmonically complex.

Ekholm has been involved in liturgical music for many years, having been music director at Loyola Chapel, Concordia University in Montreal, for ten years and more recently a professional chorister at Christ Church Cathedral in Montreal. Much of her liturgical music for a cappella choir has been performed at the Cathedral, thanks to the encouragement and support of their renowned music director, Patrick Wedd. Three examples, *Prayer of Saint Francis*, *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis*, can be found on YouTube. She recently completed a piece for women's chorus, SSAA, inspired by the music of Hildegard von Bingen, entitled *O Splendidissima Gemma*, for Ensemble Scholastica, a professional recording ensemble of nine women who specialize in early music. Ensemble Scholastica has also recorded two of Ekholm's pieces – *Quinque prudentes virgines* and *Benedicamus Domino: Tu lux refulge* – for their 2017 CD, entitled *Ars elaboratio*, on the ATMA Classique label.

In recognition for her excellence as a composer, Ekholm was the 2016 winner of the Debbie Fleming Prize for Choral Composition for her *Prayer of Saint Francis*, which was premiered by the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir at their Choral Splendour concert in June, 2017. *Prayer of Saint Francis* is an *a cappella* setting of the Christian prayer for peace commonly attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi, which begins “Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.” The jury commented: “There is a lovely sense of attention to the text and the overall piece is well thought out and executed. Ekholm uses beautiful, warm harmonic language, inventive transitions and modulations, and has a very nice melodic sense.”