



# **THE ROAD HOME**

## **The Journey to Acceptance\***

**Andrea Clearfield *Here I Am: I Am Here*  
with string quartet and soloists**

**Canadian Premiere**

**With Additional Music by  
Samuel Barber, Craig Hella Johnson,  
Stephen Paulus and Katharine Petkovski**

**Sunday, February 22, 2026, 3:00pm**

**Tickets: \$30/\$10**

**\*There will be a resource table provided by PFLAG  
as well as a panel from Affirm United to facilitate  
questions and discussion following the concert.**



**350 Queens Ave. at Waterloo  
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## Participating in Today's Concert

### Soloists (Clearfield):

Sonja Gustafson, soprano  
Nathan Gritter, tenor

### Piano (Clearfield):

Melanie Cancade

### Narrators (Clearfield):

Mimi: Lesley Andrew  
Sam: George Jolink

### Post-Concert Panelists:

Rev. Karen Low, Roland Beach, Chris Fischer

### Recorder (Parton):

Margaret Trethewey

### String Quartet – Musicians of London Symphonia (Barber, Clearfield):

Violins: Andrew Chung, Mikela Witjes  
Viola: Elspeth Thomson  
Violoncello: Ben Bolt-Martin

## First-St. Andrew's Senior Choir Minister of Music: Chris Fischer (conductor)

### *Soprano*

Ruth Adams  
Glenda Baldwin  
Emma Dickson  
Sonja Gustafson\*  
Helen Guthrie  
Joanna Li\*\*  
Barbara Macdonell  
Leah Morise  
Rebecca Neaves  
Nancy Quinn  
Margaret Trethewey

### *Alto*

Anne Cunningham  
Lynda Kennedy  
Susan McKane  
Merran Neville  
Marilyn Norman  
Francesca Ranalli\*  
Zhongyi Wang\*\*

### *Tenor*

Roland Beach\*\*  
Paul Cooper  
Alex Neaves  
Marvin Shank  
David Wardlaw  
Chris Wood\*

### *Bass*

Bill Guthrie  
Bob Kennedy  
Alastair Smyth\*  
David Wake

\*Soloist/Section Lead

\*\*Eberhard Vocal Scholar



## Program

*The concert will run uninterrupted for approximately 75 minutes, without intermission. After the last piece, there will be a short (5-10 minute) break until the panel discussion begins.*

### **“The Road Home”**

Text: Michael Dennis Browne (b. 1940)

Tune: Prospect (from Southern Harmony 1835), adapted by Stephen Paulus (1949 – 2014)

(Soprano soloists: Joanna Li, Rebecca Neaves)

### **“The Winter Is Past”**

Text: Robert Burns (1759 – 1796)

Music: Katharine Petkovski (b. 1997)

### **String Quartet in B Minor, Opus 11**

Samuel Barber (1910 – 1981)

I. Molto allegro e appassionato

II. Molto adagio [attacca]

III. Molto allegro (come prima)

### ***Here I Am: I Am Here***

Music and Libretto: Andrea Clearfield (b. 1960)

Based on texts by Mimi Lemay and Sam Brinton – used by permission

Part I: Mimi

*Prologue*

1. Here I Am

2. A Mother’s Love (1)

3. Our Em Is a Quirky Girl

*At the Crossroads #1*

4. Not My Little Girl

5. Keep Things Fluid / Fracture

Part II: Sam

6. Here I Am: I Am Here

7. The Treatment / The Cure

8. Dear God, Make Me Straight

*At the Crossroads #2*

Mimi:

*At the Crossroads #3*

9. A Mother’s Love (2)

10. The Time Is Now

*Epilogue: Love Letters*

A Letter to My Younger Self: “O Beautiful, Little Sam”

A Letter to My Son: “Jacob, My Love”

### **“Light of a Clear, Blue Morning”**

(Soloist: Francesca Ranalli, mezzo-soprano)

Words and Music: Dolly Parton (b. 1946)

Arranged by Craig Hella Johnson (b. 1962)

## Program Notes: *The Road Home – The Journey to Acceptance*

February is well known as Black History Month. It also happens to be Queer History Month, with a focus on remembering the struggle of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community toward liberation and equality. Accordingly, this concert presents music and words with the theme of finding belonging and acceptance in a sometimes-hostile world.

American composer Stephen Paulus wrote “The Road Home” in 2005, setting lyrics by poet Michael Dennis Browne. His choice of a folk tune, *Prospect*, or “The Lone, Wild Bird,” evokes feelings of familiarity and longing, but also hope: “Rise up, follow me, I will lead you home.”

Katharine Petkovski, a rising star in the Canadian classical music firmament, sets a text by Robert Burns in “The Winter Is Past.” She explores multiple tonalities, expanding on the idea of shifting seasons. The piece laments the separation of two people in love, and, although it also alludes to a newfound love, it ends in the same key in which it began. She explains that nature is cyclical and eventually it must come to pass again.

Samuel Barber wrote his String Quartet not long after his time as a student at the Curtis Institute and in Europe, completing it (except for a rewritten finale in 1943) in 1935-36. Its slow movement was subsequently adapted as the famous “Adagio for Strings” and as a choral “Agnus Dei.” It is one of his most frequently performed compositions, perhaps best known for its appearance in the Oliver Stone film, *Platoon*. Barber was gay and lived with partner (and fellow composer) Gian Carlo Menotti for more than 40 years.

Craig Hella Johnson, founding Artistic Director of the professional choir Conspirare, wrote his arrangement of Dolly Parton’s “Light of a Clear Blue Morning” for that ensemble in 2010. Parton first recorded the song in 1977, as she emerged from a difficult breakup with a musical and business partner in order to set out on her own. The song radiates optimism, expressing the feeling that “everything’s gonna to be alright, it’s gonna to be okay.” We believe that, as love drives out fear and hatred, we can hope that all will live as we truly are, and that our differences will be celebrated rather than shunned. Let it be so!

“Here I Am: I Am Here” receives its Canadian premiere performance today. Composer Andrea Clearfield wrote this cantata as an affirmation of queer young people as they strive to live as their authentic selves in the face of rejection and trauma at the hands of family, church and society at large. Two stories are told through letters, written by Mimi Lemay to her trans son Jacob, and by Sam Brinton, a conversion therapy survivor, to their younger self. (CONTENT WARNING: descriptions of spiritual and physical abuse, thoughts of suicide.)

As Clearfield describes them, “their powerful letters of love promote understanding, healing, and connection.” After the concert, you will have an opportunity to write your own letters of support and encouragement to queer youth in our city and region. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions and discuss issues raised by the performance of this work. Church communities like ours commit to being safe places for 2SLGBTQIA+ people, and to making known to them that they are loved, they belong, and they are not alone.

– Chris Fischer



## Friends of Music

First-St. Andrew's is known throughout the London area and beyond for its outstanding music program. This important commitment to musical outreach through year-round concerts is supported, in part, by donations from our generous donors to Friends of Music. Donations can be made to honour a birthday or anniversary or as a memorial, to help support our programs.

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- Eberhard Memorial Music Scholarship
- Dr. Elmer Butt Shekinah Fund
- Terry Head Memorial Fund
- Clark Wilson Fund (established Jan. 1983 by the Music Committee)



*We acknowledge and honour the land upon which we gather today  
as the historic and traditional territory of First Nations People.*

*In particular, we recognize and thank the  
Chippewas of the Thames First Nation;  
the Oneida Nation of the Thames  
and the Munsee-Delaware Nation  
for their stewardship of these lands over millennia.*



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# HARBINGER of SPRING

**Saturday March 28, 2026 - 2:30pm**

## PERFORMERS

Richard Frank, saxophone

Yiwei Yang, flute

Gary McCumber, clarinet

Menelaos Menelaou, violin

Katerina Juraskova, cello

Catalina Teican, piano



**Free will donation  
(suggesting \$15-\$20 per person)**

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**You are invited to write messages in support of 2SLGBTQIA+ youth in our city and region: these may be sent via email to Queer Intersections (London) at [info@qxcanda.org](mailto:info@qxcanda.org).**



a London, Ontario based group whose purpose is creating, establishing and maintaining an environment that is a safe and inclusive place for the Two Spirit LGBTQIA+/Rainbow community through education and community relationships. Their focus includes but is not limited to the promotion of health, wellness and expression/exploration for individuals across the lifespan from youth to seniors in the Two Spirit LGBTQIA+/Rainbow community. For more information, please visit their website:

<https://www.qxcanda.org/>