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CONCERT
SEASON

ORLANDO

EMA NIKOLOVSKA
MEZZO-SOPRANO

SEAN SHIBE
GUITAR

Saturday, November 7, 2026

Raven's Cry Theatre, Sechelt



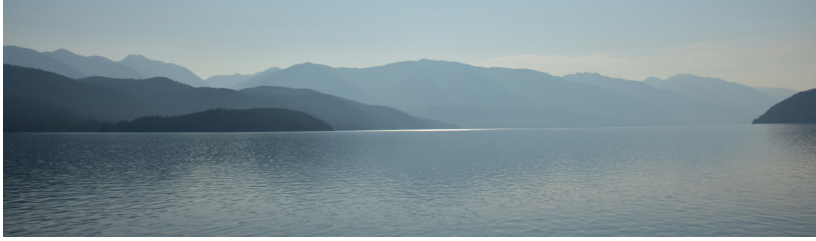
This concert sponsored by
Dr. Bland's Family Dentistry

THE COAST RECITAL SOCIETY

www.coastrecitalsociety.ca



The artists



Born in North Macedonia, mezzo-soprano **Ema Nikolovska** grew up in Toronto and lives in Berlin. She is a recipient of the Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award, was a BBC New Generation Artist, a YCAT Artist, Wigmore Hall Artist-in-Residence, and Elbphilharmonie "Fast Lane" Artist, and winner of the International Vocal Competition 's-Hertogenbosch.

She trained as a violinist at The Glenn Gould School of The Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, and as a singer at The Guildhall School of Music and Drama as well as the Internationale Opernstudio of the Staatsoper Unter den Linden in Berlin.

Ema's creative practice embraces standard and obscure repertoire from all centuries, in opera and concert, with the philosophy that all centuries of writing exist within one another and are interdependent. One week she may be singing Olga Neuwirth, Kaija Saariaho or Pierre Boulez, another Mozart, Schubert or Strauss, another week Rameau or Élisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre, and yet another, working on a piece that was written a day ago.

Her chamber music work (performance, arrangement, commissioning, research, curation) informs her opera practice—both forms are integral to her life as a vocalist.

Last season she made her role debut as Nicklausse/La Muse in Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* at the Staatsoper Berlin, Cherubino in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* at Oper Zürich and Orlando in Olga Neuwirth's *Orlando* at Komische Oper Berlin.

Ema also debuted Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier*, the lead role of The Woman in George Benjamin's *Picture A Day Like This* (London Royal Opera, and Opéra National du Rhin).

In recent years, particular creative highlights have included performing regular recitals in venues such as Wigmore Hall, Pierre Boulez Saal, Hamburg Elbphilharmonie, Carnegie Hall, Koerner Hall, CalPerformances Berkeley, with artists such as Sir András Schiff, Martha Argerich, Charles Richard-Hamelin, Sean Shibe, and Graham Johnson,

Guitarist **Sean Shibe** is a boundary-pushing force in contemporary classical music. The 2026/27 season features two exciting world premieres: Mark-Anthony Turnage's classical guitar concerto *Caught Hand* (with the Swedish Chamber Orchestra) and David Fennessy's electric guitar concerto *The Noise* (with the RTÉ Concert Orchestra and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, in collaboration with New Music Dublin).

A committed recitalist and chamber musician, Sean makes regular appearances at prestigious halls and festivals including Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, 92 Street Y, Wigmore Hall and the Aldeburgh Festival.

Over the last seasons, collaborations have included The Hallé, BBC Scottish Symphony, and the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra with whom in 2025 he performed the first ever electric guitar concerto at the BBC Proms—Mark Simpson's extraordinary *ZEBRA*.

Shibe is an ardent champion of contemporary music, taking a hands-on approach to new commissions and working with composers to experiment with and expand the guitar repertoire. Premieres to date include works by Thomas Adès, Oliver Leith, Cassandra Miller, Sasha Scott, Daniel Kidane, David Fennessy, Shiva Feshareki, David Lang, Freya Waley-Cohen, James Dillon and Mark Simpson.

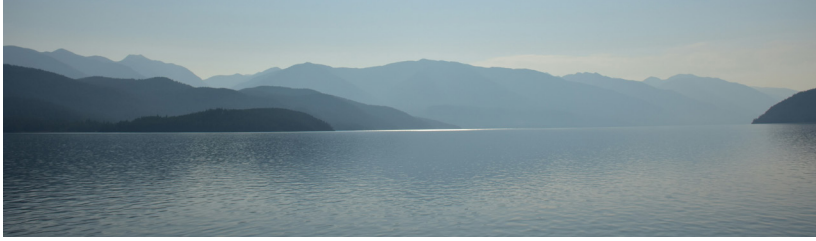
He is equally committed to the canon, regularly pairing bold, new pieces with his own transcriptions of J.S. Bach's lute suites and seventeenth-century Scottish lute manuscripts.

Shibe's recordings have received consistent critical acclaim: *Profesión* won a 2024 BBC Music Magazine Award, while *Broken Branches*, a collaboration with tenor Karim Sulayman, was nominated for a 2024 GRAMMY Award.

Previous albums have garnered OPUS Klassik and three Gramophone awards. Shibe's 2026 Pentatone release, *Vesper* was nominated for a Gramophone award in the contemporary category and received the Golden Guitar Award for best solo album.

Shibe studied at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, at the Kunst-Universität Graz and in Italy. He currently serves as a Guitar Professor at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

The program



ORLANDO

JULES MASSENET (1842–1912)

Ô Souverain, ô Juge, ô Père from Le Cid

JOHN DOWLAND (1563–1626)

Praeludium

Come Again, Sweet Love
Come, Heavy Sleep
Think'st Thou Then by Thy Feigning

from *First Booke of Songes or Ayres* (1597)

SASHA SCOTT (B. 2002)

1000 Parts of You

LINDA CATLIN SMITH (B. 1957)

Dark Light

THOMAS ADÈS (B. 1971)

Blanca **from** ***The Exterminating Angel***

DETLEV GLANERT (B. 1960)

Hexensabbat **from** ***Orlando-Lieder***

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797–1828)

Einsamkeit **from** ***Winterreise, D. 911***

DETLEV GLANERT (B. 1960)

Lied der Wehmut **from** ***Orlando-Lieder***

THOMAS ADÈS (B. 1971)

Habanera **from** ***The Exterminating Angel***

INTERMISSION

NAHRE SOL (ALICE GI-YOUNG HWANG) (B. 1991)

This Other Here

MADDIE ASHMAN (B. 2001)

Pearls (2026)

CASSANDRA MILLER (B. 1976)

Dream Memorandum (It Reminded Me of the Truth)

HANS ABRAHAMSEN (B. 1952)

See the Small, Limpid Well-Spring **from** ***Two Inger Christensen Songs***

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797–1828)

So laßt mich scheinen **from** ***Gesänge aus Wilhelm Meister,*** **D. 877, no. 3**

ALEX PAXTON (B. 1990)

Be Kind

SMALL PAUSE

JOHN DOWLAND (1563–1626)

Orlando Sleepeth

PAULINE VIARDOT (1821–1910)

Aimez-moi

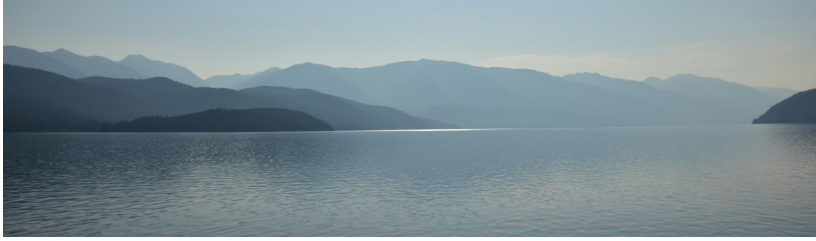
BOB DYLAN (B. 1941)

Masters of War

LAURIE ANDERSON (B. 1947)

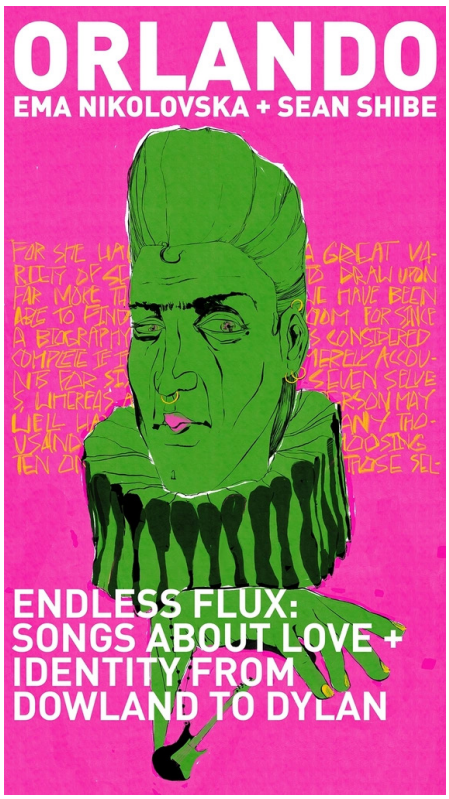
O Superman

Program notes



"The experience felt like being awake in a vivid dream...their shared artistic purpose and daring made it gel, along with the melding of Shibe's endlessly nuanced playing and the expressive beauty of Nikolovska's voice."

—The Times of London



The knight immortal, the troubadour ever-changing, the lover constant: Orlando adventures in all their/her/his forms, uncovering who they truly are.

This programme explores the non-linear journey between the multiple iterations of Orlando through disparate time, genders and media, inspired by written stories such as the Old French *Chanson de Roland*, Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography*.

Orlando's experience with war begins with the *Chanson de Roland* (written c.1040), one of the oldest surviving works of French literature, and continues with his part in Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* (1532). These poems focus on the duties of a knight, as well as courtly love and the chivalrous adventures that ensue.

Virginia Woolf forces Orlando to consider his identity in her novel *Orlando: A Biography* (1928), making him both long-lived and genderfluid. Inspired by her first female lover and fellow writer, Vita Sackville-West, Woolf created an Orlando who not only shifts from a man into a woman and steps up in social class from a court page to a noblewoman, but who explores their gender expression and sexuality. The novel follows Orlando's centuries-long adventures through both physical countries and metaphysical ways of being.

This programme follows Orlando's kaleidoscopic existence via the four musical signposts of Sasha Scott's *1000 parts of you*, Cassandra Miller's *It Reminded Me of the Truth*, Detlev Glanert's *Orlando-Lieder* and Laurie Anderson's *O Superman*. Along the way, we touch upon music by Dowland, Massenet, Bob Dylan and others. Both Sasha Scott and Cassandra Miller contend with Orlando's identity in their world première works, deriving inspiration from Woolf's novel.

1000 parts of you by Scott, a Londoner and current composition student at the Royal College of Music, mirrors her cover of *O Superman*, employing voice, guitar and electronics. About this piece, she said, "...[Chapter 6 of Orlando] led me to contemplate how we all as humans have what feels like thousands of different selves and parts of us, which all make us who we are.

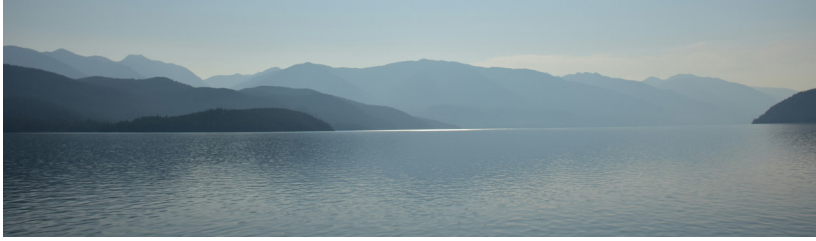
"When I was thinking about this, I visited the exhibition *Infinity Mirror Rooms* by Yayoi Kusama. I was really moved and struck by the infinitive amount of reflections there were in the mirrored room, and how it almost felt like a simulation of Orlando's introspection. I wanted the sound world to feel infinitive and contemplative, yet consuming and overwhelming."

Miller, a Canadian composer and previous Associate Head of Composition at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, created her piece, *Dream Memorandum* (*It Reminded Me of the Truth*), from the voice-memo of her conversation with Ema Nikolovska about the overarching themes of Woolf's novel.

Speaking about her process, Miller said, "...I've asked Ema to re-learn excerpts of her voice memos to me, and to speak them now in concert accompanied by Sean. I find the sound of Ema's voice to be magical, evocative and intelligent—and, fortunately for the transcription process, quite tonal. Her flights of insight manifest in an effervescent F major, and her most profound reflections have a rich D minor cadence."

While adventuring the musical landscape, we continuously return to Detlev Glanert's *Orlando-Lieder*. This set of songs explores facets of Orlando's personality while providing a musical scaffolding for the entire recital. The texts, although inspired by Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, are new poems by writers Margareth Obexer and Angela di Ciriaco-Sussdorff.

Program notes



Glanert's propensity for harmonic complexity in his vocal work shines through these songs, although he swaps his usually dense soundscape for the sparse narrative style common to the troubadours and trobairitz of the Middle Ages. The voice moves freely over the lute-like accompaniment of the guitar, Glanert's emotion-forward compositional voice lending itself well to these texts that focus on passion and adventure.

This troubadour-esque sound serves as connective thread throughout the recital, exemplified by Dowland's work and colouring the wartime songs of Bob Dylan and Laurie Anderson. When placed alongside Dylan's *Masters of War*, a Cold War protest song from 1963, Anderson's *O Superman* displays the effects of war on Orlando's identity and hampered ability to create community.

Having started as an indie avant-garde artist, Anderson burst onto the commercial scene with her *O Superman*, taking the number two spot on the UK singles chart in 1981. The song began as part of *United States*, an 8-hour stage work that spanned two evenings and included musical numbers alongside purely visual segments, spoken word pieces and animated vignettes. Both the stage work and the song explore life in the United States, with the song focusing on how new technology can change communication between individuals during wartime.

This song is sometimes called *O Superman* (for Massenet) because Anderson was inspired by the aria *O Souverain, ô juge, ô père* from Massenet's *Le Cid*. The opening line of the piece (O Superman, O Judge, O Mom and Dad) mirrors the translated opening line of Massenet's aria (O sovereign lord, O judge, O father), but the text diverges after that.

The original recording of *O Superman* utilises looping electronics and a vocoder, allowing Anderson's voice to serve as both a constant beat and an accompanying, chordal Greek chorus. This programme's cover version, created by Sasha Scott, emulates the electronic accompaniment of the original while adding an acoustic element through the use of guitar. Orlando's adventure continues through and beyond this programme, their identity changing as they repeatedly reflect upon it. Who and what will they become next?





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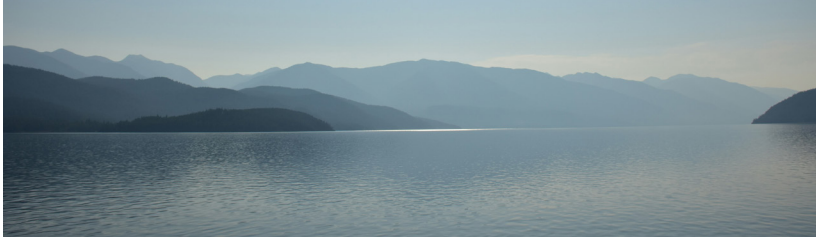

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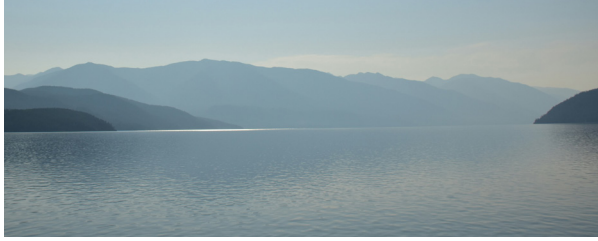

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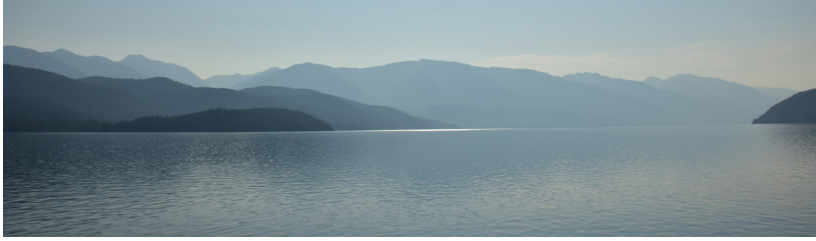

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