



LOOK!

An Opera in 9 Paintings

Composed by *Oliver Whitehead*
Story and Lyrics by
Oliver Whitehead and Linda Nicholas
with
Paul Grambo, baritone
Sonja Gustafson, soprano

June 3, 2018
at Museum London



London **Arts** Council

GOOD FOUNDATION ^{INC.}

LOOK!

An Opera in 9 Paintings

Composer: *Oliver Whitehead*

Story and Lyrics: *Oliver Whitehead & Linda Nicholas*

Soprano: *Sonja Gustafson*

Baritone: *Paul Grambo*

Piano: *Steve Holowitz*

Cello: *Christine Newland*

Painting # 9 Lyrics: *Claire Whitehead*

Producer: *Mary Malone*

Creative Consultant: *Adam Corrigan Holowitz*

Lighting Designer: *Mark Mooney*

Videographer: *Greg DeSouza*

Transition photos: *Mary Malone & Oliver Whitehead*

ARRIVING

Christine

Why?

Why did I ask him here?

It was a bad idea.

What made me think that he'd be interested in art?

He's not the type, he doesn't even dress the part.

But then again, who knows?

We've never been that close.

He's always been a man of mystery to me.

Not someone that I'd ever regularly see.

Let alone go on a date.

Just my ex-boyfriend's ex-roommate.

I'm taking an art course—

Does that make me wise?

More likely I'll seem like a fool in his eyes.

Will he see what I want him to see?

Will he listen to me?

If I open my heart,

Am I ready for what I might find?

Or will my own mask make me blind?

He's taking time from some conference he's in town for.

But what's his plan? What did he want to track me down for?

This whole thing's got me quite perplexed.

I should have just ignored his text.

When I come here, it's nice to be alone.

No need to talk, just taking time, just taking time.

Then, how sublime,

The paintings mine.

I own it when I look.

Do others feel the same?

The art we see, we also half-create.

No telling how,

No time but now,

Here in this place.

He's seven minutes late!

This is a hopeless date!

Just one more minute and I'm out of here, I swear.

And if I wreck his day, so what, why should I care?

Marc

Hey!

Christine

Hey....Hey Marc

Marc

Hey Christine. You're looking great!

Christine

You too...thank you. You've changed

Marc

It's been years.

Christine

How was the conference?

Marc

Well, you know

Christine

Is this alright with you?

Meeting here, I mean?

Marc

Well,to be honest, I was thinking of the Dairy Queen.

Christine

It's just that I'm taking a course,
And there might be some things here
That you would like to see.

Marc

Museums are OK with me,
As long as there's nothing too abstract.
The art that I like
Is art with a story.
Art about the past.
Battles...heroes,
Canadian history,
Settlers and natives.
Just like that artist I've seen in Toronto:
What's his name?
Kroger...Kruger...Krieger?

Christine

Krieghof.

Marc

That's the one!
When I look at his paintings

There's a feeling I can't explain.
It's like being back in a far-off time.

Christine

Well, let's take some time
To look at some art
That was painted here in London.

Marc

Sure. I grew up here -- the Forest City!
And a city of art,
It's famous, I know that.
I had a few friends
Who studied at Beal.
And who hasn't heard of Paul Peel?
You know...I almost met you once
When you were playing
In that band you had at Saunders.
It was your big gig
At Call the Office.

Christine

Oh my God, so long ago!
You never told me that.

Marc

Well, we never talked much
When you were seeing Evan.
Maybe it's time to make up for that now.

Christine

Ok, here's a piece of history for you.

1

***Painting of Elmwood Avenue with View of
Normal School, 1904***

by John Munnoch

Marc

What's this place? Is it in London?

Christine

Yes, look! Elmwood Avenue.

Marc

Really?

Christine

Yes, look. There's the Normal School.

Marc

Well, that's kind of strange.
It doesn't look much like the street that I know.
In fact there's no street there at all.

Christine

No, you see,
the street runs beside it.
That must be The Green.

Marc

Well, to me it looks more like
some strange piece of farmland,
with a piece of South London stuck in at the back!

Christine

But there's history here.
You said you like history.
Art with a story.

Marc

Yes, but I want it real!
This just doesn't ring true.
This painter's trying to paint like some Brit from 50
years in the past.
A colonial dream,
With shepherds and cows.
It was out of date then,
And it's out of date now.

Christine

When all's said and done,
I have to agree.
Let's find something new.
This does nothing for me.

both

When all's said and done,
We have to agree.
Let's find something new.
There's lots more to see.

2

The London Six, 1984

by John B. Boyle

Marc

Now here's a different story.

Christine

Or several different stories.

Marc

This is the London that I recognize.

Christine

But do you recognize the people there?

Marc

Why d'you ask that?

Christine

Well, you said you had friends at Beal.

Marc

I don't remember much.

Christine

Did they ever talk about a band of artists
who played strange sounds
on things that they made?

Marc

That rings a bell.
Tell me about them.

Christine

Deep in the heart of London,
In nineteen sixty-five,

Marc

Two years before Sergeant Pepper,

Christine

A strange beast came alive.
Their instruments were infernal,
To hear and to look at too.

Marc

Frankenstein monsters stuck together,
With nuts and bolts and glue.

[Chorus]

They made no music.
It had no meaning.
There was no rhythm,
No melody,
No harmony, no hits,
No Sergeant Pepper.

Now I remember!

both

N-I-H-I-L-I-S-T
Nihilist Spasm Band!

Christine

Everything London wasn't
Was exactly what they were.

Marc

And London loved them and loathed them.
But they refused to disappear.

both

They got invitations
To destroy the nations.
They took Manhattan,
Tokyo, Paris.
Then they took Berlin.

Marc

But those six guys
Are not all in the band.
Or am I missing something here?

Christine

Only the rest of London history.
Tied into the story.

Marc

Sucked into the vortex.
Strolling players on a painted stage.

Christine

There's Paul Peel out there on the left.

Marc

Some homeless drifter, you might guess.

Christine

And see Jack Chambers on his right.

Marc

He looks like he might hit me.

Christine

He looks like he might paint me.

Marc

I wouldn't wrestle that arm for my life.

both

Creative spirits
From the present and the past,
Summoned to attend some cosmic conference.
Standing on that corner
Where the busker plays in summer.

Christine

Moving to no music.

Marc

No melody.

Christine

No meaning,

both

Pure anarchy.

Christine

There's something strange about the sky.

Marc

Yes, you could say a flying car is strange.
Held up by no noticeable means.

Christine

A puzzle for the viewer.

Marc

The secret of the picture.
D'you want to guess?

Christine

No, go on, spill the beans.

Marc

You know they once made cars
In London long ago.
The greatest one was called The London Six.

Christine

We could have been another Motor City.

Marc

But now we're just Detroit's baby brother.
They once had it all,
The cars, the music too.

Christine

General Motors, Chevrolet,

Marc

Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye.

Christine

But we have one thing that Detroit has not.
N-I-H-I-L-I-S-T
Nihilist Spasm Band!

3 _____

**Lethbridge Lodge Variations:
Light Grey/Cremnitz White, 1996**

AKA "The White Painting"
by Doug Kirton

Marc

Hm—hmm-hmm-hmm

both

Hmm-hmm-hmm

Marc

I don't get it.
It's.....

Christine

Well, it's.... Well, it's....

Marc

It's just nothing.

Christine

No, it's, no, it's, no,
There's something, there's something, there's
something about it.

Marc

No, really, I just don't see it.
How much did that cost?

Christine

Why does it matter,
Any more than any other piece of art?

Marc

Why spend public money on this?
Who decides?

Christine

You're missing the point.

Marc

It's a sham, pure and simple.
They're just trying to hoax us.

Christine

Look carefully and maybe you'll see something that
you missed.
You just can't see a story.

Marc

I know what I'm looking at.
I'm looking at nothing.

Christine

You just don't understand abstraction.

Marc

Please! Gimme a break!
I've got a better colour on my bathroom wall.

Christine

Just listen to me,
Try to see what I see.
I want you to try.

Marc

There's no point in trying to convince me,
It's a waste of time.

Christine

No, you have to take time.

Marc

It's not worth it.

Christine

Just think of the time that it takes
To create a work of art.

Marc

No, no, no.
Hah! Are you kidding?
All I need is thirty seconds and a roller.
Where's the skill?

Christine

No, no, I'll show you.
Will you let me show you?

Marc

What? Sure I guess.
Tell me what you see.

Christine

Well....well...

Marc

Well, I'm waiting. Ready?

Christine

Okay, look, it's not just white, there's something faint
and dark, like veins in skin.

Marc

Hmm.. hmmm... ah ha.
Faint and dark, yeah, well, maybe,

Christine

A perfect pearl, or fronds of cedar in the snow.

Marc

A pearl, yeah, whatever.

Christine

A map of treasure bleached by sun,
A mystery.

Marc

Well, I, well, I,
Oh, come on.
You only like it 'cos it's hard to understand.

Christine

Wait! No, that's not true,
It's a choice.
Anybody can open their eyes and see!

Marc

It's, no, no, it's not for me.

Christine

And see!

Marc

I still don't get it.
Just don't.....

4

Spring Series # 1: Lake Huron, 1994

AKA "Every Summer"

by Paddy Gunn O'Brien

Christine

Every summer,
Every summer
Every summer as a child,
Every summer as a child,
We stayed by the lake.
Always the same place,
That cottage near Kincardine,
Where family stories slept between the boards.

I don't remember how many days we stayed there,
But every day was forever.
Days out of time,
Like a wheel standing still.

Sweet water sea,
Playground of the wind,
School of colour,
Palette of the sand and the sky.

The summer I turned nine,
I swam into the blue
Past the place where my feet could touch down.
I was so scared,
But I didn't dare to scream
And give myself away.

My cousin Luke was on the shore.
He was just thirteen,
The most beautiful thing
That I had ever seen.

This is the place,
Beyond the form, beyond the shade,
Where all my senses break
In a sudden great light,
A great white sound without walls.

The lake still wears its colours,
Those bands of blue and green.
The warm safe shallows, the colour of a fawn.
Then the line where the water darkens,
And innocence ends.

Marc

Every summer,
Every summer,
Every summer as a child,
We stayed by the lake.

Christine

Aquamarine, turquoise,
Sapphire, cyan, topaz,
Cobalt, azure,
Mirror of electric blue.
Other times the cold, dull grey of lead or pewter.

Marc

Days out of time, like a wheel standing still.
Sweet water sea,
Playground of the wind
School of colour,
Palette of the sand and sky.

Christine

Purple glow,
No horizon where the sky meets the water
In the last light of sunset.
Fading, fading, never gone.

both

Endless summers
By the endless water.

5 _____

Sky Woman: Losing My Stuff, 2002

by Shelley Niro

Marc

Here's a world
Turned suddenly upside-down.

Christine

A woman in free-fall, bright as the sun.

Marc

Speak to me
As you flash past my sight!

Christine

Are you bound for oblivion?
Or bound for the light?

Marc

Sky woman, sky woman
Headfirst and headstrong
You're flying and falling
With wind in your hair.

Christine

Sky woman, sky woman
Clutching your windbreaker,
Blood-red bandanna,
A matador's prayer.

Marc

Snowballs of meteors
Send shooting-star wishes
That ride through the lightning
On missions unknown.

both

Sky Woman, Sky Woman,
Falling through the universe,
Falling for all of us,
Heading for home.

Christine

The land that you left
May be hard to return to.
No clutching at roots
With your hands full of flowers.

Marc

Dreaming or tumbling
Like Alice or Icarus,
Free faller's flight,
Deep in Milky Way showers.

Losing your shoes
And your worldly possessions.
Sunglasses look for
A path of their own.

Rain over Water, 1974

by Paterson Ewen

Christine

Rain!

Marc

Hail!

both

Storm!

Gale!

Marc

What force is this?

A power hose

Of flying nails

That rip your clothes.

A fist, a blast,

A battle ground

Of cut and thrust,

Of pelt and pound!

Christine

A grapeshot shower,

A volley hurled,

Relentless lash,

To whip the world.

A rage of rain

That takes control,

That slices skin,

That cuts your soul.

A testing ground.

Marc

A battlefield.

Christine

There's no escape.

Marc

Strap on your shield.

both

Sky Woman, Sky Woman,
Falling through the universe,
Falling for all of us,
Heading for home.

Marc

Falling and falling
Rough riding on air,
Barefoot and startled
With sharp fingered hair.

Christine

Sky woman, tumbling
Your bright yellow dress,
A promise of sunshine
To ease and to bless.

Tree-roots flash lightning,
You're diving and drifting,
In fathoms of falling
Deep into the blue.

Marc

Falling's a secret—
You just let it take you,
And keep a cool head
While enjoying the view.

Snowballs of meteors
Send shooting-star wishes
That ride through the lightning
On missions unknown.

both

Sky Woman, Sky Woman,
Falling through the universe,
Falling for all of us,
Heading for home.

Marc

Up close there's more
To shock the eye.
You see the cuts,
The grey paint sky.

The gouged-out groove,
The routed slice,
Intended slash,
Performed, precise.

Christine

Salt in a wound
From left to right.
No mercy here
In sting and bite.

He whips the paint,
He flays the wood,
So dark and hard,
So cruel and crude.

Christine

Knockout round.

Marc

That leaves you drowned.

Christine

That strikes you down

Marc

To unseen ground.

Christine

Look close, look deep, behind the rain,
Behind the veil that curtains calm.
Lake water bluer than the sky,
Green islands older than the rain.

Marc

There's hope for peace, for breathing free

Christine

For breathing free

Marc

Should we turn back,
Walk clear away?
Escape the lash
Of wind and spray?

It's like a dare,
A gauntlet thrown.
Ride out this storm,
You're not alone.

Christine

You might get drenched,
You might get thrashed,
Your hair smacked flat,
Your skin feel lashed.

You stride, you wade,
You fall, you fight,
You push right through,
With eyes shut tight.

Marc

We'll ride that storm.

Christine

Get on that train.

Marc

Be brave and wild,

Christine

And risk the pain.

Marc

The fighting's done,
The battle's won.
That's when the dance
Has just begun.

Christine

Move with the earth,
Move with the wind.
The sky wheels to
The spin you're in.

Olga and Mary Visiting, 1964-65

by Jack Chambers

Marc

There is daylight full of shadows,
 Hard to see, yet shining bright.
 Clear and misty, still and moving.
 Paradox of dark and light.

Christine

There is silence in the singing,
 Passageways that threaten night.
 Black the empty chair that's waiting,
 Black the hair that holds the sight.

Marc

Look, there's roses on the table.
 Oranges. From Southern Spain?
 That round arch has light and darkness.
 The floor has circles, walls a frame.

Christine

There are limbs that float in pieces.
 What a strangely see-through shoe.
 Now I want to pull the curtain,
 Just to clarify the view.

Marc

Can I ever lift my mask off?
 Can I move the cup away?
 Should I speak about my worries?
 Would it scare my friends away?

Christine

There are shadows in the white light,
 And a halo round the room.
 Ask a holiness of questions.
 Find the dark side of the moon.

Marc

There's a mystery in this moment,
 Painted by a dying man.
 It's so hard to pin down meaning
 When it's written in the sand.

Marc

You greet the hail,
 The pelting stones.
 They could be music,
 Lines and tones.

Christine

And all the lake
 Is dancing too.
 Those cloudy waves
 Are almost blue.

both

I'll dance a dance that hears the rain.
 I'll dance with my young soul again.

Christine

Then out of breath I'll rest on earth,

Marc

On terra firma, bright and green.

both

And there's a voice, so still and calm,
 That tells you that your dance is done.

Marc

So let it rain,
 Let it pour!
 Bring it on!
 Send me more!

The wind calls out,
 The rain says go.
 This time it's real.
 I won't say no.

Christine

I'm lacing up
 My dancing shoes.
 The cyclone spin
 Will whirl me through.

both

High as the kite
 That rides the spray,
 We'll snap the string
 And fly away.

both

So we try to see things clearly,
But they slip and slide away.
All our memories show their fault lines
In the clarity of day.

Marc

The clarity of day
Would chase this memory away,
Away from haze and mist,
Or as my mum would say,
They're lost in the mists of time.

My mom was lost one day.
Black hair, greying up.
Struggling to find the words,
The mind in pieces.

Christine

Did she lose everything?

Marc

She came apart --
Life at its worst.
It broke my heart.
Time was broken.

Those two, those two,
Still here today,
Silent in talking.
All of us looking.
Not lost.

Christine

It's a moment, held breathless,
A simple thing, made endless.

Marc

We are in church.

both

There's a mystery in this moment,
Painted by a dying man.
It's so hard to pin down meaning,
When it's written in the sand.

8

Wheel, 1973-74

by Greg Curnoe

Marc

Before you speak,
I have to say
It can't be just a wheel.

Christine

Let it be just a wheel.
So much simpler to be
Just a wheel.

Marc

It's a thing of beauty!
Exact, shining bright,
Elegant, an engineered delight.

Christine

Let it be just a wheel.
So much simpler to be
Just a wheel.

Marc

But look at those spokes.
I feel that I could play them.
Heavenly sounds, the music of the spheres!
Harpo Marx would never catch up.
I love the geometric frequency.
Proportions rule, precise and cruel,
In a certain exact sequence.

Christine

Oh, let it be just a wheel.
So much simpler to be just a wheel.

I wish that it could be
A simple painted wheel,
Standing still with Fortune at the top.
But spin it round
On solid ground
And down you're bound to drop.

Marc

You don't like bicycles then?

Christine

My sister died riding one.

Look at Me Dairy Queen Here I Am, 2011

by Jason McLean

Marc

Look at this! The Dairy Queen!
I knew that's where our afternoon would end.

Christine

Should we take it as a sign?
"I found myself at the Dairy Queen."

Marc

Do you think he really did?
"I found myself out of body..."

both

D'you think we really could?

Marc

Now we're standing in a Blizzard
Like the treats that I was given;
Lucky, greedy, grateful child,
Risking brainfreeze for some heaven,
With speckled sweets that teem and swarm
And make their points across the page.

Christine

And what a flurry it has been.
We've spilled these thoughts out on the day.
He never knew me well before,
And now there's little held at bay.

Marc

It looks whimsical at first,
But look at all these heavy lines.
Makes me wonder what did happen
At the Roadhouse or the Ocean.
Lines so deep are often pulled,
Impressed in place by something strong.

Christine

What a change of tone he's taken:
Lets me look more closely too,
See the lines, the roads and places
We both know and travel through.

Marc

Oh my God, I'm so sorry.
What was her name?
Who was to blame?

Christine

Her name was Jane,
A precious pearl,
Imperfect, rare,
The centre so bright.
My special girl,
My heart's delight.

A car door opened and her life closed.
Spun out and into the squeal of wheels.
Helmet or not what did it matter?
Tossed like a rag.
Straight into the gutter.
Oh yes! The wheel's a brilliant thing.

Marc

I ought to stop,
To let it drop.
I don't know what to ask.

Christine

No need for speech.
Trust art to teach
The heart to lift the mask.

both

The art we see we half-create.
So tales are told,
As time unfolds,
Each twist of fate.

Christine

We've shared a lot of memories,

Marc

Yes, I didn't mean to get you down.
With traumas from my past.

Christine

Me neither.
Let's find a painting
That will take us somewhere else.

Marc

See the way the roads of London
Form a child's head with a helmet.

Christine

Those scribbled names, ideas which just explode.

Marc

They call attention frantically
To people's lives lived locally.

Christine

There's Curnoe's birthplace next to Wharnccliffe Road.

Marc

"Talk on Art Bell"

Christine

What's that all about?
Where d'you think he got that name?

Marc

Don't you see it's Taco Bell.
It's like a wink, a way to tell
That art can flourish in a fastfood chain.

Christine

It's funny how that makes me see
Some secret, strange society,
Debating their beliefs
Over sodas and ground beef.

Marc

Tuesday night philosophy
By fluorescent light.

Christine

Just like a Paris bistro
But with no red wine in sight.

Marc

It shows you what bizarre creations
Spill out from inside a Blizzard cup.

"I found myself at the Dairy Queen."

Christine

Did you really?

Marc

We'll find ourselves at the Dairy Queen.

Christine

Do you think we could?

Marc

After this, I think we should.

Christine

My hair's a mess, let me just slip out and fix it.

Marc

Go right ahead, I'll be waiting at the exit.

...LEAVING _____

Marc

So what just happened here?
It's really not too clear.
It seems we both said things
We never planned to say.
It was kind of shocking,
But it somehow feels OK.

I had my doubts at first.
I could bail out at worst.
There was a moment
When I almost walked away.
But something made me
Change my mind and choose to stay.
It was the right move in the end.
I've got a hunch we could be friends.

This is a different kind of place for me,
An ever-new, surprising space to be.
She knows it better
But I'm kind of catching up.
I'm not too blind to see
There's something here for me.

When you look with eyes wide open,
You see what's hiding in plain sight.
We saw no battles,
We saw no heroes.
But we found history
In the opening of hearts,
The lifting of the mask.

There's more to see, I know.
But I can take it slow.

It's not a movie,
An opera or a play.
You could take ten minutes,
Or stay for half the day.

Christine
Hey

Marc
Hey

Christine
Are you ready?

Marc
Yes, let's go.
You know...
I'm really glad you asked me here.
The conference was super-dull.
This gave me such a lift.

Christine
That's good to hear,
I didn't know what I was doing.

Marc
You did the right thing.
It worked so well.

Christine
I feared that you'd find nothing,
And spoil it for me too.

Marc
No, no, I've got to say
This was a nice surprise.
It opened up eyes.

Christine
Do you see what I see now?

Marc
Now I see it.

Christine
Line and figure,
Expression, emotion.

Marc
It's like finding a friend.

Christine
All the colours of the spectrum,
Even white?

Marc
We'll get back to that another time.

Christine
What really matters
Is that paintings change with looking.
The painting that you leave behind
Is not the one you found.

Marc
The stories that they show us
Are stories of ourselves,
But some are not the ones we want to tell.

Christine
But stories must be told,
And life is not a clear day.

Marc
But all the heartache
Will burn away like fire,
When you're dancing in the storm.

Christine
Who can predict the weather of the heart?
Dancing in the storm....

Marc
Till you reach the other side,

Christine
Until you find
That still small voice of calm.

Marc
That still small voice of calm.

both
The art we see
We also half create.
Darkly through glass
Unknown at first
Then face to face.

Marc
Ice-cream's on me.

Adam Corrigan Holowitz

Creative Consultant

Adam works as a dramaturge, director and playwright. Adam is the Founding Artistic Director of AlvegoRoot Theatre Company, which celebrates its 10th Season in 2018. Works he has directed for AlvegoRoot include: *Sixty-Seven* (playwright), *Dominion Day*, *The Cheese Poet* (playwright), *The Big Lad*, *The Angel of Long Point* (playwright), *Running Rude*, *Press Cuttings*, *Colleening* (creator), *Endgame*, *Beard*, *Macbeth*, *Uncle Vanya* and *Waiting for Godot*. He wrote and performed his solo play *Manor Park*.

Adam played Kenneth in James Reaney's *The Easter Egg*. Recently Adam directed the opera theatre double bill of Menotti's *The Telephone* and Shaw's *Village Wooing* for Village Opera. Adam studied dramaturgy at York University and studied acting at Fanshawe College. He is an associate artist with Troubadour Theatre Collective. Adam also works as an arts journalist, he frequently writes on theatre for several publications including stratfordfestivalreviews.com.



Paul Grambo

Baritone

Originally from Brandon, Manitoba, baritone Paul Grambo teaches and performs out of London, Ontario. Some of his credits include eight seasons with the Grammy and Juno nominated Elora Singers, community theatre and opera with AlvegoRoot Theatre and Village Opera, plus opera and comedy with UWOpera, Pacific Opera Victoria, and Edmonton Opera. As a teacher and director, Paul maintains a vibrant and growing private voice studio, is Music Director and Conductor of The Broadway Singers, Assistant Music Director at St. James' Westminster Anglican Church, plus he works closely with the Canadian Celtic Choir, the Mississauga Children's Choir, Pride Men's Chorus London, the Karen Schuessler Singers, and regularly conducts workshops for ensembles around south western Ontario. Paul holds a Bachelor of Music degree from Brandon University and a Masters of Music degree in Performance and Literature from the University of Western Ontario.



Sonja Gustafson

Soprano

London's award-winning Jazz songstress Sonja Gustafson is a talented vocalist with a unique style and polish. Her traditional approach reflects an appreciation for the forerunners of vocal jazz, bringing a cool verve to classic and lesser-known standards. Honest and soulful in her delivery and grace, Sonja Gustafson is dazzling whether performing passionate ballads, scatting with abandon, or crooning popular covers.

Her collaborations with many of London's top jazz instrumentalists led to the release (2007) of her self-titled debut CD, and a double Christmas CD entitled "Comfort & Joy" (2010). Both albums were well-received and enjoy airplay on CBC radio.

She is also an accomplished classically trained soprano with a Master's of Music from Western University. A popular guest with symphonies, choirs and big bands, she has been soprano soloist at First St. Andrew's United Church in London, ON since 1999. Sonja's love of opera and theatre led her to found her own production company, Diva Lounge Productions, which produces fully staged chamber operas, and has enjoyed five highly successful seasons at the London Fringe Festival.

In an intimate jazz club or in front of a symphony, this multi-faceted performer connects deeply with her audience, and shares her love of song with passion.



Stephen Holowitz

Pianist

Stephen Holowitz teaches music at A. B. Lucas Secondary School in London and is Director of Music at St. James Westminster Anglican Church.

Stephen led a number of jazz groups in the Thunder Bay area, before moving to London in 1983, completing a Bachelor of Music in Performance (Organ and Church Music) and a Bachelor of Education (Music, Dramatic Arts). He has been a featured performer with the London Encore Concert Band, Orchestra London, Brassroots, London Pro Musica, the Karen Schussler Singers, and Herencia Latina.

Stephen was keyboardist and co-composer along with Oliver Whitehead for The Antler River Project a London ensemble that writes unique blends of jazz and world music. They premiered a set of songs based on the poems of James Reaney, and presented an original musical suite inspired by The River Project. Oliver and Stephen also collaborated to compose music for the play Colleen (song settings of poems by the London poet Colleen Thibaudeau), produced by AlvegoRoot Theatre.

Stephen performs frequently with Denise Pelley, Paul Stevenson and the contemporary folk group Celtic Shift. He has recorded two CDs of original arrangements of traditional hymns and gospel music, and composed music for the Amabile Youth Choir, Project Sing, and The Grand Theatre.



Mary Malone

Producer

After 10 years as a journalist, publishing hundreds of articles in over 60 newspapers and magazines, Malone spent the next 20 years as a communications project manager for government and commercial organizations. Her late career work included book editing, grant-writing, researcher on documentary film projects, and conference management. She was co-founder and programmer of the London Canadian Film Festival for six years (2003-2008). Since 1983, Malone has also managed promotions and logistics on her husband Oliver Whitehead's recording and music festival tour projects; most recently on production of The Fetch (2016), Whitehead's trans-Atlantic collaboration with Linda Nicholas (Linda Hoyle) in London, Ont., with Mo Foster and several other top jazz and session musicians in London, England. Malone has served on the boards and advisory councils of London arts organizations including Lester B. Pearson School For The Arts and the London Heritage Council, with more in-depth services to Orchestra London and Sunfest. When Whitehead needed help on the non-musical aspects of Look ! An Opera in 9 Paintings, she thought "how hard can it be to produce a little opera?" She's finding out.



Christine Newland

Cellist

A Canada Council supported artist, Christine has performed solo for CBC and BBC radio and television, and the West Deutches Rundfunk. She toured Europe and Canada in the Dusseldorf String Quartet, and Japan, sponsored by the Hellas Cultural Organization. Her chamber studies were with the Guarneri, Hungarian, Yale, and Lenox String Quartets. She has freelanced with the Toronto, Hamilton, Kitchener, Windsor and Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestras and has been principal cellist for Orchestra London for over 40 years. Concerto performances include: Haydn C & D, Schumann, Boccherini, Saint-Saens, Elgar, Giron, Shostakovich, Tchaikovsky, Vivaldi, Dvorak, Faure, Hindemith, Shoushounian and Whitehead.. In 2000, Christine debuted the \$16M "Bonjour" Stradivarius cello, in Canada, at a solo cello tribute concert to her friend Jacqueline Du Pre, that raised over \$100,000 for Orchestra London. She has organized several fund-raising concerts: for 911, the American Red Cross; an environmental concert, debuting Uhuru Peak, written for her by Oliver Whitehead; and raised funds for various causes with her artwork, as a portrait artist. She currently enjoys writing cello parts for various artists in Rock, Pop and Jazz, performing with them, and making recordings. She has received 3 Jack Richardson Awards for Solo Classical Artist.



Linda Nicholas

Lyricist

Linda Nicholas is a singer, songwriter, art therapist and teacher. Upon retiring after 45 years from her primary Canadian career as a psychotherapist, she returned to singing and writing.

In the late 60's and early 70's, she was the lead singer with Affinity, an English band that was labelled "progressive." She made her first album, *Affinity* (1970) under her stage name Linda Hoyle. She left the band four years later, and joined forces with Karl Jenkins (now Sir Karl!) writing nearly all of the songs with him on her second album, *Pieces of Me* (1971). Both these albums are still selling. Linda added a third album in 2016, *The Fetch*, a collaboration with Oliver Whitehead (in London Canada) and Mo Foster (in Londovwn UK). It won album of the year at the London Free Press, and Best Jazz CD of the Year by Audiophile News in England.



Claire Whitehead

Lyricist, "Look At Me, Dairy Queen"

Claire is a violinist, guitar player, songwriter and community worker based in Toronto. Claire began classical violin at age 8 and started guitar and song-writing at 18. Studying music at the University of Guelph, she experimented on violin with music composition and improvisation in a number of mixed-media acts including the Polydactyl Heart's *Le Cyc* and *Hello Adventure* and the Contemporary Music Ensemble. Since moving to Toronto in 2011, Claire has performed and toured violin across the North America in indie-folk-rock band *Forest City Lovers*; and electric guitar across Canada and Europe in the indie-"giggle-pop" band *Blimp Rock*. Since 2013 Claire has been a community worker, focused on food justice at George Brown College, and music at *Girls Rock Camp Toronto* and *Sketch*. As a writer, Claire works on poetry and songs, when the music is feeling needy and the words are feeling generous. As a recording artist, she has contributed violin on various albums as diverse as *Blimp Rock's* *Sophomore Slump* and the Juno-nominated *The Peacemaker's Chauffeur* by Jason Wilson. She is currently writing, recording and performing two of her own projects: a rock band, and a solo violin-loop-based project, with an expected EP release upcoming in 2018.



Oliver Whitehead

Composer

Born and raised in Oxford, England, Whitehead settled in London, Ontario to teach Comparative Literature at Western University, while also writing and performing music with numerous ensembles. His compositions include an oratorio, *We Shall Be Changed* (recorded 1994); a world-music Mass, *The Mass for All Creatures* (recorded 1998); concertos for oboe and cello; *Pissarro Landscapes* for clarinet, piano and strings (recorded 2007 on *The Nightingale's Rhapsody, Cambria*); *Uhuru Peak*, a tone poem for cello and orchestra; *Home/Suite/Home* for wind quintet (recorded 1998); and extensive music for TV, ballet and theatre. Additional recordings of his original material include two jazz recordings, one nominated for the Juno as Best Jazz Album; *Resonance* with guitarist Margaret Stowe; *Latitude 43* with the jazz/world-music group the *Antler River Project*; and numerous choral CD's featuring Whitehead's compositions and arrangements. *The Fetch* (2016), his recent collaboration with Linda Nicholas (Linda Hoyle), was named Best Album of the Year by the London Free Press, and Best Jazz CD of the Year by Audiophile News in England. As a performer, Whitehead is primarily a jazz guitarist, working with numerous ensembles in the London area. For a full list of his jazz and classical compositions and nine recordings, see his Wikipedia page.



ARTWORK CREDITS

1. John Munnoch

(Canadian, b. Scotland, 1855 – 1914)

Painting of Elmwood Avenue with View of Normal School, 1904

oil on canvas, 61 x 81.3 cm

Collection of Museum London, Transferred from the Material Culture Collection, 2013

2. John B. Boyle

(Canadian, b. 1941)

The London Six, 1984

oil on canvas, 66 x 96.3 cm

Collection of Museum London, Gift to the City of London, 1987

3. Doug Kirton (Canadian, b. 1955)

Lethbridge Lodge Variations:

Light Grey/Cremnitz White, 1996

oil on canvas, 86.4 x 91.4 cm

Collection of Museum London, Gift of Jared Sable, Toronto, Ontario, 2001

4. Paddy Gunn O'Brien

(Canadian, 1929 – 2012)

Spring Series # 1: Lake Huron, 1994

oil on canvas, 61 x 61 cm

Collection of Museum London, Gift of Richard and Beryl Ivey, Toronto, 2007

5. Shelley Niro

(Mohawk, Bay of Quinte,

Turtle Clan, b. 1954)

Sky Woman: Losing My Stuff, 2002

oil and chalk pastel on paper, 127 x 160 cm

Collection of the Artist

6. Paterson Ewen

(Canadian, 1925 – 2002)

Rain over Water, 1974

acrylic on gouged plywood, 243.8 x 335.3 cm

Collection of Museum London, Purchased with matching acquisition funds and a Wintario Grant, 1980

7. Jack Chambers

(Canadian, 1931 – 1978)

Olga and Mary Visiting, 1964-65

oil and mixed media on plywood, 125 x 193.7 cm

Collection of Museum London, Art Fund, 1965

8. Greg Curnoe (Canadian, 1936 – 1992)

Wheel, 1973-74

watercolour on paper, 72 x 72.4 cm

Collection of Museum London, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John H. Moore, London, Ontario, through the Ontario Heritage Foundation, 1980

9. Jason McLean (Canadian, b. 1971)

Look at Me Dairy Queen Here I Am, 2011

archival markers, acrylic, and ink on paper,

55.8 x 76.2 cm

Collection of Museum London, Purchase, Art Fund, 2013

PROGRAM NOTES

By *Oliver Whitehead* and *Linda Nicholas*

Both Linda and I claim that it was the other person who first came up with the idea of composing a set of songs about paintings by London artists. Initially conceived as a concert piece for one singer, the project soon expanded into a dialogue between two characters, in which their personal narrative could be interwoven with the subject-matter of the paintings. Finding out that the median time for looking at a painting in a museum is 17 seconds, we were interested in asking the question, “what happens if you take time”.

We first set out to create our two characters, Christine and Marc-André, fleshing them out in sufficient detail to give the story some development and three-dimensionality. The more arduous task, as it turned out, was the selection of the paintings. Our quest was to find paintings which were not only “song-worthy” in themselves but could also play a part in furthering the narrative of our two characters. Fortunately, we were aided in this by Museum London’s exhibition of 150 years of London art in early 2017, from which we culled an initial set of choices. This was followed by long hours spent searching through Museum London’s database of images, with occasional visits to the vaults to view the paintings themselves. For over a year our selection—and our title—fluctuated until, with many parts already written, we finally decided on our definitive nine paintings in early 2018.

THANK YOU

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You make it possible for new music about London, Ont. to be created and performed.

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Tuesday to Sunday 12:00 noon to 5:00 pm

Thursday 12:00 noon to 9:00 pm

Closed Monday

Admission by donation.