



Festival  
Classica



# SEA SONGS AND SACRED ANTHEMS

Capella Regalis

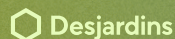
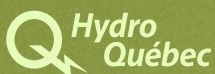
16th edition

22 May 2026 – 7:30 p.m.

Église Sainte-Famille

Boucherville

In collaboration with



# Sea Songs and Sacred Anthems

Pre-concert talk (6:30 p.m.)

Musicologist Marilou Garon invites the public to learn more about the pieces on the program.

## Program

(75 mins without intermission)

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*Kyrie de Angelis*

*They That Go Down to the Sea in Ships*

*O Sacrum Convivium*

*Cantique de Jean Racine*

*Duo Seraphim*

*Jesu, the Very Thought of Thee*

*Kyrie de Angelis w/ Alleluias*

Traditional chant

Herbert Sumsion

Thomas Tallis

Gabriel Fauré

Jacob Handl

Paul Halley

Paul Halley

*United in Song*

*Petty Harbour Bait Skiff*

*Farewell to Nova Scotia*

*Skye Boat Song*

*O Waly, Waly*

*The Leaving of Liverpool*

*Away from the Roll of the Sea*

*Freedom Trilogy*

Paul Halley

Paul Halley

Paul Halley

Nick Halley

Traditional Scottish folk song, arr. John Rutter

Paul Halley

Allister MacGillivray

Paul Halley

## Artists

Capella Regalis Choirs — Men, Boys and Girls

Nick Halley, conductor, percussionist, general director

Vanessa Halley, Girls Choir director

Paul Halley, organist, pianist

Wyn Burkhart, organist assistant

## About

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Capella Regalis Choirs presents a rich and varied concert program of sacred and secular anthems featuring repertoire from their newest album, *Songs of the Sea*, with choir, organ, piano, and percussion. Expect a feast for the ears showcasing a Maritime-based choral ensemble performing a range of works from Gregorian chant to sea shanties. Bringing together sacred pieces of the choral canon with fresh arrangements of traditional folksongs from around the world by multi-Grammy Award-winning composer Paul Halley, this concert offers an exciting mix of music that is sure to delight!

*Capella Regalis wishes to thank Andrew Gray, Marie-Pierre Rolland, and Les Petits Chanteurs du Mont-Royal for hosting the touring ensemble for the whole of its time in Québec, and Festival Classica for putting on its concert—a first in Montréal!*

# Program notes

Benjamin Goron, musicologist

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On one side, music turning to contemplation, prayer, and inner elevation; on the other, songs born of the wind, work, and sailors' memories. But between these two poles, the same humanity is given expression: the quest for meaning, the fear of danger, hopes of return, the need for community. From the resonance of a *Kyrie* to the cry of a mariner leaving port, all these songs tell of a crossing, spiritual or physical.

## **Sacred hymns: meditation, contemplation, elevation**

For centuries, hymns have held a central place in Christian liturgy: masses, services, solemn celebrations or moments of contemplation. Gregorian chant, such as the *Kyrie de Angelis*, embodies this thousand-year-old tradition in which plain human voices become pure prayer. The apparent simplicity opens up an inner space where time seems suspended.

As the program unfolds, the pieces presented reveal different facets of spiritual experience. Herbert Sumsion's *They That Go Down to the Sea in Ships* sets Psalm 107 to music with gripping dramatic force: the sea becomes a metaphor for the trials of life, where sailors "stagger like a drunken man" and "cry unto the Lord in their trouble" before finding peace. This tension between chaos and deliverance runs throughout the piece.

## **Sea songs: adventure, memory, imagination**

Sea songs are born out of a completely different context: work at sea, long perilous voyages, and life aboard ship. Before the modern age, sea voyages were synonymous with uncertainty: unpredictable storms, approximate navigation, prolonged absences. In this context, songs fulfilled a number of essential functions: coordinating effort (in work songs), breaking isolation, telling stories, and keeping crew morale high.

These songs are profoundly rooted in a specific seafaring culture. In Nova Scotia, where the Capella Regalis ensemble originated, the sea shapes collective identity still today. Ports, lighthouses, fishing villages: this environment spawned a repertoire that combines homesickness, courage, and solidarity. Sea songs also give meaning to the experience of departure and absence. They sing of separation but also of the hope of safe return. The sea is both a threat and a promise, a bringer of both loss and freedom.

Paul Halley's *United in Song* sets the tone for the collective thrill of departure: "Now the wind fills the sails, We are bound for the wide open sea." The song celebrates the community of mariners, united in a crossing, whether real or symbolic. With *Petty Harbour Bait Skiff*, the program veers into darker territory: a Newfoundland ballad telling of a maritime tragedy of 1852— a sudden storm, a boat capsized, and the loss of the crew.

Departure and separation are at the heart of *Farewell to Nova Scotia*, a traditional song rooted in Canadian seafaring culture. The sailor voices the pain of leaving home: "Farewell to Nova Scotia, the sea-bound coast." This homesickness is echoed in *Skye Boat Song*, in which a historic flight becomes an almost mythical crossing, "like a bird on the wing." With *O Waly, Waly*, the mood becomes more intimate. The sea symbolizes love and its instability ("the water is wide, I cannot get o'er"), while the image of the oak tree that bends and breaks evokes betrayal and the fragility of sentiment.

With *The Leaving of Liverpool*, Paul Halley returns to a more lyrical mood: "It's not the leaving of Liverpool that grieves me, but my darling when I think of thee." Here, separation carries a particular poignancy. A moment of calm descends with *Away from the Roll of the Sea* by Allister MacGillivray: boats rest in the harbour, suspended in time, tellers of silent stories. Finally, Paul Halley's *Freedom Trilogy* broadens our perspective: the ocean becomes a space of freedom and hope, prolonging the thrill of putting out to sea.

Through these two worlds—sacred and maritime—this concert traces one line: that of humans in movement, seeking their way through storm and light, solitude and community.

# Artists



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**Nick Halley**  
*Conductor,  
percussionist,  
general director*



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**Vanessa Halley**  
*Girls Choir director*



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**Paul Halley**  
*Organist, pianist*



## Capella Regalis Choirs

2026 touring choristers

### Boys Senior Choir

Gerasimos Delorey, head chorister  
Clement Fulton, head chorister  
Isaac Burkhart  
Nikolaos Delorey  
Claude Fulton  
Cash Gallant-McLean  
Brendan Lee  
Lochlan Sachdev  
Jonah Sneddon  
Oscar Hernandez Moshin

### Girls Senior Choir

Ellianna Lee, head chorister  
Molly Sneddon, head chorister  
Mofesireoluwa Afolabi  
Annie Chhangur  
Seraphina Lee  
Maggie Sneddon  
Stella Wilband

### Men

Simon Blake  
John Bogardus  
Shaylan Burkhart  
Wyn Burkhart\*  
Llewellyn Davidson  
Peter Dietz  
Gavin Hilchey\*  
Daniel Sneddon\*  
James Whitley

\*Young Men's Program

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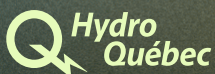
16th edition

May 22 to June 14, 2026

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