

ISSUE NO. 1

WINTER 2025

# MUSE

CELEBRATING COMPOSERS ACROSS THE PRAIRIES



**NIC BRAY**  
**EMILIE LABEL**  
**DANIEL PELTON**

PERFORMANCE | EDUCATION | PROMOTION



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# MUSE



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FEATURED CONTRIBUTORS

**NIC BRAY**

**EMILIE LABEL**

**DANIEL PELTON**





## FROM THE EDITOR

I am delighted to be writing this introductory address for the inaugural issue of MUSE, a quarterly publication highlighting the extraordinary talents of Prairie Region composers and creators! In addition, our partner podcast *Musing: Music, Conversation, Inspiration*, was just launched in early January 2025. This weekly podcast features Canadian content, recent album releases, and interviews.

*Check out an episode and subscribe [HERE!](#)*

I invite you to explore both of these new initiatives of the Canadian Music Centre Prairie Region, and support live music and artists in your community!

*This year, CMC Prairie Region celebrates 45 years of championing and promoting composers and making Canadian music and educational resources available to the public. We will be launching more exciting initiatives to support the musical eco-system across the prairie provinces in the months ahead, we can't wait to share them with you!*

*CMC is the catalyst that connects you to the ever-evolving world of Canadian musical creation through performance, education, and promotion.*

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

INTRODUCING

# MUSING

MUSIC  
CONVERSATION  
INSPIRATION

*Hosted by*  
Janna Sailor



A WEEKLY PODCAST FOR THE ADVENTUROUS LISTENER  
COMPOSERS, ARTISTS, AND CREATIVES IN CONVERSATION

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# Nic Bray

The Canadian Music Centre: Prairie Region is pleased to present the winner of the 2025 Emerging Composer Competition (ECC), Nic Bray for his composition, ***Spruce***.

Nic (Manitoba), is a multifaceted musician whose talents span composition, orchestration, songwriting, and jazz saxophone performance. His music often bridges the gap between contemporary classical, jazz, and pop idioms, showcasing a versatile and innovative approach to composition.

In 2023, Nic completed his bachelor's degree in jazz performance at Brandon University and has since begun a master's program in composition at the same institution. He plans to begin his doctoral studies in Fall 2025.



## **Spruce**

A Fantasy from Riding Mountain National Park  
For Orchestra

Nic's commitment to music extends beyond personal achievement, as he actively engages in community outreach. These initiatives serve a dual purpose, fostering and elevating emerging local artistic talent while simultaneously fundraising to provide support for local public resources. By leveraging his connections to his community, Nic creates opportunities for aspiring artists to showcase their work and gain exposure in the local arts scene.

Nic's projects also address the critical issue of underfunded community resources. Through fundraising events and collaborative performances, Nic demonstrates how the arts can be a powerful tool for local artistic development and financial support. His work exemplifies the potential for musicians to make a significant impact beyond the stage, using their talents to build stronger, more vibrant communities.



*“Beams of sunlight gently twist between emerald needles, cascading across a calm but flowing creek near a shaded hammock as the overwhelming, yet calming beauty of the might spruce tree seeps from my consciousness into my subconscious”.*

*Nic Bray*



# ***SPRUCE***

## **CONNECT WITH NIC**



Winnipeg's Classic 107  
Interview



@nic\_bray0

*Spruce* was originally conceived while camping at Riding Mountain National Park, laying in a hammock, looking up at the simultaneous might, beauty, chaos, and tranquility of the spruce tree. This piece brings the simplicity, the complexity, and the awe-inspiring beauty of the spruce tree to life. After rising from the hammock, using a stick, I scawled the form of the composition into the dirt below my bare feet. This would lay the foundation for the formal structure of the piece and would serve as the first step in the writing process.

“The work cycles through these emotions as they occurred to me in the moment, climaxing in a feeling of overwhelming love not only for nature, but for the life it brings and life itself”.

CMC PRAIRIE REGION  
EMERGING COMPOSER  
COMPETITION

The ECC is a joint project of the Canadian Music Centre, Prairie Region, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra (WSO), and the Winnipeg New Music Festival (WNMF). Bray's Piece, *Spruce*, will be PREMIERED by the WSO on January 25, 2025 on the final day of the Festival.

The adjudication was based on anonymous score submissions. The panel consisted of: Kristin Flores (CMC Associate Composer), Daniel Raiskin (WSO Music Director and WNMF Artistic Director), and Harabalos [Harry] Stafylakis (WSO Composer-In-Residence, WNMF Co-Curator, and CMC Associate Composer).

**WN20** WINNIPEG  
**MF25** NEW MUSIC  
FESTIVAL | **JAN.**  
**21-25**  
**2025**

**MICHAEL NESBITT**  
PREMIER PATRON

CENTENNIAL  
CONCERT HALL

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CONCERT HALL

**WNMF.CA**



# COMPOSER FEATURE

## EMILIE LEBEL

*“... one of the country’s [Canada] most acclaimed musical voices, known for her atmospheric and introspective compositions that captivate listeners.”*

Fanny Po Sim Head, *Interlude*



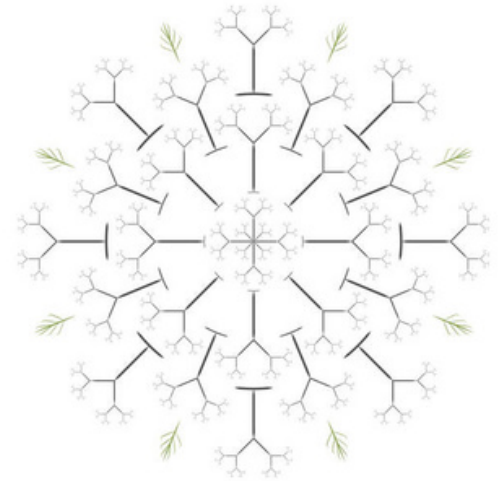
# A creator who “has arrived at this point with an assured, gripping aesthetic marked by contemplative patience”

Peter Margasak, *Bandcamp Daily*



Canadian composer Emilie Cecilia LeBel specializes in concert music composition, and creation of mixed works that employ digital technologies. LeBel’s work inhabits sonic worlds that are primarily concerned with textural landscapes, resonance, and variances in colour.

LeBel’s artistic practice has been recognized through several awards and appointments, including Affiliate Composer with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (2018–2022), Composer-in-Residence with the National Youth Orchestra of Canada (2015), SoundMakers Composer in Residence with Soundstreams Canada (2015–2016), Land’s End Ensemble Composers Competition (2016), Toronto Arts Foundation Emerging Artist Award (2015), Canadian Music Centre Toronto Emerging Composer Award (2012), and Canadian Federation of University Women Elizabeth Massey Award (2012). LeBel’s debut album of chamber music, *field studies* (2023), received a JUNO Award Nomination for Classical Composition of the Year (2024), and a Western Canadian Music Award Nomination for Classical Composer of the Year (2024).



*field studies*  
music of Emilie Cecilia LeBel  
by / Cheryl Duvall / UltraViolet / Ilana Waniuk

*FIELD STUDIES* (2023), EMILIE LEBEL

Active as an educator and mentor, LeBel is a faculty member at MacEwan University, and Composer Advisor at the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Previously, she taught at the University of Montana (2015–2018), and was a lecturer at McMaster University (2012–2015) and the University of Toronto Scarborough (2012–2014). LeBel has served as a mentor composer for several early-career artist programs, including HATCH (Continuum Ensemble, Toronto), PIVOT (Canadian League of Composers), ConneXions (Canadian New Music Network), Explore the Score and NextGen Composers (Toronto Symphony Orchestra), and Young Composers Project (Edmonton Symphony Orchestra).

LeBel holds degrees in music composition from the University of Toronto (DMA) and York University (MA, BFA Hons.), and in audio engineering and music production from the Harris Institute for the Arts (Dip. Hons). Her composition teachers included Gary Kulesha, David Mott, William Westcott, and Michael Finnissy.

Canadian composer Emilie Cecilia LeBel specialises in concert music composition, and the creation of mixed works that employ digital technologies.

Hear host Janna Sailor and Emilie LeBel in conversation on the Jan. 20th episode of *Musing!*

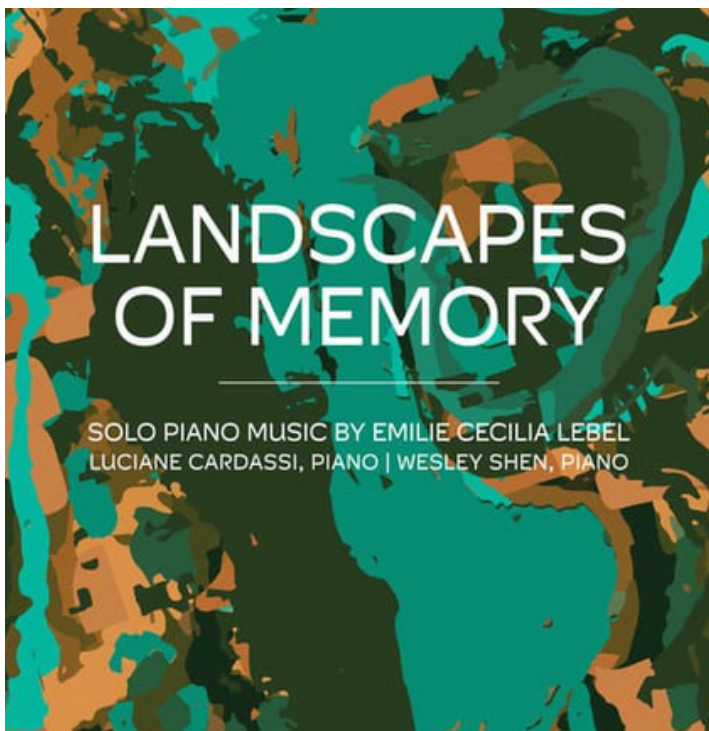
Emilie discusses her approach to composition, the recent release of *Field Work*, and her latest art song project for release later this year!



Tune in to all the *Musing!* episodes [HERE](#)



LANDSCAPES OF MEMORY (2024), EMILIE LABEL



## CONNECT WITH EMILIE



[Website](#)



[Soundcloud](#)



[@emilieclebel](#)



[CMC Composer Profile](#)

# Honoring History:

*Violins of Hope*,  
the latest  
release from  
The Daniel  
Pelton  
Collective,  
will be released  
on the 80th  
Anniversary of  
the Liberation of  
Auschwitz

(Jan. 27, 2025)



## DANIEL PELTON

Daniel Pelton is an award-winning saxophonist and composer from Calgary, Alberta. Daniel began playing saxophone at the age of nine and pursued his musical studies at the University of Calgary, graduating with his Bachelor of Music degree in 2018. Inspired by his musical hero Frank Zappa and somewhat disillusioned by the impersonal approach of the modern classical music performance scene, Daniel made it his goal to create music that could push boundaries while still prioritizing a positive audience experience, and to create space for others to do the same.

Daniel's efforts to achieve this goal include creating the funky horn band Long Time No Time, and his contemporary chamber group The Daniel Pelton Collective. Daniel has performed with these groups across Western Canada, and his recorded music has been featured in various press media across the world. Daniel also created the Composer in Residence position with the Calgary Public Library, led the University of Calgary Jazz Orchestra in rehearsal and performance for a full semester, and opened for Too Many Zooz on their Canadian tour. In his free time Daniel enjoys writing 200-word biographies and dreaming about making a livable wage from his original music. And eating snacks.



[bandcamp](#)



[Soundcloud](#)



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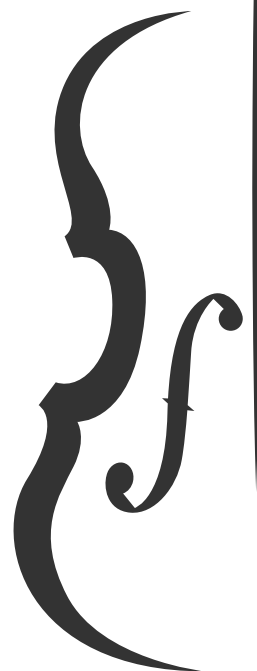
[CMC Composer Profile](#)

# the daniel pelton collective



Created and conceived by Daniel, *Violins of Hope* serves as a stark reminder of the experiences of the Jewish people and other victims of the Holocaust. The Daniel Pelton Collective recorded the project using instruments from the “*Violins of Hope*” collection brought to the National Music Centre by Ammon and Avshalom Weinstein - historical violins that once belonged to Holocaust survivors, were discovered in concentration camps, or were left behind by those who could no longer carry.

“Releasing this album on the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz is not only a tribute to the victims of the most horrific genocide in history, but also a powerful reminder”, writes Daniel. “I hope that the instruments enjoyed their time being played in this piece that only acknowledges the light and leaves the darkness behind”.



# LEGACY COMPOSER

*“The most admired  
woman of the decade”*



**VIOLET  
ARCHER**

**1913-2000**



Archer was extremely prolific, with over 300 works to her name, characterized by multiple genres and versatility, encompassing comic operas, music for documentaries, and even electronic music in the 1970s, alongside more traditional configurations and instrument settings.

## Fast Facts about Violet Archer:

- She was born Violet Balestreri to Italian immigrants, but the family changed their last name to Archer in 1940.
- The Canadian indie-rock band The Violet Archers is named for the composer.
- She found recognition when her piece *Britannia: A Joyful Overture* (1941) was selected to be performed at the BBC and recorded for the armed forces in Europe.
- She was highly decorated over the course of her career, receiving the Order of Canada in 1983, Alberta's Life Achievement Award in 1990, the Canada 125 prize in 1992, and the International Biographical Centre's title of International Woman of the Year, American Biographical Institute's Woman of the Year and Most Admired Woman of the Decade, all in 1993.
- Archer's notable students included Larry Austin, Shauna Rolston, Allan Gilliland, and Allan Gordon Bell.

**To learn more about Violet Archer, check out her CMC [profile HERE](#)**

This year, CMC Prairie recognizes the 25th anniversary of Violet Archer's passing. Our regional CMC library is sustained by an annual endowment from the Violet Archer estate that facilitates new purchases and the expansion of our collection. We are deeply appreciative of this contribution, and in turn will do our utmost to ensure that the legacy and essence of Violet Archer's work continues for generations to come.

Violet Archer (1913–2000) is widely regarded as one of the most important figures of Canadian music history. A Canadian composer, pianist, organist, percussionist, and music educator, Archer showed promise as a composer in her adolescence, and went on to study at McGill University, receiving a Licentiate in Music diploma in 1934 and BMus degree in 1936. Archer also acquired an associate diploma from the Royal Canadian College of Organists in 1938. Archer's career path took a fortuitous turn when she visited New York in the summer of 1942, soon after beginning studies there with Béla Bartók. She continued her education at Yale University with Paul Hindemith, earning a B.Mus. in 1948 and M.Mus. in 1949, truly extraordinary feats for a woman of her generation.

Following completion of her studies, Archer became composer-in-residence at the University of North Texas, and also taught at the University of Oklahoma from 1953 to 1961.

After returning to Canada, Archer joined the Faculty of Music at the University of Alberta in the Theory and Composition Department, and remained there until her retirement in 1990.

The influence of Bartók and Hindemith is evident in her works who encouraged her to develop a compositional language incorporating various modernist techniques and moving away from the strictly classical tonal anchoring – though without shedding it completely. In the words of Frédéric Duhaupas, "She was particularly influenced by Hindemith's harmonic system, which she reused in her own works, while taking certain liberties as her style matured. Her music is sometimes also marked by the influence of Schoenberg, though she never fully embraced that doctrine. Certain passages and pieces occasionally present the sombre and anxious aspect of the expressionist aesthetic." Her work is also characterized by an openness to innovation and the evolution of compositional techniques of the time, and Archer trained in electronic composition techniques at London's Goldsmith College late in her career.

Archer was extremely prolific, with over 300 works to her name, characterized by multiple genres and versatility, encompassing comic operas, music for documentaries, and even electronic music in the 1970s, alongside more traditional configurations and instrument settings.

# NEW PRAIRIE ASSOCIATE COMPOSER



photo credit: Pinar Atil

## BABUR TONGUR

Babür Tongur (1955) is a Turkish Canadian composer, conductor and academician. He started education when he was four and started composing music at the age of six. At the age of eleven, he completed talent exams and was accepted to the Istanbul State Conservatory. He started composition studies in 1972, and started to study with A. Adnan Saygun in 1978, completing his DMA in 1987. He co-established the Tiyatora Orchestra (1979-1992) in Istanbul, and conducted the first productions of several works in Türkiye. These productions included the Threepenny Opera and West Side Story. Between 2000 and 2007, he conducted several operas, cantatas, and symphonic works with the MSGSU State Conservatory Orchestra.

As a composer, he has written for solo instruments, choir, chamber ensembles, and orchestra, as well as several other stage-works since 1973. He won several awards for these compositions. His works were performed in Türkiye, Europe, and North America, and took place in several CDs. He has been commissioned by preeminent ensembles. His long-time contributions in stage works and his past in theatre works influences his expressive musical language. In his compositions, he tells stories, and oftentimes he writes these stories, he explores paintings, and is freely inspired by other art forms. He explores human experiences such as love and death. His studies in ethnomusicology, which he defines as “musical anthropology” nourishes his harmonic and modal language. His works have been defined as captivating, expressive and intense.

He has been living, teaching, and composing in Canada since 2009. He co-established Tongur Music and currently teaches violin, piano, music theory, harmony, and music history.



# NEW PRAIRIE ASSOCIATE COMPOSER



## JOEL BALZUN

Praised for his ‘voluminous sound” and “imposing, ringing baritone”, Canadian baritone and composer Joel Balzun is establishing himself as an intelligent and creative musical force both on and off the stage. He was recently an award-winner in the Wagner Society of New York Singers Competition, following his win of the Fulham Opera Robert Presley Memorial Verdi Prize, solidifying his growing presence in the dramatic repertoire. An avid proponent of the music of living and contemporary composers, Mr. Balzun won critical acclaim for his portrayal of the titular Joseph de Rocher in the South Florida premiere of Jake Heggie’s *Dead Man Walking* with Miami Music Festival. He worked with the composer on this work, as well as the role of Charlie in excerpts from *Three Decembers*. He recently created the role of Ivan Brisilov in the world premiere of Stephanie Fleischmann and Peter Knell’s *Arhipov* with Jacaranda Music, conducted by Daniela Candillari.

Also an accomplished composer, Mr. Balzun’s “haunting and beautiful” music has received international recognition, garnering prizes from the SOCAN Foundation Awards for Young Composers, the Dallas Winds’ annual Call for Fanfares and the Classical Marimba League International Composition Competition. Praised as a “musical standout”, Mr. Balzun’s music has been performed in Canada, the United States, Costa Rica, Denmark, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom by ensembles such as Alberta Winds, Calgary Civic Symphony, Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, CCM Wind Orchestra, National Broadcast Orchestra of Canada.



CENTREDISCS

2024 RELEASES

# MUSIC SPOTLIGHT

IN 2024, CENTREDISCS HAS RELEASED ELEVEN ALBUMS OF NEW CANADIAN MUSIC TO WIDESPREAD ACCLAIM. THESE ALBUMS FEATURES WORKS BY ASSOCIATE COMPOSERS ACROSS CANADA THAT ENCOMPASS A DIVERSITY OF MUSICAL MOODS AND STYLES. FROM SOLO WORKS TO ORCHESTRAL, FROM SOOTHING TO SURPRISING, FROM THE SPIRITUAL TO THE POLITICAL – WE HOPE THAT YOU ENJOY THIS SELECTION OF OF TRACKS FROM CENTREDISCS’ NEW RELEASES.

**Centrediscs 2024**  
Preview Canadian Music Centre  
+ Save on Spotify

1 Chorus of Wishes: I. Part of It  
The Shuffle Demons, Iris Trio 09:52

2 The Mata Hari Songbook: No. 3, You'll Be My Sun  
John Burge, Patricia O'Callaghan 02:09

3 Sur Bà nội  
Gabriel Dharmoo, Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra 03:44

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**Michael van der Sloot**

*Associate Composers' names appear in*

*bold*

# MUSE

The Canadian Music Centre (CMC) is Canada's largest community of professional composers. It promotes, publishes and distributes the music of Canada's contemporary music composers across the country and around the world. With over 800 established Associate Composers to date, the CMC is Canada's primary resource for scores, parts, recordings and information about Canadian composition. It plays an essential role in documenting, preserving and facilitating the growth of Canadian musical culture through its Centrediscs recording label, libraries, events and online social network.

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2500 UNIVERSITY DR NW  
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