



2026
JUNE
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OPENEARS.CA
#OE26

FROM THE DIRECTOR

On behalf of our Board of Directors and General Manager, I am delighted to welcome you to the Open Ears Festival 2026 (#OE26). This year's festival brings some of the world's highest-calibre musicians to our region, featuring award-winning soloists and ensembles from local, national, and international stages.

At a time when societal shifts and constant digital noise cause many to tune out, sustaining momentum can feel daunting. Yet our audiences continue to show remarkable resilience. The transformative experiences offered by Open Ears provide a welcome reprieve from doom-scrolling and invite listeners to tune in—deeply and intentionally—to something that is engaging, thoughtfully challenging, and designed for curious ears. These shared experiences offer hope, meaning, and a renewed sense of purpose in the face of adversity.

#OE26 also marks a personal milestone. After ten years as Artistic Director and fifteen years with the organization, this will be my final Open Ears Festival in this role. It has been a profound privilege to help shape the artistic vision of this festival and to work alongside so many extraordinary artists, collaborators, volunteers, and supporters. As Open Ears continues to evolve, it feels both timely and essential to make space for a new voice—one that will steward the festival into its next chapter and carry its spirit forward for the next generation of curious listeners.

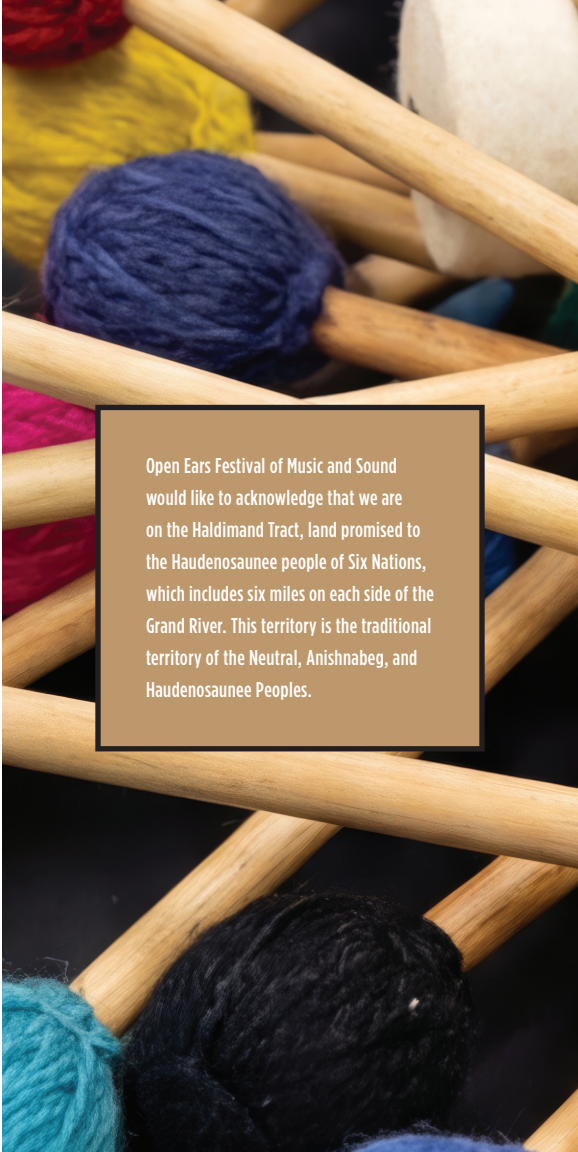
In 2026, we are pleased to continue our collaborations with long-standing partners and supporters while also building new relationships with new sponsors and donors. We are deeply grateful for the ongoing support of our community and for the shared confidence in the future of the festival.

Open Ears will present a wide range of performances and workshops to spark curiosity and celebrate the vibrant cultural life of our region. The festival will feature multiple world premieres, award-winning artists, sound installations, and performances—including my own.

I look forward to seeing you in the audience throughout the festival.



Richard Burrows
Artistic Director



Open Ears Festival of Music and Sound would like to acknowledge that we are on the Haldimand Tract, land promised to the Haudenosaunee people of Six Nations, which includes six miles on each side of the Grand River. This territory is the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishnabeg, and Haudenosaunee Peoples.



THURS. June 4th. 6-7pm

Workshop with Duo Cichorium

FREE

Church of Good Shepherd, 116 Queen St N, Kitchener

Interactive Performance Workshop

In this interactive performance, audience members will be able to participate in two of our interactive projects, Canvas Conductor and Speed Run. The sound generated for both works is reliant on gesture; the former utilizing the action of painting, and the latter on the action of gaming — specifically Super Smash Bros. on the Nintendo GameCube. Following each “performance” will be a discussion period to share details on the technology and development of these works

THURS. June 4th. 8pm

The Happenstancers

\$30/\$5 student with ID

The Registry Theatre, 122 Frederick St, Kitchener

In *FUTURE PASTORALE*, three performers create a path connecting the past and future. Using Claude Vivier's rarely-performed and enigmatic *Ojikawa* as a foundation, the artists construct an evening of collaboratively-composed/improvised acoustic and electronic performances that explore the imagined pastoral expanses of antiquity and link them to the endless digital landscapes of tomorrow. This work features poems from William Blake's *Songs of Innocence* as well as text manipulations and generative poetry created by the performers with tools utilizing artificial intelligence. Taking inspiration from the *Knee Plays* of Philip Glass' *Einstein on the Beach*, these texts are then fragmented and layered.

Framing Vivier's work with spoken-word recitations and collaboratively-composed works by Cherwin, Pino, and Young, *FUTURE PASTORALE* challenges the expectations of Vivier's forward-thinking and experimental trio. Recasting Vivier's work as nostalgic and historical — in a subtle upending of the expected understanding of *Ojikawa* as contemporary — *FUTURE PASTORALE* envisions expansive new possibilities for the chamber music recital, blending abstract narrative, improvisation, spoken word poetry, collaborative composition, and theatrical lighting to evoke a future that is equal parts celestial and computerized.





FRI. June 5th. 6-7pm

Workshop with Duo Cichorium

FREE

Church of Good Shepherd, 116 Queen St N, Kitchener

DIY Instruments and Noisemakers

In this instrument building workshop, Duo Cichorium will guide attendees through the development of DIY instruments commonly used in their musical practice. This includes the (possible) creation of music box scrolls, windchimes, rattlers, and noise boxes. The instruments created will be recession-friendly as all materials are sourced from either the dollar store or your own personal junk drawer.

Attendees are encouraged to bring a small collection of junk (cutlery, old keys, gamepieces) and will leave the workshop with a DIY noisemaker of some sort.

FRI. June 5th. 7:30-8:30pm

Confined in Everyday Scenes

\$30/\$5 student with ID

Kitchener Public Library Theatre, 85 Queen St N, Kitchener

At the heart of this concert is the world premiere of **Confined in Everyday Scenes**, a new suite for **solo cello and fixed electronics** by composer **Frank Horvat**, commissioned by acclaimed cellist **Joann Whang**. This powerful work invites audiences into a profound musical journey that exposes the uneasy coexistence of the ordinary and the unseen—where familiar, everyday moments can conceal hidden realities of modern-day slavery and exploitation.

Horvat and Whang began imagining this collaboration in 2021, grounded in a shared desire to create music that bears witness and sparks conversation. Inspired by Laura T. Murphy's book *Survivors of Slavery: Modern-Day Slave Narratives*, the project broadened into a deeper exploration of contemporary slavery worldwide. With Murphy's guidance, and through ongoing conversations with NGOs working on the front lines to help people leave lives of enslavement, this premiere aims to amplify survivor voices and illuminate what too often goes unrecognized.

Surrounding the premiere are additional works by contemporary composers championed by Whang. Together, these pieces offer a space to listen deeply—and to see more clearly.





FRI. June 5th. 9pm

**ANIMA & the Open Ears Festival co-present the
world premiere of *Mme Caeneus's Canteen***

\$30/\$5 student with ID

The Registry Theatre, 122 Frederick St, Kitchener

A transy chamber opera set in the queer world of Mme Caeneus's, a 'locker club' in WWII America, where host/ess Lucy ('Mme Caeneus') holds space for transformation in the midst of a polarized world.

Madame Caeneus's Canteen!

A beggar can become a queen,

a queen become a corporal,

the corporal can trade his stripes

for civvies of a Friday night — ...

Two intersecting gender transitions unfold against the backdrop of the sexual, gender, and racial politics of the 1940s U.S. — and beyond that, against the backdrop of the bronze-age transition story which a group of soldiers are acting out in their 'blueprint special' drag revue.

A story of queer solidarity, love, and chosen family, this opera resonates in and for our own time.

music by James Rolfe

words by Luke Hathaway with contributions from asitha tennekoon

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directed by Henry Oswald Peirson

musical direction by Juliet Palmer

technical direction and lighting design by Jasmine Rajaballey

stage management by Paula Bornacelli

costume design by Rachel Kaufman Behling

artist-care consultant Claire Yurkovich

Featuring:

Martin Gomes (Lucy)

asitha tennekoon අසීත තනේනකෝන් (Eugene)

Lesley Emma Bouza (Remi)

Paul Genyk-Berezowsky (Ben)

Ryan McDonald (Pat)

Daniel Cabena (Bird)

and Mme Caeneus's house band:

Phil Albert (electric bass)

Richard Burrows (percussion)

Juliet Palmer (bandleader/clarinet)

Matti Pulkki (accordion)

Philipp Samutin (violin)

Supported by the Canada Council for the Arts.



SAT. June 6th.11am

Found Sound Ensemble; *Serene Music*

Free

Victoria Park Lake at David St

Up-cycled, repurposed kitchen bowl instruments. Four racks of microtonal resonant bowl instruments played by a quartet of Laurier teachers. 'Microtonal' means unusual tunings which can drastically change how one hears harmony and melodic lines. The music is also 'micro-sonic.' The bowls are rich in harmonic contents that can normally only be heard with ones ear close to the bowl. Numerous microphones are set up to amplify and project these sounds. The music has roots in Indonesian Gamelan, and 20th century composer and instrument inventor, Harry Partch.

Tuning systems completely change the harmonic colour of music. Listeners are almost exclusively raised on 12-tone equal temperament tuning system. It is only one tuning system amongst thousands. Close microphones show the bowls' rich and idiosyncratic colours. The four players supplement the bowls with specialty instruments. Bruce Gremo is the composer, instrument builder and performer and doubles on glissando flute. Zhang Li performs bowls and Chinese erhu. Laura Burke performs bowls and digital keyboard where she demonstrates unconventional tunings. Percussionist Max Lindsay demonstrates percussion virtuosity in improvised solos.

FSE encourages and aids in listening to the richness of sounds found in all objects. We are always already in a multi-harmonic-universe! Perhaps another way of saying multi-cultural!

SAT. June 6th. 1pm

Fragmented Forms

\$30/\$5 student with ID

Trillium Lutheran Church, 22 Willow St, Waterloo

Fragmented Forms is an ever-evolving cast of fierce experimentalists that turn medieval European and Makam music inside out, formed by the collaboration of Labyrinth Ontario and Cory Harper-Latkovich's Jelly Ear.

Fragmented Forms explores the possibilities of improvisation by utilizing both the microtonal aspect of Makam music and free improvisation, and how the two can coalesce. From Paris to Istanbul, this musical mindwarp borders the line between primordial and futuristic.

Drawing from historical music composed years before the 12-tone equal temperament tuning system was invented in China and Europe, repertoire ranges from new arrangements of 13th century cantigas to contemporary makam musics. Fragmented Forms strives to create something deeply historical and wildly imaginative that, at the same time, is relevant to the epoch we live in.

Thus, the ensemble takes the liberty in interpreting the intervals and modes of these compositions, and brings their own agency into each piece. This performance will feature a trio formation with Aysel Taghi-Zada (violin), Heather Saumer (trombone) and Araz Salek (tar)





SAT. June 6th. 3pm

WHAT BRINGS YOU IN

\$30/\$5 student with ID

Perimeter Institute, 31 Caroline St N, Waterloo

Presented by OE Patron Mohan Thomas

Violinist Leslie Ting performs *What Brings You In*, the live album - pieces by Linda Catlin Smith, Rose Bolton, Julia Mermelstein, Germaine Liu, and Leslie Ting. With percussionist Germaine Liu, these pieces formed the foundation of a years-long process exploring parallel relationships to her instrument, therapy and the audience.

Based on interview research and personal experiences with talk therapy, hypnotherapy, dreamwork, sandplay, somatics, and Reiki, *What Brings You In* explores what it means to 'be yourself' with another. The words "what brings you in" are treated both as a question and as an offering: what brings us into a performance venue or communal space, and what brings us inward to discover more about ourselves through listening?

"This project grew out of my desire to have a different relationship with the audience. What happens if I bring more of myself to playing the violin? Do you bring more of yourself to listening?" - Leslie Ting, Creator/Performer

SAT. June 6th. 5pm

NIMBA

\$30/\$5 student with ID

Waterloo City Hall, Atrium, 100 Regina St S, Waterloo, ON

Land of inspiration and living heritage, Guinea carries two symbols that meet in Nimba: the Nimba mask (N'Dimba), a maternal figure of the Baga people embodying fertility, abundance, and protection and Mount Nimba, a massif listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site for its precious yet threatened biodiversity, guardian of a balance that must be protected.

From this encounter emerges a story about the resilience of life and the intertwining of culture and nature. Renewal coexists with destruction, still bearing its traces. Reweaving the ties between nature and culture is not about going backward or dreaming of a naïve return to origins, but about opening a restorative impulse — an uncertain, imperfect new beginning, profoundly human in the face of this fracture. It depicts a shifting rurality, in resonance with the rhythms and shapes of the city, where the boundaries between farmland and urban spaces are constantly being redefined. In a changing world, Nimba celebrates what endures, what connects us to our history and our land, while navigating fractures and rebirths.

Nimba: the performative installation conveys the complexity of the relationship between humans and living heritage — which inhabits us, shapes us, and transforms alongside us. Nimba is a journey, a return to the roots, and a momentum toward the future, carried by the strength of its roots. Aly Keita creates a soundscape that supports and shapes the physical performance. The vibraphone, in dialogue with the musical framework, transforms vibration into a perceptible wave that envelops the experience, heightens perception, and opens new interpretations of the moving bodies.





SAT. June 6th. 6-7pm

Workshop with Duo Cichorium

FREE

Church of Good Shepherd, 116 Queen St N, Kitchener

Improv

Jaz Tsui facilitates an improvisation workshop and discussion, covering a variety of practical and philosophical entry points to the craft, drawing on their years of experience as an improviser. This will be a session that caters to all levels of improviser with the emphasis on creative exploration, responsiveness, and going beyond one's own comfort zone in the pursuit of developing one's unique artistic voice. The workshop will include listening and playing activities, as well as a question/discussion period.

SAT. June 6th. 8pm

Kairos

\$30/\$5 student with ID

The Registry Theatre, 122 Frederick St, Kitchener

Twisted Ritual turns a percussion quartet concert into a shared ceremony shaped by sound, time, and immersion. Performed by **Kairos Percussion Quartet**, the program brings together six contrasting works that unfold across the evening as a single, connected experience.

The music moves easily between drive and stillness, dense textures and open space, repetition and rupture. Rhythms build, loosen, and return, while soundscapes expand, break apart, and reform. Moments of intensity give way to quieter, spacious passages. Over the course of the night, these shifts accumulate into a continuous experience, unfolding like a slow procession through changing sound worlds.

The “twist” comes from how the concert reshapes familiar listening habits. Through unconventional techniques, noise, and audiovisual elements, the concert reshapes how sound fills the room, turning the hall into an immersive space.

Presented at **Open Ears Festival**, *Twisted Ritual* reflects the festival's commitment to reshaping how audiences understand what music can be, **bringing audiences together through shared presence and curiosity.**





SUN. June 7th. 1pm

Duo Cichorium

\$30/\$5 student with ID

The Registry Theatre, 122 Frederick St, Kitchener

Inspired by video games and choose-your-own-adventure storytelling, **The Sylvan Legacy** is an unpredictable performance shaped in real time by decisions made by the audience. Using their smart devices, audience members collectively control musical, visual, and narrative elements, choosing character traits, determining which paths to follow, and deciding how the heroes respond in moments of conflict.

Join Jester Jaz and Wizard Pino as they journey through the Sylvan Forest in search of treasure for their King. Along the way, participants can expect cats, costumes, and a range of theatrical spectacles in this multimedia production.

SUN. June 7th. 3pm

Canto Ostinato featuring Taktus Duo and TorQ Percussion Quartet

Free

Kitchener City Hall Rotunda, 200 King St W, Kitchener, ON

Celebrating its 50th anniversary **Canto Ostinato** by Dutch composer **Simeon ten Holt** is one of the most quietly radical works of late-20th-century minimalism. Written as a sequence of repeating musical cells, the piece unfolds through gentle harmonic shifts, pulsing rhythms, and luminous tonal clarity. Rather than prescribing a fixed form, ten Holt invites performers to shape the music in real time—deciding how often to repeat each section, when to move forward, and how to respond to one another. As a result, no two performances are ever the same.

Typically performed by multiple keyboard instruments—famed percussion ensembles Taktus Duo and TorQ Percussion are teaming up to reimagine this iconic work. *Canto Ostinato* creates a warm, enveloping sound world that encourages deep listening. Its steady ostinatos and consonant harmonies evoke a sense of suspension, allowing time to feel both expanded and intimate. The music resists drama in favor of gradual transformation, offering listeners space for contemplation and emotional resonance.





DURATION OF FESTIVAL

Hours. Minutes. Seconds. by Peter Hatch

Free

Community Room, KWAG Community Room, 101 Queen St N, Kitchener

West Coast Radians, loudspeakers, recycled iPads, bark, leaves, cardboard.

Hours. Minutes. Seconds. is an audiovisual installation that explores our cultural habit of measuring and counting time. Visitors are invited to step inside what feels like the interior of an unconventional clock mechanism, where ticks, tocks, and other time-related sounds surround and shift as they move through the space.

As a composer, I work as a kind of 'time sculptor', negotiating the different experiences of time I feel when planning a work while understanding how different the time sense will likely feel by those experiencing the work. All of this is measured against 'clock time', often in the form of musical bars and rhythms. Hours. Minutes. Seconds. creates a space in which visitors can sense the relativity of time while remaining aware of clock time as something precisely measured and regulated.

The installation's soundscape draws inspiration from the natural world, where multiple sound sources coexist in counterpoint. Each occupies its own sonic space, defined by frequency range and varying levels of activity and density. The sounds combine synthetic elements with recordings from natural environments.

This soundscape is accompanied by a series of handmade clocks constructed from natural materials—such as bark, leaves, and cardboard—using commercial clock mechanisms alongside digital devices. The digital elements are programmed in Max/MSP.

Open Ears Festival is grateful for the support of the following:

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Information + Tickets: openears.ca

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