

# DYNAMIC



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Check out our Choirs Ontario Events Calendar

**HERE**

# DYNAMIC

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### Editor

Mark Ramsay  
editor@choirsontario.org

### Graphic Designer

Olga Petrova

### Cover Photo:

2019 Ontario Youth Choir  
(Photo credit: Mathias Memmel)

### Choirs Ontario

230 St. Clair Ave. W  
Toronto, ON M4V 1R5  
416.923.1144 or 1.866.935.1144  
f: 416.929.0415  
info@choirsontario.org

### Charitable registration:

11906 7536 RR0001

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*Dear Friends,*

We are all so disappointed that our choral seasons, rehearsals, retreats and concerts have been cut short by the COVID-19 virus that has now interrupted every part of our lives. We are all learning new ways to communicate with each other, to stay connected, and many of our choirs continue to hold virtual gatherings. While the online tools we are growing accustomed to accessing are a poor substitute for the joy of in-person singing with our friends, I continue to be amazed and inspired by the ways you continue to keep our collective song alive. It is this resilience that makes me confident that when it is safe to come together again, we will be ready, as Leonard Bernstein famously said, "to make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever before." Together, we will get through this unprecedented crisis. For now, I am grateful that I can be safe and healthy and home, and I hope that you, too, remain safe and healthy.

Yours,  
Dr. Mark Vuorinen, President  
Choirs Ontario



## EDITOR'S MESSAGE

*Hello, colleagues,*

I hope now more than ever this issue finds you and yours safe and comfortable. It certainly is an unusual time, especially for many of us who rely so much on making music together, in person.

In the middle of March, we were working to wrap-up our winter issue of *Dynamic* when all of our plans came to an abrupt halt due to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic. We hit pause on the issue and gave our contributors time to make important decisions within their organizations and gradually update their content for this issue. Thank you to all for your patience. We are happy to be finally sharing this “winter” issue with you, our dedicated readers and members.



*Mark Ramsay, editor*

working with Charles Bruffy and both Melissa LaLonde and Donald Maudsley remind us of the power of community building we experience in group music-making. Jenny Johnston's article on the benefits of social media couldn't be more timely as we all look for virtual options to stay connected and share the important work we do.

I hope you enjoy reading about the activities of your choral colleagues from across the province. Perhaps more importantly than ever before, let's stay connected!

Be safe. Keep singing!

Cheers,  
Mark Ramsay

Student contributor Laura Curtis reminds us all of the meaningful learning we stand to gain from attending professional conferences. As many of these conferences now turn to online options, our ability to virtually attend conferences and learning sessions around the world is rapidly expanding. A shot of inspiration is provided by Tim Stacey's reflection on his experience of



**CONTRIBUTE  
TO OUR SUMMER  
ISSUE OF  
DYNAMIC!**

How are you and your choir buddies remaining connected during these times? What creative solutions are you planning for your upcoming season? What anniversaries and milestones are you preparing to celebrate with your group? Read about the submission requirements here: <https://choirsontario.org/dynamic/> Deadline for submissions is extended until **June 1, 2020!** Kindly submit your materials to [editor@choirsontario.org](mailto:editor@choirsontario.org)

**Congratulations to Nicholas Ryan Kelly**, winner of the 2019 Ruth Watson Henderson Choral Composition Competition!

Choirs Ontario received 30 submissions from composers across the country. The compositions were reviewed by a distinguished jury including Hilary Apfelstadt, Leonard Enns, and Melissa Lalonde.

ANNOUNCING

# The WINNER

“Memory’s Voices” by Penicton, B.C. composer, Nicholas Ryan Kelly was chosen as the winner. Nicholas receives a cash prize of \$2,000 and a premier performance to be determined.

From the jury: “The music is chorally idiomatic and well written, the harmonic journey is compelling and expressive, and the music/text relationship is sensitive and nuanced. Every moment reaches forward, to lead us through a rich and satisfying journey.”

“The Snow-Shower” by Toronto composer, Emily Green was given an honourable mention. “This is an attractive setting of this evocative and picturesque text (by William Cullen Bryant), with interesting and well-crafted harmonic changes, rewarding melodic material for all voice parts, changes in choral texture that keep the music fresh and engaging, and gentle metric shifts, all supported by the constant underlying voice of the piano.”

Nicholas Ryan Kelly is a composer who draws inspiration from speculative fiction, science, and nature. He has been commended by the Vancouver Sun for his “sophisticated work of such immediate, glittery appeal” and called “a rising star in the constellation



OF THE 2019  
RUTH WATSON  
HENDERSON  
CHORAL  
COMPOSITION  
COMPETITION

of Canadian composers” by Oregon Arts Watch. Originally drawn to music’s storytelling power by symphonic film scores, he now brings a sense of cinematic drama to music for choirs, orchestras, and wind bands throughout North America.

Choirs Ontario is grateful to our jury members, Hilary Apfelstadt, Leonard Enns and Melissa Lalonde, Competition Coordinator Meghan Hila and Choirs Ontario Past President, Elaine Choi.

Choirs Ontario is proud to support Canadian composers and add to the rich legacy of Canadian choral music through the Ruth Watson Henderson Choral

Composition Competition. Past winners of the competition include: Jason Jestadt, Mark Sirett, Leonard Enns, Allan Bevan, and Elise Letourneau.

**For a complete list of winners, please visit**  
<https://choirsonario.org/programs-awards/#Ruth-WatsonLink>

The competition was born out of a concert held in November 1992 to honour Ruth's 60th birthday including Toronto Children's Chorus, Elmer Iseler Singers, Amadeus Choir, Bach Children's Chorus, Elora Festival Singers, Oriana Women's Choir, and TMC Youth Chorus. The proceeds of this joint concert were used to establish the RWH competition. The administration of the competition was handed over to Choirs Ontario

with Ruth Watson Henderson involved in judging the competition up until 2017.

One of Canada's foremost musicians, Ruth Watson Henderson is renowned internationally both as a composer and pianist. Her works are acclaimed, performed, and recorded worldwide. The Ruth Watson Henderson Choral Competition was established in 1996 to recognize Ms. Watson Henderson's invaluable contribution to the art of choral music. Ms. Henderson is very pleased to encourage the contribution to Canadian choral music that the competition provides, and appreciates the work of Choirs Ontario who administers this program.

## Lake Field Music camp



August 8 - 15, 2021



August 9 - 16, 2020

[www.lakefieldmusic.ca](http://www.lakefieldmusic.ca)

# CHOIRS ONTARIO MUSIC LIBRARY

## UPDATE

Your music library continues to expand! Many donated sets of music in all voicings have been added throughout the season and the number of titles now exceeds 3000. Look for titles online or write to us! You can request music and correspond with the library team through its new email address:

**library@choirsontario.org**

While most of the donated music is adoptable, we have continued to put aside excess music that we cannot accommodate. You will have received a letter in mid-April telling you of the Excess Music available to member choirs. About half of the list is available only for the cost of shipping, and the “sale” portion of the list is available at anywhere from 10%-50% of the current sale price. (Financial donations to Choirs Ontario will, of course, always be gratefully received!)

The Excess Music list is ongoing. Music that has been requested is removed and more music is added almost daily. The latest edition may be perused by clicking on this link, or copying it into your browser:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/2n2slyp6adb7cjh/Choirs%20Ontario%20Excess%20Adoptable%20Music.xlsx?dl=0>

Since this list is an excel file, you can sort it by any field (title, composer, arranger, voicing, publisher, subject). A field stating the date on which the title was added allows you to sort by “date added”. Some of the quantities are fairly large and you are welcome to order fewer copies than the entire set. While we are enjoying the newly expanded library location, space is not unlimited, and excess music will be culled periodically to make room, so check the list regularly.

The CO library is a huge resource. We hope you will take time to explore it!

***The Choirs Ontario Library Team:***

Linda Beaupre  
Eileen Baldwin  
Karen Freedman  
Marg Fisher



# Student Conference Participation

*by Laura Curtis*

Throughout the year, I receive numerous emails from the Music Department regarding upcoming conferences and symposia and their ‘Calls for Presentations.’ At times I have found the selection overwhelming, as each conference appears to be as relevant to my research interests as the next. It can also be difficult to justify the financial burden of attending these conferences against the benefits to my graduate education and career aspirations. As I mentioned in my previous *Dynamic* article, I have personally felt many academic and social benefits when participating in conferences. I have also, however, attended conferences that I did not find overly helpful or interesting. In this article, I will discuss my personal process when selecting conference opportunities, in hopes that I may help students who may be wondering whether or not to register for conferences in their field this year and beyond.

When selecting which conferences to attend and/or present at, I focus my decision-making process on two elements: relevance and cost. Deciding whether or not a conference is relevant to my research interests and academic success (and exactly how relevant) is something for which I rely on both my own instincts and those of my professors. When I am alerted about an upcoming conference that I feel may be relevant and interesting to me, I make sure to ask my supervi-

sor and other faculty members whether they believe the particular conference would be an important one for me to attend and/or to present at. Their opinion is usually based on the reputation of the conference, as well as the conference theme, any known presenters, and the relevance of the conference to what they know of your research interests.

While some conferences may be touted as “the best” or “the most important” in your field of study, it is important to be aware that their importance to some may not align with your own interests. It is also prudent to seek out conference opportunities that may not necessarily relate to your exact field of study but, rather, specific elements of your research. Your decision may therefore require the input of a faculty member in another department. As an example, my own research interests are situated within the fields of both music education and women’s studies. I therefore seek the advice of faculty members from both departments who would be familiar with the conferences I am considering, as well as being familiar with my research interests.

As part of the process, I recommend going online to investigate the opportunities offered at past conferences, in terms of workshops/presentations, keynote speakers, and—most importantly—student oppor-

tunities. These opportunities may include master-classes, graduate student paper presentations, panel discussions, and/or research poster presentations. For some graduate students, the idea of travelling a great distance to present a research poster may not appeal when weighed against the cost of attendance. For myself, I prefer to look at the larger picture and think about the full experience of participating in the conference, including networking and learning opportunities.

Financial concerns, however, are real for graduate students, and therefore the decision to attend and/or present at conferences can be a difficult one that is largely dependent on financial accessibility. I recommend inquiring within (and outside of) your department as to whether there are bursaries offered to graduate students that can be used against conference travel. I have been fortunate enough to receive one of these bursaries in the past and it made a big difference to my travel expenses. There are many universities that offer opportunities to receive bursaries across faculties, and I urge you to 'think outside the box' when seeking out financial assistance to cover conference expenses.

When international conference travel is not an option, it is important to remember that there are a number of conferences that take place a little closer to home and may be more accessible to those who are limited by time and/or funds. Most schools of graduate and postdoctoral studies run their own graduate student symposia, organized by and for graduate students. Faculty members are often in attendance at these events, making them a great opportunity to network with, and learn from, a variety of colleagues and peers within your own school, or at colleges and universities across the province (or country).



**Laura Curtis is a Doctoral student in the Music Education program at Western University, a private piano, voice and theory instructor, and Music Director of the Addison Women's Choir.**

When attending conferences, a student may do so in one of three capacities: as a presenter, as a delegate (attendee), and/or as a volunteer. This last option is especially helpful when looking to offset the cost of attending a conference and may be offered as an option when registering for the event. In the case of student-run symposia, there may be no registration cost involved at all.

For graduate students, conference participation is valuable to experiencing knowledge sharing and professional networking in a meaningful way. Because of time and financial constraints, however, conference participation is not always easily accessible to us. While universities do a great deal to provide their graduate students with opportunities for academic and personal growth, it is up to us to seek out ways to engage meaningfully with as many academic and professional opportunities as we feel would be beneficial to our education and careers including, but not limited to, conference participation.

# CHARLES BRUFFY URGES YOU

## *to Try*

*by Tim Stacey*



*Charles Bruffy, Rachel Rensink-Hoff, and the combined Avanti Chamber Singers and Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts Choral Ensemble. Photo courtesy of the Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts.*

**The** Venn diagram of choral singing and meditation is nearly a perfect circle. You focus on your breathing, you assume an ideal posture, and you repeat the same things over and over. As a conductor, Charles Bruffy intensifies these similarities. You're not focusing on one concert or even one piece; you're focusing on one note.

You're told that every sound you make should be beautiful, not just that one show-stopping chord a few bars from the end of the piece. Every word you sing should be crystalline in clarity, not just the title of the piece. You should consider each note you sing for its potential to impart the quality of the piece as a whole – as Blake writes in *Auguries of Innocence*, you're asked to “see a World in a Grain of Sand”.

In November of 2019, Grammy award-winning choral conductor Charles Bruffy (Kansas City Chorale) visited Niagara to work with Avanti Chamber Singers, the Brock

University Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts (MIWSFPA) choral program, Chorus Niagara Children's Choir, and numerous local school choirs. His friend and colleague Dr. Rachel Rensink-Hoff (Assistant Professor, Brock University MIWSFPA; Artistic Director, Avanti Chamber Singers), who had spent time with Bruffy at the Nova Scotia Sing Summer Camp, knew he would challenge the choristers here to improve.

And challenge us he did. Over the course of his first evening in Niagara while rehearsing with Avanti Chamber Singers, the tone for Bruffy's week-long guest artist residency was set. The potential of each ensemble would be actualized via one of a few strategies. At one moment he may choose to lure a superior sound out of a given section with saccharine encouragement; at another, he would opt to mine the sought-after quality flake by flake, like a prospector panning for gold.

More often than not, Bruffy would stop you three seconds into a deceptively simple passage to urge you to



Charles Bruffy works with the Brock University Women's Chorus. Photo courtesy of the Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts.

consider the expression of the text and your commitment to the tone. The interruption may also be to firmly remind you that you shouldn't be noticeably breathing at any point during the performance ("wherever it tells you to breathe – don't"). Working through a piece like this is like picking through a sonic minefield; progress is slow and exhausting, but with commitment and care, you eventually make it across no man's land.

An important realization I had while rehearsing with Bruffy was how often the interaction between a conductor and choir ends up being rhetorical. Struggling to capitalize on what a conductor offers you exposes how ineffective the process can really be. They're waving their arms in a seemingly arcane code, and you're singing, at best, specifically what's on the page, and nothing more.

One of Bruffy's primary goals in working with choirs is to dissect this dysfunctional conductor-choir relationship with a fine scalpel. You're made to sing the same note over and over, rarely reaching the barline, and often being stopped by Bruffy with a curt "thank you", and a measured inquiry as to where you might have (obviously) failed in your execution. When called for, Bruffy draws on a seemingly bottomless reservoir of metaphors to impart the very specific quality a given passage requires. While he may ask you to "wear your ballet flats" for one agile run of notes, later on, you'll be instructed to "change into gardening clogs" for a more marcato march.

Is Bruffy too much? It depends on who you ask. His insistence on the extremes of the tempo and dynamic

spectrums can arguably push the aesthetic too far for performance purposes. His encouragement to hang on a word's final "s" can make even the most artistically liberal of choristers take pause.

That said, learning to disagree is an important lesson for choristers as well. Working with Bruffy showed me that while you may not agree with a conductor on each and every detail, they should nevertheless be given the attention and trust their position calls for. Not as a dictator, but as a collaborator, equally as vulnerable as everyone else on stage.

One of the pieces Bruffy worked on the most during his time here was Rachmaninoff's "Bogoroditse Devo", a piece he had previously received a Grammy for recording with the Kansas City Chorale. If you'd like a better idea of his style, check it out – even as a listener, the tempo will leave you short of breath.

It was both intimidating and exciting to see him dig into the piece again firsthand; he pushed the combined choir (Avanti Chamber Singers and the MIWS-FPA choral students) to take it as (literally) breathtakingly slow as our professional counterparts in Kansas City did, imbuing each note with the pensive, holy nature that the text called for.

Like in every other rehearsal with him, Bruffy was uncompromising in his expectations, and our progress was slow. However, by the time we performed the piece, singing it was like entering a flow state. We breathed and acted in close unison, forming a gestalt, the likes of which I have rarely experienced.

Was it perfect? Was it Grammy-worthy? Who cares? It was undoubtedly beautiful. In fact, it was a strong argument for how rhetorical the experience between performer and audience can be. While I can't speak for others in the choir, I was not performing – I was breathing.

This is what working with Bruffy made me think about. Through repetition, unyielding insistence in quality, and adherence to less-than-democratically determined artistic choices, Bruffy makes choral rehearsal an exercise in intention. He tells you to always “do something”; or, that is, don't just “do nothing”. Each action you take while performing, whether it's breathing, humming, or singing, must be meaningful. It has been a few months now since Bruffy left Niagara, and you can still hear the effects of his efforts here and there. Someone in the church choir concludes the word “god” with a “-dih” of biblical proportions. Our conductor expects more of us because she knows it's there, waiting to be drawn out. Other members of Avanti Chamber Singers note hearing a more anemic sound in some of the choral recordings they listen to, wherein the effect may be beautiful, but not vulnerable. We've gained a better ear for when our sound, while undoubtedly pretty, is devoid of intention.

I found the experience with Bruffy to be challenging and rewarding. I greatly appreciate what he shared

with my choir, and hope that other choristers get the opportunity to explore the relationship between them and their music, and their ensemble and conductor, in such an unflinching way.

Ask yourself – how many rehearsals do you write off each season because they're still months before the performance? How often do you intend to rehearse at home, but don't? Is there any point at which you try, other than when you're performing for a paying audience?

In the end, Bruffy is trying to tell you that you are settling for something less than what you are capable of. Any community choir can read notes, stay relatively on pitch and in tempo, and bring in an audience. If you want to be better, you have to try.

Tim Stacey is a tenor, and the Marketing & Media Coordinator for Avanti Chamber Singers. He holds a lead tenor position with the St. Mark's Anglican Church choir in Niagara-On-The-Lake, and is the Administrative Director for Chorus Niagara Children's Choir.

Charles Bruffy gives a choral conducting masterclass with Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts students. Photo courtesy of the Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts.





Coming Together in Unity with Songs of Praise. Used with permission from Le Journal le Nord.

*How*  
**DO YOU  
COMBAT  
SEASONAL  
DEPRESSION,  
CREATE  
INTER-COMMUNITY  
CONNECTIONS,  
WELCOME  
NEWCOMERS,  
WHILE SUPPORTING  
LOCAL CHARITIES?  
SING IN  
A CHOIR.**

by *Melissa Lalonde*

HEAD NORTH. PAST BARRIE. PAST NORTH BAY. AT SUDBURY? KEEP GOING. CONTINUE ON THREE HOURS PAST TIMMINS AND EVENTUALLY YOU’LL FIND YOURSELF IN HEARST, ONTARIO, POPULATION 5,070. DON’T LET THE LUMBERJACKS (HOCKEY TEAM) FOOL YOU: CHOIR MUSIC IS ALIVE AND WELL HERE.

Boréale en choeur, is made up of nearly 40 members who originally came together in 2017 for what was supposed to be a single performance. This artistic season sees the choir not only still performing, but thriving. Under the direction of Melissa Larose, the group performs multiple concerts each season for an appreciative community: all proceeds from the choir’s music-making are given to local and regional charities.

In the nearly entirely francophone community of Hearst, one would expect for many choristers to hail of French-Canadian origins however, some of Boréale en choeur’s singers are much farther away from their homeland – Africa – to be exact. Boréale en choeur has for some time now welcomed to their ensemble

Coming Together in Unity  
with Songs of Praise.  
Used with permission  
from Le Journal le Nord.



African students completing their studies at the local Université de Hearst.

Noteworthy this season was the choir's participation in a local initiative to combat seasonal blues before the Christmas season: Coming Together in Unity with Songs of Praise saw group singing once again act as a meeting place for individuals of diverse ethnicities, religions, and cultures. The concert brought together musicians and music lovers of Hearst and of Constance Lake First Nation under the roof of Hearst's Place des Arts.

Spearheaded by George and Margaret Taylor of Constance Lake and Gisèle Morissette and Robert Hébert of Hearst, the event was designed with the single purpose of spreading well-being to those in the community in need of healing. "We knew that many people had recently lost loved ones and that seasonal depression affects many up here," said Linda Chum Martin, an essential member of the organizing team, Praise and Worship Leader at Full Gospel Church, and staff member at Josie Bluff Me-

morial School in Constance Lake. "Our goal was to heal and encourage each other in times of loss and grief through songs geared towards uplifting," she said.

The initiative also served to reduce the sense of geographical isolation of these northern communities: "We wanted to show people in Constance Lake that they can reach out, that they have no limits on the reserve," said Linda. "We always hoped that Hearst and Constance Lake would come together through music."

In this way, the effort united French and English speakers from French-Canadian, First Nation, and African backgrounds. Next time, Linda hopes to include the Cree language in the initiative as well. Linda explained that the organizing committee is hoping to uplift these northern communities with similar events three times per year: "When there are no words, music helps us to sit and receive," she said.

As for the rest of the artistic season, Boréale en chœur has much

to look forward to. In early March 2020, the ensemble will accompany the pop a cappella group, QW4RTZ, from Trois-Rivières Québec, as they pass through the region on tour. Isolation? Winter blues? New to the area? On tour and need extra voices? Fear not. Choral music lives here.



Melissa Lalonde is a music educator and choral conductor based in Timmins Ontario. She is adjunct in student affairs at the Université de Hearst, Timmins campus. She holds a B.Mus.Ed. and B.Ed. from Western University and a M.Mus. Performance in choral conducting from the University of Toronto.

# TORONTO CITY OPERA:

Toronto City Opera Chorus,  
from a performance of *La  
Traviata* with Mississauga  
Symphony Orchestra

# The “Go-to” Chorus — “TO GO”

(And how I got to go with them)

by Donald Maudsley



Years ago, a music teacher played the “Grand March” from *Aida* to her fifth-grade class and a ten-year old boy was hooked on opera. Years later I watched a strange film (*Man of Flowers*, Australia 1983, dir. Paul Cox) and was hooked on opera — more. The music was from *Lucia di Lammermoor*. I played the recordings until they were worn out.

Hooked? Yes, but I never expected to SING opera.

Fast forward to 2020, I’m boning up on *Cavalleria Rusticana* — in May, my eighth adventure in this grandest of musical forms. All thanks to a company that, like the “little train that could”, has overcome the artistic vagaries and mundane financial burdens of bringing opera to old and new audiences for 73 years. In several incarnations, the Toronto City Opera (TCO), Toronto’s oldest opera company, has risen from the ashes like the proverbial phoenix, “passionately committed to opera for everyone”. This time the leaders were developing a first class choir. Operas have choruses, so a TCO chorus.

The superb direction of Jennifer Tung and her able wingman Ivan Jovanovic has generated the concept of a “go to” chorus – “to go” (couldn’t resist the palindrome!). Recently we have enhanced the choruses of Opera York’s and the Mississauga Symphony Orchestra’s productions of *La Traviata* and Tapestry Opera’s world premiere of Dean Burry’s Canadian opus, *Shanawdithit*. Dean was so taken with the addition of a chorus that he wrote additional chorus material for us to perform.

How did I get here? Singing pals and the network of choirs in Ontario.

After church choir in university days and spontaneous harmonizing with buddies over a beer or while driving to play hockey, I didn’t sing much until the 80’s when the East York Barbershoppers sang on Toronto radio. With them and the Megacity Chorus, I embarked on a 30-year odyssey across the U.S., Canada, and to St. Petersburg, Russia, singing “the old songs” and many new ones. The unique combination of a cappella singing “off book” and intricate choreography was important preparation to this amateur for the stagecraft and performance of opera. I migrated next to the wonderful Toronto Jewish Chorus, a SATB ensemble where a barber-shop buddy sang. Another fellow chorister suggested the Toronto Welsh Male Voice Choir.

Music was common to these choirs and some songs, but besides English, languages ran the gamut from the Latin of a 20<sup>th</sup>-century “Ave Maria” by Franz Biebl, to a four-part Russian version of “Moscow Nights”, to religious and secular tunes in Hebrew and Yiddish (and

Italian opera), to rousing Welsh hymns and folk songs, French, Italian (more opera), and Latin again! A ditty by Stompin’ Tom in the lingo of hockey and the style of barber-shop was a hit in Russia! (An aside – no operatic language looks THAT difficult after an exposure to Welsh! But I haven’t tried Czech yet!)

Throughout this journey, talented and dedicated choir leaders provided an eclectic education in singing and entertaining.

Then a “Welsh” pal suggested TCO and here I am. And what a “here” it is! A Canadian melting pot of a community, linked by a love of singing and a devotion to opera, sparked by the leadership of people like Sandra and Henry Tang, Mark Wilson, and Henry Abraham.

One day in our Miles Nadal dressing room, I sat within earshot of conversations in Ukrainian, French, Serbian, and Italian (our speaker of Friulano had no one to chat with, nor our Romanian). The Cantonese, Mandarin, and Polish speakers weren’t chatting that moment!

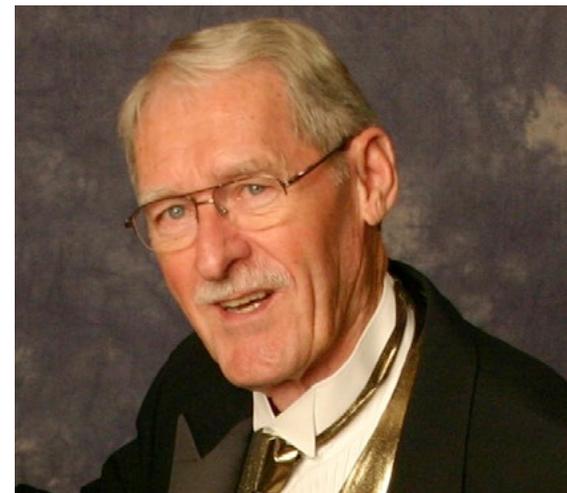
Who are these choristers? Ph.D. students (clinical psychology, genetic medicine) dentist, M.D., three psychotherapists (!), teachers galore, speech therapist, journalist, retirees... the beat goes on. Twenty-somethings to eighties. A rich potion!

Each member contributes time, talent, a ton of elbow grease and donates to support TCO productions. We struggle with pronunciation and the music, but under the tutelage of our enthusiastic music professionals, are inspired (some-

times driven) to produce our best. Bottom line, a gang of amateurs, we are drawn together by a powerful attraction to this majestic art form and the chance to sing, rub shoulders, and learn with a cadre of young professionals from the cream of national and international performance programs.

In our upcoming production we’ll be enmeshed in love, lust, murder, revenge, the petty cruelties of village life (all those good things), the high crimes and misdemeanors of opera, in the “chivalry of the countryside” (herein lurks irony!), *Cavalleria Rusticana* – latest adventure of the “go-to chorus to-go” – and TCO.

During the run, 75 years after meeting *Aida*, that ten-year old, still hooked on opera, will celebrate another birthday, Deo volente, performing with an Ontario choir. This one is the most unusual of all!



Donald Maudsley, Ed.D., spent 10 years as teacher/professor and 25 in policy and executive roles with the Ontario Ministry of Education. He sings with TWMVC, Hart House Singers, and TCO. Lifetime musical highlight: a barber-shop quartet at Roy Thomson Hall.

# THREE WAYS SOCIAL MEDIA CAN MASSIVELY BENEFIT YOUR CHOIR

*In the year 2020*

we know our choir should have a strong social media presence, but the path hasn't been clearly forged as to what this looks like for a choral organization. Many choirs are short staffed or are led by hard-working conductors who in addition to directing a choir, might also have to juggle a few other teaching or performing jobs. It's understandable that prioritizing time-consuming Instagram posts seems like an unproductive way to spend one's time when there is repertoire to select, rehearsals to plan, newsletters to write, grants to apply for, and concerts to organize.

I'm not at all suggesting that social media takes precedence over all the hard work required to build and maintain a choral program, but I would like to make a case for adding social media to your to-do list. Here are three ways social media can massively benefit your choir.

## 1. IT AMPLIFIES YOUR (ALREADY STRONG) WORK

It doesn't matter if your goal is to be an exclusive, auditioned chamber choir, or a non-auditioned community choir, we all need singers to want to join our choir. So why not stop hiding your hard work in church basement rehearsal spaces and start amplifying everything that makes your choir wonderful?

It only takes a few extra minutes during rehearsal to snap a photo (or delegate a volunteer to do this), then write a post sharing what was special about that rehearsal, or why the choir is enjoying a certain piece, or what warm-ups were working well. Don't post for post's sake, post to share a moment, tip, or story that paints the picture of your choir and the community you're building.



Help your audience connect with your conductor, pianist, and section leads by sharing their credentials and interests. Throw perfection to the wind and be brave enough to share a few video clips, or even entire pieces filmed from performances. Online presence is more important than online perfection. There is always someone who can learn from what you do, so stop preventing others from benefiting from your work by not posting a piece because your choir's vowels are a little sloppy on bar 24. Don't worry about a post being too

"braggy" or not important enough to share. Remember: presence over perfection.

I guarantee that over time you will relish in the online highlight reel you've created, and that your regular, engaging posts will help build your connection to your choral community. As odd as it may feel at times, I encourage you to embrace shining that social media light on your wonderful choir. You may be surprised just by how much light you get back.

## 2. IT'S A MARKETING MECCA

For decades, choirs have been stumped by how to effectively market themselves and gain new choristers. It used to be easy for the established choirs to dominate a community in the early 2000's when word-of-mouth marketing was the primary way people selected a choir to join. But by having a strong social media presence you can build an awareness and reputation quite quickly.

Before joining a choir, perspective choristers (or parents of choristers) are more likely to browse your social media accounts even before googling you. Why this shift away from a Google search? Because social media communicates who you are and a website communicates what you do. People make decisions based on their feelings and justify those decisions with logic. Allow your social media posts to amplify the core values of your organization, thereby attracting singers who feel aligned with them.

Social media is also a great way to connect your followers to all of your media channels, including YouTube videos of performances, links to buy tickets to your next concert, job postings, and of course your website/registration page. Think of your social media account as a one-stop-shop where potential choristers can come to find and learn everything they need to get to know you.

The other enormous benefit to social media marketing? Share-ability! A strong social media presence builds internal pride within your organization. Current choristers and parents of choristers enjoy sharing posts by their choir with their social network. You never know whose friend-of-a-friend on Facebook was inspired by

a video you shared last week, and how many potential new enrolments or partnerships will result from that.



The list of social media marketing strategies is endless, and with time, commitment and a little education, you can un-tap incredible tools to amplify your work with both in-person and online audiences.

### 3. IT EXPANDS YOUR CHORAL REACH LOCALLY, NATIONALLY, AND INTERNATIONALLY

You may be shrugging this one off but hear me out. Perhaps your choir is a non-auditioned community choir, and your mandate is not to perform complicated works to gain online recognition. There is still a way that every choir can benefit from having online reach.

Maybe you share a helpful info graphic on maintaining vocal health, or you post a video of a warm-up that music teachers find and end up using as a classroom resource. You could post a request for billets for a tour

you're planning or find repertoire inspiration by following other choirs that you never would have discovered offline. You could connect with other conductors who you'd like to hire as clinicians, or even discuss possible choir exchanges. You could be found by local or corporate businesses who want to financially support you. And of course, you could even post a video of your choir that goes viral and blows your little reputation out of the water. The possibilities are endless when you have a way of connecting with worldwide audiences. All you have to do is show up online, support your fellow choral artists, and share your work with those who are listening.

While the possibilities that come with social media are exciting, it can also be overwhelming. To some, social media is not even a fun hobby, and certainly not a strength. So if you're in that boat, my suggestion is to find someone else who has this strength to help you (and not for nothing!). It is my firm belief that in life, we get what we pay for. It's easy to write off this job as something that the "youth of today" can do for free, but don't underestimate this skillset. There are thousands of professional social media managers who make a full-time income and have acquired years of education, training, and skills to help businesses and organizations such as choirs build their community both online and offline. So, if you have any money to invest in the growth of your choir, I can't think of a better way to spend it than by hiring a social media manager.

If you don't have the budget, there are grants available for this, or you could ask a donor to consider covering the cost of hiring someone freelance. You can also get creative by offering volunteer hours to a marketing student seeking more experience, or even arranging an energy exchange if there's someone in your choir who would do this in exchange for a free or discounted choir fee.



**Regardless of how you find someone, these are the skills to look for when searching for a choir social media manager:**

- Someone very proficient in social media and or willing to learn social media business marketing trends (especially in Instagram, Facebook and YouTube)
- A good writer and storyteller who can quite literally sing your praises in a compelling way
- Someone with a background in choral singing is an asset (but not a deal breaker – you simply want someone who understands choir culture and can easily communicate it to both musical and non-musical followers)
- A good collaborator who can work with all the staff and volunteers in the choir to curate photos and videos
- Someone who is organized yet creative, and able to commit to posting quality content regularly

At the end of the day, all you need to do is showcase your choir. Conductors tend to be humble and terrified of bragging, but if nobody knows what you're doing, they won't know they want to be a part of it. Share your work with the world. We are so lucky to live in a time when we can broadcast our passion with anyone willing to listen. Let's stop resisting social media and let's begin embracing it as a tool to help us share the exquisite art form that is choral music with the world. The possibilities lie right beneath your fingertips.

Do you have questions about how to start or grow your choir's social media presence? Contact Jenny with questions!

[jennifer.johnston@oakvillechildrenschoir.org](mailto:jennifer.johnston@oakvillechildrenschoir.org)



*Jenny Johnston is an elementary music teacher and one of the conductors of the Oakville Choir for Children & Youth (formally Oakville Children's Choir). She has been their social media manager since they launched their rebrand in 2017.*



Liked by drsjmo and others

**oakvillechoir** How 'bout that HUGE Cherub choir?! 🤯 This year with a record 60 singers accepted into the choir we decided to split them into two rehearsal groups with two accompanist and two conductors. We did this to make sure that we were doing our best to meet the needs of each chorister. Tonight we brought both groups together into one supersonic amazing RHV Cherub choir and they were outstanding! 🥳 Can't wait to share their hard work with you soon! 🎵



SINGING IN CANADA'S CAPITAL –  
 Ottawa's Capital Chamber Choir celebrating 10 years of  
**#choirfamily**

by Amy Desrosiers

« **In a very short time, the Capital Chamber Choir has established itself as Ottawa's premiere small vocal ensemble. Jamie Loback has developed a sound serene and urgent, cerebral and spiritual, with immaculate tuning and laser-cut precision.** »

— Natasha Gauthier,  
 Artsfile Ottawa (June 24, 2017)

Nowadays, a decade doesn't seem that long but to a choir, celebrat-

ing ten years of singing means so much more. It signifies strength, growth, versatility, celebration, and family. To the Capital Chamber Choir of Ottawa, this rings true in every way.

What began as a small chamber choir of peers has grown into a choir of 35 auditioned singers ranging from music students, working professionals, young parents, and retirees. Every Wednes-

day, we arrive at rehearsal excited (and sometimes nervous!) to tackle some of the most riveting, challenging, and beautiful music written for choirs.

Hailing from Canada's capital, the Capital Chamber Choir was founded in 2009 by Dr. Sara Brooks during her studies at the University of Ottawa. Throughout the years, the Capital Chamber Choir has become known for its energy,

versatility, and musicianship. Today, our singers and Artistic Director, Jamie Loback (since 2011), are proudly committed to singing a diverse range of choral music—in particular, modern, Canadian, and local works.



“**This type of work [Lang’s “The Little Match Girl Passion”] is ideal for the Capital Chamber Choir, showing off the purity of its sound, the precision of its intonation, the virtuosity of its singers.**”  
 — Natasha Gauthier,  
 Artsfile Ottawa  
 (December 14, 2019)

Our inaugural 2017 album titled “The Delight of Paradise” is a testament to how important performing and premiering Canadian compositions means to our choir and the community. The album features works by six Ottawa-based composers—Nicholas Piper, Kelly-Marie Murphy, Christine Donkin, Steven Gellman, Andrea MacWilliams and Timothy Mott—and Vancouver-based composer Jocelyn Morlock.

Every rehearsal is a special moment for us. We have our young parents rehearsing with their children playing at their feet, we jokingly laugh with each other if one messes up a phrase, we take a break and chat about how our week is going, we sing “Happy Birthday” to our friends on their special day, and end the night with “Team Nachos” at our local pub

while nerding out on all things choir – but most importantly, we grow and learn from each other.

As Covid-19 has cancelled ours and many other choirs’ seasons, it doesn’t mean we give up. We miss each other, we miss our sound, and we even miss singing the sopranos’ intimidating high passages!

And so...every week since March, we meet on Zoom for social-focused activities (ex: musical treasure hunts and choir pets!) and also organized guest spots with composers and vocal clinicians! We’re still celebrating our 10th anniversary with a bang! Stay strong everyone and keep on singing.

*Cornwall native Amy Desrosiers is a mezzo-soprano and sings in the Capital Chamber Choir. She completed a Bachelor of Music and minor in Arts Administration in 2011 at the University of Ottawa. Amy loves working behind the scenes as an Arts Administrator and Choir Manager for the Capital Chamber Choir since 2014 and recently completed her Digital Marketing Certificate.*





# Choir Founder STEPS DOWN

by Barbara Bottriell

**Robert Dueck**, the man who founded the West Ottawa Ladies Chorus in 2012, is retiring after eight seasons of choral conducting. Starting with just 12 singers, Dueck grew his choir to its present 40 singers over the intervening years. A dynamic conductor with a gift for choosing music that audiences love, Dueck worked hard to challenge his singers to improve their skills each year. Rehearsals are enjoyable affairs with regular warm-ups to stretch the voice before tackling a variety of music that requires anywhere from two to five-part singing.

Originally from Alberta, Dueck plans to retire to British Columbia sometime during 2021. His last concert with the ladies will be on Friday, September 11 at 7:00 p.m. at St. Paul's Anglican church in Kanata and it will feature favourite musical selections from spring concerts that have been performed over the last eight years.

The West Ottawa Ladies Chorus is an auditioned choir with four voice parts – first and second sopranos and first and second altos. A mezzo part is also added to

certain pieces of music. It is a community choir and offers donations to local organizations such as food banks. It presents three public concerts a year as well as performing at other events and retirement homes. Its musical selections are varied but always interesting musically, and often exhibit lyrical qualities which catch the emotions of listeners.

The program for this upcoming concert for instance includes a heart-stopping song called “The Lake Isle of Innisfree”. It soars to a climax and then drops down to a long, drawn-out single note unison ending. On the same program is “Chattanooga Choo-choo” and “Bugle Boy” accompanied by a trumpet, as well as Henry Purcell’s “Sing and Rejoice” and “Cape Breton Lullaby”. The singers as well as the audience love the variety of choral singing Robert provides.

This last concert will conclude with a dessert reception for audience and singers alike to mark Robert Dueck’s last appearance as the conductor of the West Ottawa Ladies Chorus. A new music director will take over duties in September.



The Durham Girls' Choir has been fostering an appreciation for the choral arts in members and audiences alike for over 45 years. Girls aged 7-18 of all talent levels join the choir to learn about music and teamwork, build self-confidence, create lasting friendships, and share in the joy of a dynamic, performing choir. For more information on the choir, visit [www.DurhamGirlsChoir.org](http://www.DurhamGirlsChoir.org)

## Bridging social distance with

# *“True Patriot Love”:*

Durham youth choir members sing remotely to inspire and send messages of hope to fellow Canadians.

*by Wendy Capkun, Choir Manager*

The Durham Girls' Choir draws its young members from across Durham Region, connecting this diverse group of singers with a wider musical community.

With the isolation of social distancing, the girls have lost their weekly rehearsals, where they meet and sing together, as well as opportunities to perform concerts for their community, but it hasn't dampened their spirits, nor their belief in sharing the joy of song.

Singing remotely from the safety of their homes in Ajax, Whitby, Oshawa, and Courtice, the girls, whose ages range from 7 to 18, recorded themselves singing our national anthem, "O Canada" to inspire hope and unity in all Canadians during these unprecedented times. Their submissions come together in "True Patriot Love", a virtual choir

whose individual voices are truly guided by patriot love for their fellow Canadians.

The girls also submitted artwork reflecting their understanding of the events unfolding around them, which pay homage to our healthcare professionals and essential workers, and offer words of inspiration to get us through these difficult times.

Through this video, one chorister (aged 12) hopes, "More people will see that kids are trying hard to help, even with little things like washing our hands, and that might make the adults feel better, too."

View the video on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/XcprtDB9vF8>