



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CHOIRS ONTARIO ANNOUNCES THE WINNER OF THE  
2021 PRESIDENT'S LEADERSHIP AWARD**

TORONTO, ONTARIO | AUGUST 5, 2022 - The Board of Directors of Choirs Ontario is thrilled to announce that Carol Woodward Ratzlaff has been selected the winner and recipient of the 2021 President's Leadership Award.

Carol's long and extensive career as an educator, a choral conductor, artistic director and mentor has distinguished her as a leader within the province of Ontario and beyond. Her development of the VIVA Singers Toronto youth and adult programs encourages artistic excellence in a context of mutual respect.

**Carol Woodward Ratzlaff** is the Artistic Director and Founder of VIVA Singers Toronto, Co-Conductor of Main Chorus, Chamber Youth Leadership Chorus, Community Choir, SATB Chamber Singers and Conductor of the Every Voice Matters Chorus.

As per Carol's vision, at the heart of VIVA is the Every Voice Matters Chorus, which welcomes teens and young adults with disabilities. An all-abilities, inclusive approach to choral music education and performance is central to the identity of the organization and to each of VIVA's seven choirs. Carol's commitment to innovation and excellence in community music-making has led to the development of unique foci for each of VIVA's choirs, including dynamic ensembles for children 4 and up, a leadership-based youth choir, the unique Creation Stream program for young composers ages 6 to 16, and choirs for adult singers at all levels of experience.

Carol maintains an active career as a choral conductor, educator, singer, and private voice teacher, after her recent retirement from the Toronto District School Board. Having recently joined the Faculty at the Oscar Peterson School of Music, Royal Conservatory of Music, Carol has also continued to share her passion for vocal music education as a Sessional Instructor at the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto; and with Vocal Music Teacher candidates at OISE, University of Toronto and the Faculty of Education, University of Windsor. Through Carol's diverse teaching outlets, her former students can be found in university music faculties, as award-winning singer/songwriters, as music teachers across the GTA and beyond, and as lifelong advocates for the power of choral music.

Carol has performed across Canada and internationally as a member of the Elmer Iseler Singers, the Elora Festival Singers, and has been engaged as a guest artist with the Pax Christi Chorale, the Toronto Chamber Choir, and the Toronto Consort. She currently sings with Soundstreams' Choir 21.

Carol is a PhD student in Music Education at the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto where she will research choral performance opportunities for singers with disabilities. She holds a MMus in vocal performance from the University of British Columbia, with degrees in vocal performance and music education from Western University and the University of Toronto.

Upon learning of her appointment, Ratzlaff remarked: "I am very grateful to be selected as recipient of the President's Leadership Award, especially after such a challenging time for singers in recent years. I feel that I must share this recognition with the strong and dedicated VIVA Singers Toronto team who stood together, focused on the possibilities, and unearthed new ways of being and doing choral music together."

Carol is described as,

"Carol is an innovative, risk-taking, collaborative, singer-first conductor-educator who consistently demonstrates new ways of engaging with choristers through a commitment to equity, inclusion, repertoire, and programming."

"Carol has been one of the leading figures on the Ontario Choral scene for many decades. Her experience as a conductor, mentor, educator, champion of contemporary Canadian choral repertoire, singer, voice teacher, and choral administrator has been an invaluable part of the Ontario and Canadian choral scene... Carol's artistic leadership is nothing short of inspirational to the choral community at large and continues to inspire new generations of choristers and educators."

"Carol Ratzlaff has built an amazing choral family with a dedication and passion for all the right things, building a group that is inclusive to its core, and which inspires its singers to excellence while building community."

#### **Statement from President of Choirs Ontario, Andrew Walker**

"Carol is a deserved recipient of the Choirs Ontario President's Leadership Award. Her achievement and leadership as a chorister, administrator, and leader in our community is extraordinary. She is welcoming to all, a strong musician and singer, and inspires all those around her.

It is thanks to people like Carol that the choral community in Ontario thrives. Thank you, Carol, for all that you do."

#### **ABOUT THE PRESIDENT'S LEADERSHIP AWARD**

Established in 2001 to commemorate Choirs Ontario's 30th anniversary, this award recognizes individuals who, through their support or engagement in choral music-making, have made an exceptional contribution to the promotion and advancement of choral music in their communities.

The Award is presented annually and alternates between those who support choral music – executive directors, administrators, volunteers, corporate sponsors, philanthropists, and those who are directly involved in the performance of choral music – singers, conductors, and accompanists. Candidates must have demonstrated an exceptional leadership role, vision and cultural activism and must be nominated by a Choirs Ontario member choir or individual member.

Previous recipients include: Frieda and Vern Heinrichs, Linda Beaupre, Emily Burgetz, Marilyn Ala-Kanti, Albert Greer, Robert Henderson, Mark Sirett, Jessie Iseler, Gerald Fagan, Barbara Clark, Jean Ashworth Bartle, and Andi Murphy.

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT**

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