

Caledon artist recognized for her own sound of music



Written By CONSTANCE SCRAFIELD

Caledon resident, Lydia Adams, was awarded the Distinguished Service Award by Choral Canada this month. It was presented to the Conductor and Artistic Director of both the Elmer Iseler Singers (EIS) and the Amadeus Choir at the Bi-Annual Podium National Conference in St. John's, Newfoundland, this July.

It is the most recent of a long list of awards presented to this one of very few lady conductors of choral music and choirs. Although Ms. Adams was unable to attend the conference, she was deeply moved by being given the award.

"It's a great honour," she commented, "because it comes from my colleagues in the choral music world."

She remarked further about the music in Newfoundland, "There are great choirs in Newfoundland. There's a tremendous choral tradition there."

Back here in Ontario, "We are very busy with some lovely concerts coming over the next few weeks. There are three concerts in Ottawa, July 15, 16 and 17; then, we're going to Niagara and on to the Parry Sound for the Festival of the Sound. There are really great musicians who perform there."

The Elmer Iseler Singers were established by long time Caledon resident Elmer Iseler and has grown into a choir that is renowned for its virtuosity, especially in singing in many different languages, including at various times, Arabic and Welsh, its eclecticism and enthusiasm for commissioning new works.

She said, "Next year, is the 40th anniversary for the EIS and the Festival of the Sound. Composer, Eric Robertson and, lyricist, Gary Dault have been commissioned by the Festival to write a work for the occasion."

Very thrilling for the EIS, to be sure, was last weekend's concert in Ottawa: "It's very special, the great John Rutter is coming from England to conduct the choir singing his Magnificat and his new work, Vision, with Ottawa violinist, Kerson Leong, a Canadian.

"John Rutter wrote Vision after Kerson won the Menuhin Competition in 2010."

Originally, John Rutter was "booked ... in for just the one concert. I was co-artistic director for the concert but it sold out in such a hurry that we asked him, "Can you come for a second performance?" And he agreed.

?He is a terrific architect of music ? such a volume of work over the years.?

Additionally, Ms Adams told us, ?It [was] wonderful to sing Vision with the Ottawa Children's Choir in addition to Kerson on the violin. We sang The Magnificat with the Capital Chamber Choir.?

Reflecting back on her own years in the UK, where she studied choir music and conducting, she related a thrilling interlude.

?I was very fortunate to have a terrific experience. I was at college in Cambridge. There was a choir going to Venice to perform. They needed an extra voice and I was asked to join them. We sang in St. Mark's Basilica, in the gallery. It was just wonderful. What a way to see Venice.?

In the present, Ms Adams has been the conductor for the EIS for 20 years and involved with them as accompanist while Elmer Iseler was still alive for a total of 35 years.

Asked what keeps her doing this work, her answer came unhesitatingly, ?It is the music, it is so great, my colleagues ? the sound is remarkable and they are such great people.

?One time, there was an assembly of some pieces and they hadn't read that music before. But immediately, they could sight read it so that sounded basically as it should. You're into the music at such a high level. They're an exceptional team.?

She noted, ?They love travelling together. There is a mix of youth and more experienced people. They have musical experience in common. When they're dealing with something that is really fantastic, when they're involved in something exceptional, they have the desire and the talent to be into it.?

After the Festival of the Sound, the EIS takes a break and comes back to it all in September, singing in Toronto and in Northern Ontario, sometimes with children's choirs or the Amadeus choir.

As conductor, Lydia Adams is clear: ?The conductor is the leader and Artistic Director,? she said simply. ?It is our job to set the time and establish a vision of excellence for the organization. You always have to make your vision with the group but always asking for the best of every member of the team.?