

Lydia Adams conducts the Elmer Iseler Singers in Messiah

Written By CONSTANCE SCRAFIELD

Caledon's Lydia Adams, conductor of the Elmer Iseler Singers and the Amadeus Choir, will be conducting the EIS in Messiah, a concert. The performance will include the Amadeus Choir and four soloists, Meredith Hall, soprano; Marjorie Maltais, mezzo; Asitha Tennekoon, tenor and Giles Tompkins, bass baritone. The one only performance is next Friday, November 30 at the Metropolitan United Church, at 56 Queen Street East at 8:00 p.m.

Messiah was written by George Frederick Handel in 1741. In a telephone interview with Lydia Adams, she talked about how enduring the Messiah still is, even centuries after it was written.

'It's amazing, isn't it,' she commented. 'A lot of people feel that once they've heard Messiah, their Christmas can begin. Coming back to it every year, it's an old friend. Every time I come to it, I find new things in it.'

Her excitement for this marvellous work rang out as she said, 'I was rehearsing with the choir last night and it was just as fresh as if they had never done it before. They were so into it. The joyous parts are so exciting. The sad parts are very moving and it's hard! From what I was watching last night, the choir have back to come to something they love.'

To explain the tremendous passion for the music, 'It is a great piece of art - you're basically interactive with it. I have some singers doing it for the very first time and that is great and, then, some who have actually done it for decades. It's a challenge to everybody, if you've sung it 40 times or are coming to it for the first time.'

'The 16th notes run for a long time - four bars. How do you rehearse those 16th notes?'

'I begin at the end to get the rhythm of all those notes.'

Ms Adams told us, 'The great soprano, Lois Marshall, she told me she rehearsed [a passage in Messiah] Rejoice Greatly every day of her life. If Lois Marshall has to rehearse it every day of her life, just imagine how hard it is. Of course, that kept her in shape.'

'You have to get to know those difficult 16th runs in your body. They are great vocal lines.'

Reflectively, as a resident of Caledon, she longed, 'We have to bring it to Caledon. Caledon, of all places, filled with artists. It's time to push for an arts centre. If Caledon had something like that, the community would support it. I'm noticing an upsurge in interest in such a place. We [the Elmer Iseler Singers] would love to come and perform here.'

She spoke briefly about her plans to step down from her post as Conductor and Artistic Director for the Amadeus Choir. 'This is my 35th year with Amadeus - this is their 45th year. We're having the most wonderful rehearsals and concerts. They're going through a search process, meeting some really amazing people. They're winners with whomever they get from that group.'

'I'm really looking to perhaps doing some other things,' she remarked, meaning in addition to continuing with the EIS. 'I'm leaving the door open a little bit. Opening the door for the Universe to come in.'

The other wonderful and very much an annual event being hosted by the EIS is their Sherry and Shortbread afternoon, now for 30 years.

'It started off with wonderful friends, Alfreda and Vern Heinrich. They hosted the choir in their home and they would have their home so beautiful. She is a collector of Creches from all parts of the world. It was just gorgeous and we just had a wonderful time and the audiences loved it. Then, they sold their home and we had to find a new home. Some of the board members are members of the Albion Club. So, we were so fortunate to find a home there. It's really beautiful. People can listen to the carols - we do three sets - and look at the silent auction. It's a nice time for people to get together.'

Sherry and Shortbread, and she assured us that there will be both, takes place at the Albany Club, est. 1882, is located at 91 King Street East at Church Street, Toronto. Sherry and Shortbread is an afternoon's entertainment from 2:00 pm to 5:00pm.

Briefly, back to the idea of an arts centre in Caledon, Ms Adams advised, 'Get a good acoustician. Multi purpose buildings don't work for anybody. Go and look at different concert halls and see what they're doing.'

She said, 'Build it and they will come.'

For tickets to the Messiah concert on Friday, November 30, at 8:00 pm or the Sherry and Shortbread event, on Sunday, December 2, at 2 pm, please call 416-217-0537.