

Mark DuBois opens downtown Orangeville studio

By Constance Scrafield

Great news, not only for the congregation of Tweedsmuir Memorial Presbyterian Church, but also for the Orangeville area at large. World-renowned tenor Mark DuBois has taken the position of Music Director at the Orangeville church, which will also serve as his downtown Orangeville studio.

"I wanted to get back to choral music and Tweedsmuir has a good choir of some 20 people. This will grow and is already," DuBois said, explaining how he was drawn to the church. "There is lots of music in this church and really nice people making it."

Tweedsmuir is a substantial church, under the leadership of Rev. Harvey Self, with an average Sunday congregation of about 150 people. No doubt, though, the place will be packed Dec. 21 when DuBois, with the choir, the church's "praise team" and the DuBois Studio Singers will fill the air with all the best Christmas music.

"This will give a different flavour with the young adult and the professional singers all joining in," DuBois remarked happily. "We'll sing popular Christmas songs as well. It won't be a staid message and carols service."

There is with this new era of music, if we may call it that, at Tweedsmuir, the opportunity for DuBois to blend his own young and adult students with the music of church, for he has now opened his Downtown Studio in conjunction with his engagement as Music Director there. In fact, already his daughter Elisabeth has participated in recent special services at the church.

As a way of demonstrating how he can be of real service to the community, DuBois explained the benefits of a teacher with his background. "I have 40 years of experience and training," he said. "I believe that teachers need qualifications and experience."

Indeed, he was a boy soprano at the age of seven in the choir at St. Augustine of Canterbury Anglican Church in Leaside. From there, by the age of 15, he had started a Youth Rock Folk Group (with the long hair, rock sun glasses and guitar over his back, "bringing the youth to Christ" quite a picture).

On and on, his long career within and without the church, under mentors who brought his singing voice to lead him to opera houses around the world. Now, he has the time and place to offer all this as a teacher to talented people in Dufferin and Caledon.

There is an audition process, as he explained. "I will only teach people with talent and passion for the singing. This means not only young people but adults as well. I have five adults, by which I mean people over 40, coming to me now."

"It's wonderful to watch them change and bring out their sound and understand the technical requirements," he added. "And, it's great for them."

Particularly important, as a result of his experience in the music world is, having sung with many of the great voices in the world, here is how he detailed it to us: "I hear the voice (of a student) and it reminds me of a person I've sung with. Then, I can work with the student toward that place of excellence."

"There's a lot of talent in Orangeville who need a teacher like myself with all the tools for their singing," he added. "Then, they can go and do what they want with their singing. A lot of my students have gone on to university, but not everyone will necessarily want that. I have that to offer. That's why I will not simply teach just anybody; to teach without the talent doesn't work with me."

It is that delicate time in a boy's life when his voice begins to change that DuBois is also known for his skill in guiding.

"I've become known as taking boys' voices and leading them through that change over," he said. "There is a lot of harm can be done to a young man's voice at that stage without knowledgeable instruction."

His philosophy: "I don't force; I point my students and I give them the feeling to follow their dreams and I'll take them there. They have to tell me where they want to go and, if they have the talent, I will show them the way. The way to their dreams as singers."