

Messiah performance Dec. 19 at Claude Presbyterian Church

By Marni Walsh

Headwaters' Concert Choir will return to Claude Presbyterian Church to present repertoire from Handel's Messiah, along with two pieces by J.S. Bach.

This will be this coming Saturday (Dec. 19).

Robert Hennig, founder and conductor of the award-winning choir, said the concert is about "hearing the humanity in the music of musical greats."

For more than a decade, the Headwaters' choir has gained a reputation for its "blended and expressive sound," winning awards for interpretations of composers such as Handel, Rutter and Beethoven. Noting it has performed both sacred and secular repertoire, Hennig said the choir offers audiences "an authentic interpretation, clarity of expression and a profound emotional experience of some of the most beautiful music ever composed." The choir has been invited to perform in some of the world's most prestigious concert halls and sanctuaries, including St. Peter's Basilica in Rome in 2012.

Hennig, an honours music graduate from the University of Toronto, is a conductor, musician, singer and music teacher. He is also the founder of the Ontario Music Scholarship program, which provides young musicians and singers the opportunity to perform publicly. Hennig currently conducts the Great Lakes Symphony and Touring Chorus and the Brampton Festival Singers as well as the Headwaters Concert Choir.

The choir will be accompanied by members of the Great Lakes Symphony Dec. 19. Guest soloists will include Shelagh Tyreman, Laura Curtis, Nancy Claridge, Adam Malcolm and Jeffrey Carl. Claridge, a mezzo-soprano who will perform the alto aria He Was Despised, said that for her, Messiah is a staple of the Christmas season.

"I've been performing it since I was a child and it never loses its magic, whether I'm singing in the chorus or performing solos.

Although, this masterpiece covers Christ's nativity, passion, resurrection and ascension, the Christmas season seems to give us the time to sit back and reflect on this gift."

The concert at Claude is a rare opportunity for area residents to experience the very best selections of Handel's masterwork as well as a new addition of related music by J.S. Bach, which includes a duet from Bach's Mass in B minor. Hennig said he made the addition to stretch the skills of the choristers and to highlight the differences between the two composers, who were both born in 1685, in close proximity, in Germany.

"A phenomenon," he said, "that two such genius were produced at the same time and place."

He added that the cultural practice of giving children, who showed musical promise, to the church to be trained, likely influenced this outcome.

"Choirs love Handel's Messiah because it's very dramatic," he said, adding "it will be very poignant and emotional" for audiences.

"They will be touched by some quiet moments of life, but also lifted by the most joyous ones, especially the Hallelujah, which is a roller-coaster emotionally," he said

The performance will be held at Claude Church, 15175 Hurontario St., south of Olde Base Line Road at 2:30 p.m. Dec. 19th. Tickets are \$20 online at www.ticketscene.ca or \$25 at the door.