
The festive season means that music's in the air

JILL SUMMERHAYES, PIECE OF MIND

Published on Nov 09, 2007

This city will be filled with music during the festival season.

There are numerous concerts, choirs and bands, all playing music for the holiday season, a time of celebration for many of us. Choosing just which ones to attend is not easy.

One choir that has raised funds for various community groups for the last 25 years is the Addison Women's Choir. Funds raised have gone toward Haven House, The Bridges shelter for the homeless, Tsunami relief, a mammography machine and numerous other worthwhile projects that benefit the community.

Now, they are fundraising for themselves as they approach their 25th anniversary and have been invited to sing in the United Kingdom next spring. These women from Cambridge and the surrounding area get together because they love to sing. Their ages range from 20s to 80s (some have been with the choir for the entire 25 years), and is led by Rachel Rensink-Hoff, a doctoral candidate at University of Western Ontario.

Rensink-Hoff does a wonderful job of teaching vocal techniques and selecting a wide range of music to this already accomplished choir. If you have never heard them, on Dec. 1 they will be performing at Central Presbyterian Church at 7:30 p.m., along with other choirs.

We wish them well on their trip next spring as they take Cambridge overseas and share their expertise with others. Please read the newspaper carefully to check on all the other concerts, choirs and happenings coming up so you do not miss the one you want to attend.

On Nov. 30, the Christmas in the Village concert with children's choirs and the Cambridge Community Orchestra take place at St. Andrews Church in Hespeler. The following weekend, the Community Orchestra combines with choirs at Forward Baptist Church and the Michelle Hopkins dance studio to perform excerpts from the Nutcracker. Children are welcomed at most of these events.

Many parents are uncertain as to whether or not their children will sit through a concert so the children never have the pleasure of hearing live music. This past weekend, due to a family emergency, Stuart and I had a visit from our two grandchildren from Stouffville - three-year-old Charlotte and nine-year-old Claire. As chair of the board of directors of the Cambridge Community Orchestra, I was due to attend the concert and wondered about taking the girls, whose understanding of classical music is very limited. We opted for Stuart to stay home with Charlotte and me to take Claire.

For the first part, Claire sat quietly through the concert listening. When I asked during the intermission what she thought, she said it was good. She had just heard a brilliant young pianist, Jonathan Bondoc, play Beethoven's piano concerto with passion and style. This young music student, studying at Wilfrid Laurier, brought the audience of several hundred people to their feet as he received a well-deserved standing ovation.

During the second portion of the concert, I gave Claire a small notebook so she could write or draw in it if she needed distraction. The following day, when I was making a note about something, I came across what she had written. She had drawn a music stand, written musical notes on it and underneath had written, "At the orchestra you get to hear the most beautiful thing you could EVER hear".

There's no longer any doubt in my mind as to whether or not she should have been there. Exposing children to the classics might start a lifetime love of music.