**Ottawa Brahms Choir**

**35th Anniversary Spring Concert on April 24th, 3 pm, 2016**

**Impressions**

May I quote once more from the German Ambassador’s Werner Wnendt’s message , Hon. Patron of the 35th anniversary celebration year, “Dear friends of choral music, Music is probably the most beautiful form of communication between people of different backgrounds and traditions. Music unifies, music transcends borders, bringing people close to one another. I am pleased that the Ottawa Brahms Choir has been bringing people together with singing for over 35 years. That you keep alive the musical heritage of Johannes Brahms and other composers from Germany and Europe fills me with pride....”

*Jubilate Deo…Jubilate…!* Singing this work at our special concert by composer Colin Mawby accompanied by Shawn Potter on the organ, is still very present in my mind.

A very demanding, rich, full programme of choral works, prepared by Conductor Christopher Askwith awaited the audience on Sunday afternoon, April 24. Kurt Ala-Kantti strengthened the Basses; Tenor Ken Parlee strengthened the remaining three Tenors of the choir.

Organist Shawn Potter accompanied us during the first part of the concert to a selection of these: *Duo Seraphim’* (by Jakob Handl) sung in two choirs; *Pueri Hebraeorum* (Tomas Luis de Victoria); *April is in my mistress’ face* (Thomas Morley); *Jubilate Deo* (Colin Mawby), *When the sun comes after rain* (Matthew Emery); *Credo* (from Berliner Messe by Arvo Paert); and Johannes Brahms’ Motette *Es ist das Heil uns kommen her* (Op.29, #2). The audience appreciated all presentations.

A wonderful Entr’acte followed, giving the singers a much needed break.

Former accompanist of the choir, Ioulia Blinova, joined our present accompanist Svetlana Logigan at the piano to delight everyone with Johannes Brahms’ Hungarian Dances 1, 2 and 5.

Svetlana accompanied her student Tenor George Valettas as he presented three beautiful Italian songs: *Sogno* (Paolo Tosti), *Dicentello vuie* (Rodolfo Falvo), and *Core n’grato* (Salvatore Cardillo).

Svetlana also generously presented Frederic Chopin’s Waltz in C# minor (op. 64, #2).

The audience and choir responded with enthusiastic applause to each of these wonderful presentations.

‘Old Favorites’ , a selection of the choir’s 35 years repertoire with added new songs, filled the second part of the programme, which started with:

*Pastyme with good companye’*(Henry VIII Tudor); Bach’s beautiful chorale *Jesus bleibet meine Freude;* Gabriel Faure’s popular *Cantique de Jean Racine*, Mozart’s *Bundeslied*, Johannes Brahms’ divine *Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen* (Ein Deutsches Requiem, #4); *Who is at my window, who* (by Welford Russell).

Svetlana and Ioulia both accompanied the choir to Johannes Brahms’ *Ein kleiner huebscher Vogel* and *Am Donaustrande* (Liebeslieder Walzer #6 and #9) and Johann Strauss II *An der schoenen Blauen Donau*.

The presentation concluded with two impressive pieces, G.F. Handel’s *Hallelujah* and Ron Jeffers’ *I have had singing*. As our tenor, Ken Currie, wrote in his extensive notes to the programme, “Ron Jeffers, born 1943 in Springfield, IL, was for many years choir director of Oregon State University, but now runs music publisher Earthsong. His setting of ‘I have had singing’ is based on Ronald Blythe’s book Akenfield, Portrait of an English Village, recounting lives in a tiny village in Suffolk, England. An 85-year old recalls his childhood: “*I never did any playing in all my life. There was nothing in my childhood, only work. I never had pleasure…….But I have forgotten one thing – the singing”.* Ken Currie concludes with, ‘May we all take pleasure in singing!’

The audience thanked conductor, choir, and musicians, with a very appreciating, long applause - standing ovation in many parts of the church. Flowers were presented to the musicians, conductor, long time singers (Gisela Hell 35 years , Hennie Buckshi and Angela Siebrecht each 25 years) and to outgoing Choir President, Leo Heistek, who has also been our webmaster of [www.OttawaBrahmsChoir.ca](http://www.OttawaBrahmsChoir.ca)

The audience was invited to a celebration reception where tables, decorated with flowers, presented sweet and savory food and drinks generously provided by choir members, graciously hosted by Louise. It included two big round Black Forest cakes donated by Swiss Pastry Store with congratulatory message and a large beautiful celebration cake donated generously by Roxane Roy, our new President. Animated guests extended Kudos to musicians, guest singers, choir members, and conductor. President Leo, again on chair, welcomed the many guests, expressed thanks to all involved, and gave out honouring certificates to the three long time choir members, Gisela Hell, Hennie Buckshi, Angela Siebrecht, including one to long time generous sponsor ‘The Outskirts’ – which specializes in European clothing.

A concert involves a lot of preparation: Many rehearsals during harsh winter months. An energetic weekend workshop with vocal clinician Cara Gibertson Bose. Dr. Kenneth Currie, prepares and sponsors our concert programme with assistance from Marcela Pauckova, who also produces our posters, publicity material, and honouring certificates for long time members. We thank the many generous sponsors. We thank the media for publishing our concert in their community newspapers (HBH News, Grapevine-Glebe Report, VISTAS, OSCAR, Centretown News, the Ottawa Citizen, Spotlight, City of Ottawa, New Edinburgh News), the German and Austrian Embassies for announcing it in their calendar of events or Facebook, as well as CAMMAC and Dynamic (Choirs of Ontario). We thank CBC Saturday ‘In Town and Out’ (host Giacomo Panico) and Carleton University Radio CKCU-FM for airing announcements of our concert. We thank the Secretary of St. Thomas the Apostle church, Leading Note and Compact Music who handle ticket sales. We thank the many volunteers who welcome guests, sell tickets, give out programmes…. ; two photographers who capture the concert event, and concert recorder Don. And a special big thank you to the loyal audience consisting of family, friends, and choral music lovers.

We thank our outgoing President, Leo Heistek, for his relaxed, cheerful leadership and for his tireless work as webmaster. We welcome charming, resourceful Roxane Roy as new President of the Board.

Gretel Harmston, April 29, 2016