

Voices of Angels – BC Boys Choir Takes You HOME

Peggy Stortz

WHAT: The British Columbia Boys Choir

WHEN: 7:30, May 18

WHERE: St. Stephens Anglican Church, West Van

HOW: For concert tickets and information about the choir and CDs call 1.888.909.8282.



The human voice is the oldest instrument. It can achieve a wide variety of sounds and pitches and is much more diverse than any man-made instrument. The vocal music of the choirs of the early middle ages was, for many centuries, the only music that was notated. Chants, such as the well-known Gregorian ones, were sung in the churches and monasteries throughout Europe.

In time, composers began to experiment with the intertwining of two or more melodic lines giving birth to what we now call vocal polyphony. This new style of singing proliferated in the churches. The composers of the time wrote their finest works, most of it sacred music, for a four-part blend of men's and boys voices.

Today, the sound of a choir is no less stirring than it was so many centuries ago. But the repertoire has expanded beyond liturgical music and some of the most wonderful choral offerings today are by contemporary composers.

The British Columbia Boys Choir (BCBC), founded in 1968 by Donald Forbes, has won critical acclaim throughout Canada and the United States as well as in Europe, Australia and New Zealand. This summer, their International Touring Choir, along with the BC Girls Choir and the Orchid Ensemble, will be performing in six cities in China.

The choir is open to boys and young men from 8 to 24 years of age. Participants come from almost every community around the Lower Mainland including both North and West Vancouver. Besides the Touring Choir, there is the Town Choir for intermediate boys from 10-12 with unchanged voices, and the Choristers for boys from 8-11.

Artistic Director Tony Araujo and Associate Conductor Siiri Rebane have led the choir since 2003. They tour regularly in Western Canada and the United States and performed locally with various Vancouver choirs including Chor Leoni, the Welsh Mens Choir and the Pacific Spirit Choir.

In October of 2002, they were invited to sing for Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth II for the historic dropping of the puck for the Vancouver Canucks Game at GM Place.

Besides performing live, the BCBC has made several recordings including their most recently released CD entitled *HOME* which celebrates Canadian composers and arrangers. The nineteen songs come from a variety of sources. Opening with "Amazing Grace" it continues on with a trilogy of psalms, Canadian folk classics by Allister MacGillivray, Ian Tyson and the late Stan Rogers, and choral arrangements of poems by W.B. Yeats and the bard himself, William Shakespeare. There is even an arrangement by young Canadian composer Jason Nett of John Lennon's "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds", simply entitled Lucy. Other favourites include *Loch Lomond* and the old Negro spiritual *Going Home*.

Songs of a Prospector, a collection of five pieces, paints a vivid picture of pioneer life in BC. The words, written by George Winkler, a miner in the early days of our province, are arranged by Stephen Chatman. Some of the other Canadian arrangers featured on the *HOME* are Eleanor Daley, Diane Loomer, Stuart Calvert and Stephen Hatfield, to mention just a few.



BC Boys Choir on tour