

A Halton Hills Arts Council feature

Choral voices in solo spotlight Feb. 17

Mezzo soprano Carolyn has surrounded herself with music



Doreen Willford of Oakville helps the three soloists from the Georgetown Choral Society hold the world's longest note, announcing the society's February concert. Carolyn Simmons.

Bill Brush, George De Kleer and Mrs. Willford will be the featured soloists in the joint concert with the Oakville Symphony. (Herald photo)

As one of the soloists for Beethoven's Mass in C Major, to be performed February 17 at Holy Cross Church by the Choral Society in conjunction with the Oakville Symphony, CAROLYN SIMMONS "enjoys this tremendous challenge".

Early education in London, followed by Teacher's College training, continued to take up specialized kindergarten studies at Toronto. After marriage and 20 subsequent years in Toronto, the Simmons family arrived in Georgetown. A great love for the country drew this family to the largely rural area of Halton Hills, where they enjoy small-town living in a "closer knit" environment.

Initially, Mrs. Simmons taught at Park School, where she began as a volunteer teacher with handicapped children. This proved a temporary sojourn back to education which was followed by going into business with Lynn Barnard, proprietor of Penniesworth store. While Mrs. Barnard continues her interest in the business, Mrs. Simmons relinquished her share to pursue other interests.

Early musical training started with piano lessons at

EDITOR'S NOTE: A week from Sunday, the vastly under-rated Georgetown Choral Society combines its 65 voices with the delicate strings of the Oakville Symphony Orchestra for an evening performance of Beethoven's Mass in C Major at Holy Cross Church. Along with Oakville resident Doreen Willford, three local singers will be featured soloists at the Holy Cross concert and the Oakville Centre performance which precedes it February 16, Halton Hills Arts Council columnist Enid Williams met with George de Kleer, Carolyn Simmons and Bill Brush last week to find out about their work with the society, their backgrounds and interests and their feelings about the upcoming collaborations.

eight years of age, which continued until Mrs. Simmons received her A.R.C.T. at 18 years of age from the Toronto Conservatory of Music. An avid choral singer through her life and student of voice at the Conservatory, she has used her mezzo soprano voice for her own enjoyment for years. She has taught piano out of her home but happily explains that she "enjoys making music more than teaching".

Choral experience over many years in church groups has been greatly stimulated by her involvement with the Salvation Army, which is renowned for musical expression in its services.

Early musical training started with piano lessons at

Chorus, Concord Singers, which was founded in 1972, and now our local Choral Society.

Oratorio singing began at age 15 in London, when the Kriwans Club sponsored an oratorio which drew singers from all community churches. Participation in the singing of several famous scores brought this singer much pleasure, as well as solo concert performance in such works as Brahms, Schubert and Schumann.

The Simmons family

vibrates with music, as husband David plays the soprano cornet in the Salvation Army Brass Band, son Greg, 15, is a tuba instrumentalist and son Scott, age 12, plays cornet and studies flute with Ralph Foster of Milton. Both boys are in the junior brass band with the Salvation Army Carolyn says, "I'm surrounded by big brass".

Mrs. Simmons does not feel she has fully availed herself of the total arts community in Halton Hills. However, she is well aware of the dire need "for an enlarged library after having to sit on the floor to do some research reading". The Arts people in Halton Hills "deserve a strong, cohesive, cultural centre", she adds. "We have an excellent creative community".

Becoming a member of Georgetown Choral Society has not only "kept me practising", but also "enfolded me in the musical environment of my own town".



CAROLYN SIMMONS

Singer-sportsman Bill Brush will team up with flautist sister



BILL BRUSH

BILL BRUSH, vocalist, born and reared in Milton, has a career in sales, working out of Toronto. As a child, he played the trombone in the Milton town band.

During the 1950s, Mr. Brush was in the newspaper limelight often when he won several singing awards in festival competition. In 1957, he won the Rose Bowl from the Kiwanis Music Festival in Guelph for "best performance" in the category examining 1,500 entries in a week long festival.

Early interest in music began through the schools. Mr. Brush entered festivals in voice, piano and trombone, and currently holds a degree in voice. At one time he played for a local dance band as well as playing the organ in a few hotels in the surrounding area, but he has always pursued

music as "a hobby".

Encouragement and training from the late Ken Harrison spurred Bill Brush on to become a soloist in churches, an interest he has maintained through the years. Mr. Brush has taught music out of his home but now leaves it to his four children, whom he has nurtured to play instruments. Besides a piano and organ in the Brush home, there is also a trombone, trumpet, clarinet and flute. The throb of music vibrates from this home through the next generation. Daughter Jane teaches music at home and Joan is a singer as well as clarinet player in the school band.

The outdoors life is an exciting hobby for Mr. Brush, who enjoys hunting and fishing which takes him all over Ontario. Along with these travels, he also has a cottage on the Bruce Peninsula.

Although a long time resident of Milton, Mr. Brush spends so much time in Georgetown involved in music that he is equally well-acquainted with this town and has many friends here.

The fact that Georgetown Choral Society will be performing with the Oakville Symphony has special meaning, as Mr. Brush's sister is flautist in the orchestra. He considers this involvement between Oakville and Georgetown "an exciting challenge".

"This joint effort is a developing of culture in the community and an enrichment as well when we share together programmes of music that challenge the performer and listener," he comments.

Prior to joining Georgetown Choral Society in 1976, Mr. Brush had circulated around the Milton area as a church soloist. As a member of the Choral Society, he feels he is "one of 65 soloists in the choir", and expressed his hope the choir will be singing to packed houses both at Oakville Centre February 16, and at Georgetown's Holy Cross Church, February 17.

Enthusiasm was very evident when Mr. Brush expressed his pleasure in singing classical music. He went on to say he "prefers harder works" as he feels the more one puts into learning a score, the more rewards to be realized from such efforts. Favorite composers include Vaughn Williams and Brahms, whose works offer Mr. Brush stimulation to strive to achieve a high standard of performance.

Along with being well attuned to the arts, Bill Brush is an avid sportsman. He plays softball all summer in Milton and manages to enjoy golf as well.

An unassuming performer, Mr. Brush stressed the importance of the whole choir working together for a common goal. There is "a thrill in building a piece of music into a culmination of the whole choir's efforts". He values his association with Dale Wood, director, both as a friend and stimulating musician. Bill Brush is an example of being a rounded out person, as his life includes many interesting facets, all vibrating with dedication and force of energy.

This tenor, accompanist is also a farmer



GEORGE DE KLEER

GEORGE H. de KLEER, tenor soloist and accomplished organist, began his life in Canada in 1957, when he emigrated from the Netherlands. Initially, he started out in eastern Ontario before taking up residence in Georgetown.

Mr. de Kleer's first introduction to music started at home where an appreciation for music generated through the whole family, which encompasses several vocalists, a trumpet player, a violinist and organist. Mr. de Kleer began studying music as a hobby, which continues as a sideline and an integral part of his life.

Although Mr. de Kleer studied both agriculture and music, he chose the former as his living. His present occupation in dairy and poultry farming revolves around a parcel of land on the Seventh Line. Although rurally-oriented, he resides in the town of Georgetown.

Organ studies were pursued through the Royal Conservatory of Music, and Mr. de Kleer is director of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Fergus. He has a senior and junior choir of 55 voices under his baton, as well as a 20-piece string orchestra. Within the ranks of the church orchestra, there is a family of six string instrumentalists which he feels is exceptional.

Mr. de Kleer studied voice with Professor Victor Martin at Waterloo University.

"It's very exciting to work with this choir under Dale Wood's direction both as organist and tenor soloist," he said. "I'm completely trained and oriented to church music and consider myself a church musician".

Another musician, Mr. de Kleer's wife Vicki, plays alto recorder with expertise, and at one time they played baroque music together.

The coming Choral Society concert February 16 and 17 at Oakville and Georgetown, respectively, will feature Mr. de Kleer in the tenor arias of Beethoven's Mass in C Major.

Winterfest fun and games for all ages



Susan O'Donnell demonstrated that she has some muscle power in the nail-hammering contest at the Jaycees' Winterfest Saturday. The nail-hammering contest was just one of several contests that went on without the benefit of some extra snow. (Herald photo)



The cold temperatures Saturday made for an excellent ice surface for the Winterfest activities. These youngsters seem to be having a problem getting across the ice on their feet, or maybe they prefer not to take any chances. Contests such as the deep snow tug-of-war, the snow sculpturing and other activities such as cross-country skiing were cancelled because of the lack of snow, but ice events such as curling and family skating were very successful. (Herald photo)