

Making music memories for 40 years



Choral Society celebrates milestone

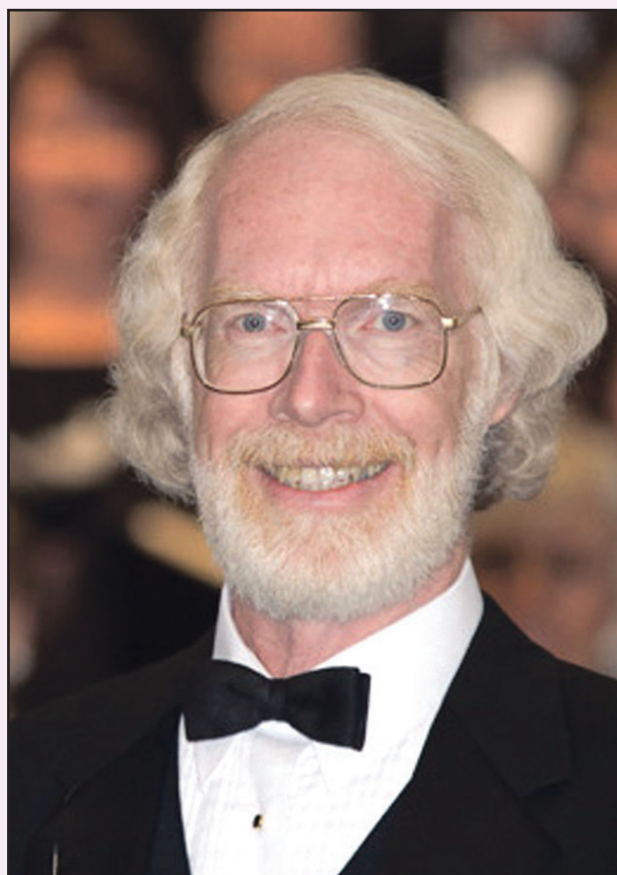
Story by Andrea Lefebvre
Photos courtesy Georgetown
Choral Society

The lights dimmed and the crowd hushed as the 100-plus members of the Georgetown Choral Society filed to the front of the Georgetown Christian Reformed Church, the women wearing long, black skirts with matching shirts and sparkly jackets and the men donning dark tuxedos with bow ties.

The audience burst into applause as choral director A. Dale Wood made his way to the front of the room and, with a bow and a wave of his baton, the first concert of the Georgetown Choral Society's 40th season began.

The performance, titled *40 Years—Hallelujah!*, included an eclectic combination of favourite songs from the choir's four decade history, from classic works by Beethoven and Handel to contemporary pieces by Oscar Peterson and the Rankin Family. The evening was capped off with the debut of *Requiem*, a haunting work created by Wood to commemorate the choir's 40 years of song—a history that includes fun, friendship, international travel, impressive concert venues and lots of music.

The Georgetown Choral Society can trace its roots back to the Georgetown Community Choral



Director A. Dale Wood

Society of the 1930s, although the choir's current incarnation was founded in January 1971 by volunteers Charles Crimes, who acted as director,

and Ralph Ursel, the choir's accompanist. The group had about 35 members who all met and practiced in the Georgetown District High School music room.

"It was an opportunity to meet people with the same idea who also like to sing," says Joanne Mackie, the choir's archivist and one of three members who have been with the choir from the start. "From the beginning it was a very collegial group."

Three years after founding the choir, Crimes found he had too much on his plate and passed the conductor's baton to Howard Weedmark, who led the choir for a year. In 1975, Wood was hired as choral director.

A graduate of the Royal Conservatory School of Music, Wood introduced classical works to the choir's repertoire of folk songs and pop spirituals. In his 35 years with the choir, Wood has earned a reputation for his energy and enthusiasm, as well as his enviable ability to sing all four parts and play the piano during the choir's weekly rehearsals.

It was under Wood's leadership that the Georgetown Choral began building relationships with other choirs around the world. Together with the Achill Choral Society, another community choir directed by Wood, the Georgetown Choral Society travelled to the Netherlands in 1990 to perform with the Ettens Mannenkoor Male Choir



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