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# Arts & Entertainment

## Concert aims to quench entertainment thirst

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**  
The Champion

**B**rainerd Blyden-Taylor is busy travelling the world with the Nathaniel Dett Chorale he founded six years ago. But this month, the former Milton Choristers director will be returning to Milton for what he views as a homecoming concert.

He said it'll be like he's performing for

family.

"I feel like I'm coming home."

The Nathaniel Dett Chorale will perform March 27 at 7:30 p.m. at St. Paul's United Church, 123 Main St. E.

"The show will be a cross section of what we do," Mr. Blyden-Taylor said. "We'll do some spirituals, some of Nathaniel Dett's music, some more contemporary classical repertoire and some Cuban folk songs."

The common thread linking these music styles is they're all Afro-centric, Mr. Blyden-Taylor said, adding the concert will give Miltonians a chance to experience some musical styles they probably don't often hear.

Concert organizer Jack White of St. Paul's United Church said it's going to be an exciting concert.

"I've seen them (the chorale) on TV and I think they're awesome," he said. "Because they're the kind of thing we haven't heard in town, we thought we'd like to bring them in."

The Nathaniel Dett Chorale was founded in 1998 in response to what Mr. Blyden-Taylor called "a musical void in Canada."



Members of the Nathaniel Dett Chorale are set to perform at St. Paul's United Church March 27.

It's Canada's first professional choral group dedicated to Afro-centric music of all styles including classical, spiritual, gospel, jazz, folk and blues. In addition to delighting audiences, the group aims to promote the original works of past and present Afro-centric composers.

The chorale consists of 21 classically trained singers.

The choir's namesake was an African-Canadian composer who died in 1943. Mr. Blyden-Taylor said naming the choir after Mr. Dett was his way of paying tribute to a man he said has inspired him both personally and professionally.

"He paved a way for those following in his path — myself included."

The chorale gives Mr. Blyden-Taylor a chance to educate people, he said.

"People ask who Nathaniel Dett was, and we say he was part of the Canadian, musical and black heritage."

Starting the chorale was a way of correcting some of the stereotypes Mr. Blyden-Taylor said he often faced as a black conductor and musician. Black choirs, he said, are often "pigeon-holed" as gospel choirs.

The chorale is Mr. Blyden-Taylor's way of showing the diversity of Afro-centric

music.

"There was a real need in Canada for an ensemble showcasing a variety of Afro-centric music," said Mr. Blyden-Taylor, who, besides directing the chorale, works for U of T's faculty of music. He's also the musical director for St. Timothy's Anglican Church in Toronto.

Choir members aren't just singers or musicians, Mr. Blyden-Taylor said. "They're ambassadors of cultural diversity."

Mr. Blyden-Taylor directed the Milton Choristers from 1982 to 1990.

"It was a rich time," he said. "I made a lot of friendships there (Milton) that still last today."

Proceeds from the concert will go toward reducing St. Paul's United Church's debt, particularly debt incurred from a \$350,000 addition a few years back.

"This is a chance to showcase our church and give something back to the community," Mr. White said, adding, "This town is hungry for good entertainment."

Tickets cost \$25 for adults and \$22 for seniors and are available by calling (905) 878-6807 or (905) 878-8895. Stephanie Thiessen can be reached at [sthiessen@miltoncanadianchampion.com](mailto:sthiessen@miltoncanadianchampion.com).

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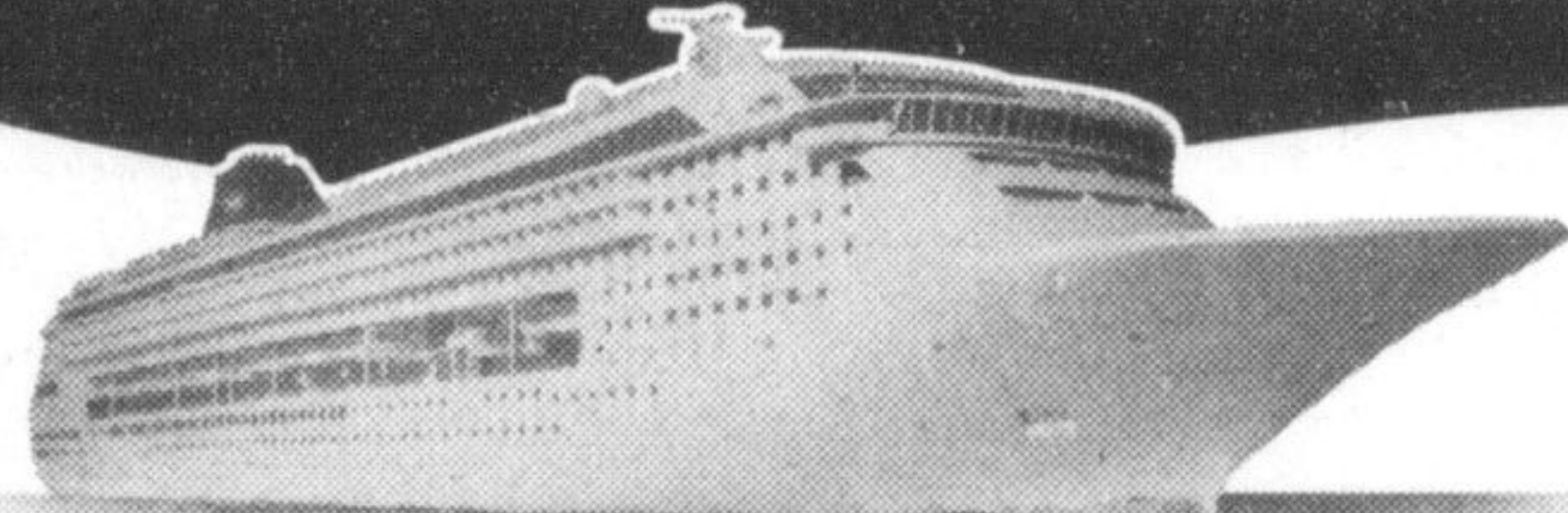
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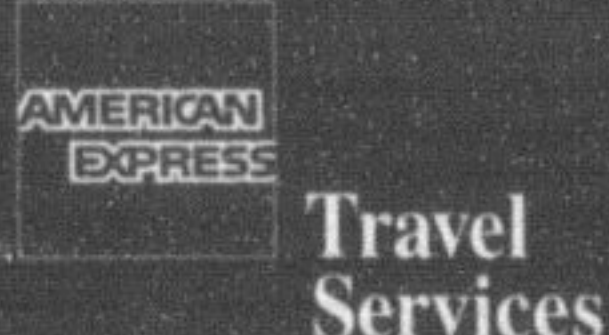
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