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St. Michael's Choir to present special Christmas concert

An alumnus of St. Michael's Choir school has been instrumental in bringing the famed 120 voice singing group to Midland for a concert specifically attuned to the Christmas season.

Bob Whittam, Director of Music at St. Margaret's Church in Midland considers the appearance of the choir "a major event on Midland's cultural calendar. The choir will be performing the same program that they're doing in Toronto's Massey Hall for three

nights early in December."

There are three choirs in the group. The Junior Choir, composed of boys in grades five and six at St. Michael's Choir School will include "Sleigh Ride", "Ding Dong Merrily on High" and a Czech carol, "Harken to Me", in their selections.

The tenor and bass choir will sing a selection of modern Christmas songs, in addition to "Do You Hear What I Hear?" and the chorus of "Shepherds and Kings."

There are some adult voices in the senior choir which will include "Lift up your Heads", "For Unto Us a Child is Born", and "I Saw Three Ships" in their section of the program.

All three choirs will combine for the final section which will include "O Holy Night" and a Christmas medley arranged by Monsignor J.E. Ronan, choir director.

What is most remarkable about this evening of glorious music is that the St. Michael's choir school is donating its services for the concert.

Proceeds from the evening are slated for the restoration of the 1890 R.S. Williams tracker organ at St. Margaret's. "As soon as they heard about our old tracker organ," says Whittam, "they volunteered their services. They believe in the cause."

Most churches these days are equipped with electric organs, or with pipe organs which have an electro-pneumatic action. This means that when the keys are pressed, the action which sends air through the pipe is dictated by the electronic impulse.

In tracker organs, the action is completely mechanical. The pipes are connected directly with the keyboard. There has been a resurgence of interest in tracker organs in the past few years but not before many churches had dismantled theirs, in favour of the more modern electric in-

struments.

Fortunately at St. Margaret's, although an electric organ has been in use for about ten years, the old tracker organ is still intact, though unplayable at the moment.

"Over the years," says Whittam, "it gradually deteriorated to the point where organists sometimes had to pause in mid-service to repair something with a bit of scotch tape. However, even though it hasn't been played for ten years, the St. Margaret's organ is a historically significant instrument, and it should be restored."

St. Margaret's has already secured a Winario grant which will pay for one third of the restoration cost, up to five thousand dollars. Estimates of restoration costs are in the thirteen thousand dollar range.

The St. Michael's Choir School concert is the first step.

The school was founded in 1937 and students pursue a sound academic program as well as their musical instruction which includes theory, and instrumental instruction as well as choral music.

Most of the St. Michael's choir school

graduates proceed to university, but few pursue music as a career. Most of them, like Bob Whittam, seek other vocations, but choose music as an avocation.

"I have a commitment to expressing myself at church, in song," says Whittam. "More than that, my commitment is to encourage others to do the same."

And when the 120 voices of the St. Michael's choir school fill the air with silvery festive sounds on December 22, it may well be one of the loveliest Christmas presents Midland has ever had.



'Silent Night'

120 members of St. Michael's Choir School are presenting a concert of Christmas music at St. Theresa's High School on December 22. Tickets are available at 526-5582, or 526-7222.

New Huronia District gift shop opens Dec 1

Baby cloths... quilt... Christmas decorations... Christmas knick knacks... designed to cheer young and old alike... this and much more is what the Huronia District Hospital Women Auxiliary's gift shop is all about.

Manned by between 20 to 30 Auxiliary volunteers who each week give two or more hours of their time to the special little store, the gift shop is the hospital visitor's answer to forgotten "cheer-ups."



Gift shop

Jesse Brown (left) and Miriam Williams add the final touches to Huronia District Hospital's new Gift Shop. The ladies volunteer their services.

... Staff photo

Gift shop convenor Belle McKee and her willing staff are still in the process of stocking the new shop, opened only December 1st. A larger gift and novelty selection, a card rack and magazine selection are but a few of the ideas Mrs. McKee hopes to put to work in the coming weeks.

Somewhere between 25 to 30 per cent of the items carried in the Auxiliary shop are hand made by Auxiliary volunteers. The others are selected at special gift shows held in Toronto.

All proceeds from the gift shop go towards further work of the Women's Auxiliary, though the Auxiliary has no immediate plans for funds made through gift shop sales.

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