

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier University



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About 350 involved in March 31 performance of Berlioz' Requiem

Waterloo, Ont. (March 3) — About 350 professional musicians and students and alumni of Wilfrid Laurier University will assemble for a rare performance of Hector Berlioz' *Requiem* at Kitchener's Centre in the Square on Friday, March 31.

Conducted by Noel Edison, the *Requiem* will feature tenor Christopher Coyea with a chorus of 225 and an orchestra of 130. The chorus will include the WLU Choir, the WLU Chapel Choir, Laurier alumni, the Elora Festival Singers, and the Elora Festival Chorus. The orchestra will include the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony Orchestra, members of the WLU Symphony Orchestra, and four brass choirs. There will be 19 percussionists and timpanists. .

Described by its composer as a sacred drama that is "overwhelming and of a horrifying grandeur," the *Requiem (Grand Messe des Morts)* is rarely heard because its performance requires monumental resources.

"This is one of the few times it will be performed with the full complement-of musicians recommended by Berlioz," says Edison.

As the French composer intended, the performers will be arranged in the shape of a cross: in addition to the musicians on the stage, brass choirs will perform from loges at either side of the audience and from the balcony. The full force of the sound will be heard in three of the composition's 10 movements.

(more)

Edison says the production will be an exciting opportunity for the music students involved. "Laurier students will have the experience of rehearsing and performing a great work with professional musicians — many of whom are their teachers in an outstanding concert hall."

Coyea, who has performed with every major Canadian opera company, graduated with an honors bachelor of music degree in voice performance from Wilfrid Laurier University in 1983 and continues to study with Prof. Victor Martens.

Berlioz was commissioned in 1837 to compose a requiem to celebrate the slain heroes of the Revolution of 1830. However, when the musical part of the ceremony was cancelled, the *Requiem* had its first performance later that same year at the funeral of a general killed during an Algerian campaign.

This performance will commemorate the 20th anniversary of WLU's faculty of music and the 50th anniversary of The Co-operators Group Ltd. of Guelph, which gave \$30,000 to the university to help fund the performance.

Tickets for the 8 p.m. performance can be purchased from the box office at the Centre in the Square. Prices are \$26, \$22, and \$18. Telephone (519) 578-1570.

The faculty of music at Laurier is recognized as offering one of the finest undergraduate programs for music in Canada. The performance faculty attracts students from across Canada; there are currently about 300 music majors.

The Co-operators Group Ltd. is a group of Canadian companies focusing on insurance and also providing financial security products, property development and management and investment counselling services.

Wilfrid Laurier University



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Profiles

Noel Edison

Noel Edison is one of the founding members of The Elora Festival and has been its artistic director since 1983. He is also the conductor of The Elora Festival Singers. Born in Toronto, he has taught at St. John's Kilmarnock School and the University of Guelph. He is currently director of the WLU Choir and Laurier Singers at Wilfrid Laurier University and organist and choirmaster at St. John's Anglican Church in Elora. The Choir of St. John's was given the prestigious Healey Willan Award in 1989.

Edison has been responsible for a number of major commissions of new works from Canadian composers, including an oratorio by Srul Irving Glick, cantatas by Eric Robertson, Gary Kulesha, John Beckwith, Imant Raminsh, and the chamber opera *Florence: The Lady with the Lamp* by Timothy Sullivan, which premiered in 1992. In 1994 the Elora Festival received the prestigious Chalmers Award for mounting the production of *Florence*. He frequently acts as a juror for several arts grants and awards organizations including the Junos. He graduated with an honors bachelor of music degree from Wilfrid Laurier University and has studied choral music with John Alldis, Eric Ericson, Wayne Riddell, Sir David Willcocks, and Helmuth Rilling.

Christopher Coyea

Possessing a rich voice and a keen dramatic sense, Canadian tenor Christopher Coyea has established a well-deserved artistic reputation both in opera and in concert. As a former member of the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble, he has appeared in many COC productions including *Salome*, *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Queen of Spades*, *Werther*, *Andrea Chenier*, *Carmen*, *Wozzeck*, and the *Tales of Hoffmann*.

Since leaving the ensemble Coyea has appeared with several of Canada's leading orchestras including the Toronto Symphony, the Winnipeg Symphony, the Victoria Symphony, the K-W Symphony, the Ottawa Symphony, Orchestra London, and the Hamilton Philharmonic.

He has performed numerous operatic roles ranging from the comical King Kaspar (*Amahl and the Night Visitors*) to the villain Melot (*Tristan und Isolde*) with the opera companies of Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Hamilton, Toronto, and Montreal.

Most recent appearances include tenor soloist in Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Gaylord Ravenal in *Show Boat* in concert, *Der Mond* by Carl Orff, Arturo in *Lucia di Lamermoor* with Opera Hamilton and Opera Lyra of Ottawa, Malcolm in Verdi's *Macbeth* with Opera Hamilton and Pacific Opera Victoria, and an evening of Richard Strauss and Franz Lehár with the Sault Ste. Marie Symphony.

Coyea received his bachelor of music degree in vocal performance from Wilfrid Laurier University and continues to study with Prof. Victor Martens.

Elora Festival Singers

Elora Festival Singers is a professional choir formed in 1980 as the principal ensemble for The Elora Festival. The Festival is held each summer in the village of Elora where the Singers participate in numerous concerts with both national and international soloists. Their repertoire encompasses a vast spectrum of music including many commissioned works by Canadian composers.

Over the past four years the Singers have toured to the U.S. five times, including a trip to New York City in a performance of the opera *La Favorite* by Donizetti at Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Centre. Their winter activities are numerous, with provincial tours and their own concert series. This spring the Singers will be recording a program of folksongs to be released this summer at the Elora Festival.

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Elora Festival Chorus

The Elora Festival Chorus is made up of singers who every year are involved in the larger choral/orchestral works performed at the Festival.

WLU Choir

The WLU Choir is a credited course and numbers 134 students drawn from the music faculty. It rehearses twice a week in preparation for its concerts throughout the year. It champions primarily the oratorio repertoire and performs with the WLU Symphony Orchestra. In February it performed with the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony and Christopher Plummer in Grieg's *Peer Gynt*.

WLU Chapel Choir

The WLU Chapel Choir is the ensemble of the Church Music program, although it draws on students from the whole faculty. Its purpose is to explore liturgical repertoire from many traditions, and to perform it in a service context. This is done both on campus, in conjunction with the Seminary, and off campus at community churches. The choir is directed by Prof. Barrie Cabena and, on occasion, by students in the church music program.

The Composition

by Alma Colk Santosuosso, associate professor of music at WLU

In 1837, Hector Berlioz (1803-1869) was commissioned to write a requiem mass to celebrate the slain heroes of the Revolution of 1830. Unfortunately, the musical portion of the July ceremony was cancelled and his *Requiem* was first performed on Dec. 5, 1837, at the funeral of General Damrémont, who had been killed during a campaign in Algeria.

Berlioz' *Grand Messe des Morts* or *Requiem*, Op. 5, is a grandiose work scored for a huge six-part choir of more than 100 voices, 100 strings, quadruple woodwinds, 12 horns, 16 timpani, and four separate brass choirs. The combined resources are heard in only three of the ten movements.

The opening is subdued and the first part of the "Requiem et Kyrie" leads to a fugato section, while the text of the "Kyrie" is chanted in unison. In the "Dies irae," modal fragments lead to the moment of the revelation with apocalyptic fanfares played by the four brass choirs and the thunderous sounds of the massed timpani. The movement ends quietly, setting the mood for the following "Quid sum miser," scored for male voices, English horn, bassoons, and lower strings. The energetic "Rex tremendae" contrasts with the unaccompanied choral fugue of the "Lacrymosa," where a fugue is followed by a calm second section. After both parts are recalled, a massive coda with brass concludes the movement. Next, in the "Offertorium," a unison chorus chants on two notes, while the strings play a fugue. This contrasts with the "Hostias," featuring the men's chorus, in which three flutes and eight trombones repeat the final chord of each phrase. In the "Sanctus," the solo tenor, echoed by the three-part women's chorus, is accompanied by flute and strings. The full chorus joins in for the Hosanna section. The work ends with a magnificent setting of the "Agnus Dei," which recalls material from the devotional passages of the "Hostias" and the opening "Requiem," and concludes with six powerful "Amens."