

## **Review of the Brockville Community Choir Concert, Dec. 13, 2014**

Forty-four years before the first European settlers arrived to found Brockville, Handel wrote the greatest choral work in the English language - his "Messiah". Every Christmas for 273 years, countless choirs have performed the immortal "Hallelujah Chorus" to the delight of audience and performers alike.

On December 12 the Brockville Community Choir brought great enthusiasm and the joy of singing together to this year's edition of the masterwork. Ably accompanied by The Strings of St. John the Evangelist, Ottawa, and under the inspirational conducting of Heather Eyerly, the Community Choir delighted the audience with a happy and satisfying performance.

Much of "Messiah" is set in the key of D major, a key which during Handel's time was usually associated with light and glory. Soloists Deborah Massell, Lorraine Yaros Sullivan, Donald George, and David Pittman-Jennings, all faculty members from the Crane school of music, brilliantly illuminated the performance. Tenor Donald George was particularly effective beginning the work. The aria, "Every Valley" was simply a pleasure to hear.

All the soloists provided a wonderful professional standard for the Choir members to learn from and aspire to. The Community Choir should be proud to sing with such accomplished musicians.

The beautiful, sympathetic acoustic environment of St. Francis Church suited the lovely blended sound of the Choir.

The opening phrase of the first chorus, "And the glory, the glory of the Lord" sung by the women of the Choir was warm with a dignified passion, inviting the audience to relax and be swept away. This was true of all the slower sections of the performance where the Choir was most comfortable. The diction was excellent throughout the performance.

The first half ended with the glorious "Hallelujah Chorus". The enthusiasm of all performers, the resounding trumpets and the Choir in full voice was the crowning achievement of the evening.

The second half consisted of many familiar carols in a community sing-a-long.

Conductor Heather Eyerly deserves all credit possible for setting such a high standard for the Choir. Her calm demeanor on the podium seems to spread throughout the Choir and audience.

*Howard Alexander*