

Woodstock Fanshawe Singers

December 2008
Volume 1, Issue 1

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WOODSTOCK
fanshawe
SINGERS

WFS Beat!

“Feast Your Ears On Us”

Choir’s season offers fresh expression and local flavour

Media Release

The Woodstock Fanshawe Singers launch their 2008-09 season with a new direction, new focus and new energy. Members of the board spent the summer developing ways to better serve the singers and the community. The results showcase the choir’s quality singing, variety of music and love of food. Their new tagline, **Feast Your Ears On Us!** is an invitation to everyone to come to a concert and experience the wonderful array of talent right here in Oxford County.

The choir members love to get together to sing. Their enthusiasm and passion is infectious every time they perform. For an audience, their music is like eating an energy bar. It’s also available in any flavour – an **omnivore’s smorgasbord of sound** including traditional choral works, pop music, world beat and Christmas favourites.

“People always comment about the spirit of the choir,” said artistic director Jennifer Moir. “They’re engaging and it’s enjoyable to watch them sing because they love what they are doing.”

They are also ahead of the **‘Buy Local’** trend. Choir members come from Oxford County and the composer-in-residence is also Southwestern Ontario-based. Jeff Smallman is making a name internationally, but is firmly dedicated to the Woodstock Fanshawe Singers. He has written a new trilogy for the Christmas concert Dec. 5. At the spring

concert, the choir will present the world premiere of a work by Sarah Quartel who teaches elementary school in Elgin County.

The **nutritional** side of the choir’s presentations is the educational outreach program. Within the choir, the young artists program supports and encourages development of singers. “It’s an opportunity for young musicians to gain experience in the context of a community choir in performance and leadership,” said Moir.

The choir also works with area teachers and music programs. Two special interactive workshops are planned for November and January. They are open to everyone in the community. The first session explores vocal production and range development, helping singers improve their own voices. The second looks at maintaining vocal health.

Woodstock Fanshawe Singers are all about **feeling good**. Recent research shows the health of a community and the health of individuals have a strong connection to the health of the arts. The members of the choir would agree. They all attest to the energy boost they receive at each rehearsal. Their audiences feel the same about the concerts.

And what would a meal be without a treat? A new matinee Christmas concert is planned for Dec. 6 at St. David’s United Church with **musical sugarplums** for the audience. John Rutter’s wonderful *Magnificat* is a sumptuous choral work, a true crowd-pleaser. The choir then moves to lighter fare with contemporary and Canadian pieces. A special guest has promised to ‘drop in’ for the children and Mayor

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Michael Harding picks up the stick to conduct Sleigh Bells Ring.

“The concert is interactive and family-focused,” said Moir. “It is less formal and more festive. We’ll serve Christmas cheer at the end.” It promises to be the beginning of a brand new holiday tradition for Oxford.

Serving food after each concert is a tradition for the Woodstock Fanshawe Singers. It’s also a natural. They not only love to sing together, they love to eat together. It was that social, welcoming and warm feeling they wanted to extend to the community through their new branding.

Try us – you’ll like us because we serve up some of the best choral music in the community!

Rutter’s *Magnificat*

*By John Bawden
Musical Director (1994 – 2006)
Fareham Philharmonic Choir*

Though he is perhaps best known for his carols and other short pieces, John Rutter also has a number of large-scale works for chorus and orchestra to his name. Most of these received their first performances in the United States, where Rutter is a frequent visitor, writing regularly for American choirs and conducting performances of his own music. The *Magnificat* was first performed in 1990 in Carnegie Hall, New York, conducted by the composer, and the UK première followed a year later in Coventry Cathedral.

The Magnificat - the canticle of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Luke I: 46-55) - traditionally formed part of the ancient service of Vespers in the medieval Roman rite. After the Reformation it

was incorporated into the evening services of the Lutheran and Anglican churches, where it was linked with the Nunc Dimittis. The Magnificat has been set to music more often than any liturgical text other than the Mass itself, in settings that vary enormously in style and scale, from the purity of Palestrina’s exquisite four-part unaccompanied compositions to Monteverdi’s grand, dramatic settings written for St Mark’s, Venice, and later the almost symphonic conception of Mozart’s *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore*, of which the Magnificat forms the final movement, written in 1780 for use in Salzburg Cathedral.

John Rutter’s initial inspiration for his *Magnificat* was another great masterpiece – that of J.S.Bach, though he has also revealed that he found the task of following in Bach’s footsteps a somewhat daunting prospect, as indeed any composer might. Despite the fact that the two works are about as different in style as they could possibly be, they nevertheless do share some basic similarities. For instance, both pieces conclude with a reiteration of the music of their opening movements, both make use of traditional Gregorian plainsong melodies, and in both works the focus is on the soloist for the more reflective verses, while the chorus is called upon to provide some appropriate vocal muscle in robust sections of the text such as ‘Fecit potentiam in brachio suo’ (He hath showed strength with his arm).

And just as Bach included several additional Christmas movements in the original E-flat version of his *Magnificat*, so too Rutter incorporates three extra elements into the standard Latin text. Particularly memorable is his haunting setting of the beautiful 15th century poem, ‘Of a Rose, a lovely Rose’, which uses the image of a rose as an allegory for the Blessed Virgin Mary and her powers to intercede for

Vocal Health Tip: Maintaining Good Vocal Health!

- Drink plenty of water or juice each day to keep vocal cords flexible and lubricated. Limit caffeine or alcohol, which may dehydrate you.
- Rest your voice, balancing periods of extensive voice use with silence.
- If possible, maintain 40-50 percent relative humidity in the air you breathe.
- If you spend time in environments with airborne pollutants or dry air, try to include these activities in your day; breathe often through a moist wash cloth; breathe fresh outdoor air as often as possible; firmly bit the sides of your tongue to increase mouth and throat saliva.
- Avoid voice use if you have laryngitis or an infected throat rather than force your voice to go on anyway.
- Learn how to use your voice effectively, but with less muscle effort.
- Get adequate and regular sleep. Limit stress.
- Exercise regularly. (Consult your physician before beginning any new exercise program.)

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mankind. The other two supplementary texts are the Sanctus from the Ordinary of the Mass, and a Marian antiphon, 'Sancta Maria' (Holy Mary).

John Rutter has stated that his intention was to write a Magnificat redolent of Mediterranean sunshine and celebration, evoking the spirit of the many exuberant festivals held throughout Europe in honour of the Virgin Mary. To this end, the work is full of energetic, syncopated rhythms and strong melodies, with more than a hint of the musical theatre from time to time. Rutter's music is always beautifully written for the voice and superbly orchestrated, and although his unashamedly popular style has won him few friends amongst the upper reaches of the musical establishment, choral societies and audiences throughout the world have responded with wholehearted enthusiasm to its uninhibited tunefulness.

See Rutter's *Magnificat* performed by the WFS at their holiday concerts: December 5 & 6

Jeff Smallman

Thoughts on being a composer-in-residence

Before I start writing anything for the WFS, I always get together with Jen to discuss what the next concert will be like. I look for themes, or styles of music. For example, if I see that there are a lot of slow pieces, I might try to write something that's a little quicker that will complement the rest of the music on the programme. I always try to give the choir something a little different than I've written for them before. Variety is important, in my opinion.

For this Christmas concert, Jen told me



Composer's Corner

Featuring Jeff Smallman

WFS Composer-in-Residence

Jeff was born in 1965, in Brantford, Ontario, Canada. At the age of eight, he began piano lessons and began writing music soon after. He attended the University of Western Ontario and, in 1987, graduated with an honours degree in Theory and Composition. While at Western, he studied with Alan Heard and Gerhard Wuensch, and found many different influences from as early as the Medieval period. Various 20th-century techniques, including serialism, aleatoric, 12-tone, etc., failed to attract Jeff, whose melodic talents incorporate a blend of Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and Impressionist styles.

Jeff has written for a wide variety of ensembles, ranging from solo instruments to full orchestra, covering a range of styles and difficulty levels. This variety of styles has led people to compare his music to such composers as Bach, Ravel, Debussy, Mahler, Poulenc, Ibert, and Shostakovich. His numerous commissions include pieces for concert band, solo flute, clarinet choir, saxophone quartet, and choirs of various sizes. His trumpet sextet, "Fanfare for Prince Henry", was written in celebration of the birth of Prince Henry of Britain, and was accepted by the Princess of Wales in 1984.

Performances of Jeff's compositions have been given throughout Canada, and in the United States, Hungary, Holland, Lithuania, Poland, and China.

Two of Jeff's choral works, "Brier" and "Sentinels of Glory", were declared competition winners in 2004. "Brier", the winner of the ACCC (Association of Canadian Choral Conductors) Associated Publishers Composition Competition, was published by Kelman Hall Publishing in the summer of 2004. Subsequent to these wins, Jeff was admitted to the Canadian League of Composers.

Jeff's Webpage: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Jeff-Smallman/21078690483>

that the theme was based on the "Christmas Rose" legend. Then she told me some of the pieces that would be performed. I saw pretty quickly that Mary was the focus in most of the music. That helped me decide which direction to go in search of texts. There are times that I'll write my own texts (sometimes out of necessity), but in this

case, I thought that I'd be able to find suitable texts fairly easily, which was the case.

"Ave Maria" was the first, and most obvious, text that I chose. Being in Latin (and very old), it seemed natural to me to think along the lines of Gregorian chant. If you listen to the

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first couple of lines, you'll hear that influence in the music. It also crops up in various places throughout the rest of the piece. "Ave Maria" is a little different in that the choral parts work on their own, and can be sung without the piano accompaniment. This piece is through-written, which suits the nature of the text (there are no verses or choruses).

"I Saw a Maiden" was the next text that I found. I liked it as soon as I read it. Again, the words are very old, 15th-century Basque, and I thought that the music should sound "old" too. So, I tried to picture a minstrel singing this and then shaped the melody to that image. The challenge with this piece is that it's very strophic (verse after verse with no break). This was the form that I wanted to keep in the music, but I had to try to keep it interesting all the way through. I did this (I hope!) by moving the melody to different voices and changing the harmonic progressions. I think the end result works well.

"There is No Rose" took longer than the other two. First, I couldn't decide if I liked the text well enough to set it (I'm very picky that way), and then I couldn't decide what treatment to give the text. Even though this is also an old text (15th- or 16th-century English, I think) I tried to go a different way with the music this time, and it was very stubborn! It would have been very easy to write "I Saw a Maiden" all over again, so I had to constantly rework ideas to make this piece unique from the others. The beginning and ending verses are very "singable". They have a melody that's not too long and is easy to remember. Because there were a lot of verses to this song, though, I also decided to add new musical material in the middle section. This section sounds a little "older" than the others and provides a good contrast.

Watch for an exclusive interview with Jeff Smallman in an upcoming issue of *WFS Beat*!

Sherry Steele

Soprano Soloist



The Woodstock Fanshawe Singers are proud to feature Sherry Steele as the soprano soloist in their holiday concert!

Sherry has been featured in productions ranging from opera to oratorio to music theatre and folk music. She was an original cast member of the Broadway version of *Riverdance-The Show*, and has also toured North America extensively as the featured singer of the show. Other credits include roles in *Into the Woods*, *My Fair Lady*, *Wizard of Oz*, *Candide*, *Charley's Aunt*, *It's a Grand Night for Singing*, *Ernest*, and *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and *Masterclass*. She currently teaches voice part-time at the University of Western Ontario.

A Few Jokes ...

TONIC: A smooth liquid generally enjoyed over ice after a choir rehearsal

DOMINANT: In a choral relationship, usually the alto

Upcoming Events

December 5 8:00PM
St. David's United Church
Magnificat

WFS holiday concert featuring soprano soloist [Sherry Steele](#) in Rutter's *Magnificat* and the premiere performance of three works by composer-in-residence [Jeff Smallman](#).

Tickets: Adults \$20, Seniors \$15, Students \$10

December 6 3:00PM
St. David's United Church
Sleigh Bells Ring

A new Christmas tradition in Woodstock! Join us for family holiday fun!

Tickets: Adults: \$10, Youth 13-18 \$5, Children 12 and under free

December 6 8:00PM
St. David's United Church
Magnificat

WFS holiday concert featuring soprano soloist [Sherry Steele](#) in Rutter's *Magnificat* and the premiere performance of three works by composer-in-residence [Jeff Smallman](#).

Tickets: Adults \$20, Seniors \$15, Students \$10

January 10
10:00AM – 12:00 PM
St. David's United Church
The Singer's Workshop: How Can I Keep From Singing

Jennifer Moir facilitates this workshop to help you maintain your vocal health for a lifetime of healthy, expressive voice use! \$20.00 (WFS members free)

Want to submit to WFS Beat? Send your submission with your contact information to the address found on page 6!



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ORDER FORM

Please fill out the number of tickets or subscriptions in the spaces below. Mail this form along with payment to:

Woodstock Fanshawe Singers
c/o 166 Sixth Avenue, Woodstock, Ontario N4S 8V5
Please make cheques payable to Woodstock Fanshawe Singers

2 Concert Series Subscription Subscribe to BOTH concerts and save!

Indicate the number of subscriptions in the appropriate spaces below.

Adults \$35.00 pp	Dec. 5 _____	or Dec.6 _____	AND	Apr.3 _____	or Apr.4 _____
Seniors \$25.00 pp	Dec. 5 _____	or Dec.6 _____	AND	Apr.3 _____	or Apr.4 _____
Students \$20.00 pp	Dec. 5 _____	or Dec.6 _____	AND	Apr.3 _____	or Apr.4 _____

Individual Tickets

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Adults \$ 20.00/ticket	Dec.5 _____	Dec.6 _____	Apr.3 _____	Apr.4 _____
Seniors \$15.00/ticket	Dec.5 _____	Dec.6 _____	Apr.3 _____	Apr.4 _____
Students \$10.00/ticket	Dec.5 _____	Dec.6 _____	Apr.3 _____	Apr.4 _____

Sleigh Bells Ring! Dec.6 at 3:00 p.m.

Indicate the number of tickets in the appropriate space(s) below.

Adults \$10.00 _____	Students 13-18 \$5.00 _____	Children 0-12 free _____
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The Singer's Workshop

Indicate the number of spaces to be reserved.

1. Make a Joyful Noise Nov. 8 \$20.00 pp _____
2. How Can I Keep From Singing? Jan. 10 \$20.00 pp _____

Please consider making a charitable donation to the choir. We truly appreciate your support. Charitable donation receipts will be issued.

Amount \$ _____

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