

PRESS RELEASE -

Renaissance Singers new Artistic Director.

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ANOTHER RENAISSANCE SINGERS RENAISSANCE!!!

- Katherine Lees

Jurgen Petrenko, the Artistic Director for The Renaissance Singers for the 2008/2009 Season, has had to hand over his baton, due to increased responsibilities in his role as General Manager for the Elora Festival, and the Elora Festival Singers. Willing and able to pick up that baton is Gordon Burnett. As a child and young adult, Gord sang in the Eramosa Choral Society, touring extensively with that group. He sang with the University of Guelph Choir prior to attending Wilfrid Laurier University where he received a B Mus in vocal performance and an Opera Diploma. Gord maintains an active musical career as a conductor, singer, and artistic director. He has worked with children, youth, and adult choirs. Most recently, he was the conductor of the University of Waterloo Choir, where he became known for his ability to prepare and present major works with orchestra.

As a singer, Gord continues as a regular member of Tactus Vocal Ensemble, a group he has been with since its inception in 1996. This summer, Tactus performed at Stratford Summer Music with Dr. Andrew Gant, music director to her majesty Queen Elizabeth. Other singing credentials include professional choral experience with the Elmer Iseler Singers, Elora Festival Singers, Tafelmusik Chamber Choir and Da Capo Chamber Choir.

This fall, Gord will introduce and conduct his newly formed Voices of Hope Choral Ensemble and the Waterloo Chamber Players in a benefit performance of Handel's Messiah for Out of the Cold programme. The ensemble is dedicated to using music to generate funds to support worthwhile cause and organizations in the community.

Gord's family includes wife Valerie Nunn (alto with Tactus Vocal Ensemble), daughter Emily Burnett (soprano) and daughter Stephanie Burnett (music aficionado and purveyor of fine food). Recently, Gord, Valerie and Emily sang in the massed choir for Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the KW Symphony at Centre in the Square. This marked the first time all three had performed together on the same stage.

When not involved in musical activities, Gord is the program head of Mathematics at St. David Catholic Secondary School.

We asked Gord a few questions about his new role as Artistic Director for the RS:

1. What attracted you to the Renaissance Singers?

I was concerned when I heard that the choir was going through some challenging times. People deserve the opportunity to sing good music and have a satisfying experience. The Singers have always done wonderful repertoire and have maintained a high standard of achievement. The opportunity to conduct an auditioned chamber choir, once again, appealed to me.

2. What are your thoughts re the direction for the choir?

The choir will continue to do music from the Renaissance period, 1450-1600 roughly, as well as contemporary settings of Renaissance and medieval texts. In this way I wish to honour the intent of founding director Raymond Daniels. The choir will not be restricted to this repertoire, but will use it as a way of defining itself and filling that niche in the choral community.

3. What about membership in the Singers?

As for membership, the choir will continue to be auditioned. Singers will need to possess the skills and desire to function successfully in a 30-36 voice adult vocal

ensemble that does a significant amount of acappella singing.

4. What will be the 2009/2010 Season highlights?

This season we will do each concert twice, once in KW and the other in Cambridge. Choirs improve most through performance so having the opportunity to sing a program twice helps develop the choir's capacity faster.

Christmas Cheer will feature a combination of humorous readings and music for the season, both sacred and secular. Then, Lux Aeterna, featuring works by Chilcott, Tallis and others. A Royal Garland will feature partsongs by William Mathias, Ralph Vaughan Williams and more. The season begins with John Rutter's wonderful collection The Sprig of Thyme.

5. How can the community get more information?

They can email burnett@golden.net for audition info or email kathybob@golden.net or phone (519) 745-0675.

6. Do you any long-range goals?

Touring of course. It's fun and it can be used to really build the choir in many different ways. Collaborating with other similar and perhaps not so similar groups. This provides opportunities for creative and innovative programming. It would be great to take advantage of new media to reach a wider audience (internet, email, facebook etc.)

We are fortunate to live in a community with such a rich and flourishing choral tradition. There seems to be a choir for everyone's needs and plenty of good performances to go with that.

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