



ST. MICHAEL'S CHOIR SCHOOL:

Sing We Noël, Noël We Sing

Massey Hall, Friday, December 11, 2009, 8 p.m. and Saturday, December 12, 2009, 3 p.m.

Tickets: \$36.50 - \$22.50 - Call 416-872-4255 or visit the Roy Thomson Hall Box Office

www.masseyhall.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Toronto, November 23, 2009 -- On December 9th 1939, the *Cathedral Schola Cantorum* later to become known as **St. Michael's Choir School**, took to the stage to present their first-ever Christmas concert. This year, the venerable boys' choir will mark their 70th Annual Christmas performance with a joyous celebration of song during their 44th annual holiday appearance at Massey Hall. On **Friday, December 11, 2009 at 8 pm** and **Saturday, December 12, 2009, at 3 pm** the inspirational voices of St. Michael's Choir School's Elementary, Junior, and Senior Choirs will usher in the Christmas season with a spirited performance of sacred and secular Christmas favourites.

For the 258 choristers participating, this milestone event offers its own rewards. "When we sing, we sing for the centre of the Catholic community in Toronto, and the Massey Hall concert is a great opportunity to do something for the community," explains **Matthew Farahat** a Grade 12 student who has been a student at St. Michael's Choir School since 2004.

Conducted by Dr. Jerzy Cichocki, Caron Daley and Teri Dunn, this year's concert, *Sing We Noël, Noël We Sing* also features the talents of gifted musician and St. Michael's Cathedral organist William O'Meara, and distinguished guest soloist, harpist Sanya Eng. Music on more traditional holiday subjects will include excerpts from Rutter's choral song-cycle, *Dancing Day, Lux aurumque* from composer Eric Whitacre; and liturgical works such as *E'en so, Lord Jesus, quickly come*, and Young's arrangement of Widor's *Toccata – Gloria*. Several popular pieces like *Silent Night, O come all ye faithful* and *It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year* will delight with holiday fare in a lighter tone.

To highlight the Choir School's choral tradition, the choirs will also perform two works specifically connected with St. Michael's Choir School. In addition to a special arrangement of *O Canada* by the Choir School's former Music Director Monsignor Thomas Barrett Armstrong, the Senior Choir will present ***Hodie, Christus natus est*** an original work by Dr. Kola Owolabi. Dr. Owolabi, an alumnus and former organist of St. Michael's Cathedral, is currently an associate professor at Syracuse University.

"Hodie Christus natus est is the Antiphon to the Magnificat, sung at vespers on Christmas Day.

We've showcased many arrangements of this piece in our history of Christmas performances," says Dr. Cichocki, Artistic Director of the Choir School and conductor of the Senior Choirs. "This arrangement is particularly special because it was Kola's first published composition when he was still a teenager."

Dr. Owolabi's arrangement of *Hodie Christus natus est*, along with Peter Mathew's *Dans Les Ombres De La Nuit*, and *O come, all ye faithful* as arranged by Derek Holman are among the many featured performances found on St. Michael's Choir School's lush new Christmas recording. "**In Midnight's Stillness**", the Choir School's 10th recording, will be released on December 11, 2009 to coincide with the 70th Anniversary Christmas performance.

This remarkable CD and the historic 70th Anniversary concert are dedicated to the memory of **Monsignor Thomas Barrett Armstrong**, a priest of the Archdiocese of Toronto, a graduate of St. Michael's Choir School and former Director of Music of this world-renowned institution. Monsignor Armstrong passed away on November 14, 2009.

About St. Michael's Choir School

Founded in 1937 with the purpose of providing sacred music for services at St. Michael's Cathedral in downtown Toronto, St. Michael's Choir School is a centre for musical and academic excellence. It is one of only six choir schools in the world affiliated with the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music in Rome. Each student admitted to the Choir School is trained in vocal, technical, and instrumental music, and sings in one of the school's choirs.

Balancing the sacred and the secular is customary for the school. St. Michael's Choir School is not only known for its music program, but also academic achievement, consistently ranking at the top of Fraser Institute surveys. For seventy years, graduates of the Choir School have pursued studies in science, education, medicine, law, business and, of course, music. In the last group are the *Crew Cuts* and *Four Lads* of the 1950s and present-day musical artists Michael Schade, John McDermott, Stewart Goodyear, Kevin Hearn (of *The Barenaked Ladies*), Robert Pomakov, Matt Dusk, Michael Colvin, Claude Morrison (of *The Nylons*), and Michael Burgess.

In addition to the annual Christmas concert, the choirs perform publicly in an annual tour and at many local events. Dignitaries such as His Holiness Pope John Paul II, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and former Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien have enjoyed the choir's performances. For more information: **www.smcs.on.ca**.

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Media images and clips about St. Michael's Choir School and *Sing We Noël, Noël We Sing* can be downloaded at www.smcs.on.ca/media or contact:

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