

## We remember them . . .



The sound of Remembrance Day from Confederation Square was the sound of children singing.

*In Flanders Fields, I Vow to Thee My Country, O Valiant Hearts, God Save the Queen, and O Canada.*

CBC-TV commentators fell silent as Prince Charles, the Governor-General, the Prime Minister and the Silver Cross Mother laid wreaths at the Cenotaph, followed by representatives of national organizations.

In cooperation with the Royal Canadian Legion, the choir has been part of the Ottawa Remembrance Day ceremony for 37 years. It's a day of excitement and significance for each generation of choristers.

In these central moments of ceremony, what the nation-wide television audience and the thousands of spectators in the square heard was the Ottawa Children's Choir singing

"I'm lucky! I'm proud! I'm Canadian!" they chanted as they gathered at the Conference Centre to prepare for their role.





"Remember that you are representing all the children in this country," Artistic Director Jackie Hawley told them.

Staff Sergeant Brandon Wise, Drum Major of the Canadian Forces band that led the choir into the square, also spoke to choristers.

"This is the most special day for the military," he said. "It's about everything it means to wear a uniform. It's a chance for those serving in Afghanistan and Bosnia to connect with us. "You're nervous, I'm nervous. Just make sure you breathe. And don't lock your knees!"

"You sound fantastic. You look fantastic."

At the conclusion of the ceremony, choristers received many compliments on their performance from veterans, soldiers, RCMP officers and dignitaries. Steven Clark, the Royal Canadian Legion's, Director of Ceremonies, messaged:

"Thank you, all, for your outstanding support and participation in making the 2009 National Remembrance Day ceremony the significant commemoration that it was. We have clearly shown that our fallen will never be forgotten."



And by email:

"Your choir sang beautifully - like angels"

Karen Hutton

"Thank you so much for your choir's contribution to the ceremony. *In Flander's Fields* particularly hit my emotional buttons. Wow, so beautiful"

Terry Jorden,  
Edmonton



**Ben Urban Shipley and Andra Popescu lay a wreath at the Cenotaph on behalf of the Ottawa Children's Choir.**

# Singing Makes Me Happy!

**Jackie Hawley**

Artistic Director: Ottawa Children's Choir Conductor: Chamber Choir



Recently, I was asked to write an article about children's choirs for the Association of Canadian Choral Communities (ACCC). I thought it best to go to the children themselves to hear what they had to say about singing in a choir.

In almost every case, the choristers' answer to the question, "Why do you sing in a choir?" was, "because I love to sing!" Of course! The question that followed was, "Why do you love to sing?" Again, the answer was the same nearly every time: "because it makes me happy!"

Those of us who are involved with choirs have endless anecdotes to share about the benefits of singing in a choir and the increased benefits of starting this activity as children. Through the innovations of technology, individuals who have not had the choral experience first hand can read scientific studies that measure the positive effects of music on the brain, especially during its development.

In her book, *Research-Based Strategies to Ignite Student Learning*, neurologist Judy Willis states that there is, "lifelong growth of the support of connecting cells that enrich communication between neurons. Dendrites increase in size and number in response to learned skills, experience and information. New dendrites grow as branches from frequently activated neurons."<sup>1</sup> In *This is Your Brain on Music*, Daniel J. Levitin explains that, "Listening to music caused a cascade of brain regions to become activated."<sup>2</sup> while a recent article in *Canadian Geographic* says, "Few activities use more of the brain than playing music."<sup>3</sup> Neuro-imaging evidence and brain-mapping studies are quantitatively illustrating some of the positive effects of music on our brains. Oliver Sacks, in his best seller *Musophilia*, sums this up effectively saying, "There is little doubt that regular exposure to music, and especially active participation in music, may stimulate development in many areas of the brain. Music can be every bit as important educationally as reading or writing."<sup>4</sup>

In addition to these physical reactions to music, the brain also responds chemically. When choristers claim, "music makes me happy", it is absolutely true! Studies show that singing increases the production of dopamine which is part of the pleasure and reward system in the brain. Therefore, as Daniel Levitin says, "music is clearly a means for improving people's moods."<sup>5</sup> Evidently, singing should not be underestimated for its significant benefits to today's youth. Singing is a healthy, positive, satisfying way of achieving happiness and joy.

The benefits also extend to interpersonal relationships and self esteem. Dr. Levitin states, "Collective music making may encourage social cohesions to promote feelings of group togetherness and synchrony. Humans need social linkages to make society work and music is one of them."<sup>6</sup> This is evident in chorister comments such as, "I like to be with people who like to do the same thing I like – sing!" "It doesn't matter how old you are, everybody's [sic] friends." "We make a beautiful sound together with all the harmonies and lots of voices." "We get good response and make many people happy – it's powerful." "It's a great way to meet other people." Choristers look forward to participating in festivals where they connect with other singers from a wide variety of communities. With the many social networking tools available today, many of these world wide relationships are fostered over the long term. It benefits us all when global fellowship is cultivated.

Now, did any of the choristers interviewed say anything about cognitive development, brain chemistry or social cohesion? Not specifically. Does all of this scientifically proven information matter? Yes! Do we need these scientific studies? Most certainly! Information in a variety of forms will assist us in advocating to parents, school boards, politicians and to others that need convincing of the value of music education for our children. For the children themselves, it is enough to know, "I love to sing because it makes me happy!"

<sup>1</sup> Willis, Judy, M.D., *Research-Based Strategies to Ignite Student Learning*, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Virginia, 2006, pg. 1

<sup>2</sup> Levitin, Daniel J., *This is Your Brain on Music*, Penguin Books Ltd., New York, 2006, pg. 187

<sup>3</sup> Fick, Steven and Elizabeth Shilts, "A la carte, Mapping your brain on music", *Canadian Geographic*, Jan./Feb. 2006, pg. 35

<sup>4</sup> Sacks, Oliver, *Musophilia*, Vintage Canada, Toronto, 2007, pg. 102

<sup>5</sup> Levitin, Daniel J., *This is Your Brain on Music*, pg. 187

<sup>6</sup> Levitin, Daniel J., *This is Your Brain on Music*, pg. 252

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# An Open Letter to Choristers and their families

By Allison Prowse

Associate Artistic Director: Ottawa Children's Choir Conductor: Viva and Concert Choirs



As I write to you on this grey November afternoon, the sun desperately trying to shine around the clouds, I am warmed with the memory of all of you. Those who participated at the National Remembrance Day ceremony earlier this month, and the countless others who have done so for many years. I think of all of you, as well as our new members in the Viva Choir who will have a similar opportunity with the Concert Choir in May as they



"To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch;  
Be yours to hold it high..."  
John McCrae (1872-1918)

sing for the Canadian Navy's commemorative ceremony for The Battle of the Atlantic. You have had, and will continue to have, the privilege and honour of representing the hope and the future of our communities, our country and our world. You raise your voices in song...in memory of the unfathomable sacrifices that so many have made for us all. Songs and hymns that speak of pride and hope in our country, Canada. John McCrae's poem for a fallen friend during WW1 that you sing with such meaning, comes alive with your efforts. The hymns of heart and soul will remain with you throughout your lives. And as you rehearsed and sang those hymns, I heard, and saw, so much passion as your became more familiar and engaged with your singing experience.

It seems that when we care about what we do in life, experiences take on greater meaning, and are easier to recall. When we ask choristers who re-audition for the choirs what music and performances they enjoyed or remembered from the year, the hymns and the Cenotaph ceremonies always pop up. It has been this way for many years. And once again, it was so very obvious that you cared about the gift of music that you wholeheartedly gave on November 11<sup>th</sup>.

As a choral music educator, I am met with two new groups (with some returnees) every September. We begin our Concert Choir choral year with the music for the Remembrance Day ceremony. We begin early as we need to "own" the pieces...to help their melodies and lyrics to resonate. It is always difficult to start the year on such a serious note. But I know that each year the choirs respond to the powerful message that they have to spread. Every year we receive thankful and positive communication via phone, letter and e-mail from all walks of life. We hear from those attending the ceremony and from across the country, as people watch and listen to the broadcast.

As I have shared some of those words with you at rehearsal, I am certain that they provide you with a warm, and proud, feeling. And so they should. What you do, and who you are, and are becoming in this choral experience, is a life gift to yourself. One that you can pass on and gift to others, just because you came to sing together as an ensemble.

Music is about many things. Things that can be articulated with language and things that slip past the spoken word into a far deeper and more resonant place. Music is about art, and intelligence...emotions and self-expression, just to name a few. You, as members of the Ottawa Children's Choir, express and exemplify all of these attributes (and so many more) through your experiences. You are indeed fortunate to have such wonderful opportunities to sing together.

I am proud of all of you. I look into your eyes and can only see young people to be so very proud of...to believe in...to support and encourage. I am gifted by each one of you, and I challenge you to continue to build upon your choral experiences as they will, without a doubt, influence your whole life.

Your honesty and heart in singing for the veterans and those who went before them was touching. Your faces, your fortitude and your talents shone forth...along with the bright sun of the day! Viva choristers are at the beginning of this experience, but their eyes and hearts sing with the same resonance. The torch is truly yours, all of ours, to hold high.

Well done. Bravo to all....always.





*The Chamber Choir sang at the Black Rod Ceremony in the Senate chamber November 6 to mark the beginning of Veterans' Week.*

## Celebrating the purpose of music

*By Emma Soldaat*

The Chamber Choir performs at a lot of concerts throughout the year, but I have to say that the Black Rod ceremony in the Senate chamber is one of the most rewarding. This was the second time I've sung in this ceremony.



We sing *O Canada* as well as a beautiful song called *Remembrance Day Child* and *On Eagle's Wings*, among others. The soloist, Jonathan, who sang with us last year, sang *The White Cliffs of Dover*, which was really popular during World War II.

I think it's a wonderfully touching ceremony because it has the thoughts of Canadian veterans at heart. There are a couple of speeches honouring the veterans prior to Remembrance Day. I think that the ceremony is also touching because it's much smaller and intimate than the one on the 11th, giving a more personal feel.

But the best part is during the reception. We get a lot of comments from veterans and others on how much they enjoyed our music, especially *Remembrance Day Child*. We receive a lot of comments after concerts, but I feel like these are the very best of them all. It's the part that I feel is the most rewarding because we get to celebrate the purpose of music: to spread happiness to others.

## Christmas Season Performances

Chamber Choir - Guest Artists  
Christmas with the Ottawa Choral Society  
Saturday, December 5

Concert Choir - National Arts Centre Orchestra  
Winter Wonderland  
December 9

Ottawa Children's Choir Christmas Concert  
Welcome Yule  
Sunday, December 13 - Dominion Chalmers Church

Chamber Choir - NCC Merit Awards Breakfast  
Monday, December 14

Viva Choir - Colonel By Retirement Home  
December 15



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# Choristers & Parents Corner ....

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## **Privilege and Pizza**

*By Bronwyn Gordon - Viva Choir*

Ottawa Children's Choir is a privilege for me. The pizza party was a great way to get to know each other. I find the choir is successful this year and will always be, with the help of the kids and Ms. Prowse. The songs are either enthusiastic or calm peaceful ones. Music has always been a part of me. I'm a pianist, an actor and a singer. I look forward to a long career with OCC.

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## **Confidence, knowledge, skills -- transferable**

*By Heather Gordon - Parent*

Ottawa Children's Choir has been an extremely positive experience for my daughter and our family. Bronwyn's confidence in her musical ability has increased tremendously. By being a part of a group such as the Viva Choir, she has developed her knowledge and skills in music, and this has transferred over into her daily life. She is approaching her piano lessons and her studies with more enthusiasm and discipline. She looks forward to her Thursday practices and always has something positive to say about Ms. Prowse. Bronwyn leaves each practice with a sense of accomplishment from being able to tackle a new or challenging section of music. Already my younger daughter is looking forward to her turn in Viva.

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## **I love Thursdays**

*By Katie Loewen - Viva Choir*

Hi! My name is Katie Loewen and this is my first year in Viva Choir. I have made many new friendships in the choir since September and I love Thursdays because I get to come to choir. Ms. Prowse has been teaching me a lot about singing. She helps me sing properly and has taught me to enunciate when I sing.

I really liked the Sing 'N Social where we played lots of fun games. It was amazing when all three of the choirs sang together. It was so cool!

Even if I come to choir tired from school, I always leave happy. I look forward to our upcoming performances and special events. I love music and I love singing. My mom said that I was singing songs before I spoke my first words!



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## Choristers & Parents Corner ....

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### How could anyone resist such excellence?

*By Joseph Nanda - Viva Choir*

The Ottawa Children's Choir is the most excellent choir for children in Ottawa. Ms. Prowse is a very friendly choir conductor. I have learned a lot of facts about singing from her. For example, not to sing the vowel E like you do when you're talking. You sing it like an O. I have also learned lots of things from the book *A Young Singer's Journey*. For example, how to draw treble clefs. At first, I was unhappy about my parents signing me up for the tryouts. When I received the letter, I couldn't decide whether to go to the choir or not. Now I can't believe I couldn't decide. How could anyone who's a good singer stand not being in the Ottawa Children's Choir? How could anyone resist such excellence? Now I'm very happy I joined the Ottawa Children's Choir!

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### Remembrance Day

*By Felicity Chamberlain - Concert Choir*

I was so nervous the night before that I hardly slept. All that I could think was what Ms. Prowse said "eat a good breakfast with orange juice, have a good sleep and pay attention to me." I knew that there was going to be so much to look at, I sure hoped I could concentrate. Then that morning when I saw all of us dressed the same and everyone's excited faces I knew they felt the same.

There was so much to see and I didn't expect the guns to be so loud, but we kept singing. I could see the faces of the veterans and how much they liked our singing and it made me very happy to be there. The Prince of Wales was even there. So much excitement and we were in the middle of it all. I was glad to be surrounded by so many familiar voices and sang in thanks for everything I have.





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# Choristers & Parents Corner ....

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## A father reflects

By Jamie Brehaut - parent

- Two hundred words to describe what singing has meant to me; there's an exercise in summary if ever there was one. Easier to do it in four: discipline, emotion, mystery, revelation.
- A young boy, maybe 4-5; Dad with his guitar, singing *The Cat Came Back*, *Frankie and Johnnie*, *Puff the Magic Dragon*. I didn't quite understand the words, but the feelings were clear.
- In a boy's choir, under a director who inspired, entertained and terrified. Singing in six parts, singing on television, singing for royalty under palm trees was just another part of childhood. Doesn't everyone get to do this?
- Skip ahead, 'way ahead to graduate school. Opera Hamilton needs members for the chorus of an opera I've never heard of. I expect to sing raucous *Andiamo's* a lot; *Va Pensiero*, as it turns out, is the centerpiece of the show.
- Even later, in Vancouver, 40 diverse men led by one visionary woman. Why on earth are we spending all this time on a piece as simple as *America the Beautiful*? Touring in Minnesota, a year after 9/11, speaking simply to the souls of strangers.



Who wouldn't want that for their own children?

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## New and old, all a family

By Rebecca Whitford - Concert Choir

What I like most about singing in the Concert Choir is all of the wonderful experiences I get to partake in. Beethoven last year was truly amazing, and my class was there! It was exciting to show my friends our choir's talent. Just being backstage at the NAC is something few can say that they have done. Participating in Remembrance Day, Battle of the Atlantic and the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration were also great honours.



One other thing I really enjoy is being able to make new friends. None of my friends from school are in the choir. Luckily the choristers are all friendly and some of the chums I see less also joined in. New and old, we're all a family.



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# Choristers & Parents Corner ....

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## Not just the singing

*By Sara Loker - parent*

The Christmas season is almost upon us and our family is very much looking forward to the choir's Christmas Concert, as last year's performance was so amazing. I think what was so fantastically awe inspiring about that night for us first timers was looking at our kids, our sons and daughters, and hearing and seeing their self-confidence in both voice and composure.



Like many families that night, I was not doing anything as mundane as just seeing my young daughter sing. I was also enjoying the experience of watching the beginnings of a young self-assured performer. For that experience alone, I would like to thank everybody who has given their time and patience to make that possible.

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## Programme éducatif: une journée bien passée

*Par Kim Farris-Manning - Chamber Choir*

À mon école secondaire, plusieurs personnes ne joignent pas la chorale car ils n'ont jamais chanté avec d'autres personnes. D'autres ne veulent pas être les seuls de leurs amis qui chantent. Mais la majorité ne savent même pas ce qu'est une chorale. Ce que nous avons fait le 17 octobre était pour changer cela et nous sommes amusés tout en le faisant.



Je trouve inouï le nombre de professeurs qui se sont présentés pour apprendre à enseigner et diriger les enfants, mais leur détermination et leur bravoure étaient encore plus étonnantes. J'ai beaucoup aimé remarquer l'amélioration qu'ils ont faite au cours de la journée. Presque toutes leurs connaissances et expériences ont commencé proche de zéro, mais à la fin de la journée leur confiance et dextérité se sont enrichis considérablement.

J'avais du plaisir à apprendre comment chaque petite chose faite par le/la directrice pouvait affecter notre ton et posture. Je n'avais aucune idée qu'un geste de main si simple pouvait nous faire avachir ou trainer si facilement! C'était aussi formidable que nous ayons eu la chance d'apprendre comment diriger les chorales, car je sais que la plupart de nous vont devoir utiliser ces connaissances plus tard dans nos vies. Je suis ravie d'avoir aidé tant de professeurs et élèves et j'espère que c'était aussi utile et agréable pour eux que pour moi.

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## Choristers & Parents Corner ....

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### **Much to see and remember**

*By Lauren Halasz - Chamber Choir*

The Remembrance Day ceremony is always a great experience for choristers.

We are always treated very well. Planes fly by, and guns fire, which is always interesting to see, and hear. These are always my personal favourite things at the ceremony. I always like the parade and the laying of the wreaths. Of course, what we sing is also a high point because the hymns and songs are always so meaningful and beautiful. This year was especially interesting because the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall came to the Cenotaph for the ceremony. This is very exciting knowing that someone will get a chance to meet them, or just see them, which truly is a once in a lifetime experience. All in all, singing on Remembrance Day is a really great chance to see so many things, and remember those who died for our country.



### **New people, new friends**

*By Avya Stollow - Concert Choir*

Sing 'N Social is a perfect time to meet new people and make new friends. The moment I walked into the room there was a crowd of choristers gathered on the floor chatting with one another. It was great for me to see all my friends from the Viva Choir once again.

“Oooooohhhhhh.....” sang Ms. Hawley, and then all the choristers joined in. It was time to warm up our voices!

After the warmup, we were all given a sticker with the name of a chorister we did not know. We were told to stick the name on our foreheads and find the person with our names stuck to theirs. It was a fun way to get to know new people.

The highlight of the event for me was “Singo”. We all got a sheet of paper with a bunch of little boxes with short descriptions. We were supposed to find people to sign in the box that the description matched. I can’t remember exactly who won, but it was a lot of fun.

After our snack we sang a few songs which brought the day to a close. All in all it was a great way to start my first year in Concert Choir.

# Choristers & Parents Corner ....



## Ambassadors for Ottawa

*By Andy Lee - parent*

The Chamber Choir was one of more than 20 choral groups from across the globe participating in the 7th Biennial Festival 500 *Sharing the Voices*, a celebrated non-competitive festival of choral music held in St. John's, July 5-12, 2009. I was pleased to be a chaperone, responsible above all to ensure choristers' safety and well being.

Parents were left behind as 28 excited choristers flew from Ottawa at 5:30 a.m. July 5, arriving in Newfoundland that afternoon, to be whisked immediately to the grand opening ceremony at the Memorial University campus. In the next week, the Chamber Choir participated in rehearsals, concerts and workshops led by world leaders in their fields. They usually spent three hours in morning rehearsals, three hours in afternoon workshops, and two hours in evening performances independently or with other groups.

Saye Clement and Merle Haltrecht kept the choristers arriving on schedule, carrying the right items and wearing the right clothes. Andi Murphy and Saye were nutritionists for menus ranging from pizza (ordered in) and cod tongues (restaurant appetizer). The group enjoyed a leisure day of souvenir shopping in Canada's oldest city and went whale watching. Minor health emergencies were taken in stride.

Well prepared by Artistic Director Jackie Hawley, the choir always acted as an exemplary group. They helped other children in rehearsal and impressed people with their knowledge of music and their attitude and manner. They were fantastic ambassadors for Ottawa, and I was proud of them. By the end of the trip, I was happy finally to match all names and faces. It was lots of fun supervising them, and I would love to have the opportunity again.





# OTTAWA CHILDREN'S CHOIR

## 2009-2010

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|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Jackie Hawley</b>  | Artistic Director<br>Chamber Choir                   |
| <b>Allison Prowse</b> | Associate Artistic Director<br>Concert & Viva Choirs |
| <b>Andi Murphy</b>    | General Manager                                      |
| <b>Laura Hawley</b>   | Accompanist<br>Chamber Choir                         |
| <b>Sally Robinson</b> | Accompanist<br>Concert & Viva Choirs                 |

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| <b>Kay Baggley</b>     | Viva Choir Manager       |
| <b>Wanda Manning</b>   | Concert Choir Co-Manager |
| <b>Angie Dugan</b>     | Concert Choir Co-Manager |
| <b>Merle Haltrecht</b> | Chamber Choir Manager    |

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