



# *Share Your Song*

with Cantores Celestes

Issue 22a - Spring 2019

CANTORES CELESTES  
CELEBRATES 30 YEARS OF MAKING MUSIC

*Join us on Saturday May 4, 2019*

at 7:30 pm

as Cantores Celestes Women's Choir celebrates

*30 years  
of sharing our song!*

**Featuring**

Musical highlights from the  
best of Cantores Celestes

**With**

Kate Carver, piano  
Stephen Boda, organ  
The Emperor Quartet

**And Director Kelly Galbraith**

Runnymede United Church, 432 Runnymede Road, Toronto  
General Admission: \$25 No reserved seating

416-655-7335



Twitter, Facebook & YouTube ✨ [cantorescelestes.com](http://cantorescelestes.com)

*Share Your Song* is edited & published by Catherine Roe, Poster by Janice Bobbie, Contributions by: Kelly Galbraith, Carolyn Ryan & Debbie Gonsalves

# Reflections on 27 Years with Cantores Celestes



Catherine Roe  
Publisher  
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As Cantores Celestes celebrates its 30th year and we think about what to do next, I look back at my 27 years with the choir and am struck by what has changed and what has remained constant.

## Costumes

Our costumes have changed three times over the years. At first we simply wore black skirts/pants and a white top. Pretty standard stuff. When we did our first concert with a slide presentation as part of the performance we all wore all black so the white tops wouldn't stand out. Two problems with that - someone, not saying who - wore a shiny leather skirt. Unfortunately it reflected the light and was a distraction. Another person who was very well endowed wore a lacy top and we lost the attention of most of the men!

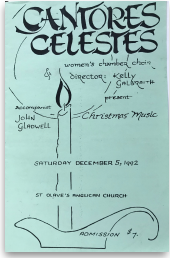


So the next step was to come up with a standard outfit. I got patterns for a wrap around skirt and a very simple top and ended up sewing quite a few of them. Since this made for a very severe look, we decided to wear scarves to break up the "avenging angel" appearance. Even this went through variations. We have three quite different sets of scarves that could make souvenirs for the choir. Pictured above are these outfits and I believe the second set of scarves.

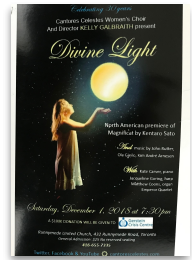
Eventually, as the choir kept growing and we had long since run out of fabric we ended up buying tops and skirts resembling the original as best we could but eventually our outfits were no longer uniform. So, Joanne Weaver, a former member researched gowns that were made specifically for choirs and our relationship with Southeastern Performance Apparel, a company who supplies choirs with outfits, was born.



## Programmes



As our choir grew and the music became more ambitious and eventually memorized, our programmes developed as well. In the beginning there were photocopied programmes with hand drawn images on the front cover. For years now they have been professionally printed and the designs have been created by Shauna Rae, Carol Sebert, Tamieka Evans and currently by Janice Bobbie.



## Travel

Cantores Celestes has also given us the chance to travel and tour. Our first major trip was to Saint John's Newfoundland when we were accepted into the Festival 500. There we attended many workshops, performed in concerts and enjoyed the music of many choirs from around the world. The culmination of the week was a massed choir of about 1,500 adults and 500 children and at the end of that concert we joined together and sang Berlioz's *Requiem*.

As everyone knows, we have been singing without scores for many years and this began before we were chosen to attend the Festival 500 in Saint John's, Newfoundland. Knowing that we were going to be performing more than one concert on our own was our incentive to memorize all of our music.

Kelly knew that without the music in our hands we gave a much better performance because we actually paid attention to her and she was able to shape our sound in a way she never could if we weren't watching. We have never looked back.

On another trip, I will always remember when we turned into the main square in Saint John, New Brunswick when some of the women on the bus started screaming. They had just seen our name on the marquee of the Imperial Theatre where we were to perform. Needless to say many pictures were taken. It was, after all, the first time we had seen our name "up in lights" so to speak.



## Past Members



Of course, with a group as large as Cantores Celestes there has been loss. We lost a much loved chorister, Monica Parfitt, five years ago to heart disease. She is remembered for her winning smiles, her dedication to her music and the choir and her will to live her life to the fullest. We were honoured to sing a mini concert for Monica as well as some of her friends and caregivers in the atrium of the hospital.

We have sung at funerals including Monica's and another fondly remembered choir member, Sheila Costello. We have also had the honour to sing at funerals of family members of Cantores Celestes.

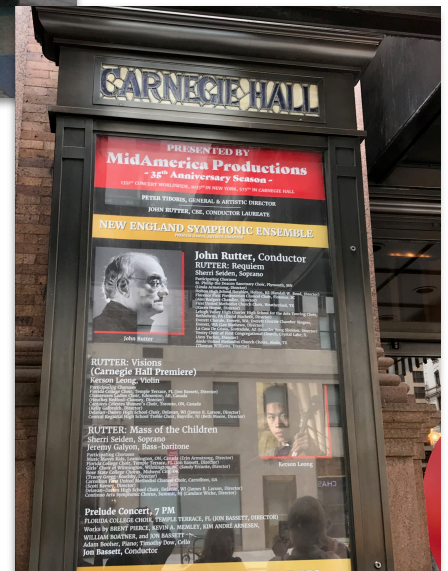
## New York City

Since the tours Down East we have made many road trips to perform in different towns but I think I speak for the rest of the choir when I say that our highlights had to be performing in New York city, first at the Lincoln Centre and then at Carnegie Hall. Both performances were by invitation! It was a thrill to meet and be conducted by Sir John Rutter. Both performances were massed choirs. Oh, and by the way, we were the only choir in both performances who had their scores memorized!

### Outside the Lincoln Centre



### Carnegie Hall





With John Rutter and in the Green Room



### *Toronto and the Luminato Festival*

Of course, we all had a memorable performing experience right here at home when we were asked by David Fallis to be the women's choir in R. Murray Schafer's *Apocalypse* which was the finale of Toronto's music festival, Luminato a few years ago.



## *What has remained the same?*

Many things have remained constant for the choir over the years. The programming by our very own Kelly Galbraith has always been high calibre, challenging and never boring! We went from a chamber choir to the 50 - women strong choir we are today. Kelly began the choir with 8 or 9 people and when I joined a few years later there were 14.



Something else that changes from concert to concert is the question of what languages will we sing in? Basically if you can sing it in English or Latin, Italian, French, etc., we sing it in the language in which it was originally written. We have also sung in many different genres. While our base was originally classical and we always return to classical, we have also sung in many different styles of music, such as Bluegrass, Gospel, World, Celtic and more.



I would be remiss if I didn't mention bootcamp. Oh sorry, I meant to say our retreats. My bad. This is when we get together, crunch our notes and discuss the coming term. Our first one was many years ago and we were a smaller group so we actually went to a camp for kids that was available because the kids were back in school. We arrived on Friday night and stayed until Sunday. We actually thought that we were going to have lots of free time and get to know each other, sort of a girls weekend with some singing.

We didn't know Kelly well enough at that point to know that that would not be the case. Now, we did have fun, quite a lot actually and we did have some free time and got to know each other a little better. However what we didn't know is that Kelly had scheduled the entire weekend! Almost to the minute.

Instead of hanging out on the Friday evening we practiced. There were breaks throughout the days as there were scheduled sectionals so that our voices all got a break but we worked hard and the weekend was named Bootcamp. Every once in a while someone will call it our retreat but basically we all agree that Bootcamp is a more fitting name.

As the choir grew and grew, and more people had small children and more responsibilities we stayed closer to home and for the past several years bootcamp, now just Friday night and Saturday, has been held at the clubhouse at Babypoint. It is still strictly scheduled with even our lunches being working lunches as we discuss new travel plans, getting advertisers for our programme, etc. but we still have fun!

We often had guests to help us out, sometimes a vocal clinician to help us with our singing, a drummer to help us with rhythm or our own Margareta Hanna with a presentation about how to care for our vocal chords, or a coach to help us with the correct pronunciation when we sing in a language that is particularly difficult.

## *Newsletters*



This season will be the last that I will be producing our newsletters. Here I have chronicled our experiences with the music, the styles of costumes we wore, our performances, our travels and the friends we made, It has been quite the honour to send out these newsletters that we then send to our friends and family.

These newsletters have hopefully been an enticement to come to our concerts and have featured our guest musicians, highlighted composers, described the many charities that we have given money, over \$60,000 given over the years and for a while, interviews with choristers themselves.

Many aspects have never changed. First is the dedication of Kelly, our Fearless Leader. She has never missed a practice (actually she did miss one for her honeymoon). She has been incredibly patient (you try to keep 50 people from doing a little bit of chatting over a two hour practice), unfailingly upbeat and inspiring. While it is hard to say what I will miss most after our last concert in May I think it has to be Kelly herself and I know I'm not alone.

Something else I will always treasure are the many friendships I have made. My time with Cantores Celestes has been challenging, fulfilling and joy-full. I will carry the memories of my time with this amazing group of women in my heart always with pride and joy.

So, Cheerio, not goodbye...  
Catherine