

By [LISA RAINFORD](#) Nov 24, 2011 InsideToronto.com

WOMEN'S CHOIR SINGS HOLIDAY CLASSICS

AT 23RD ANNUAL CONCERT



Women's choir sings holiday classics at 23rd annual concert. Cantores Celestes Women's Choir presents its annual Christmas concert Saturday, Dec. 3 at 8 p.m. at Runnymede United Church.

Cantores Celestes Women's Choir performs its 23rd Christmas concert comprised of holiday classics from both sides of the Canada/US border next month.

Its Artistic Director and Conductor Kelly Galbraith said she wanted to incorporate the music of Canadian and American composers, particularly Toronto composer Derek Holman, who celebrates his 80th birthday this year and will be attending the Dec. 3 production.

"I'm just tickled he's coming," said Galbraith, whose passion for choral music led her to found the choir more than two decades ago. "This is not your typical fare."

Cantores Celestes, which began with just eight singers in 1989, will be singing Holman's "delightfully clever" 'Sir Christmas' as a tribute to his musical gifts and "contributions to the rich fabric of Canadian choral repertoire," said Galbraith.

Galbraith said she built the program around Holman and American composer Conrad Susa's 'Carols and Lullabies of the Southwest' and supplemented these pieces with gospel tunes.

"What I find interesting is the contrast between the Canadian music - Derek Holman's take on Christmas, its brittleness, its crunchiness of Canadian winter snow and Susa's - you can picture yourself sitting with a cactus sipping a cocktail in the heat. The music can sound so fresh and different," she said.

Susa's music is replete with Spanish rhythms and flavours of the American Southwest. "It takes off the winter chill," said Galbraith.

The choir will be accompanied by pianist Ellen Meyer and celebrated musicians, percussionist Andy Morris, harpist Jacqueline Goring, guitarist Michael Kolk, cellist Karen Houston and flautist Stephen Tam, the first-prize winner of the 2003 CBC Radio-Canada National Competition for Young Performers.

In celebration of the season of giving, Cantores Celestes will continue its tradition of donating to charity. This year, the women have chosen to support The Assaulted Women's Helpline. For more than 25 years, the helpline has served as a 24-hour telephone and TTY crisis line to all women in Ontario who have experienced any form of abuse. Since its inception, it has responded to more than 728,000 calls. The organization provides crisis counselling, safety planning, emotional support, information and referrals seven days a week, 365 days a year in 154 languages. The choir will donate \$1,000.

The choir has donated more than \$35,000 to various causes ranging from global concerns to local issues. "I so appreciate everyone coming to support the choir," said Galbraith, adding that it doesn't receive grant money. The concert takes place Dec. 3 at Runnymede United Church, 432 Runnymede Rd. Admission is \$20. There is no reserved seating. Visit www.cantorescelestes.com or call 416-236-1522 for further details.