

SPRING CONCERT SPOTLIGHTS WOMEN

BY LISA RAINFORD

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Cantores Celestes Women's Choir is kick-starting its 20th anniversary year-long celebration this Saturday with its spring concert 'Women of Light, Strength and Faith,' which coincides with the release of its fifth CD *Wake up in the Moonlight Singing*.

"Because it's a women's choir, I thought why not celebrate songs about women," said Director Kelly Galbraith. Her passion is evident as Galbraith talks of the talented singers participating in Saturday's concert at Runnymede United Church. The choir braved the six major snowstorms this past winter, which coincidentally each happened on a Tuesday night - rehearsal night.

She wanted a concert that offered something different to both the choir and the audience because there are hundreds of choirs in this city.

"You want something for everyone," Galbraith told *The Villager*. Canadian mezzo-soprano Jean Stilwell and pianist Patti Loach present Stilwell's signature role as Carmen in one of the most famous arias of all time, the "saucy" 'Habanera.' Rising superstar soprano Yannick-Muriel Noah sings the "heartbreaking" aria 'Vissa-d'arte' from Puccini's *Tosca*. "For our audience to get to hear her sing for \$20, it's a once in a lifetime experience," Galbraith said.

The program also boasts music about women whose lives are celebrated in myth, legend, and opera. There is music from the great classical composers like Rossini, Verdi, Wagner, Holst and Tchaikovsky. Francis Poulenc's 'Litanies a la Vierge Noire' portrays his grief and angst in coping with loss. Libby Larsen's 'I just Lightning' is a theatrical work inspired by a chant recited at a sacred ceremony of the Mazatec Indians of Mexico.

'Wood River' is Connie Kaldor's ode to friendship, Wade Hemsworth's 'Log Driver's Waltz' and David MacIntyre's show-stopping 'Ave Maria', three Canadian compositions, are in the program along with music from the film *Paradise Road*.

Starring Glenn Close, the film tells the true story of a group of women prisoners-of-war who boost the spirits of all prisoners in the camp when they form a choir and perform arrangements of popular classical masterpieces. This is music that captures the story of hope over despair and the strength of will to survive, Galbraith said.

As it does for every concert, Cantores Celestes is donating \$1,000 of its proceeds from the spring concert to a charity. This year, it will donate to the ALS Society of Canada (Lou Gehrig's disease). Galbraith, who volunteers with Pet Therapy at Runnymede Healthcare Centre with her dog, chose the charity in part because the health care centre takes care of several ALS patients. Also, Stilwell's mother passed away from the disease and she is the organization's spokesperson.

The concert takes place Saturday, April 26 at 8 p.m. at Runnymede United Church, 432 Runnymede Rd.

For further details, visit www.cantorescelestes.com.

