

# Cantores Celestes choir to mark 25th year with concert at Runnymede United Church

Bloor West Villager By Lisa Rainford

It's Kelly Galbraith's love for the women that comprise the Cantores Celestes choir that has kept the director at the helm for a quarter century. "The women are incredible. They're coming from all walks of life. They're committed; they memorize all their music," Galbraith told The Villager. "They're the type of women you'd want to go to battle with – there's such camaraderie between them." The choir is like family, Galbraith added. "They really appreciate each other," she said. "They're a great group of people who continue to inspire me."

The choir's latest concert, Saturday, April 20, is an extra special one because it kicks off a year of 25th anniversary celebrations. Cantores Celestes will present 'The Circle of Days, at Runnymede United Church, starting at 7:30 p.m.

"I'm really excited about it," Galbraith said.

She credits the power of social media for introducing the choir's music to a larger audience – Cantores Celestes has its own YouTube channel with 16 videos posted thus far ([www.youtube.com/user/cantorescelestes](http://www.youtube.com/user/cantorescelestes)), two of which it is performing at the April 20 concert.

Internationally recognized Belarusian-American composer, Sergey Khvoshchinsky, was so impressed when he saw Cantores Celestes on YouTube, the Minneapolis, Minnesota resident contacted Galbraith to ask her if she would premiere his 'Dona Nobis Pacem,' a traditional canon meaning "grant us peace," in conjunction with the choir's 25th Anniversary kick-off performance. In addition to Khvoshchinsky's piece, the choir will perform Gabriel Fauré's Requiem and the North American premiere of David Hamilton's 'The Circle of Days.'

There will also be music by Canadians Stephen Hatfield and Richard Kidd. Accompanists include, the Emperor String Quartet, organist William O'Meara and pianist Ellen Meyer and the choir will be joined by bass-baritone Justin Welsh.

"It's a thrill to be able to present such stunning music and an honour to have been selected to premiere the work of such important choral composers," Galbraith said.

Galbraith created Cantores Celestes in 1989 after relocating to Toronto from New Brunswick, and has been its director ever since. Its roots based in classical repertoire, the choir performs a wide variety of music, including Celtic, Bluegrass and contemporary pieces, including several Canadian premieres. The choir performs regularly in Toronto, but has toured Western Ontario and Atlantic Canada as well.

Cantores Celestes has a long history of giving back to the community. Since its inception almost 25 years ago, it has donated \$40,000 through its Christmas and spring concerts. This spring's donation will go to 'Loads of Love' to be used by the local humanitarian and mission society to

buy sewing machines and other materials for the Ituna community in Zambia. Visit [www.loadsoflove.ca](http://www.loadsoflove.ca) for further details. “Our tickets have to be the cheapest in Toronto. We don’t turn people away,” Galbraith said. “You don’t have to go downtown to hear great music.”

Admission is \$20. There is no reserved seating. Runnymede United Church is situated at 432 Runnymede Rd. Visit [www.cantorescelestes.com](http://www.cantorescelestes.com) or [facebook.com/CantoresCelestes](https://facebook.com/CantoresCelestes) for further information.