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LYDIA, OH LYDIA ... ! ELMER ISELER SINGERS SCINTILATING SUNDAY NIGHT

Mark Clairmont | MuskokaTODAY.com

GRAVENHURST — If you love music even a transistor radio would have rocked your socks. When stereophonic sound replaced LPs you were over the moon.

It's like listening in Carnegie Hall.

Hearing the Elmer Iseler Singers at the Opera House Sunday night was all of the above — and beyond.

An a-choired taste that's a savoury taste.

Lydia, oh Lydia — that would be conductor Lydia Adams — what a magnificent performance you and your singers put on.

The first of two Muskoka Concert Association (MCA) dates this season for the venerable Gravenhurst music and arts organization was splendid. It was spectacular. Impressive and dramatic with lyrical and audible power.



The Elmer Iseler Singers, one of Canada’s pre-eminent choirs, performed a dozen pieces Sunday in Gravenhurst that felt short, but resonated with clarity, pitch and tone capturing the very best of Canadian choral sights and sounds. Photos Mark Clairmont

But the pureness, clarity, pitch and tone of the Toronto-based professional choir — paired beautifully with the ancient beauty of the wooden recital hall — put the audience inside a live, vibrating speaker box that had tucked in it the deep sub-woofer sounds of the basses, baritones and tenors backing the searing voices of the sopranos, altos.

The dozen pieces split equally in to halves felt too short depriving listeners who yearned for more. But two-and-a-half hours alone of singing a demanding vocal program was understandably nonetheless appreciated.

With pianist Dakota Scott-Digout’s tasteful accompaniments Bach, Mendelssohn, MacMillan, Dubinsky and other well-known and lesser-known Canadian classical and contemporary composers had their compositions treated gracefully, exquisitely, charmingly, attractively, prettily, delightfully, appealingly, seductively, alluringly, elegantly, gorgeously, sublimely, bewitchingly, entrancingly, handsomely, divinely, sumptuously, sweetly and enchantingly as pencilled a first time on sheet music.

During one particularly pregnant pause — before the applause — soprano soloist Clare Renouf reached a soaring crescendo at the end “The Bluebird,” which mesmerized the 160 choral lovers as they let the dormant note linger before vigorously putting hands together in an enthusiastically grateful response.

Adams programmed a nice nod to Robert Burns that heard tenor Mitchell Pady (Cellar Singers conductor) and baritone Paul Winkelman combined on a Celtic Suite second the end.

For their finale, Adams arranged Leon Dubinsky’s “We Rise Again,” which captured and concluded a concert that was a reprise of a similar one the acclaimed Canadian choral group presented for the MCA in 2016 and that is certainly destined to be repeated as requested from all accounts by the choir, the concert association and the audience.

The MCA’s next concert is Oct. 20 at 2 p.m. and is a sure to be another crowd-pleaser with Bridge and Wolak, a clarinet and accordion duo fusing classical, jazz and world music with an entertaining passion for performance.

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Famed Canadian choir in Gravenhurst for return engagement.



Two conductors at once: the Elerberries' Louise Jardine and Cellar Singers' Mitchell Pady.



Longtime conductor and director Lydia Adams coaxed and cajoled her charges with sound ease that amazed and enthralled the admiring audience.



Kathleen Duff and Pentti Haaspiseva were among those who said they thoroughly enjoyed Sunday night's concert.



Taking it to the people. Singers took their voices off the stage where they sent shivers through the audience as they stood shoulder-to-shoulder with them, their voices resonating through the seatholders.



It was the same back to front where there was nowhere the choristers couldn't be heard close and in person.



Combine a great hall like The Op and the Elmer Iseler Singers and you've got perfect sounds as if you're inside stereo speakers.



Singer and guest conductor Emily Taub was praised by Adams who said it's nice to have a future generation of choral leaders. Manishya Jayasundera also conducted a piece.



Soprano singer Amy Doddington, who is from Port Carling, has been with the choir for 12 years



... She was featured on “Melodia,” a piece by famed Ukrainian composer Myroslav Skoryk.



Trillium Court had the light background music of pianist Rand Simpson before and at the intermission.



The Iseler Signers have a wide following with ticketholders coming from far and wide to enjoy the evening's performances.



MCA guests are always treated so well, as the popular the pre-concert reception drew many an hour early for the 7 p.m. show.



Then it was upstairs, where more than 160 choral lovers savoured the sounds of the Iseler singers in a well-lit early evening concert.



Lydia Adams rests on her laurels following her and her choir's so satisfying concert and performance again at the Gravenhurst Opera House. It was their second visit following one in 2016.



Muskoka Concert Association (MCA) chair Diane Harrop was thrilled with the night. She said she is handing over direction of the venerable arts and music association to another leader after next fall's second concert.

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