

North Hastings choir goes full-on spring



The North Hastings Choir, under the direction of Melissa Stephens, sings 'Flower of Beauty' by John Clements. TONY PEARSON Special to This Week

By Tony Pearson

The flowers were definitely in bloom at the Bancroft Village Playhouse on Saturday evening, as the North Hastings Community Choir gave full-voiced celebration to spring with an invitation to one and all to 'Come to My Garden.' The choir, led by musical director Melissa Stephens and accompanied by Rod Moffit, sang over a dozen numbers around the central theme. Included were such classics as Robbie Burns' 'My Love Is Like A Red, Red Rose,' and folk legend Pete Seeger's 'Where Have All The Flowers Gone?'

The music sometimes whispered, sometimes soared, but always delighted. Music by composers like Delibes, Vaughan Williams, and Leonard Bernstein enchanted, and poets such as Vachel Lindsay and George Herbert were honoured by the precise diction of the choir members individually and together, as every word was clear (something that's not true of a lot of today's music).

The choir, made up of around 40 voices, has been in existence for over two decades. It meets once a week in L'Amable to rehearse, with members coming in from Coe Hill and Maynooth as well as from Bancroft. Stephens and MC Tony Fitzgerald observed that Mother Nature seemed to dislike this timing this year, as every Wednesday seemed to bring a snow or ice storm - ironic, since the weather was fine right up to their Christmas concert.

Stephens, a teacher at Haliburton Highlands, leads a total of six choirs in the region - two United Church ensembles, and community choirs in Haliburton and Lindsay as well as Bancroft. Asked if this wasn't overwhelmingly exhausting, Stephens replied that after a long teaching day at school, she found it 'energizing' to make choral music.

The choir members not only made vocal magic, they also baked the intermission treats. Their dedication is further shown when you learn that they buy all the sheet music they use themselves - which can amount to a tidy sum. Evidently they agree with the American composer Aaron Copeland, that 'to stop the flow of music would be like the stopping of time itself, incredible and inconceivable.'

By the way, the choir is always looking for new voices, so if you like to sing outside the shower, you can contact them at northhastingscommunitychoir@gmail.com.