

# Celebrating 25 years: Seaway Valley Singers in concert

IROQUOIS – It was an evening of beautiful music, shared memories, and optimism for the future as the Seaway Valley Singers held their spring concert at Iroquois United

Church on Friday evening, May 4, 2018.

As MC Wendy Gibb pointed out, the original choir was formed in 1993 from a group of interested people in this community who wanted to sing: “25 years later, the Seaway Valley Singers, a strong, vibrant and dynamic group of music lovers stands before you in celebration.”

The gala concert was conducted by Robert Jones, who has been the Singers’ director for the last 14 years. Accompanying the choir for the program was singer/teacher Margaret Whisselle.

Among the current choir, are seven musicians who sang in the original 1993 choir: Manfred Staebler, Bob Ruddock, Judy Veinotte, Sydney Smith, Mary Ann Whitteker, Jill Dumaresq and Elizabeth Temple.

The program for this special

concert, celebrating over two decades of singing, was a varied and entertaining one.

Selections ranged from Mozart’s “To God Be Joyful”, to Leonard Cohen’s powerful “Hallelujah,” (where a number of former choir members came forward to sing with the present choir.)

During the program, the Singers interpreted the exuberant whimsey in the *Kismet* medley, and later the soul-stirring power of the songs of *Les Miserables*.

One special selection in the evening, “Peace I Leave With You” was dedicated to long-time choir member, the late Sid Irwin.

A delightful addition to the concert also saw alto Isabelle Delage soloing in her own song, “Rise Above”, from her album, *Songs from My Little Couch*, accompanied by fellow members

of the choir.

For many in the audience, a touching moment in the program definitely took place when current Seaway Valley Singers director, Robert Jones, handed over his podium to the Singers’ very first director, Michael Goodwin, who conducted four pieces in the concert.

Among these was Goodwin’s own arrangement of “A la claire fontaine”, which featured soaring soprano, Margaret Whisselle taking the solo.

As part of their commitment to music in the community, the Singers announced this year’s recipients of two bursaries of \$250 each at the spring concert.

Carlie Bender, a guitarist and singer, who will continue her music as she becomes a full time nursing student at St. Lawrence College, was the first honoree.

A grade 12 honours student from Seaway, a pianist, guitarist and vocalist, Grant Wells, who will be going to Brock in the fall, was the second honoree.

The Seaway Valley Singers earned the ovation which greeted the end of their concert.

As they begin their next 25 years, the Singers look forward to welcoming others in the community to join them. It is always wonderful to “Hear the people sing!”



**The Seaway Valley Singers celebrates 25 years of great music**

Before a full house, on Friday, May 4, the Seaway Valley Singers celebrated 25 years of rich musical heritage, and looked to the next 25 years of bringing beautiful music to the community. Gathered at Iroquois United Church, the choir under the direction of Robert Jones, with Margaret Whisselle accompanying them, delivered a program of classic pieces, modern pieces and medleys from *Kismet* and *Les Miserables*. The choir also presented two student music bursaries that evening. In the front row, left to right, are Carlie Bender, bursary recipient, Annette McRae, president of the choir, Robert Jones, director, and Margaret Whisselle, accompanist and soloist. In the back row are soprano Rhonda Schneckeburger, Grant Wells, bursary recipient, Michael Goodwin, first director of the Seaway Valley Singers, librarian Carol Barkley, Manfred Staebler, tenor, member of the original 1993 choir and Isabelle Delage, alto and soloist.