

Seaway Valley Singers “sing with the angels”

W. Gibb – Leader staff

IROQUOIS—It was standing room only at Iroquois United Church as the Seaway Valley Singers held their Christmas concert, celebrating both the season and the choir’s 25th anniversary, on Sunday, December 3, 2017.

Stepping up as emcee was Gerry Rosenquist, who shared background and stories to accompany the pieces.

Director Robert Jones had promised a program both secular and sacred, and the 42 voice choir offered just that in their concert, *Sing With the Angels*.

The musical selections ranged from the solemn Reformation hymn “From Heaven Above to the

Earth I Come” penned by Martin Luther, to the lovely 17th century French chanson, “Un Flambeau, Jeanette, Isabelle.” The choir was also at home in the traditional seasonal songs “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” and “O Christmas Tree.”

The vocal arrangements in the concert took full advantage of the strong voices in the choir. “*Sing With the Angels*” (Don Besig) featured the male and female voices echoing each other, a cappella, in the style of a modern spiritual.

And the choir’s exuberant rendition of “*Hanukkah Holiday*” left the audience tapping its toes in delight.

Tambourines added a calypso feel to the “*Carol Cantata*”, which featured Ben Vreman (now a promising tenor) in a solo.

Director Robert Jones, who holds a Master of Music degree from Western University, and a Choir Master diploma from the Royal Canadian College of Organists, arranged several of the choir’s pieces for the concert himself. Accompanying the Singers was Margaret Whisselle, an accomplished musician, teacher and singer.

Definitely a high light of the concert had to be the upbeat and frankly hilarious choir rendition of “*The Christmas Can-Can*”. After all, who expects Offenbach’s classic *Parisienne* music and traditional carols jousting with each other in the same song, especially with an ironic chorus of “*Shopping Shopping Shopping?*”

I almost expected to see Elves in ruffled skirts go kick-stepping across the stage.

The next opportunity to hear the dynamic Seaway Valley Singers will be at their Spring concert in May of 2018.



Following their virtually sold out concert, some members of the Seaway Valley Singers gathered for a photo. In the back row (l-r) are Margaret Reid, Dawn Atwood-Ouellette, Annette McRae, Ab Carr and Sam Moss, while in front are director Robert Jones, Rhonda Schneckenburger, Lorraine Howard, Mike Ouelette, pianist Margaret Whisselle and Pat McCourt.