

## AFRICAN SANCTUS – ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

### MATTHEW LARKIN - MUSIC DIRECTOR



Matthew Larkin has brought a fine eloquence to the podium of the Ottawa Choral Society (OCS) since assuming the leadership of the choir in 2005. Among the hallmarks of his inspired programming are Palestrina's *Pope Marcellus Mass*, Mozart's *Coronation Mass*, Orff's *Carmina Burana*, J.S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* and Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*. He has also prepared the choir for appearances with the NAC and Ottawa Symphony orchestras.

With a growing oeuvre of liturgical compositions, Matthew Larkin has also composed and directed two secular song cycles commissioned by the OCS: *Four Songs of Love and Loss* and *wife in winter*. In May 2008, he led the choir on its fifth international tour, conducting concerts in historic churches in Venice, Florence and Rome. Mr. Larkin serves as jury member of the OCS New Discoveries Auditions and accompanies the winners in Showcase recitals. In May 2010, he made his debut with the Ottawa Symphony Orchestra in *Three Limericks* for chorus, orchestra and soprano soloist by Harry Somers.

One of Canada's most exciting organ recitalists, Matthew Larkin has been featured on Canadian, American and British public radio. He is widely recognized for his passionate advocacy of boys' choirs through his work at Ottawa's Christ Church Cathedral. He is also the founding director of Ontario's newest professional choral ensemble, the Larkin Singers.

### MAGHAN MCPHEE - OPERATIC SOPRANO



A native of Timmins, Ontario, Canadian soprano Maghan McPhee's voice has been described as "brilliant, with warm lyricism" (*Times Argus*). Ms. McPhee was a semi-finalist in the Montreal International Voice Competition and winner of the Silver Medal at the esteemed Eckhart-Gramatté competition, which focuses on new music. The finals of both competitions were broadcast live on National CBC radio and showed her ability in a wide variety of repertoire including contemporary works, opera, oratorio and art song.

The completely bilingual Ontarian made her debut at *Carnegie Hall* where she gave the world premiere of a work by Ryan Carter. Other highlights include her debut recital at the National Arts Centre, a recital at the Juilliard School with pianist Joel Harder and performances with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, the American Symphony Orchestra, on the main-stage at the National Arts Centre under Pinchas Zukerman's baton, and at the National Gallery of Canada.

Ms. McPhee recently finished a second Masters Degree at Bard College Conservatory of Music in New York where she was awarded a full scholarship and a teaching position. One of only eight international singers in the inaugural class, she worked alongside Dawn Upshaw, Kayo Iwama, Jennifer Ringo Conlon, and Lorraine Nubar as well as several other New York coaches.

Other competition credits include the Louis Quilico Voice Competition, the Brian Law Competition, the Académie International d'été de Nice (France) Competition, and the Canadian Music Competition.

## REBECCA ABBOTT - POP SOPRANO



Currently residing in Ottawa, Rebecca Abbott has sung throughout Canada, the U.S. and Europe. Abbott has been featured on popular blues and jazz programs for the BBC Radio 2 in the U.K., Radio Bremen in Germany and Triple R Blues Radio in The Netherlands and Belgium. More recently, Rebecca has spent some time honing her composition skills in L.A. with multiple Juno Award-winning producer David Tyson, and in Nashville with multiple Grammy recipients Gary Nicholson and Tom Hambridge. Rebecca has warmed-up audiences for artists such as Bonnie Raitt, Boz Scaggs, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Hawksley Workman, BB King, ZZ Top and Robert Plant. While Rebecca has loved having the opportunity to travel the world, singing pop and blues on the big stage, it is when

she returns to the dimly lit jazz clubs in Montreal and Ottawa, that she truly comes out of her shell. Rebecca is currently making regular house appearances at Maggie's Of London, the popular London jazz club where her grandfather, highly sought after - Canadian jazz master: John Noubarian has a residency. Locally, Rebecca can be found performing as one of 5 vocalists in the 10-piece theatrical Pop-Fusion sensation The PepTides.

## BAOBAB YOUTH PERFORMERS



The Baobab Youth performers bring together students from many schools in the Ottawa area to drum and dance the music of Ghana, West Africa. Founded in 1995 by Artistic Director Kathy Armstrong, the group is named for a resilient African tree.

This educational arts program offers students an opportunity to interact with each other in non-verbal and creative ways, helping them to explore their relationship to others and the surrounding world. Leadership skills are developed through mentoring opportunities and public performances. The group has given many vibrant performances in

settings such as the Ottawa Folk Festival, The National Arts Centre, the Black Sheep Inn and at numerous University, school and community events. They have toured through Ontario, Alberta, parts of the USA and to Ghana. Baobab Youth has also been featured several times on radio and television.