

## **Backgrounder:**

### ***Holy Mysteries, Holy Miracles***

Ottawa Choral Society, November 30, 2011

### **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.

**Tenor, James McLean** is one of Canada's most distinguished vocal artists, known for his compelling interpretation of the works of Bach, Mozart and Britten on the operatic and concert stages of Europe where he established an illustrious career as a lyric tenor, specializing in the repertoire of Mozart in roles such as Tamino, Belmonte and Ferrando in Nurnberg, Dusseldorf and Deutsche Opera am Rein. Concert appearances throughout Europe, Russia and Israel include Bach's Evangelist roles, McCartney's Liverpool Oratorio, Haydn's *Creation*, Britten's *War Requiem* and Rossini's *Stabat Mater*.

Now based in his hometown of Toronto, Canadian appearances for this accomplished singer include Kingston Symphony (*Messiah*) Grand Philharmonic Choir (Mendelssohn's *Lobgesang*) and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with Thunder Bay Symphony. James is a frequent guest artist with Aldeburgh Connection, and has shared his artistry as the Evangelist in the *St. Matthew Passion* (Guelph Chamber Choir) and the *St. John Passion* (Chorus Niagara). Highlights of the current season feature Pub Operas with Tapestry New Opera Works, *Saint Nicolas Cantata* with Toronto's Pax Christi Chorale, and Haydn's *Creation* with Kingston Symphony Orchestra. James is delighted to return to the Ottawa Choral Society, where he performed the *Saint Nicolas Cantata* under the direction of Brian Law in 1981.

**Bass Baritone, Phillip Holmes** makes his home in Norway Bay Quebec. He began his musical studies with piano and organ before moving to voice at the age of 17. He has studied with Mervin Fick, Lawrence Ewashko at the University of Ottawa and Patricia Kern at the University of Toronto. Past performances include Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Brahms' *Requiem*, Handel's *Messiah*, Fauré's *Requiem*, Bach's *St. Matthew's Passion*, and *Magnificat*, Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, Rutter's *Mass for the Children* and Vaughan Williams' *Five Mystical Songs*. He has also appeared with Opera Lyra Ottawa as Paris in their production of *Romeo and Juliet*, and has traveled to Europe on four occasions to work with Helmuth Rilling and the Festival Ensemble. Phillip was also a finalist on the Bravo original television series 'Bathroom Divas'.