



## Ottawa Choral Society

For immediate release

### RENAISSANCE MEN, INNER SPACES AND GRAND MASTERY!

#### The Ottawa Choral Society announces 2008-2009 subscription concert series

**Ottawa** – The Ottawa Choral Society recently announced its 2008-09 season when Music Director, Matthew Larkin presented a preview of what he has planned for Ottawa music lovers in the new choral season. The choir's three regular subscription concerts, **RENAISSANCE MEN**, **INNER SPACES** (in which the choir will share the stage with the famed Elmer Iseler Singers led by Lydia Adams), and **GRAND MASTERY!** will be directed by Larkin. The OCS will also appear with the National Arts Centre Orchestra under the baton of NACO Music Director Pinchas Zukerman in double performances of the *Mozart Requiem* in September and *A German Requiem* (Ein Deutsches Requiem) by Brahms in June, as well as in the annual presentation of Handel's *Messiah*, conducted this year by James Judd.

The new season begins in the splendid Byzantine sanctuary of Dominion-Chalmers United Church (355 Cooper St.) on Friday, Nov. 14<sup>th</sup> at 8 p.m. with **RENAISSANCE MEN**, a programme that will explore the *a cappella* (unaccompanied) repertoire of the Italian and English Renaissance.

“*A cappella* singing is the most challenging form of choral art,” Larkin said. “Without the aid of instrumental accompaniment, the choir is alone with the music. Yet, when all the musical elements are aligned and the choir is perfectly tuned, it is as if the heavenly spheres are moving in sublime harmony.”

Choral music lovers may be surprised by the suggestion that Renaissance compositions somehow could be equated to the music they might hear on a contemporary ‘new music’ programme. Yet it was Giovanni Luigi da Palestrina's astonishingly innovative *Missa Papae Marcelli* (Pope Marcellus Mass) that led the *avant-garde* of liturgical music in the latter half of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. With its ‘user friendly’ simplified polyphony and clarity of text, Palestrina's revolutionary ‘new music’ was precisely what the cardinals of the Roman Church needed to support their Counter-Reformation and shepherd their flocks back to the fold. The second major work on the programme, *Spem in alium* by the Englishman Thomas Tallis is a rarely performed motet in 40 parts that is considered Tallis's crowning achievement. The work, which calls for eight five-part choirs singing unaccompanied in “surround sound,” served as the inspiration for Janet Cardiff's hugely popular 40-speaker sound installation in the Rideau Chapel of the National Gallery of Canada in 2001. **RENAISSANCE MEN** will also include motets and madrigals by such Renaissance luminaries as Thomas Weelkes, Orlando di Lasso, Orlando Gibbons and Claudio Monteverdi.

The choir returns to Dominion-Chalmers for **INNER SPACES** on Sat, Feb. 28<sup>th</sup> at 8 p.m., when the OCS will perform alongside its very special guests, the Elmer Iseler Singers, who will be celebrating their 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. With just 20 professional singers, the Iseler Singers were founded by Elmer Iseler, the great pioneer of Canada's fine choral tradition. The choir is considered to be one of the world's finest choral ensembles and is known for their virtuoso choral technique and transparency of sound. The concert begins with Music Director Lydia Adams directing her choir in works by Healey Willan, Thomas Weelkes and the contemporary mystics Henryk Gorecki and John Tavener. She will return to the podium as guest conductor to lead the joint choirs in a performance of Franz Schubert's *Mass in G*, one of the composer's most beloved works. Larkin will provide the “symphonic” accompaniment at the church's

magnificent Casavant organ—an instrument which boasts four manuals with 64 speaking stops comprising 95 ranks and a total of 5,157 pipes. To complete the programme, Larkin will direct the Choral Society in a reprise performance of his own poignant song cycle *wife in winter*. The work received warm critical notice and an intensely emotional response from the audience in its premiere performance in April 2007. Larkin has now added two new movements for baritone soloist, which are set to the most personal of the ‘Jane poems’ that Toronto poet Jim Lanthier wrote during the bleakest days of his wife’s terminal illness.

The subscription season concludes in high spirits on Sun. May 3 at 7:30 p.m. at St. Joseph’s Roman Catholic Church, with **GRAND MASTERY!** Mozart’s *Grand Mass in C Minor K 427* is arguably his grandest sacred composition. Had he completed the work, it undoubtedly would have earned a place alongside the *Mass in B Minor* and the *Missa Solemnis*, the great choral masterpieces of Bach and Beethoven. It was this splendid work that Mozart presented before Prince Archbishop Colloredo and his court on his return to his hometown of Salzburg in 1793. Audiences will recognize the work’s memorable tunes, the Italianate coloratura soprano aria *Laudamus te*, the *Domine Deus*, which has been called a ‘pyrotechnic duet for two sopranos’, and the incredibly beautiful siciliana, *et incarnatus*. Mozart was bringing with him his young bride Constanza, a gifted soprano, who certainly impressed the Court, (and her new father-in-law, Leopold) with her gorgeous performance of the Mass’s sublime coloratura soprano arias. The outstanding musicians of the OTTAWA MUSIC COMPANY ORCHESTRA will join the choir for this thrilling evening celebrating Mozart’s mercurial genius.

As part of the 2008-09 season, the choir will present a roster of superb Canadian soloists. Baritone Jesse Clark, who mesmerized the OCS New Discoveries 2008 jury, makes his debut with the choir in February when he will introduce two new songs Matthew Larkin has composed for his song cycle *wife in winter*. Making up the solo quartet for Mozart’s *Grand Mass in C Minor* will be two of the winning artists from the 2008 round of the OCS New Discoveries Auditions for Young Artists: Toronto soprano Laura Albino and mezzo-soprano, Aidan Ferguson, a native of Edmonton now studying in Montreal. They will be joined by tenor James McLennan, of whom the Toronto Star said “he radiates considerable charm, and sings with a strong yet pure tenor,” and Ottawa baritone Gary Dahl, who made a fine impression as the prophet Samuel in the choir’s production of Handel’s *Saul* at the NAC in 2004.

This season, the Ottawa Choral Society is offering a number of attractive new subscription packages. Subscriptions are on sale now at \$95.00 for **GO SOLO!**, \$185.00 for **DOUBLE UP**, and \$70.00 per subscription for **BRING YOUR FRIENDS** packages. Exciting **EARLY BIRD** offers are also available until July 15<sup>th</sup>. Those interested can order ONLINE at [www.ottawachoralsociety.com](http://www.ottawachoralsociety.com), or may request a copy of the new season brochure by calling 613-725-2560

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