

Barrie Concert Review – Saturday November 9, 2019
Voices of Angels - Hamilton Children's Choir



Submitted by Sandra Ruttan
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Excellence has no age!

On Saturday, November 9, the Barrie Concert Association presented “Voices of Angels”, a concert by the Hamilton Children’s Choir, at Hiway Pentecostal Church. What an incredible experience! Ringing the spacious sanctuary, all 90 of the choristers making up the two groups within the choir warmed up with a polished “O Canada.” Following this, the older group sang a pair of pieces by Ontario composer, Katerina Gimon titled “Elements: Earth & Fire.” Their performance was spellbinding. It unfolded from an ethereal, sustained tone that hung in the air like it was floating, absolutely pure, like music played on crystal. From this, bending tones created harmonies, even overtones in a shifting mirage of magical sound. When “Earth” faded into silence, no one moved for at least 5 full seconds it was so mesmerizing. The second of the pieces, “Fire” broke the spell with energetic staging, body percussion, and rousing vocalizations that created a beautiful texture out of shrieking, yipping, and ululating. It was an incredibly demanding and mature performance and set the tone for the equally amazing succession of pieces that followed. Performing arrangements of folk music from Venezuela, Colombia, Malaysia, Scotland and the Appalachian Mountains as well as Contemporary compositions by Canadian composers, the children and youth, who looked like they ranged in age from about 11 to 18 years of age, sang separately and together, almost entirely without accompaniment. Instead, they clapped, snapped, waved, and carried out steps and movements as they sang with nuanced, blended sound and meticulous harmonies.

Who are these incredible young people? They are children from the Hamilton area who are part of a choral organization that provides stellar choral education through six progressive

choral programs from babies and toddlers to youths of 18 years. Based on a philosophy that everyone can sing, only the final two programs require a “vocal assessment” to be admitted. The results of that progressive nurturing and training was very evident in the performance of the 90 children heard on Saturday night. It is no wonder that they are gaining not only a national, but also an international reputation. Under the leadership of Zimfira Poloz, the artistic director, the choir has demonstrated on the world stage her assertion that “excellence has no age.”

The final piece of the evening was a charming arrangement of K’naan’s pop hit, “Wavin’ Flag”. It was moving experience to watch this group of confident, skilled, exuberant young people sing “when I am older, I will be stronger, they’ll call me freedom, just like a waving flag.” I’d say this choir program has already worked wonders...and by the lengthy standing ovation that followed, I’d say the rest of the audience agreed.