

Stratford Concert Choir Announces New Artistic Director

After a year in transition, the Stratford Concert Choir (SCC) is delighted to announce that it is launching the 2022-2023 season under the leadership of Stéphane Potvin, its new artistic director.

Potvin, who will take up the role in September, is originally from Québec. His 35-year career has taken him across Canada, the United States and Europe. He has conducted choirs, orchestras and chamber ensembles, including the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra, the McGill Chamber Singers, the Orpheus Male choir, the Niagara Children's Choir, and the Canadian Armed Forces Band.



He is the founder and artistic director of Musikay, a Hamilton-based group of professional musicians and singers dedicated to the performance of classical music.

As a child, Potvin was surrounded by music, played by his uncles on fiddle, and guitar. His mother enrolled him in piano lessons when he was seven but he was not impressed. "I hated it with a passion," he said. Then he got involved in high school musical productions and the camaraderie of that experience appealed to him. "I got interested in conducting because I like working with people," said Potvin. "We would rehearse together and spend all of our time as a group." Around the same time, he saw his first performance by the Montreal Symphony Orchestra. That's when he said, "Oh yes. This is what I want to do."

Once he found his calling, Potvin went on to earn an undergraduate degree in performance from McGill University, a Bachelor of Education from The University of Western Ontario, and a master's degree in choral conducting from the University of Illinois. He has also worked with and learned from world-renowned conductors including Fred Stoltzfus, Frieder Bernius, and Boris Brott.

Dedication and professionalism are important to Potvin and he saw those qualities in the SCC. "The culture of the choir is appealing," he said. "They don't just get together for a couple of hours to have fun and go home. They're here to do music, do it well and work hard for it."

Potvin is aware that the restrictions of Covid have taken their toll. "A number of people have not sung for a couple of years and I'm sure their voices will be quite rusty," he said. "We'll start where we are and we'll build. I hear a lot of potential. What I'm hoping to do is help everyone explore and expand on that potential and make it the best choir it can be."

For several years, Potvin was a juror for the Canada Council, helping decide which choirs would receive grants. "We heard many choirs that we thought were okay and then we would hear that one choir and



go, "Wow!", he said. "When I heard the Stratford Concert Choir, I thought it had the potential to be the choir that made the Canada Council go, 'Wow!' That is my goal -- to take the SCC to 'Wow!'"