

The Pembroke Community Choir and the Christmas Parade Experience



In our 58 year history, the Pembroke Community Choir has brought our collective choral talents to many community activities. Our outreach program is one example and involves singing at senior citizen residences and, more recently, performing Christmas Carols at the Cenotaph just before Pembroke's annual Santa Claus parade gets underway.

For the 2011 Parade of Lights, several of our singers became a moving choir, singing carols with candle flashlights along the parade route... a chilly proposition and a challenge to sing in such frigid temperatures and march uphill at the same time.

But it wasn't until 2016 that our choir decided to enter an actual float in the parade. The theme chosen by the City's planning committee was "A Charlie Brown Christmas", and fortunately for our choristers, we were familiar with the music since we had performed a medley of these songs just a few years previously.



The moveable choir 2011: walking and singing can be a challenge in frigid weather.

Organizing a Float Building Team

Our float building leader was Anne Harlow (alto section) who began by organizing a volunteer work team, borrowing a wagon, securing a garage for float assembly, and setting a few work dates. The design of the float would include several *Peanuts* cartoon character cut-outs, a 'Charlie Brown' Christmas tree, of course, and lots and lots of lights for the nighttime event.

So one Saturday morning in mid-November, the first work crew of several members met at Lisa Pritchard's home to put the skirting on the wagon and to paint the characters Lisa had already hand-drawn on large pieces of plywood. The wooden characters stayed with Lisa who then painted backdrops on each of them, adding snow and snowflakes, and then cutting out the plywood figures out so they could be screwed to the float.



Adding tree skirting and planning how the plywood characters can be mounted on float.



Figures painted and ready for background painting and cutting out by Lisa Pritchard



Photo above: Anne Harlow, left, was float building leader. She and choir president Linda Clark add strands of lights around the half-dozen Peanuts characters.



Photo right: Linda Clark, Henri Picard and Jill Renault secure greenery and lights to the float wagon bed.

Photos below: lining up all the floats and last minute adjustments.



Work Crew Gets Busy

The next few work dates involved adding many strands of lights, decorating the float with greenery and ornaments, getting the hay bale seats ready for our singers, making a 'popcorn' garland out of Styrofoam peanuts, tying on the choir banner, adding flood lights to illuminate Snoopy and to help us read our music, gussying up the truck that pulled the wagon, and setting up the sound system in Snoopy's dog house. Who knew that building a float would involve so much work?

Many thanks to Lisa for sharing her wonderful creative talents and for all the work she put into making these little characters come alive. We also thank her friends Tim and Laurie Stoddard for providing one of the main stars of the float—Snoopy and his famous dog house. Our appreciation and thanks also go to Merrill Behm for supplying both hay and wagon, to Reid Godin of Valley Property Shop for lending us a garage in which to build the float, and to Michael Montaigne Sound for providing our sound system and technical expertise.

Float Impresses the Judges

The final touches to our Charlie Brown choir of about 15 singers were the matching red fleece scarves and white fleece toques and sheet music, each one decorated with a brightly coloured image of a Peanuts character. The float design, our choir's matching outfits, the colourful song sheets, and the singing itself, created a cohesive and attractive appearance to our entry and apparently made a favourable impression on the judges.



This photo by the Pembroke Daily Observer's Stephen Uhler appeared in the Observer on November 29, 2016.

Mayor's Award

All the hard work paid off when, a few days after the parade, we received an email informing us that our float had won the 'Mayor's Award' and that we would be presented with a trophy. Choir President Linda Clark, Lisa Pritchard, Jill Renault, Diane Wolfgram and Jane Hanson attended the presentation ceremony along with Jane Hebert, who took photos of the event. Anne Harlow, our float building leader, was unable to attend but Linda Clark congratulated her by presenting her with the trophy at our concert dress rehearsal. Without her initiative, we never would have undertaken this fun project—thanks so much to Anne.

And lastly, kudos to all the choir members and spouses who helped create our first float, and to those who were able to brave the chilly day to participate in the parade.

Well Done Everyone and All the Best in 2017!



Photo top left: Float organizing leader Anne Harlow is congratulated by choir president Linda Clark. She was presented with the Mayor's Award trophy. In the photo below, a few of the choir members who worked on the float attended the awards ceremony. From the left are Jane Hanson, Lisa Pritchard, Mayor Michael LeMay, Linda Clark, Jill Renault, and Diane Wolfgram.

