



MEDIA RELEASE

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### DIRECTING AN 80-MEMBER CHOIR OFFERS CHALLENGES AND REWARDS

**PEMBROKE, ON** - Being a choral director is something like being a hockey coach. Both encourage the players to bring out their best individual skills and, at the same time, they teach them how to work together as a team. Both leaders also guide the players to co-operate, listen to each other, and work together as one unit.

Which coach has the tougher job? You could argue that the choir director faces the greater challenge when you find out what Gerald LaRonde experiences each time he stands in front of the Pembroke Community Choir.

The director's team of 80 different players is divided into four, and sometimes eight, different sections, all with different jobs to do. Some are experienced and some are rookies. And just like in any hockey game, there are lots of exciting peaks and seemingly chaotic situations that have the potential to end in either a disappointing or a wonderful moment.

Anticipating which way it might go at any given time is part of the thrill and challenge that LaRonde undergoes at each choir rehearsal. And this year's effort is all the more demanding since the choir will be performing especially difficult material of Christmas choruses from some of the most often performed classical composers – Bach, Handel and Vivaldi, and a piece by a more modern composer, Ralph Vaughan Williams.

*Continued on page 2 . . .*



## Page 2 – Pembroke Community Choir

“These selections may be familiar to many people who enjoy classical Christmas music”, says LaRonde. “Most audiences tend to hear music as a whole and can appreciate the beauty of the composition or the sound of the choir. What they might not realize is how complex a piece is...how technical and precise some of the sections are, or how hard the choir has to work to break it down note by note to learn and master their parts...and these pieces have a lot of notes,” he adds.

Each of these perennial favourites—Bach’s *Magnificat*, Vivaldi’s *Gloria*, and Handel’s *Messiah*-- has been performed by choirs all over the world and has become part of many annual Christmas choral traditions. Their popularity is due to the genius of the compositions and the perfection of how the choral parts harmonize and interweave...characteristics that both intrigue and challenge the musicians and singers who perform them.

Over the next month, LaRonde’s work as choir director will be to continue to guide each of the sections with their individual parts and then blend them together into one cohesive and melodious sound. And, just like the hockey coach, LaRonde is hoping that their upcoming performance will result in a winning score with the audience.

“After practicing very hard since September, it will be so rewarding to finally ring the rafters at Calvin Church—especially with the *Hallelujah* chorus”, says LaRonde. “We hope these inspiring selections will be an uplifting beginning to the Christmas season and we look forward to showcasing our 80-voice choir to the greater community.”

This year’s concert, “Christmas with the Classics”, takes place on Sunday, December 4<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m. at Calvin United Church. Tickets are \$15 in advance; \$18 at the door, and free for children 13 years and under. Tickets are available from choir members, at the Pembroke Mall office, and at Kevin’s Flowers in Petawawa. More information is available on their website at [www.pembrokecommunitychoir.org](http://www.pembrokecommunitychoir.org).

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***About the Choir*** - The Pembroke Community Choir has celebrated 58 years in the community and, in September and January, welcomes new members from all over the Ottawa Valley. They practice every Monday night at 7 p.m. at Wesley Community Church on Renfrew Street in Pembroke and perform a Christmas and spring concert each year. Registration for new and returning members will start Monday, January 9<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. followed by a rehearsal at 7 p.m.