

St. George's Cathedral will host a Choral Festival in the month of June. From June 7 to June 22 four choirs will perform five concerts in the cathedral. Two of the choirs are from Ontario: the Libertas Male Choir, which performed here two years ago, and the Stratford Concert Choir. The others are the Didgori Ensemble from the Republic of Georgia, and The St. Martin's Boys' Choir of Biberach, Germany. The St. Martin's choir will present two concerts.

Tickets for the Libertas Male Choir are available only at the door: \$20 for adults, \$14 for youths 10-14, and free for children under 10. The mid-day concert by Didgori is free, with a freewill offering collected. Tickets for the evening concerts by the St. Martin's choir and the Stratford Concert Choir are available at the Cathedral Office at 129 Wellington St., The Church Bookroom (165 Ontario St.), the Seniors' Centre (56 Francis St.), and at Novel Idea (156 Princess St.). The cost is \$20 if bought in advance or \$25 at the door.

Libertas Male Choir

The Libertas Male Choir, "the voice of Liberty," was founded by a group of men in Southwestern Ontario and the Dutch conductor and concert organist Martin Mans; its debut performance in 2015 was designed to commemorate the 70th year of the liberation of Holland in the Second World War. The choir comprises about 65 members from across a number of communities. Mr. Mans, who is based in the Netherlands, travels to Canada several times a year for rehearsals and concert series with the choir. But the choristers learn most of their music through a computer program (Noteworthy) before meeting with the conductor for one or two rehearsals preceding a concert. Last year the choir travelled to Holland to sing several concerts there.

In June the Libertas choir will be joined by the "Groot Mannenkoor Nederland" (Large Dutch Male Choir) to form a choir 120 voices strong for a concert tour in Ontario. Organist and pianist Mark Brandwijk, who is also based in the Netherlands, will accompany the choir. The concert program for St. George's is entitled "Hands Across the Ocean," and will include songs in Dutch and English. This concert takes place on 7 June at 8:00 p.m.

Didgori Ensemble

The Didgori choir, formed in 2003, is dedicated to the recovery, preservation and performance of traditional Georgian polyphonic singing. Georgian polyphony existed as a secular form before the introduction of Christianity in that country (4th century), and it is thought to be the oldest polyphony in the Christian tradition. This music, which occurs in several different forms of polyphony, has earned the designation of UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Its harmonies are often strikingly different from those of traditional Western polyphony.

The choir takes its name from the historical battle of Didgori in 1121, which liberated the Kingdom of Georgia from subjection to the Empire of the Seljuq Turks and ushered in the Georgian golden age of art and culture. The group enlarges its repertoire by discovering early-20th century wax recordings, sometimes by village singers, preserved in the country's archives and museums.

The Didgori travelling ensemble comprises only six singers; their performances are normally sung without instrumental accompaniment, *a capella*. Didgori's current tour is the first visit of a Georgian choir to Canada since 1975; before coming to Kingston they will participate in Edmonton's International Choral Festival. The choir's performance in St. George's is at 12:15 p.m. on Monday 10 June. Admission to the concert is free, with a freewill offering to be taken.

Chorknaben St. Martin's of Biberach

A choir of nearly 60 members, ranging in age from 9 to 29 years old, the Boys' Choir of St. Martin's church in Biberach was founded in 1962. From its inception the choir has been a member of Pueri Cantores, an international organization of Roman Catholic choral groups. As well as singing many services in St. Martin's church and other churches in the area, the choir presents an annual concert in Biberach. Most of their repertoire is sung *a capella*. Strikingly, the choir is totally self-governing; all major decisions are made by a vote among the older members, while the only non-member with a vote is the conductor, who has only a single vote. An important feature of the choir's life is an annual tour to another country; at first these tours were to nearby European countries, but they toured in California in 1999 and now make their first tour in Canada. The two-week tours are totally organized by the older choir members, who not only plan and organize the trips, but also take responsibility for looking after the younger members. At the end of each year's singing tour the choristers enjoy a week of camping holiday.

Commitment to the St. Martin's choir is a large undertaking, both musically and socially. When the youngest boys enter, they spend a time learning rudiments of music: sight singing, rhythm, ear training, and so forth. At the end of that training, if they are successful in an examination, the boys are accepted into the choir in a formal ceremony in St. Martin's church. The boys sing the treble and alto lines until their voices break, at which time they have a pause from singing until their voices have settled. Instead of leaving at this point, however, almost 100% of boys remain with the choir, taking on various non-singing responsibilities. When ready, they return to the choir, singing the lower lines of music. Much of the boys' social life revolves around the choir, and they have a social centre where all may gather for recreation. Senior choristers are committed to fostering and mentoring younger choristers.

St. Martin's choir will sing two programs of sacred and secular music on Wednesday 12 June and Thursday 13 June. Both concerts start at 7:30 p.m. The sacred program will include works in English, German, French and Latin and will range from Gregorian chant to works by 20C composers. The secular program comprises works by composers from Germany, France, Italy, the U.S. and Canada, sung in the languages in which they are written.

Stratford Concert Choir

The Stratford choir is a mixed choir of about 85 voices conducted by Ian Sadler, concert organist, a former organist of St. James' Cathedral, Toronto, and now organist of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, Ontario. The choir performs four concerts annually in Stratford, singing a broad repertoire of sacred and secular classical works, as well as concerts elsewhere in Ontario. Its membership includes both professional and amateur musicians of all ages. Singers in the Stratford choir also form the core of the Cathedral Singers of Ontario, another choir conducted by Sadler, who travel to the United Kingdom once or twice a year to sing in the cathedrals there. The Stratford choir will perform the final concert of the St. George's series on 22 June at 7:30 p.m.

Proceeds from the three evening concerts that begin at 7:30 are to be generously contributed to the Cathedral Heritage Preservation Trust.