

# Cantata Singers hosting singalong

**Frank PEBBLES** *Citizen staff*  
fpeebles@pgcitizen.ca

If you love choral singing in Prince George, the Cantata Singers makes a good point.

They also provide the counterpoint.

This is the 48th season for the Cantata Singers. They are a cultural institution in this city, and they are doing what they do best at a special concert Nov. 27. What they do best is Christmas. That night their huge vocals will get some added power – the power of community – at a public singalong at St. Michael's & All Angels Anglican Church.

Part of that night's program will be a spotlight on their own internal ensemble for times when they need to sing in smaller spaces, or get hired for public events. They call this elite group Counterpoint.

The large-scale group may well be enjoying a record number of regular members. They had 55 voices in 2000 when the millennium turned. In 2007 they reported topping out at about 75 members when big annual events were on the schedule that attracted additional singers. Currently, they have 80 singers in their ranks and a strong leadership base.

The interim director is Lyn Vernon and the previous director, Damian Dorschner, is still with the group as a singer.

"We are so proud of one voice we got back after some time off. Colin Dix is our longest serving member and was one of the co-founding voices of Cantata, and he will be with us for the Family Christmas Singalong," said Seamus Hogan, a member of the Cantata group and Counterpoint's conductor and co-ordinator.

Since the entire chorus is made up of community members, this singalong concert is a great chance for interested people to join in the songs and get a feel for the Cantata experience. They are also the featured choir at the upcoming performance of Handel's Messiah with the PGSO, to show prospective singers what the results of membership can be. In January the Cantatas will hold an intake of new voices.

The group has had the chance to be part of some exemplary moments over their years.

The Cantatas have done collaborations with big names like baritone soloist Tyler Duncan, opera conductor Kevin Zakresky, Celtic band Out Of Alba, chamber ensemble Borealis String Quartet (featuring former P.G. cellist Joel Stobbe), and with CBC Radio personalities when they've done readings of A Christmas Carol for charity.



CITIZEN FILE PHOTO

The Cantata Singers performed a concert on Nov. 2, 2010.

They have been good musical friends with the Bel Canto Children's Choir, District 57 Tapestry Singers, the Lakewood Choristers, Sweet Adelines, Westwood Mennonite Church Choir, Nove Voce, the Northern Orchestra, and many more.

Their most fruitful collaboration is an ongoing relationship with the PGSO that has gotten them on stage with the city's main orchestra for the performance of Mozart's Requiem, Spirit of the Haida Gwaii by the late Bill Reid, the songs of Cole Porter, Carl Orff's Carmina Burana, and of course the biennial production of Handel's Messiah.

The pedigree of the Cantata Singers was appealing for recent American immigrant Valerie Chatterson when she moved to Prince George.

She had been a member of semi-professional and amateur vocal groups in Washington and Oregon for years.

"I've been singing since I was a little kid, and I was really missing it," she said.

"Once I got settled in Prince George I started looking around, hoping there was some kind of choir. I was so amazed by Cantata. I couldn't believe there was a group like this that was so willing to work with new people. They offered to let me sit in on a couple of rehearsals to see if it was a good fit. It really was. So now I'm in for the long haul."

Chatterson is also a member of Counter-

point. She said that any not-for-profit organization must obtain funds, and that's especially true for the arts and culture sector for which there are few avenues to riches. That's why the Cantata Singers formed Counterpoint. She's just as eager to sing for the smaller group so the larger one has a reliable financial picture.

"We decided we didn't want to sell raffle tickets, and have the stress of always doing outside fundraising," said Hogan.

"We formed a singing group for hire. Counterpoint will do your office Christmas party, your anniversary, your bar mitzvah, whatever you want us there for. And we have done very well. This is our third year of operation. There are 16 singers who work with the Counterpoint group and with the income we've been able to generate so far, the Cantata Singers don't need to always be reaching out for other income streams the way a lot of groups do in the arts and sports. We make our money doing what we signed up to do – sing."

The cost of hiring Counterpoint varies. They take into account the kind of show and the purpose of show. The general average is \$200 for a 30-minute set.

Anyone who wants to hire Counterpoint can make email contact at [pgcantatasingers@gmail.com](mailto:pgcantatasingers@gmail.com) or phone 250-962-1663.

There is also an active Prince George Cantata Singers website and Facebook page.