

# THE PRINCE GEORGE CITIZEN

*it's what matters to you*

## Orchestra thrills with Christmas classic

Valerie GILES

Special to The Citizen

December 19, 2012

Tweet

Like

16

The Prince George Symphony Orchestra and Prince George Cantata Singers delivered an inspired presentation of Messiah Saturday evening. Considered as Handel's greatest oratorio, that work was performed for the first time April 13, 1742 in Dublin at St. Patrick's Cathedral. Intended for Lent and Easter, almost three centuries later it is now commonly enjoyed during Advent as a lead up to the celebration of Christmas.

That the music was written to be played in a sacred space made it all the more appropriate that this performance took place in Sacred Heart Cathedral. Representing the Board, Teresa Saunders introduced the newly-appointed PGSO general manager, Marnie Hamagami, to welcome the audience.

The talents of the Prince George Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Kevin Zakresky, and the Prince George Cantata Singers combined to perform Handel's Messiah. Coaxing harpsichord sound from the keyboard added to an authentic experience. That beautiful sound is so strongly associated with music of the Baroque era. It is known that in many performances, Handel himself accompanied the orchestra on the harpsichord. This Prince George performance remarkably connects us as a modern audience with those who experienced the first one 270 years ago.

In writing the words, librettist Charles Jennens drew heavily from the exquisitely beautiful language of the King James Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. The themes cover Christ's birth, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven. The hopeful themes of these songs carry an enduring, reassuring and comfortable message for the world.

The stars of the evening were the featured soloists: soprano Chloe Hurst, alto Ingrid Mapson, tenor Andy Robb and baritone Cameron McPhail. Their combined talent brought special expression to the baroque music experience. Combined and supported by the choirs, the music and voices lifted Heavenward as the arias became a form of prayer.

"Behold! a Virgin Shall Conceive" showcased the soloist's clear voice as she used precise expression and appropriate projection throughout. She was ably supported by harpsichord sound played responsively with the strings and floating notes from the bassoon.

At the point where the chorus sang “For Unto Us a Child is Born” the sprightly sound and compelling phrasing was punctuated with dramatic timpani at the mention of each of Christ’s titles - all sounding triumphant.

By the time the orchestra played the Hallelujah! chorus, it was performed with genuine enthusiasm. The centuries-old tradition of standing during that part of the performance began with King George II who was so moved, he stood up and caused the audience to rise and remain standing until it ended. There are two commonly held theories about why George II stood. One is that he was personally overwhelmed by the performance; the other is that he was signalling his acknowledgement of Christ as the King of Kings.

This performance was enthusiastically appreciated by the audience which offered generous and sustained applause. The experience of this performance was significantly enhanced by the aesthetically appealing and reverent venue. It could only be better in a magnificent baroque cathedral.

Bill and Diane Rogers were given special acknowledgement as sponsors of the evening and for their longstanding support. Also in the audience was Trelle Morrow, the architect who designed the building, enjoying the acoustical experience afforded by its exceptional verticality.

Tweet Like 16

More Stories

**Snowed in**  
1/5/2013

**Alaska quake sparks tsunami warning**  
1/5/2013

**A Pine Pass pioneer**  
1/5/2013

**Inquest possible for in custody death**  
1/5/2013

**City springs contract surprise on its unions**  
1/5/2013



© Copyright 2013 Glacier Community Media [Full Site »](#)