

more articulation on specific notes and less on others, to drive musical phrasing; and dynamic phrasing that tapers off at the end, appropriate to the fugal counterpoint common at the time.

“They aren’t doing badly on the Baroque interpretation – but it all takes some getting used to,” Mahon says. They are used to Palestrina and songs like that, he explains, but the great sweeping sounds of Renaissance music are dissimilar to the technical precision and nuanced phrasing of equal length notes that he is asking for here. After all, these choristers are being asked to acquire a cultural feeling for Baroque music that usually takes years to master.

The fact that these boys are singing with an orchestra is already in itself exciting,” says Walker. “That a 13-year-old boy is being introduced to Baroque and period music is really something, and part of the mandate of the school. I think if you’re educating a new generation of singers, knowing about Baroque pitch is important.”

As a guide to matters of interpretation, Mahon has referred the boys to the Tafelmusik recording of *Messiah*, a close match to what he’s looking for. “It takes a little longer to teach them the music,” he says. “Getting them to do the style and actually understanding how to sing a Baroque phrase rather than a Renaissance phrase is quite hard.” It helps that Mahon himself led the larger contingent of choristers in the Christmastime 2017 performance of *Part I* so they are not entirely new to the art he’s looking for.

The boys are talented and excited, ready to delve into the work. They have been rehearsing since January. “It’s quite something,” says Mahon. “They’re so motivated, they know the music. In the fall, they auditioned with *For Unto Us a Child is Born*. This time around they auditioned with *All We Like Sheep*.” Walker is impressed to hear that the boys auditioned on that chorale: many singers consider the vocal runs in *All We Like Sheep* amongst the hardest sections of music in the entire score.

Walker reminisces about his time being back at St. Mike’s and what he would have felt like getting a work like *Messiah* to perform and having to audition. “I switched from being a treble in about Grade 8,”



Peter Mahon conducting the SMCS choristers in Germany.

he says. “You are still a red jacket at that point. You get your blue jacket when you enter high school. At age 13, that these boys are actively wanting to sing this piece, and on top of that, can, is an incredible idea. It bodes well for the future of the choral scene in Toronto. What an honour it is to sing with a group of musicians and create this art together. The music lends itself to excellence, and to a really good show, to creating something magical. There are some moments in the piece that are life changing, and I don’t use that term lightly. What an amazing moment; how magical and momentous it is.”

St. Michael’s Choir School presents *Handel’s Messiah Parts II and III* with conductor Peter Mahon; Meredith Hall (soprano); Richard Whittall and Simon Honeyman (alto); Michael Colvin and Andrew Walker (tenor); Joel Allison and Keith Lam (bass); and a Baroque orchestra, on Saturday, April 14 at 7:30pm at St. Michael’s Cathedral, Toronto. 🎵

Follow Brian on Twitter @bfchang. Send info/media/tips to [choralscene@thewholenote.com](mailto:choralscene@thewholenote.com).



THE CHOIR OF  
ST. JAMES CATHEDRAL  
THE 2018 SEASON



# A Serenade to Music

ORGANIST DAVID BRIGGS IN CONCERT  
WITH THE CHOIR OF ST. JAMES CATHEDRAL



**FRIDAY APRIL 27 2018 | 8:00PM**

INCLUDING A **PRE-CONCERT TALK** AT 7:00PM WITH DAVID BRIGGS

Tickets: \$30 in advance; \$35 at the door (Students: \$20/25)  
Available in advance online or at the door

Join organist David Briggs and The Choir of St. James Cathedral for an evening of beautiful music by English composer **RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS**, including SERENADE TO MUSIC, THE WASPS OVERTURE, FANTASIA ON A THEME BY THOMAS TALLIS, MASS IN G MINOR, and sacred motets.

65 CHURCH STREET, TORONTO

416.364.7865

STJAMESCATHEDRAL.CA