

E-TODAY



Some assembly re-choired

Artistic director Eric Hannan has worked to build the Vancouver Cantata Singers into one of the best choirs in the country

IN CONCERT B2

ENTERTAINMENT

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'A holiday state of mind'

CANTATA SINGERS: Offering the much-loved carols and the classics

In concert

The Vancouver Cantata Singers: A Christmas Reprise

Where/when: Holy Rosary Cathedral, Richards at Dunsmuir streets, Saturday at 2 p.m., \$12 at 604 730-8856. And St. James Anglican Church, 303 E. Cordova St., Sunday at 2 p.m., free

BY STUART DERDEYN
MUSIC REPORTER

As artistic director of the Vancouver Cantata Singers, Eric Hannan has built the choir into one of the country's finest vocal ensembles. The group's mastery extends to all musical eras, but its passion for Baroque period works was instrumental in netting it first prize in this year's CBC National Choir Competition. That win led to the invitation to represent Canada in the Adult Choruses section of the 2009 Let the Peoples Sing Euroradio Choral Competition.

This is singing in the big leagues.

"When there is a change of director, there is always a change in vision," says Hannan. "I took over six years ago and we've been rebuilding since, seeking out the best singers and programming the kind of music that works best for what we do."

"We sang well at the competition and now that we've won, I can really put the heat on the choir to never be mediocre ever again."

Developing a winning choir is no easy task. First, you need singers of all ranges who are at the top of their craft. Secondly, you need to be able to keep them. This is not easy in Vancouver.

"We have more choirs per capita than anywhere else in North America and more of these are high-end than ever before. I have no idea why this is, but it means that we all have to compete for talent and there is a dearth of top-notch singers available. Of course, it means the ones who are out there are always singing, which is the best way to keep your voice strong and healthy."

Exactly the way you want the choir to sound when it presents its seventh



The Vancouver Cantata Singers won a top CBC prize this year.

annual Christmas Reprise concert. In a program that ranges from the 14th to the 20th centuries and touching on everything from classics such as Franz Biebl's "Ave Maria" to chestnuts such as "Carol of the Bells," the show always sells out. After turning so many away last year, the choir is adding a second free show in the Downtown Eastside.

"People want to hear beautiful music, but at least a third needs to be those familiar carols that everyone knows to keep them engaged."

"This is not a show to make the audience work. It's a time to be transported to a holiday state of mind for a break from shopping."

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