



ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025



Ottawa Boys Choir

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MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

On behalf of the board of directors, we are delighted to present this Annual Report for our inaugural season. This has been a year of firsts.

From our very first rehearsal to our debut performances, we have been inspired by the passion and commitment of our singers, the artistic leadership of our Music Director and the overwhelming support from our audiences and choir community. Establishing a new choir is no small task, and it has been heartening to see how many people have shared their time, energy and belief in our mission.

This first year has laid the foundation for what we know will be a vibrant future. We have seen the power of music to connect people, to inspire joy, and to create a sense of belonging. As a board, we are committed to ensuring that this choir not only continues to flourish artistically but also remains a welcoming and enjoyable part of each boy's musical journey.

Looking ahead, we are filled with excitement for the seasons to come. With each performance, each rehearsal and each new supporter we are building something amazing together.

To all those who have participated in our journey so far, whether it was in a small or significant way: thank you for helping us begin this journey. This inaugural season was just the first chapter and we cannot wait to see where the music will take us next.

MESSAGE FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

We had a great first season with the Ottawa Boys Choir!

We first performed as the choir, with Cumberland Community Singers, at the official City of Ottawa Remembrance Day Ceremonies at the Cenotaph in Orleans, broadcast on Rogers TV. This is a big deal and we should keep that in mind. Then we were part of a concert with Harmonia Choir and the Ottawa Wind Ensemble in December. We had workshops and a performance at MosaiK in March with the very accomplished composer and conductor Kathleen Allan.

We made our NAC debut with a touring group singing “We Don't Need No Education”, had a great workshop with former Vienna Boys Choir director Laurence Ewashko from uOttawa, and we ended our concert season with a joint concert with the Canadian Chinese Children's Choir. A great success.



This year we again are singing at the City of Ottawa Remembrance Day ceremonies, and have been hired to sing with the Ottawa Carleton Male Choir for their Christmas concert. We were invited to sing at the Alta Vista Carol Sing with 3 other choirs and the Divertimento Orchestra as a fundraiser for the Heron Emergency Food Centre, and by Jamie Loback for the St Joe's Supper Table fundraiser in the Spring. We will take part in MosaiK on Feb 21st with visiting director Catherine Robbins from University of Manitoba. Plans are still coming together for the rest of the season, but we have been approached by the Capital City Chorus for us to come and sing with them.

Thanks especially to Sarah for all she does to keep everything together (including me!) and to the board who came together to form this group in 2024, and making it the success that it had been! Thanks, too, to all the parents for doing all the extra things involved in getting the group going, keeping it going, and even just getting all our singers to rehearsals and performances!

Kurt Ala-Kantti

MISSION & VISION

Our mission is to foster an inclusive choir for boys in Ottawa. We aim to support boys' vocal development from treble through their change of voice, while instilling a lifelong love for music, joy in singing, and a respect for harmony in diversity.

Our choir will also help boys develop key life skills like teamwork, self-confidence, and discipline and provide opportunities for them to learn through mentoring relationships with singers of varying ages.

The choir will provide a nurturing environment that includes professional choral direction, training and regular rehearsals. But it also understands the importance of physical activity, friendship, and mentorship in enhancing boys' musical education.

The choir is committed to serving its local community by offering free concerts at public events, such as Remembrance Day, and performing at venues like seniors' homes, in addition to its regular concerts.

YEAR IN REVIEW

A Year of Firsts

The story of the Ottawa Boys Choir began when a group of parents decided to establish a new boys choir in Ottawa; the parents came together and built a year of firsts, which are reported out in this inaugural Annual Report 2024-25. The parents invited Kurt Ala-Kantti, a very talented and experienced choir conductor, to direct the choir and were delighted when he accepted.

The parents nominated a Board of Directors, incorporated a non-profit on August 8, 2024, approved some bylaws, and were up and running. The Ottawa Boys Choir entered into contracts with conductor Kurt and the gifted Tom Sear, both of whom represent the bedrock foundation of the choir.

The choir's key objectives are i) to advance education by providing instruction and training in choral music to boys aged 9-18, and ii) to advance the public's appreciation of the arts by providing high-quality public performances of choral works through concerts, festivals, and community events.

The Ottawa Boys Choir developed a strong repertoire, enumerated in the below section entitled Repertoire, and delivered to Ottawa residents a number of wonderful choral performances, described below in Performances.

At the same time as the musical accomplishments, there are so many other operational tasks required to make a choir run. In 2024, the Ottawa Boys Choir launched its website, created social media accounts on Instagram, Threads and Facebook, created a logo and printed some promotional materials. Certain policies were developed, for example, a code of conduct for chorists and a policy on photographing, audio and video recording the choir. Music had to be procured, and binders put together for the chorists, musician and conductor. On the financial side, a non-profit bank account was opened, registration system launched, as well as an account opened with Zeffy, a platform to manage ticket sales and take online payments. In early 2025, the Board of Directors approved an application with the Canada Revenue Agency for charitable status. Finally, parents were delighted to see the first media article about the choir in the Glebe Report, May 2025 Edition. After a successful first year, the Board of Directors is planning for its second year of operation, described below in Goals for the Coming Year.

Performances

We had 16 choristers join us for at least part of the season. We participated in five concerts and one workshop. We sang with eight other choral groups during the year and one woodwind ensemble. One of our choristers also accompanied us with his violin!

November 11 Remembrance Day Concert

For our inaugural performance, the boys sang with the Cumberland Community Singers at the Orleans Remembrance Day ceremony in front of the mayor. The ceremony was televised live by Rogers TV. We got soaked towards the end but despite the cold and the rain the boys did a great job!



December 8 Christmas Concert



Our winter concert, titled “Winter Winds ... and Voices” features Harmonia Choir of Ottawa and the Ottawa Wind Ensemble in addition to the Ottawa Boys Choir. It was our first major concert and we prepared seven pieces, including one for treble voices, and one for changed voices sung with the Harmonia Men.

March 1 Mosaik

The Mosaik choral festival guest director this year was Kathleen Allan. Kathleen Allan is the Artistic Director and Conductor of the Amadeus Choir of Greater Toronto. Originally from St. John's NL, Ms Allan is in high demand as a conductor, composer and clinician and is equally comfortable working in early, contemporary and symphonic repertoire. In addition to the Ottawa Boys Choir, six other choirs took part in the



festival: The Aella Choir, Chorale De La Salle, Cumberland Community Singers, Harmonia Choir of Ottawa, The Ottawa Carleton Choristers and the Ottawa Catholic School Board Children's Choir. In addition to preparing two pieces for their individual ensemble to perform, we performed Mosaik, the Turlutte acadienne montréalaise and Ode'min Giizis.

May 1 Workshop with Maestro Ewashko



We were very fortunate to participate in a workshop with Maestro Laurence Ewashko. Laurence Ewashko is the former conductor of the Vienna Boys' Choir and the Cantata Singers of Ottawa. As a choral clinician, vocal coach, and adjudicator, he makes a significant contribution to the quality and appreciation of vocal music in Canada and abroad. The boys enjoyed doing vocal exercises and songs with the Maestro.

Some of the tips he passed along:

- An excited breath brings an excited sound
- Stiff knees brings stiff sound
- Practice saying "a cup of tea" in front of the mirror to improve your diction

May 23 Pink Floyd concert (treble voices only)

The Ottawa Boys Choir was invited to participate in the Classic Rock Pink Floyd production at the National Arts Centre. "Classic Albums Live takes the greatest albums and recreates them live on stage - note for note, cut for cut, using the best musicians." Four treble voices from our choir along with another nine voices from another choir formed the children's choir singing in The Wall. We played board games, enjoyed snacks and NAC catering and practiced our on-stage attitude backstage. Then it was time to sing in front of the audience at Southam Hall. It was a fabulous experience, and we hope we will get an opportunity to return another year!



June 8 Spring Concert



The Ottawa Boys Choir and the Chinese Canadian Children's Choir of Canada (C5) joined forces for a spring concert entitled "Vive la compagnie!" In addition to singing the titular song as a massed choir, the boys sang four other pieces. Benjamin Baker accompanied his fellow choristers on his violin during a rousing rendition of the Wellerman.

Social Events

Fostering community is an important part of choir. We've played chess, musical themed card games and the always popular 'light saber' game where the boys run around with pool noodles. In addition to games before or after choir, we also had two social gatherings.

Dec 19 Boys Christmas Party

We had a Christmas party with snacks, pizza and cookie decorating! The boys were amused to have their own choral pieces as a soundtrack for the party.



June 12 End of year picnic in the park

The choir families gathered in Alta Vista Park. The boys enjoyed a potluck and had some time to play ball and run around the park together.



Repertoire

Our inaugural season saw us tackle nineteen different pieces in five different languages (English, French, Anishinaabe, German and Burmese).

O Come All Ye Faithful - John Francis Wade

A classic carol with a joyful, uplifting melody that captures the festive spirit of the season and the warmth of coming together.

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing - Felix Mendelssohn

A bright and jubilant song filled with celebratory energy, known for its grand melody and timeless holiday cheer.

Les anges dans nos campagnes - Wilfrid Moreau

A traditional French carol brimming with light and joy, evoking the beauty and wonder of the winter season.

Have a Holly Jolly Christmas - Johnny Marks, arr. Greg Gilpin

A cheerful, swing-inspired arrangement of the holiday classic, filled with upbeat rhythms and festive harmonies.

We Three Kings - arr. Russell Robnison

A rich, expressive setting of the beloved carol, highlighting its mysterious eastern character and the journey of the Magi.

Silent Night - Josef Mohr & Franz Gruber, arr Michel Rodeau

A serene and luminous arrangement of the classic carol, preserving its tender melody and peaceful message of holy night stillness.

Deck the Hall Joy to the World - George Frideric Handel

A spirited medley combining two beloved tunes, celebrating the joy, brightness, and togetherness of the holiday season.

Jingle All the Ways! - arr. Adam & Matt Podd

A modern take on the “theme and variations” form, this arrangement is equal parts entertaining and educational. It treats this easy-to-sing holiday favorite with a smorgasbord of fun musical styles including Jazz, Latin, Classical, Blues, and Pop, to name a few.

Mosaik - Stephen Hatfield

Employing both French and English texts, Mosaik is an acapella piece commissioned for the choral festival with a message that every "tile" contributes equally when building a mosaic; in the same way each voice contributes to building a choir and a community.

Mama Wawa - Nyi Nyi Myin

A traditional nursery rhyme from Myanmar, this is the first text a child often learns as an introduction to the Burmese language. An upbeat acapella tune that begs one's sister to dance alongside them.

Turlutte acadienne montréalaise - Marie-Claire Saindon

An original melody hailing from the traditional Acadian and Quebecois practice of *turlutte* (mouth reel or mouth music), this sparkling a cappella work imitates an instrumental reel or jig with voices only.

Ode'min Giizis (Strawberry Moon) - Tara Williamson arr. Maxime Bégin

Also known as Strawberry Moon, Ode'min Giizis is an Anishinaabe song. The song was part of the 2021 Canadian Music Class Challenge by CBC Music to encourage Canadians to learn Indigenous languages through music.

O Canada - Calixa Lavallée arr. Godfrey Ridout

Godfrey Ridout's arrangement of *O Canada* transforms Calixa Lavallée's original anthem into a richly orchestrated, ceremonial work. Scored for full orchestra or concert band (often with optional choir), Ridout's version features warm, dignified harmonies and broad, sonorous textures that emphasize the anthem's stately character. His treatment enhances the melodic clarity and patriotic grandeur of the piece, making it ideal for formal events, state occasions, and concert performances across Canada.

Another Brick in the Wall - Roger Waters

In the late 1970s, a time marked by social upheaval and political turbulence, Pink Floyd released a song that would become an anthem of rebellion and critique of the established order. 'Another Brick in the Wall,' part of their ambitious rock opera 'The Wall,' not only captivated audiences with its haunting melody and compelling lyrics but also reflected the broader societal discontent of the era. This song, with its scathing critique of the educational system and its powerful message of resistance, tapped into the collective consciousness of a generation.

Vive la compagnie – Traditional

No one knows exactly where this French drinking song was first sung. There are copies in print from the 1800s in Germany, England and the United States. However, a very old version of "Vive La Companie" (or "Vive L'Amour" as it was called) was found in the Jersey Islands written in a mixture of French and English they call Franglais. The Jersey Islands are in between France and England. Many people from the Jersey Islands came as pioneers to Quebec. We do know that this song has been sung in Quebec for a very long time.

The Wellerman - arr. Carol Troutman Wiggins

"The Wellerman", is a folk song first published in New Zealand in the 1970s. The "wellermen" were supply ships owned by the Weller brothers, three merchant traders in the 1800s who were amongst the earliest European settlers of the Otago region of New Zealand. The lyrics to "The Wellerman", tell the story of a whaling ship, the "Billy o' Tea," and its crew's longing for supplies from a Weller Brothers' supply ship. The song expresses their hope that the "Wellerman" will soon arrive with sugar, tea, and rum, after a long period of work.

The Musicians - Tom Glazer and Charles Grean arr. Jay Althouse

'I am a fine musician, I practice every day.' Each voice part (4!) is an instrument: piccolo, trumpet, trombone and tuba.

With Songs of Rejoicing - Johann Sebastian Bach, arr. Hal Hopson

Hal Hopson's setting from the Cantata Denn Du Wirst by J S Bach. Shortly after we performed this piece we learned of his passing at age 92. Hal Hopson was one of the most prolific modern composers, with more than 1 800 published works over 30 different publishers.

Vox Vibe - Greg Gilpin Vox - Greg Gilpin

The vibrant vocables of this extraordinary original have no literal meaning but simply bubble with joy. A rhythmic vocal stack opening introduces three independent voice parts before unfolding into a complete rondo that grows to an action-packed ending.

GOALS FOR THE COMING YEAR

Building on the success of our inaugural season, the coming year will be one of growth, refinement, and consolidation for our choir. We will continue to pursue our core objectives of providing instruction and training to boys in choral music, as well as advancing the public's appreciation of the arts by providing high-quality public performances of choral works. In pursuing these objectives, we will aim to deepen our musical maturity, both in the quality of our performances and in the



cohesiveness of our sound as an ensemble. We will continue to challenge ourselves with a diverse and ambitious repertoire, strengthening our musicianship, and fostering an environment of collaboration and artistic excellence. Alongside our artistic goals, we will continue to work towards obtaining charitable status and develop a fundraising strategy. This is an important milestone that will help us broaden our community impact, open new avenues for funding, and reinforce our commitment to accessibility and inclusion in choral music.

A key focus for the year ahead will be the expansion and sustainability of our membership. We are eager to welcome new singers who share our enthusiasm for music-making, while also developing thoughtful strategies to engage and retain our older members, whose experience and dedication are invaluable to the choir's culture. This may include offering flexible participation options, creating more social opportunities, and ensuring that all members feel supported and valued. By nurturing both new and long-standing members, we hope to strengthen our community and ensure a vibrant, balanced choir for years to come.

In parallel, we will refine our social media and communications strategy to better showcase our activities, performances, and community impact. By increasing our visibility both online and in person, we aim to raise awareness of the choir's work, attract new members and audiences, and reinforce our important role as a boys' choir that nurtures musical excellence, confidence, and camaraderie among young men.

RECOGNITIONS

Board Members

Carmen Chase for organizing regular emails, her creativity and design talents and managing the initial bookkeeping tasks

Elizabeth De Cairos for her perseverance battling the unexpectedly epic banking bureaucracy

Mary Jaekl for her hard work developing and launching our beautiful website, and keeping it updated

Mora Johnson for the many hours of legal work necessary to launch a new charity

Jeanie E Warnock for developing the code of conduct and her thoughtful support

Sarah Gauld, the glue that holds us together—organizing music, managing rehearsal logistics, keeping our singers on track, and coordinating rides—her dedication keeps the choir running smoothly.

Choir Helpers

Matthew Chase for his unflagging support with the choir despite a personally challenging year

Musicians

Kurt Ala-Kantti without whose vision and leadership this would not have been possible

Tom Sears for his exceptional accompaniment on piano and drum

Denise Hawkins for gracefully filling in as accompanist when needed

Benjamin Baker for accompanying the choir on his violin

Other

St Thomas the Apostle Anglican Church for allowing us to use their space

Phibian Technologies Inc for providing website design, hosting and email services

We warmly thank anyone we may have unintentionally missed, as your time, effort, and support have truly made a difference to our choir.