



## About Us

### The Summer Choir that Never Stopped

Under the artistic direction of Angela Hawaleshka, six music students joined together twenty years ago to form a summer choir known as The Alexander Singers. The Singers were given the name as a tribute to Angela's father Alexander, who was a great lover of Gilbert & Sullivan.

Their music delighted audiences immediately, and it wasn't long before the choristers were ready for even greater challenges. Six months later they were able to present a half-hour long Gilbert and Sullivan operetta "Trial by Jury". The venue was a church basement, and the ceiling was so low that only actors of medium height could be used on stage for the production.

But the group continued to perform, and was inspired to produce even bigger and better musicals - Gilbert & Sullivan's "H.M.S. Pinafore"(twice), "The Mikado" (twice), "The Gondoliers"(twice), "The Yeomen of the Guard", "The Pirates of Penzance" (3 times), and "Ruddigore".

They turned to operetta, performing "The Merry Widow" and "Die Fledermaus", and to Broadway musicals, "Oklahoma", "Fiddler on the Roof"(twice), and "Sweeney Todd". These full-scale productions called for costumes, make-up, props, lighting, elaborate sets, and a small orchestra. The Alexander Singers and Players' cast and crew grew to over 80 members, including backstage technicians and front of house helpers.

### Educational Mandate

The Alexander Singers and Players' annual winter choir develops the singing talents of aspiring artists in preparation for the fully staged musical productions that the group presents each spring. Ranging in age from eight to seventy years, some members have never had the opportunity to sing, dance or act in front of a live audience before. Others bring with them many years of experience as actors and singers.

The mandate of the group is educational. Over a period of a few years, members might move from chorus to small or major roles, then out into the world with their newly honed talents to work with other companies in both amateur and professional productions. The Alexander Singers & Players also offer an opportunity for training in technical areas for aspiring stage managers and back-stage crew.

### A Family Affair

The Alexander Singers & Players include people from all walks of life, from professional to unemployed, who bring to the group a wide range of talents and abilities. Members include brothers and sisters, and in some cases, whole family units. For some, who suffer from diseases such as Aids and Multiple Sclerosis, the choir offers a special opportunity for self-expression and camaraderie.

Members are treated as family. No one is turned away because a membership fee cannot be paid. They help arrange transportation to rehearsals and sometimes even give out bus fare to those in need.

## **Community Support**

The Alexander Singers & Players have for many years supported Variety Village, designating a special theatre performance for the children of Variety and donating a portion of ticket sales to them. Last year they also included Casey House in their outreach.

Operating self-sufficiently as a not-for-profit organization, The Singers have always been involved in community support, performing for seniors, shut-ins, and charities such as:

- The Arthritis Society
- Perla Arditti's MS Access Support Association
- The Cabbagetown Fair, which raises money for musical education for inner city children
- ORT Canada
- Patrons of Wisdom
- The Marie Curie Scorbaska Association

## **The Ensemble**

Throughout the year, an Ensemble of fully experienced singers presents staged and costumed excerpts from Gilbert & Sullivan operettas and Broadway musicals. The Ensemble has performed at Toronto Caravan, for senior citizens, hospital patients, local community/corporate events and dinners.

In addition, The Alexander Singers & Players have provided chorus for the Huntsville Festival of the Arts and for the Toronto Operetta Theatre's productions of Die Fledermaus and The Merry Widow.