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## High Park Choirs of Toronto

With its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary approaching in 2011, the High Park Choirs has taken steps to focus its strategy over the next three years to better reflect its unique sound and impressive growth under Artistic Director Zimfira Poloz.

The choirs have become known in the choral world for being innovative and fearless in their choice of repertoire. From Bach to Stephen Hatfield, the choirs have demonstrated their versatility and have delighted audiences locally, nationally and internationally. With these strengths at the heart of the new strategy, the High Park Choirs is aiming to carve a niche for itself in Toronto's and Canada's choral scene. What a "Cirque" is to circuses, so the High Park Choirs will become to children's choirs: innovative, high calibre and always a delight to hear and watch. How? Each year we intend to develop a special performance experience, something unique to High Park Choirs. Zimfira calls them "Choral Productions of Tomorrow." They will feature the senior choirs, as well as instrumentalists, dancers, lighting, interesting sounds, and more.

### Who are we?

The High Park Choirs develop the choral and musical ability of children aged 5 to 18 while promoting inclusiveness, fun, teamwork, cultural diversity and choral excellence. The result is a beautiful and unique sound like no other that has captured the attention of the choral world.

The Choirs offer children the opportunity to advance their musical skills with the guidance of highly acclaimed artistic staff. It teaches children the fundamentals of music, expressive singing in a group, professionalism and appreciation for Canada's rich multicultural musical heritage.

### What's changed?

Starting in September 2010, the choirs will realign their choir divisions based on skill rather than age. At each step of a chorister's musical journey with the choir, music theory will be taught at the appropriate levels using theory books tailored especially for our choir divisions. Theory is an important component for developing each chorister's skill and each child will be responsible for completing their theory homework.

The choir will be grouped into the following divisions:

- **Piccolo** – Two groups of young school age children, placed into two Piccolo groups according to skill level. Instruction is provided once a week every Thursday for 45 minutes for Piccolo I and for 55 minutes for Piccolo II. Through singing and musical games the children are introduced to musical concepts including beat, rhythm and pitch matching. The children have the opportunity to perform as a group in at least one concert during the year. **Conducted by Marina Filippova.**
- **Intermezzo** – As the name implies, for children who successfully audition from Piccolo and can handle the transition musically. This division is about growing in confidence when performing. Instruction is provided once a week for 90 minutes every Thursday. Choristers are expected to take part in an overnight choir retreat each Fall. **Conducted by Margaret Stanfield.**
- **Brio** - This choir meets for 2 hours and 15 minutes every Tuesday. The emphasis is on excellent vocal and choral technique. The children sing challenging repertoire, in a variety of styles and languages and involving more complex part singing. Theory and sight singing continue in rehearsals, along with the expectation that some theory homework will be required. As well as concert performances with the other choir divisions, Brio has the opportunity to perform at community events, workshops, tours and exchanges with choirs in the greater Toronto region and beyond. Choristers are expected to take part in an overnight choir retreat each Fall. **Conducted by Zimfira Poloz.**
- **Vento – COMING SOON** - Energetic and refreshing, this all boy choir is drawn from the other divisions and demonstrates mentoring in action. Instruction is provided once a month on a Saturday for 2 hours and includes a fun break. Additional rehearsal time may be required close to concert dates and can be accommodated before or after regular rehearsals of Piccolo, Intermezzo or Brio. **Conductor TBA.**
- **Allegria** – Members are selected by invitation only from Brio when positions become available. The choristers in this division meet for 2 hours every Tuesday and Friday. They demonstrate advanced vocal and choral technique and continue to develop independence through sight singing and aural skills. Repertoire is diverse and complex, often requiring singing in up to six parts. These choristers are offered exciting opportunities to perform, including tours and recording. Choristers are expected to take part in the overnight choir retreat in the Fall. **Conducted by Zimfira Poloz.**

In addition to the refinements made to the choir divisions, the choirs are embarking on new and exciting partnerships with both musical and non-musical organizations to raise our profile across the GTA and the country, and to ensure excellent opportunities for our choristers.

## **Why are we doing this now? / Benefits**

- After 20 years in existence it was time to revisit the vision, focus and goals of the choirs.
- Children continue to receive excellent choral education. Their musical growth is a journey that lasts from approximately 5 years of age to 18 years and is reflected by the clear and achievable goals of each new choir division. By the end of the process, the choristers are seasoned performers who have confidence in themselves and in each other.
- A clearly articulated strategy for the coming years allows the choirs to think big and be a part of something more than a community choir. High Park Choirs are attracting children from all over the Greater Toronto Area. We currently draw children from 71 different schools.
- A new strategy with achievable goals is more attractive to arts councils and other funders such as corporations. These funding sources are very important to the long-term sustainability of the choirs.