

Concert to feature singers? own stories



By Constance Scrafield

'We could have invited many singers,' said Nancy Sicsic, organist and Director of Music for Westminster United Church, noting the very considerable musical talent in this region, 'but that would have made it a 'variety show,' which we didn't want. So, I only asked seven singers to come. This way, they will each talk about what they are singing and why they have brought those songs along with them.'

This very special concert is taking place in the recently renovated Westminster United Church at 247 Broadway, on Sunday March 18. It is a beautiful idea to ask a singer why he/she brings specific songs to the stage, to talk about how they communicate through song.

'Basically continuing our concert series, there are so many ideas through this crazy church,' Ms. Sicsic smiled with the excitement of it all.

With her, was Darcey Baker, whom she was coaching for her Grade 8 RCM Violin and Theory exams and who is one of the singers performing on March 18. Those of us who were lucky enough to get tickets to Theatre Orangeville's Young People's production of *Les Miserables* last summer will remember Miss Baker as playing the role of Fantine, the mother of Cosette.

'It was one of the most wonderful theatre experiences I've ever had,' she remarked, observing that many of the cast members were still keeping in close contact. Some friendships last a lifetime.

One of her co-performers in *Les Mis*, Duncan Lang, is coming to sing in this concert. Duncan played the lead role of Jean Valjean in last summer's record breaking production of *Les Mis*, his fourth year with Theatre Orangeville's Young Company.

Both of these rising thespians are attending the Musical Theatre Intensive at Stratford Festival this summer. They both are vocal students of Mark DuBois.

The eminent Mr. DuBois is joining in this entertainment as well. Mark has sung in most of the major Opera Houses throughout Europe and further. A star figure in the opera world here in Canada for many years, he has performed to sold-out houses in concert halls, opera houses and cathedrals across the country. Decades of a sparkling career, of singing in opera, operetta, his own concerts, covering many genres of music, have set Mr. DuBois in the constellation of Canadian opera stars.

While he has always been invited to do Master Classes, in the last few years, although still performing, much of his time has been given over to teaching, passing his extensive knowledge to the future stars of opera and musical theatre.

'It seems I'm good at teaching,' he said in an interview a few years ago, confirming recently, 'and I love doing it.'

Daniel Lichti, with family connections to Westminster, will be singing in this concert too. A bass-baritone, Mr. Lichti has been performing since 1974, when he made his operatic debut at the Stratford Festival.

Since that beginning, Mr. Lichti has been very busy with a brilliant career, covering operas and concerts, in particular as a recitalist and acclaimed Lieder singer. His concerts have been produced in a great many cities across North America and Europe. In combination with his recitals, he also been asked to give Master Classes and be a guest teacher at numerous colleges and universities around the world.

Mr. Lichti has sung on recordings of both Lieder and Baroque music.

He was involved in the second season of the *Bathroom Divas* show as one of a panel of four judges and coaches, which aired on BRAVO-TV.

This is a concert of many moods, many types of music, each presented with passion and the stories.

Heather Katz is bringing her own creation in music and story. "I have been performing since the '70's," as she put it. "And I guess I've been teaching for 20 years."

Currently co owner of Broadway Music with her husband Michael, Ms. Katz nevertheless continues to have a busy performance schedule, singing folk, jazz and soul. She and her band participate in several festivals around Ontario, including, of course, the Blues and Jazz Festival here in Orangeville.

For her, "the most important thing in a program is to tell a story and for the audience to get the heart of it."

She explains her thinking, "There's no space between my audience and my singing. This is about sharing the human experience, not hiding from it but sharing with complete humility."

Noni Thomas-Lindsey comes to music with a gospel background, meaning she sings jazz as well. She has moved to Shelburne from Toronto and is enjoying the vibrant arts community and the attitude of a town hall that helps to encourage the arts.

Ms. Sicsic heard her sing at the latest Dufferin Arts Council (DAC) concert and was thoroughly impressed. She made a point of approaching Noni and saying, "Let's do something [musical]," resulting in her being invited to join this concert.

Cara Cameron is a member of maestro John Wervers' Amaranth Chamber Singers, a choir of performers and teachers in advanced levels of education.

For the most part, Ms. Sicsic will accompany the singers. Her background is playing for singers. As she said, "I can play classical and jazz because my dad brought us up to play both and I love all kinds of music. For this concert, I want to give [each singer] a chance to talk and have a set."

"Part of our mandate is to show the local talent. I want people to know what's right under their noses."

This is a matinee concert on Sunday, March 18 at 2:00 pm. Doors open at 1:30 pm. Tickets are available in the Westminster United Church office, at BookLore and New Wave Pools & Spas.