

# Co-Directors Annual Report to the Board of SingYourJoy

## 2015 - 2016 Season

*SingYourJoy Celebrates 5 years of building community!*

Our thanks is foremost in mind as we prepare our annual report to the Board...

- ... for the opportunity to work with this amazing group of young people,
- ... for the support and encouragement of our board of directors,
- ... for our faithful and ever-growing audience and champions,
- ... for the financial support coming from all corners of the community.

The energy and enthusiasm for SingYourJoy is flourishing, and the 5th Anniversary Celebration Season was a huge opportunity for us to celebrate our past and dream for our future.

Christine and Gordon

### BRIEF HIGHLIGHTS

- **5th Anniversary:** our season was built on the energy celebrating our 5th year as a chorus
- **Guest clinician/conductor:** Willi Zwozdesky workshopped two rehearsals, co-directed our April concert and was a cornerstone for singers, directors, audience and supporters for creating and maintaining enthusiasm around our 5th season.
- **Number of singers:** Overall Registration Intake (60); December 2015 Concert Singers (45); April 2016 Concert Singers (49)
- **Growth of skillsets/sound:** balanced sections, choral excellence in all sections, small ensembles and soloists
- **Expanded repertoire:** tackled our largest and most challenging program to date
- **Joint Concert:** SingYourJoy was invited in the spring of 2015 to be part of a collaborative event with the Linden Singers. The invitation signified a continued growing awareness of SingYourJoy in the local choral scene and an opportunity for our singers to participate with a different age group in a social and choral environment.
- **Recognition:** of SingYourJoy and its founders' work by LeaderShift, an initiative of BC Conference of the United Church of Canada (through the 5 minute overview video found here: <https://youtu.be/kVkpZef2xZ8>)
- **Sponsors:** gained one new \$1000 patron
- **Season Sponsorship:** \$3000 Harbourside Rotary Club of Victoria
- Continued work application for charitable status to the federal government

## OUR YEAR END MESSAGE TO THE SINGERS

It's a wrap!!!

We had a fantastic celebration this, our fifth anniversary year. It was made extraordinary by your presence, your great voices, some fabulous repertoire and a number of special events.

It was a season of making and meeting new friends, trying out new ideas and singing new and challenging repertoire. We all gained from our experience of working with Willi Zwozdesky, his warm way of leading, his exacting musical sensibility, and the fact that he really “got us” - he seemed to understand precisely what we were all about.

As singers, you rose to the occasion. You continued our tradition of creating a safe and healthy environment where everyone feels welcome. You took on the challenges of our largest and most ambitious repertoire ever. And you performed beautifully at all of our concert opportunities this season.

We are planning an awesome experience for all of us in our 2016/2017 season and over the summer we will keep in contact with you - especially about helping get the word out for our Fall Start-up. Some of our members are moving on (we miss you already!) and we need to replace them in our ranks to make sure the SingYourJoy story continues for many years to come. SO, remember that somebody likely invited you to your first rehearsal and we hope that you will return the favour by inviting someone to join you this fall.



## MUSIC and THE CHORAL COMMUNITY



This year more than any previous had a continuity from fall to winter. The anticipation of our 5th anniversary celebration and special guest Willi Zwozdesky was a real drawing card for our singers to commit and stay for the full year.

We encouraged singers to attend and observe the Vancouver Men's Chorus under Willi's direction in performance (November 2015). SYJ was invited to participate in a day-long choral workshop sponsored by Music United and the BC Choral Federation (January 2016) and our singers were encouraged to attend a concert by visiting award winning young adult choir Coastal Sound Youth Choir (May 2016). In May 2016 one of our singers participated in the auditioned BC Youth Choir program held in conjunction with the BCCF's annual Chorfest in Vancouver. These opportunities for learning were all

offered at a reduced rate (or tariff free) for any SYJ participant wishing to take part. About a dozen of our singers took advantage of these opportunities.

In March, we joined forces for a day-long workshop with the Linden Singers. This was attended by over 80% of our singers who were able to learn and grow in an intergenerational environment of committed choral singers. This event was our dress rehearsal for our mid season joint concert with Linden, "Inspire". Our feedback from SingYourJoy participants was that it was a fun and valuable collaboration. Many thanks to Director Brian Wismath and the Linden Board for reaching out to us and encouraging this choral community building.



Our season's repertoire was challenging and varied and an effort was made maximize our results with the well balanced numbers (male/female) voices and the skill level of our singers. We set the bar high and presented a very good performance in our April concert "Everything Possible".

**April 11, 2016 - from Willi Zwozdesky:**

Hello Gordon and Christine:

Living, as we now are, in the aftermath of this wonderful anniversary, I wanted to reiterate my thanks to both of you for inviting me to be part of the festivities. It's not easy to hand over the reins of one's choir to someone else, and I am extremely respectful of what that decision entails. I hope I delivered up to your standard! I was very honoured to have been chosen from among a wide constellation of musical colleagues, and benefited from the experience. I know I will take that experience forward in my career.

Your project is enviable in many, many respects and you've made a resounding mark in the Victoria choral community. Your individual talents and passions combined with the no-barrier, nurturing environment you create are clearly at the centre of your success. This, coupled with a generous gift from the United Church and the innumerable hours each of you has put in, results in a choir that is changing the lives of many of these singers. I know this because I've been working in a community dedicated to social action and change, as well, and I've seen the long-term results and benefits. Bravo and huge plaudits to both of you for your vision and perseverance.

I sincerely wish you further success with this bold venture and hope that each of you is getting back from it enough replenishment to keep you moving forward. It was a pleasure to contribute the BeYouTiful arrangement – I really do need to get on to creating a proper piano score for Christine!

Looking forward to seeing you on Thursday and to the unfolding of the 2017 Young Adult Chorfest stream in Victoria. Thanks once again.

Big hugs and best wishes,  
Willi





## COMMUNITY SERVICE

While we continued our practice to serve a meal at Our Place Society in both the fall and winter seasons, there was an interesting shift to singer-initiated and directed social service initiatives. One group sang at a rally where volunteers packed clothing for the folks in tent city and another group came together to knit toques and scarves for new Canadians. We will be looking for other opportunities to encourage grass roots initiatives from the chorus in the coming year.

## the SingYourJoy CULTURE



Every season through team building exercises and community service, meals together and our rehearsals and performances, an intentional effort is made to instill a sense of pride and self worth by belonging to SingYourJoy. Each singer arrives on this journey in a personal place and joins in something that is already in progress and is still ‘becoming’. Melding the story of the singer into the story of the chorus (and visa versa) is part of the culture of SingYourJoy. Its ideals of welcome, inclusiveness and space of safety are hallmarks of the SingYourJoy brand.

## Kids Choir Camp

Kids Choir Camp is an opportunity for SingYourJoy to expand its 'brand' to a younger audience, encouraging the next generation of singers.

This year was once again financially underwritten by Oak Bay United Church. We had 10 participants (one less than last year) who enjoyed the week's activities, including singing for the Oak Bay Firefighters and Oak Bay City Hall Staff.

We had hoped to grow Kids Choir Camp this year and faced an obstacle in the scheduling of spring break for public and private schools and the additional challenge of an early Easter. Several anticipated returning singers were unable to participate and expressed regret. Families of participating singers were thrilled with the quality of the overall program including theme, craft, skill-building and choral learning.

We are looking forward to renewed efforts in 2017.





## OUR SINGERS

Each year we recognise that some of our singers are experiencing a range of work / relationship / school / health and emotional challenges. As directors of the chorus we observe, or are made aware of individual concerns and respond to them on a unique and individual basis providing a listening ear, a cup of coffee, a ride, a word of encouragement, in a safe and respectful way. We believe this to be an important part of our work together, integral to building a community and living in right relationship with each other. These conversations and interactions are treated with utmost confidentiality.



## SINGYOURJOY FINANCIAL SECURITY

- Ongoing support from a select group of private donors (\$4600 for 2015/2016)
- An additional year of funding from Victoria Presbytery - note that as the United Church of Canada undergoes a restructuring, we have been advised that ongoing financial support from Victoria Presbytery will no longer be available and will cease Dec. 31 2016.
- For the SYJ year 2015-2016, Harbourside Rotary provided a \$3000 grant - this was acknowledged as a 'season sponsorship' in print and online media.
- Our original concert sponsor - Richard Sloan of National Bank Financial - retired in January 2016 and thus our April 2016 concert was presented without a corporate (small business) sponsor.
- The process of redoing the application for Charitable Registration with the Canada Revenue Agency has been an ongoing project for most of the past year. Ensuring that this application is completed correctly is the primary goal for June/July.
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We continue to remind our personal contacts of the opportunity to support SingYourJoy. Some of our community connections, family and friends are now making this part of their annual charitable givings. We hope to grow this "family" channel of giving through the relationship opportunities provided by our board members and other champions.

## THANK YOU

We cannot exist without the help of many people and our heartfelt thanks goes out to:

***: Our Singers : Oak Bay United Church :***  
***: The Victoria Presbytery of the United Church of Canada :***  
***: Richard Sloan : Ted & Helen Hughes :***  
***: Significant Anonymous Supporters :***  
***: Helen & Harvey Waddell : Private Donors :***  
***: Audiences : Cheerleaders :***  
***: SingYourJoy Board of Directors :***



*Under the Direction of Christine Chepyha & Gordon Miller*