



## Hallelujah! Christmas Classic Returns to Ottawa

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The trumpets did sound and if there were any dead, they would certainly be raised this weekend when Ottawa's Thirteen Strings alongside with Seventeen Voyces triumphantly presented this year's Handel's Messiah.

Belfast born and internationally celebrated conductor Kevin Mallon led the chamber orchestra and choir into a dynamic and spirited interpretation of the known Christmas classic that all people love, anticipate and mark to define the holiday season.

It has become the custom and even to some preferable to hear the work in a church, however the first performance took place in a concert hall, perhaps Handel saw his religious oratorios more in operatic and theatrical terms as opposed to a purely religious experience. This venue, the Knox

Presbyterian Church on Elgin lent itself beautifully to this majestic experience. With its unadorned yet magnificent stonework lining the interior thus reverberating with any hint of an echo, ring, or boom of the music.

Soprano Jennifer Tavener was resplendent and captivating as she featured her extremely strong yet beautifully delicate and ornamental lyricism.

Tenor Jach Finkelstein, Bass-Baritone Giles Tomkins, and Mezzo-Soprano Andrea Ludwig were all very strong and together their various personalities in singing, created a dynamic and superbly enjoyable and interesting evening. Finkelstein's "every valley shall be exalted", invoked an enthusiasm of the text that escorted the audience into the mystery.

When Tomkins's quintessential and authoritative bass-baritone voice chanted "Why do the nations so furiously rage together and why do the people imagine a vain thing? IT was the definitive message of the evening. While Ludwig's voice throughout the Messiah was as luscious and buttery as a golden chardonnay during a warm sunset.

Thirteen Strings have thrilled audiences for over 40 years, and last night was no exception. While the music group membership is compact, the music was full and robust, to the point that the horns embellished melodies filled the boundaries of cathedral style church.

Truly not to be missed during this holiday season.