

## Toronto Mendelssohn Choir Expands Reach with Bold Performances and Community Initiatives in 2023/24 Season

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Toronto Mendelssohn Choir (TMChoir) marked a year of achievements and strategic growth at its 2023/24 Annual General Meeting, held online. The meeting, led by Board Chair David Raju, reflected on the organization's triumphs over the past year and outlined a forward-thinking vision for the future.

"The past year has been transformational for TMChoir, reinforcing our commitment to artistic excellence in choral music," said Daniela Nardi, Executive Director. "We are proud of the work we have accomplished and are excited to continue growing our reach, impact, and engagement with audiences and communities across Toronto and beyond."

You can read TMChoir's full 2023/24 Annual Report [here](#).

### HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

The Toronto Mendelssohn Choir (TMChoir) delivered a dynamic season of programming and initiatives designed to expand audience engagement, support emerging artists, and foster community partnerships. The 2023/24 Season marked a milestone for TMChoir with performances at Roy Thomson Hall and Koerner Hall, the continuation of our Composer-in-Residence program, and a broad repertoire reflecting diverse voices.

- **Premieres and Multidisciplinary Innovation:** The season featured the premiere of works by Composer-in-Residence Tracy Wong and a multidisciplinary production of *In Time* in partnership with Citadel + Compagnie.
- **Powerful Choral Masterworks:** TMChoir received critical acclaim for powerful performances of Orff's *Carmina Burana* and Verdi's *Requiem*.
- **Festival of Carols:** This cherished annual event welcomed nearly 2,000 attendees.
- **National and International Recognition:** TMChoir toured with the National Arts Centre Orchestra and Orchestre symphonique de Québec, performing Jacques Hétu's *Symphony No. 5* and contributing to the recording *Two Orchestras, One Symphony*, released in November 2024.

TMChoir also strengthened its commitment to accessibility and outreach, engaging thousands of new participants through digital initiatives, educational programming, and community partnerships.

## **EXPANDING AUDIENCES AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

With a focus on accessibility and inclusion, TMChoir expanded its reach through innovative digital initiatives, free public performances, and educational programs.

- **Community Engagement Initiatives:** Singstation Saturdays welcomed 395 participants, and pop-up concerts brought choral music to new audiences in downtown Toronto and at Yonge & St. Clair.
- **Livestream and Digital Access:** Hundreds more joined us online for our free community concert, ensuring broader access to our music.

## **SUPPORTING THE NEXT GENERATION**

A core pillar of TMChoir's mission is to nurture talent and provide professional development opportunities. This year, TMChoir welcomed emerging artists and conductors into transformative training programs.

- **Choral Conducting Symposium:** Six emerging conductors from Brazil, Belgium, South Korea, and beyond participated in intensive workshops and a public performance under Jean-Sébastien Vallée.
- **Composition Competition:** Justin Lapierre's *Lux Aeterna*, a poignant tribute to the victims of the Québec City Mosque attack, was performed for an audience of 982 in person and streamed to a wider audience.

## **LEADERSHIP**

The Toronto Mendelssohn Choir extends its gratitude to our dedicated Board members for their leadership and service. This year, we recognize the re-election of Mary Chang and David Raju for their final terms, as well as Sean Musselman for his second two-year term. We also welcome three new Directors to the Board: Adam Malcolm, Marg Rappolt, and Jennie Worden. Christie Bates has ended her term of service on the TMChoir Board of Directors. We thank her for her valuable contributions to the Choir's mission and dedication throughout her time with us.

Lastly, thank you to our 162 singers for dedicating your time, talent, and passion to 22 performances this year. Your commitment inspires and elevates our

music-making and enriches life in this city. We are deeply grateful for your unwavering support in bringing music to life.

**About Jean-Sébastien Vallée**

Jean-Sébastien Vallée is a renowned Canadian-American conductor, scholar, and pedagogue known for his expertise in vocal, choral, and orchestral repertoires. With a career spanning over several decades, Vallée has conducted numerous ensembles across North America, Europe, and Asia, and has prepared choruses for some of the world's most prestigious orchestras including the Chicago and Toronto Symphony Orchestras, l'Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, and the National Arts Center Orchestra in Ottawa.

Dr. Vallée is Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the renowned 160-voice Toronto Mendelssohn Choir and the professional Toronto Mendelssohn Singers. In addition, Jean-Sébastien is Full Professor of Music, Director of Choral Studies, and Coordinator of the Conducting & Ensembles Area at the Schulich School of Music of McGill University. He has previously served as the Director of Choral Studies at California State University, Los Angeles, and was on the choral faculty of the University of Redlands. Dr. Vallée holds degrees from Laval University, Sherbrooke University, the University of California, Santa Cruz, and a doctorate in conducting from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Vallée's recordings have been broadcast internationally and include *Remember* (ATMA, 2024), *Distance* (ATMA, 2021), *Requiem* (ATMA, 2018 – requiems by Fauré and Duruflé), and

*Lux* (ATMA, 2017). His recent and upcoming engagements include concerts at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music in Budapest, concerts with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and a performance at Carnegie Hall with Distinguished Concerts International New York.

**About the TMChoir**

The Toronto Mendelssohn Choir (TMChoir) is proud to be one of Canada's oldest, largest, and best-known choral organizations. The choir presented its first concert on January 15, 1895, as part of Massey Hall's inaugural season, and has been a leader in choral music in Canada ever since, commissioning works by Canadian composers, and presenting world and Canadian premières. The choir also regularly performs and records with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. In May 2021, Jean-Sébastien Vallée was named as Artistic Director, only the eighth conductor in TMChoir's 130-year history.

Through its performances, educational programs, and community engagement, TMChoir aspires to introduce its audiences to choral masterworks from the past and present—and make both renowned and lesser-known pieces available, accessible, and inspirational to all.

The TMChoir includes a core of professional singers and more than 130 auditioned and experienced volunteer choristers. The smaller professional ensemble, the Toronto Mendelssohn Singers, was created to deliver more intimate repertoire in a variety of



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non-traditional venues. This 130th anniversary season includes a commercial recording Remember: 130 Years of Canadian Choral Music, by ATMA Classique, and a recording with Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra and Orchestre symphonique de Québec celebrating the late composer Jacques Hétu.

[Link to Photos](#)

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