

Choral and Conducting Resume – Naomi Russell

My choral training began in elementary school when I sang in glee clubs and continued through my collegiate years with my involvement in the school choir. During these years, I also sang in the Junior and Senior choirs at Rivers United Church. Grade 8 marked my first year of experiencing the Manitoba Choral Association's programs. Singing in the Provincial Honour Choir became an annual tradition as I participated in that program for five years (1984-1988). In grade 10, I had the opportunity to experience for the first time the Western Manitoba Youth Choir, our own regional choir. I was a part of that choir for three years (1985-1987). As a result of my involvement with the Westman Youth Choir in the fall of 1987, I was recommended to be a member of the Manitoba Youth Choir (MYC) 1987. That year was a perfect example of how each level leads to the next as a stepping stone, as I was recommended by conductor John Standing as an alternate chorister for the National Youth Choir (NYC) 1988. During the summer of 1987, I was a member of the International Ambassadors of Music European Goodwill Tour Choir. This choir was affiliated with the International Music Camp (Peace Gardens).

Following graduation from high school, I took the Registered Nurse training course at Brandon General Hospital. However, music continued to be a part of my life as I was the conductor of the school choir (1989-1990). Once my training was completed, I was able to renew my interest in the MYC program. I became involved with the organization of this project as chairperson of the MYC committee (1991-2001) and as such, served on the MCA Board of Directors. I was very fortunate to have "the best of both worlds" in that I was also a chorister in MYC for six years (1991-1996) and had the opportunity to sing for conductors Derek Morphy, Henry Schellenberg, Marilyn Redekop, Elizabeth Grant, Henry Engbrecht and Diane Loomer. My involvement in the 1993 edition of MYC led to my recommendation to be a member of the National Youth Choir 1994 under the direction of Diane Loomer. I was again recommended from MYC 1995 to participate in the 1996 NYC, conducted by Robert Cooper. These were truly two of the greatest highlights of my choral career.

My conducting experiences include directing the ladies barbershop chorus Women in Harmony of Brandon, Manitoba since 1992. In November 2001, I had the honor of directing the Mass Sing at the Harmony Incorporated International Convention and Competition. Since the summer of 2001, I have been the guest instructor for the Adult Ladies Barbershop chorus at the International Music Camp at the Peace Gardens on the border of Manitoba and North Dakota. In 2003, I led a weekend workshop in Kenora, Ontario for a prospective ladies chorus.

My barbershop quarteting experiences have included a one-song debut with the "Nu-tones" in 1985, "True North" in 1994, "Great Expectations" since 2001 and the "Humbuddies" since 2015. In 2003, I was thrilled to be involved in the formation of "AmeriCan Dream", a quartet whose

members hailed from Manitoba, Michigan, Illinois and New York (providing quite the challenge for getting together for rehearsals!).

My time spent over the years as a singer in a variety of choral settings has provided me with a multitude of opportunities to observe some of the finest conductors in North America and the world. I participated as a singer in the Manitoba Choral Association Summer Academy in Advanced Choral Conducting (Professional Voices) Choir under the direction of Frieder Bernius in 2000 and 2002. I was the contralto soloist with the Brandon Choral Society for the Saint-Saens Christmas Oratorio in November 2003, Haydn's "Nelson Mass" April 2005 and with the Brandon Community Choir for Beethoven's "Symphony Nr. 9 Finale" in 2008. I was a member of the St. Matthew's Anglican Cathedral Choir from the Fall of 1993 to the Spring of 1997, where I also fulfilled soloist duties as a cantor. I sang with the Brandon University School of Music Chorale for several years under the leadership of Earl Davey, Derek Morphy and Elizabeth Grant. In May 1995, we travelled to Italy for a concert tour. Needless to say, that was another real highlight on my list of choral experiences. Included in my BU Chorale experiences were performances with the Can-Am Choir and the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Maestro Bramwell Tovey. Works performed included "Chichester Psalms". "Belshazzar's Feast" and Alexander Nevsky".

In 1998, I became a founding member of "das Femmes", an eight-member female uncondacted chamber ensemble of which I am still a member. In 2001, I embarked on an amazing journey as a proud founding partner of the Canadian Chamber Choir/Choeur de chambre du Canada. This national ensemble provides professional choral experience for emerging Canadian singers, conductors and composers. The ensemble has toured to all corners of Canada and released 3 albums, one of which was nominated for a Juno award.

I studied voice with Doris Mayoh (1993-1996) and am a member of Choral Canada and the Manitoba Choral Association, serving on the Board of Directors of MCA since 1990. As a registered nurse, I feel very fortunate to be able to use music in healing ways, especially in the area of palliative care.

"I view each opportunity to study with a choral conductor as a fabulous chance to learn new ideas and approaches to the choral art. In my opinion, one can never stop studying that which gives them so much joy and fulfillment. Each choral experience provides an opportunity for growth. The lasting friendships, knowledge and memories gained are invaluable to any musician and to any human being."

Naomi Russell