

Howard Dyck

Howard Dyck has come a long way from the time he played a pump organ in an unheated parlour of a Manitoba farm house with a parka to keep him warm.



Today, the Waterloo resident conducts the Grand Philharmonic Choir, a choir that has grown dramatically since Dyck took over in 1972. His conducting career has taken him to ten countries on three continents.

While he is renowned for his role as conductor and musical director, he is also known across Canada as host of the CBC radio program *Saturday Afternoon at the Opera*.

Dyck was born in Winkler, Manitoba and lived there through his high school years. In the early 1960s he attended the Mennonite Brethren College of Arts in Winnipeg. He continued his studies in Canada and the United States before advanced studies in choral, orchestral and opera conducting in Germany.

Dyck is listed in the *Canadian Who's Who* directory and has been awarded honorary Doctor of Laws degrees from both Wilfrid Laurier and the University of Waterloo. In 1999 Dyck was appointed artistic director of the International Festival of the Arts in Yunnan Province, China. He was appointed to the Order of Canada in 2000 and was given the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal in 2002.

While his passion for music has been felt around the world, he has made an enormous impact on the choral scene in Waterloo Region. Today the philharmonic family of choirs includes an adult choir, the chamber choir, youth choir and children's choir. When Dyck began conducting in 1972 there were only fifty members. That number has swelled to 350 in recent years, with much of the increase coming from young singers.

There was a time when Dyck feared a philharmonic choir could not be sustained in today's fast-paced culture.

However, about six years ago university students and young high-tech workers began joining in larger numbers. "This community is becoming such a hotbed of industry and academics," Dyck said once. "I know this is bringing people to the choir who want to continue with a part of their background that gave them so much pleasure and satisfaction."

The Grand Philharmonic Choir has been broadcast nationally on CBC radio and television, as well as on Vision TV and throughout China. Under Dyck's direction, the choir has performed in many countries including Germany, Spain, China, Finland, and Russia.

Dyck's own international career includes conducting the Arnold Schoenberg Choir of Vienna, the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, the State Symphony Orchestra of St. Petersburg and the Kunming Symphony Orchestra in China.

While Howard Dyck is quick to praise all who have contributed to the success of the choir, a newspaper reviewer once wrote: “. . . Without the inspired leadership from the person holding the baton no musical group flourishes, and Dyck himself has provided that inspiration with both his dynamic manner and his superb musicianship.”

Photo courtesy of the Grand Philharmonic Choir.