

Toronto Mendelssohn Choir Announces 2025/26 Education and Outreach Programming

Toronto, September 17, 2025 – The Toronto Mendelssohn Choir (TMChoir) is proud to announce an exciting lineup of education and outreach programming for the 2025/26 season, featuring the popular *Singsation* series, the successful return of the Conducting Mentoring Program, a groundbreaking new Composition Mentoring Program, and the annual Exchange event. These initiatives reflect TMChoir's ongoing commitment to fostering musical education, supporting emerging talent, and strengthening choral communities across the Greater Toronto Area and beyond.

Singsation Returns with Dynamic Leadership

TMChoir's beloved *Singsation* series continues to bring together music lovers of all backgrounds for interactive musical experiences. This season features three extraordinary sessions:

From Spirituals to Gospel Music with Karen Burke

Saturday, October 18, 2025, 10:30am-1:00pm

Join the extraordinary Karen Burke, Artistic Director of the Juno award-winning Toronto Mass Choir and creator of Canada's first post-secondary Gospel music courses. Together, participants will dive into the rhythmic foundations and interpretive methods that bring authenticity to spirituals and gospel – traditions that will enhance appreciation of any musical forms rooted in rhythm, whether new to gospel music or not.

Bach's Passions: Drama, Devotion, and Music with Jean-Sébastien Vallée

Saturday, March 7, 2026, 10:30am-1:00pm

Experience an inspiring *Singsation* with our own Artistic Director, Jean-Sébastien Vallée, as we explore Bach's extraordinary settings of the Passion story – from St. John and St. Matthew Passions to the intriguing reconstructions of the lost St. Mark Passion. Together, we'll compare these masterpieces, uncovering how Bach wove drama, devotion, and musical brilliance into each work. Experience the emotional depth, rich choral textures, and timeless beauty that have captivated audiences for centuries – and enjoy the thrill of singing this unforgettable music in community. Discover the enduring power of Bach's Passions and leave with a deeper connection to some of the most moving works ever written.

Finding Resilience Through Song with Elaine Choi

Saturday, April 11, 2026, 10:30am-1:00pm

In October of 2024, conductor, educator and friend of TMChoir, Elaine Choi was diagnosed with breast cancer. Her public display of resilience as she embarked on her cancer journey has inspired musicians across the country. Together, participants will journey with Elaine through the music that showed her adversity in the darkness, enabled her to find courage within, and most importantly, build an unwavering community of support and love. Experience how repertoire creates connection, highlights our shared resilience, and weaves lasting impressions of hope. Immerse yourself in the art of togetherness, and celebrate the strength found in hope and human connection – through song!

Tickets for all *Singsation* events are on sale now at www.tmchoir.org.

Conducting Mentoring Program Returns After Successful Inaugural Year

Following the tremendous success of its inaugural year, TMChoir's Conducting Mentoring Program returns for its second iteration in 2026. The program welcomed 15 participants in April and May 2025, offering an innovative and collaborative space for emerging and experienced conductors to refine their skills, deepen their musical understanding, and connect with peers from across the GTA.

"Participants praised the program's personalized approach and the invaluable insights gained throughout the experience," says TMChoir Artistic Director Jean-Sébastien Vallée. "Rather than focusing on podium time alone, the program features immersive discussions, observation opportunities, and interactive sessions that foster artistic growth and leadership development."

This year's mentoring program is centered around Bach's monumental St. Matthew Passion, offering conductors the unique opportunity to witness firsthand the process of putting together one of classical music's greatest masterpieces.

Led exclusively by Artistic Director Jean-Sébastien Vallée, the program includes pre-rehearsal workshops, conducting seminars, and rehearsal techniques workshops, culminating in a performance of this beloved work.

Applications for the second cohort will open in the Fall at www.tmchoir.org/conducting-mentoring-program.

New Composition Mentoring Program Launches

TMChoir is excited to introduce its new Composition Mentoring Program, "**Pathways: Choral Creation**". This initiative is spearheaded by Artistic Director Jean-Sébastien Vallée and led by TMChoir's Composer in Residence, Stephanie Martin.

The program addresses systemic barriers in Canada's composition landscape by providing mentorship opportunities for aspiring and developing composers of all backgrounds and experience levels. As Canada's premiere symphonic choir, TMChoir offers mentorship and performance resources unmatched in the region.

"This new model ensures more aspiring and developing composers gain mentorship, professional networks, and tools to create and share their music more widely," explains Vallée.

Canadian composer and conductor Stephanie Martin serves as Composer in Residence. Martin is associate professor of music at York University's School of the Arts, Media, Performance, and Design, and director of Schola Magdalena. Her commissioned works for TMChoir include *ECHO*, *The Treasures*, and *Mystical Hope*. Applications for the Composition Mentoring Program will open this Fall with the program running January through to April 2026.

Exchange 2026: Save the Date

Mark your calendars for the annual Exchange event on **Saturday, February 7, 2026** at Yorkminster Park Baptist Church. This one-day celebration brings together TMChoir and the broader Toronto choral community for interactive workshops, masterclasses, and lectures on topics centered around choral music, vocal music, and musical community building.

The Exchange welcomes every choral music enthusiast, from armchair music fans to active choral singers of every level, featuring facilitators from across Toronto's vibrant choral and musical communities.

[Link to Photos](#)

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About Jean-Sébastien Vallée

Jean-Sébastien Vallée is a renowned Canadian-American conductor, scholar, and pedagogue acclaimed for his work in choral, vocal, and orchestral music. He is Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, as well as Professor of Music, Director of Choral Studies, and Coordinator of Conducting & Ensembles at the Schulich School of Music of McGill University. Vallée has led ensembles across North America, Europe, and Asia, and has prepared choruses for major orchestras including the Chicago, Montreal, and Toronto Symphony Orchestras. His acclaimed recordings, including *Distance* (2021) and *Remember* (2024), have been broadcast internationally. Upcoming engagements include performances with the National Arts Centre Orchestra, the Orchestre symphonique de Québec, and the Tanglewood Festival Chorus and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He is the recipient of the 2025 Distinguished Alumni Prize from Université Laval and was recently named conductor of the 2026 Alberta Youth Choir.

About the TMChoir

The Juno Award-winning and Grammy-nominated Toronto Mendelssohn Choir (TMChoir) is one of Canada's oldest, largest, and most acclaimed 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 history.

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

TMChoir includes a core of professional singers and more than 130 auditioned and experienced volunteer choristers. The smaller professional ensemble, the Toronto Mendelssohn Singers (TMSingers), was created to deliver more intimate repertoire in a variety of non-traditional venues. TMChoir's recent 130th-anniversary season was marked by two major recording projects: *Remember: 130 Years of Canadian Choral Music*; and *Two Orchestras, One Symphony*, a recording with Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra and Orchestre symphonique de Québec celebrating the late composer Jacques Hétu.