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MUSIC

# Chorus Niagara wrapping up new leader's first season with mystical finale

Saturday's "Mystical Songs" at FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre in St. Catharines marks one year under artistic director Kathleen Allan.

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Chorus Niagara concludes its first season under new artistic director Kathleen Allan with its annual spring show at FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre Saturday.

Dave Johnson/Welland Tribune file photo



By John Law Reporter Niagara Falls Review

Last year at this time, Robert Cooper wrapped up a 35-year-run as artistic director of Chorus Niagara.

This weekend, the mixed choir will mark another milestone: the finale of new artistic director Kathleen Allan's first season at the helm.

Saturday's "Mystical Songs" at FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre will be a suitably spiritual finale to the 2025-26 season, with songs of peace and poetry along with the world premiere of Andrew Balfour's "Wanuskewin."

Allan said the show will "sweep you off your feet and the choral textures will carry you away to a world of comforting, invigorating and totally enveloping music."

The show's theme of "human connection" is fitting, as she has spent a season connecting with a choir that didn't have Cooper calling the shots for the first time since 1990.

"It was a privilege to walk into an organization that is already so established and beloved in the community and think about how to build from here," she said. "I've been working to balance the continuation of excellence and honouring of tradition with putting my own spin on things."

During his long tenure, Cooper more than doubled the Chorus Niagara membership and established programs for children and youths. Allan wants to strengthen that role while also creating new collaborations across the region.

"I would love for people across the entire Niagara Region to feel ownership of our choir," she said. "To feel like they see themselves reflected on stage and that we're doing music that moves and excites them.

"I'd also love to grow our profile on the national stage and beyond through commissioning, recording and touring. Chorus Niagara is a hidden gem and we are excited to share our powerful sound with the world."

This season saw Chorus Niagara Children's Choir get a new principal conductor in Victoria Rondinelli along with Sandra Mason leading the intermediate choir. Enrolment among ages three to five rose to 17 singers.

The children's choir has its annual spring show, "Voices in Bloom: A Spring of Beautiful Noise," May 6 at Calvary Church in St. Catharines.

Following the Chorus Niagara season finale, Allan's focus will be on an important second season under her watch.

"I already feel like I have so much more knowledge of what the community wants and needs," she says, "and how we can play an even bigger role in the cultural life of the Niagara region. I'm excited for what's next."

“Mystical Songs” is at FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre in St. Catharines April 25 starting at 7:30 p.m. For tickets: [www.firstontariopac.ca](http://www.firstontariopac.ca).



*John Law is a Niagara Falls-based reporter with the Niagara Falls Review, primarily covering arts and culture.*

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