

PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NORTHLAND BARBERSHOP CHORUS PRESENTS 53rd ANNUAL SHOW:

“THE LAST VOYAGEUR”

OR

“All Fur Naught” - A Barbershop Melodrama!

The **NORTHLAND BARBERSHOP CHORUS** of the Sault, Ontario Chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society is proud to announce its **53rd Annual Show** will be presented **Sat. April 8th, 2017** starting at 7:30 p.m. at the Kiwanis Community Theatre Centre. Show info can be found here: <http://www.northlandchorus.com/annual-show.html>

BACKGROUND: The Voyageur Era In celebration of Canada’s 150th anniversary in 2017, the Northland Chorus will present a show set in the 1880’s, towards the end of the Voyageur era. The fur trade had been the backbone of an emerging national economy and at the heart of its Canada’s identity as a new nation. Fur had long been the primary currency and its pursuit is credited with opening up the continent’s interior as furs were sought ever further afield. It fell to the Voyageur to transport the furs from outlying ports to market, using only freight canoes and the muscle necessary to travel vast distances in harsh and dangerous conditions. By the late 1800’s, beaver stocks had plummeted due to over-trapping while at the same time, demand was falling as European gentlemen began to prefer silk hats to those made from fur. By the time the Canadian Pacific Railway was completed in 1885, transportation of bulky cargo by canoe had become impractical. The fur trade had come to an end and with it, the Voyageur’s way of life.

THE MELODRAMA: This show is presented using a style of theatre that was popular in the 1800’s when the Sault was new: the melodrama. The word "melodrama" comes from "melos", the Greek word for music, combined with "drama". Melodramas were traditionally performed with live orchestral or vocal music accompanying the action. They feature stock characters such as: the heroine, the hero and his sidekick, and the villain - a scheming, black-caped character who menaces the heroine whilst twirling his long moustache in evil glee. Despite dire circumstances, in the end, virtue always overcomes vice. The Northland Chorus has a tradition of presenting a melodrama every 5 years, having previously done so in 1997, 2002, 2007, and 2012. In 2017, the action is set at the **ST. JOSEPH ISLAND TRADING POST**, circa 1880.

Melodramas were and still are characterized by acting which incorporates large gestures and lavish facial expressions, an acting style once necessary so that people sitting in the backs of theatres could follow the action. Modern melodramas are more about having fun and are never intended as passive entertainment. It remains the essence of bringing community to theatre as the audience is encouraged to show its displeasure by booing and hissing at the heartless villain and its delight by cheering the heroine and her intrepid hero as good triumphs over evil.

SHOW DETAILS: The 40+ man **NORTHLAND CHORUS** will present 9 songs in traditional 4-part barbershop harmony within an original play titled: **“THE LAST VOYAGEUR”**, an old-fashioned melodrama written jointly by chorus director **BOB SHAMI** and noted actor and director, **HARRY HOUSTON** (who also handles stage direction). The standard melodrama characters are all here: the hero - Voyageur Jean-Pierre André François Gaston St. Marie (**RICHARD BUJOLD-VALLEE**), the heroine - Erma Tinger (**MARIE BUJOLD-VALLEE**), faithful friends - Happy Gilbertson (**BOB TISDALL**) and Mosely Gullible (**KEVIN COLLAR**), and of course, the nasty villain - Louden Weezelle (**CHAS CALAM**). Piano accompaniment is by **RONY DAL CIN**.

FEATURED MUSICAL PERFORMERS

- **NORTHLAND BARBERSHOP CHORUS:** Now in their 56th year. Bob Shami – Music Director
<http://www.northlandchorus.com>
- **HEADLINE QUARTET – FOREFRONT:** World Class Barbershop Quartet from Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio, they are the reigning **2016 INTERNATIONAL QUARTET CHAMPIONS**, as judged at last summer’s International Quartet Competition held in Nashville, TN. This is a cappella at its finest!
<http://forefrontquartet.weebly.com/>

All Tickets: General Admission – **\$28.00* CDN Funds**, available at:

- Theatre Centre Box Office* (Station Mall) Hess Jewellers (Churchill Plaza)
- Any member of the Northland Chorus Soo Theatre/STARS (534 Ashmun St. Soo, Mich.)
- Tickets may also be available at the door. Doors open at 6:45 p.m. Curtain is 7:30 p.m.

* A \$4.00/ticket service charge is added by the Mall Box Office to all tickets they sell. Box Office price is \$28.00 + \$4.00 = \$32.00

A major portion of the show proceeds go, as always, to the Speech-Language Pathology Unit at Sault Area Hospital in support of local speech therapy programs. As of this show, more than **\$88,000** will have been donated by the Northland Chorus to this cause since 1995. Several thousand more has been donated to the Speech Dept at War Memorial Hospital in Soo, MI. Their support of local Speech Therapy Services is in keeping with their motto:

“We Sing ... That They Shall Speak.”

The Northland Chorus has set a lifetime goal to contribute \$100,000 to Sault Area Hospital not later than their 2019 show. Revenue derived from the annual show is their only source for donations to the Hospital.

More information about the long history of support of the local Speech Therapy services in both Sault's by the Northland Chorus can be viewed on their website here:

<http://www.northlandchorus.com/about/our-service-project-we-sing-that-they-shall-speak.html>

Northland Chorus - General Information

Barbershop singing had its beginnings in American barbershops of the 1890’s through 1920’s. Barbershops served as “tonorial parlours”: places where men gathered to share news, camaraderie and a song or two.



Above, at left, the logo of the Barbershop Harmony Society, an umbrella international organization which serves 30,000+ members in 800+ chapters across North America. It granted the Sault Chapter its charter in 1961.

At right, the logo of the Sault Ste Marie Chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society. It represents an iconic barbershop singer whose International Bridge/handlebar moustache is symbolic of our membership coming from both sides of the border. The red, white and blue colours represent the colours of the flags of both nations. The four bars in the hat represent the 4-part harmony that is the hallmark of the barbershop style, and recall the stripes of a traditional barber pole. The “oh” vowel being sung is the first sound in each country’s national anthem.

Northland Chorus – Sault Ste Marie’s 2010 Medal of Merit Winner



The City of Sault Ste Marie awarded the Northland Barbershop Chorus the 2010 Medal of Merit, the city’s most prestigious honour, in recognition of community service given over 5 decades.

The award is given to nominees for “outstanding achievement in a chosen area which has resulted in making a valuable contribution to the community”. The award was officially presented to all then-currently active chorus members by Mayor Debbie Amoroso at a civic ceremony and dinner held May 7, 2011.



For Ticket Information:

In Canada, Bob Shami at (705)-253-9574

In US, Bernie Arbic at (906)-635-1057

Northland Barbershop Chorus 53rd Annual Show, April 8th, 2017

“THE LAST VOYAGEUR”

Bob Shami: Music Director and Publicity Chair

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