



# NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Heritage that resonates: a recording seventy years in the making

Once again, the heavens are telling. It is with pleasure that **St. Michael's Choir School** and the Toronto Catholic District School Board proudly share news of the release of *"From Courts on High"*--a stunning collection of sacred choral and organ music performed by the internationally acclaimed choristers of St. Michael's Choir School. This remarkable recording is in many ways a reflection of the very soul of the renowned music school, and aptly celebrates the school's 70th anniversary.

Twenty-five thoughtfully chosen selections are presented on *"From Courts on High"* spanning generations of both the school's history and repertoire. Each featured piece was composed by one of the Choir School's music directors or close associates of the school. This recording reaches back in history to works from the school's founder, Monsignor John Edward Ronan, onwards to those of the distinguished past choral director Monsignor T. Barrett Armstrong, and finally to the artistic vision of the school's current choral director Dr. Jerzy Cichocki.

The Reverend John-Mark Missio, Director of St. Michael's Choir School, states: "The music chosen for this recording illustrates ways in which the Choir School has furthered the Church's treasury of sacred music, giving the Church in Canada a 70-year legacy of composers and arrangers who have created or enhanced our liturgical music through successive generations of the school."

Each of the school's choirs has contributed to the rich layers of the recording, from the sweetness of the Elementary Choir, to the finely balanced harmonies of the Junior Choir, and the depth and resonance of the Senior Choir and alumni soloists. The recording culminates with the fullness of a 250 voice finale.

*"From Courts on High"* features outstanding pieces. Gregorian chant is reverently rendered in selections such as *Ave Maria* and *Laudate Dominum omnes gentes*. Original works such as *Magnificat* and *Jubilate Deo* will enrapture devoted followers of the school, as well as listeners new to choral music. In keeping with the tradition and innovation that together define St. Michael's Choir School, several new choral gems make their debut. Included among these are *De profundis*, *Prayer of St. Francis* and *Justorum animae*.

Perhaps most impressive of the premieres is the recording's namesake. *Thou Royal Knights from Courts on High* was originally composed in the 1940s by the school's founder, Monsignor Ronan. The hymn pays tribute to the school's patron saint, St. Michael the Archangel. The original hymn has been masterfully rearranged by alumnus Kola Owolabi. The premier recording of this arrangement features every student of St. Michael's Choir School and brings "From Courts on High" to a rewarding pinnacle.

The CD is available for purchase through St. Michael's Choir School 416-393-5518 at a cost of \$20. Order forms also available at [www.smcs.on.ca](http://www.smcs.on.ca).

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*The Toronto Catholic District School Board educates more than 90,000 students from diverse cultures and language backgrounds in its 201 Catholic elementary and secondary schools and serves 475,032 Catholic school supporters across the City of Toronto.*

## **Backgrounder:**

### **St. Michael's Choir School Toronto Catholic District School Board**

Founded in 1937 with the purpose of providing sacred music for the religious services of St. Michael's Cathedral in downtown Toronto, **St. Michael's Choir School** has evolved into a centre for musical and academic excellence recognized the world over. It is one of only six choir schools in the world affiliated with the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music in Rome. Each student admitted to the Choir School is trained in vocal, technical, and instrumental music, and performs in one of the school's choirs.

While remaining at the forefront of music education in Toronto, the Choir School has also long maintained the highest of academic standards, recognized most recently by the perfect score awarded its academic program by the Fraser Institute.

St. Michael's Choir School has stayed true to Monsignor Ronan's vision of preparing young men to serve God through music and meaningful civic action. For seventy years, graduates of the Choir School have found their calling in science, education, medicine, law, business, and of course music. Included among the scholars and musicians who call St. Michael's Choir School their alma mater are the famous *Crew Cuts* and *Four Lads* of the 1950s to present-day artists such as Michael Schade, John McDermott, Stewart Goodyear, Kevin Hearn (*The Barenaked Ladies*), Robert Pomakov, Matt Dusk, Michael Colvin, Claude Morrison (*The Nylons*) and Michael Burgess.

On a wider scale, countless graduates stay true to their roots by providing music education and leadership to school, religious and community music programs. In auditoriums, churches and concert halls throughout Toronto, Canada and many corners of the world the guiding voices of St. Michael's Choir School can be heard.