

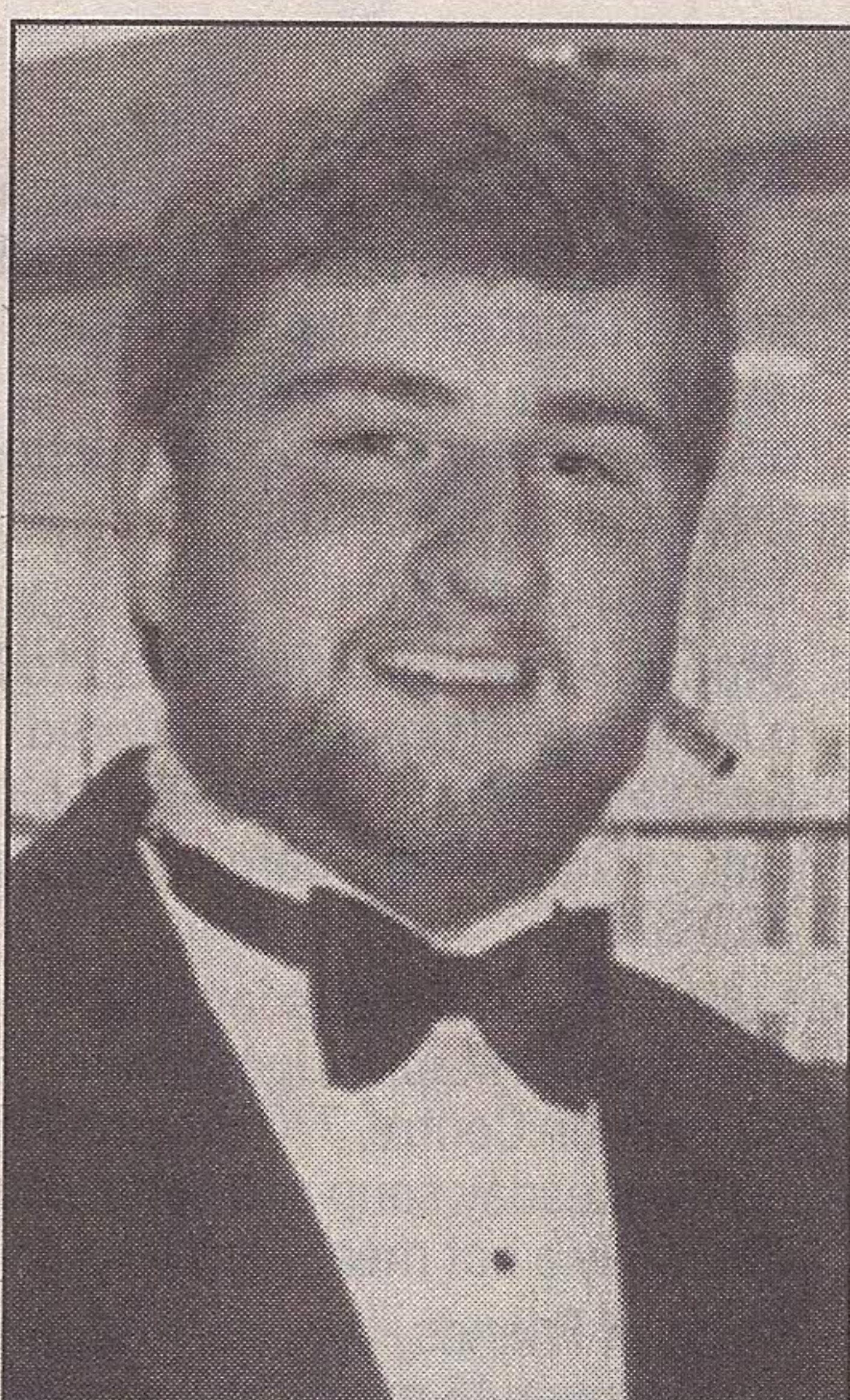
MUSIC: Concert set for Saturday at George Street United Church



Paul Massel



Sandra Tucker



Adam Bishop



Ian Sadler

Singers to present *Elijah*

Concert facts

What: Mendelssohn's *Elijah*
Who: Peterborough Singers with guests
Where: George Street United Church
When: Saturday, May 8 at 7:30 pm.
See
www.peterboroughsingers.com for details.
Tickets: \$28, student \$10

Who: Soloists Paul Massel, Sandra Tucker, Jennifer Enns Modolo, Adam Bishop and organist Ian Sadler,



Natasha Regehr
MUSIC

In 1846, Felix Mendelssohn wrote a choral oratorio about the biblical prophet Elijah, who confronted the dominant forces of paganism in a thrilling story that included droughts, earthquakes, whirlwinds, chariots, fire from heaven, and finally the reassuring "still, small voice" of God.

Elijah's final words "appeared like burning torches" to those around him, and over a century and half later, the fiery prophet's

voice continues to burn in the ears of all who overhear his dramatic pronouncements.

Brenda (Reynolds) Shodin was once such an eavesdropper. As a 10-year-old girl she was unwittingly immersed in the music of Mendelssohn as her mother, Peterborough's Diana (Reynolds) McLeod, led the Trinity United Church choir in Peterborough's first performance of the massive work in 1970.

The work was repeated in 1971 and in 1978 to packed houses, with the starring role sung first by McLeod's first husband, Ted Reynolds, and then by Peterborough's Bill Rumball. Brenda and her sisters were angels in Trinity's intermediate choir, and were therefore in close proximity to *Elijah* both as singers and as listeners.

However, Mrs. McLeod had no idea at the time how much of an impression the work had made upon her daughter.

McLeod was understandably surprised, then, when she was asked if Trinity's copies of *Elijah* would be available to a church choir in a small town nearly 2,000 km away. Twenty-five years after Peterborough's first staging of the oratorio, McLeod's daughter, Brenda, now living in Kenora, had called the work to mind and had set about her

dream of leading the Knox United Church choir in the work that she had heard so often as a child.

It was with much determination and resourcefulness that Brenda was able to undertake such an unprecedented endeavour in the isolated northern community.

Volunteers from throughout the town met on Saturday mornings, having first learned their parts in their home churches; Brenda's sister drove the two hours from Minnesota every week so that she, too, could be a part of the production.

The soloists included a local Anglican priest, a barbershop tenor, and, at one point, Brenda herself.

Diana, in true McLeod style, surprised Brenda with her presence at the dress rehearsal, where "tears flowed freely" as mother and daughter shared once again in the power of Mendelssohn's music.

And now *Elijah* has come full circle, as Brenda will make her way to Peterborough on May 8, surprised once again with tickets to hear the Peterborough Singers perform the work that had so touched her family's life.

Several members of the original Trinity choir will be singing in the performance, including Bill Rumball, Dave Freeman, and Judy McMichael, and many of the other choristers will be in attendance to cheer them on. In true dramatic form, Peterborough's famed Paul Massel will be shedding his clerical robes and donning the mantle of *Elijah*.

Of the oratorio, McLeod says that "all you have to do is see the joy on the faces of the choristers to know the pleasure they are deriving... I certainly know what it meant to one little teenager back in the 1970s" — and there can be no doubt that *Elijah*'s burning torch is being passed on once more on this 40-year anniversary of Peterborough's first historic performance of Mendelssohn's masterpiece.

The Peterborough Singers will be performing Mendelssohn's *Elijah* at George Street United Church on Saturday at 7:30 pm.

See www.peterboroughsingers.com for details.

Natasha Regehr is a member of the Peterborough Singers, an auditioned community choir under the direction of Syd Birrell.