

# PRESS RELEASE



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## *Oratorio Terezin* a spectacular success for Vanier College

The thunderous applause and standing ovations of more than 2,600 spectators said it all: the Montreal Premiere of *Oratorio Terezin* on May 4 at Place des Arts was a spectacular success. Presented as a benefit concert by the Vanier College Foundation, and produced by the Vanier College Music Department, the concert was all it had promised to be – deeply moving, passionately sung, lyrical, and simply enthralling.

“I am proud to say that the Oratorio was a great success raising close to \$50, 000,” indicated Vanier’s Director General, Gilbert Héroux. “And I would like to thank the staff and faculty who came out to support our Music Department and the Vanier College Foundation in this immense endeavor.”

Conducted by Iwan Edwards and performed by the Vanier Choir, the McGill Conservatory Youth Choir, le Choeur des enfants de Montréal, Concerto Della Donna and the Amati Ensemble orchestra, *Oratorio Terezin*, composed by Ruth Fazal, is a monumental choral work commemorating children who were victims of the Terezin concentration camp during the Holocaust. The concert was produced by Music Coordinator, Nadia Turbide, and was the brainchild of Vanier Choir Director Erica Phare who spent endless hours rehearsing and inspiring both the Vanier Choir and the McGill Conservatory Youth Choir. And in spite of her heavy schedule she was always available both alone and with Vanier students, to accept the many requests for interviews leading up to the concert. In all more than twenty-five news stories and interviews appeared in the Montreal media on *Oratorio Terezin*.

But the Montreal Premiere of *Oratorio Terezin* was much more than an artistic and musical success. It also succeeded in teaching the two hundred young people and children who performed in it, all coming from diverse cultures and religions, to feel the pain and anguish of the children of Terezin, to witness the ugliness of intolerance, and to make a commitment to respect the dignity of all people.



Photo: Jean-Guy Corbeil

Vanier student, Natalia Perez summarizes the feelings of many choristers when she says, “By singing the words of the children I feel transported to the concentration camp and am able to imagine the atrocities of which they were victims. We cannot let the world forget. In the end, for me, that’s what art is all about, opening people’s eyes.”

Maxime Péloquin, who is studying Voice at Vanier, echoes a similar appreciation for participating in *Oratorio Terezin*. “Thank you for the unbelievable opportunity you gave me. For the first time in my life I feel fulfilled in this realm that resonates so strongly in me. I had the chance to live an experience that tops my list of dreams come true.”

And another student indicates how his appreciation of life has changed because of *Oratorio Terezin*. “Living with this piece for a few months has had an effect on me. I used to be a person that would have to plan things in advance all the time, never doing anything on a whim. But now, I try to enjoy life as much as I can. I can die tomorrow, so I try and live my life fully as I can.”

Sheila Goldbloom, Chair of the *Oratorio Terezin* Honorary Committee, was immensely proud of what Vanier achieved with this performance. “Vanier College with its strong and dynamic Music Program was well positioned for such an ambitious task. The strength of the undertaking lay in how it enabled Vanier College to carry out its mission. The breadth of the undertaking was seen in the multicultural make-up of the choir, which perfectly reflects the rich and varied nature of the student body.”

The Vanier Foundation is deeply grateful for the generosity of all its patrons and sponsors, particularly, the Jewish Community Foundation of Montreal and the Velan Foundation, whose support made the production of *Oratorio Terezin* possible. And while performing in the concert has already provided Vanier choristers with the experience of a lifetime, the profits generated by *Oratorio Terezin* for the Vanier College Foundation will also benefit many other Vanier students. Through its funds the Foundation provides scholarships for academic excellence and bursaries for students experiencing financial difficulties, assists in the purchase of musical instruments and supports other activities aimed at enriching the learning environment at Vanier.