

Tower Chorale's Folk Fest gives classics a new spin

By **Lilli Kuzma**
Pioneer Press

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What would Simon & Garfunkel's "Sound of Silence" sound like in six-part harmony? What would it be like to sing along to Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land" at a concert led by over 80 accomplished vocalists?

Find out when the Tower Chorale, a community chorus that includes both amateurs and professionals, performs a Folk Fest concert May 15 and 16 at Nazareth Academy in LaGrange Park. The repertoire will explore a wide range of popular American folk music, including Stephen Foster, Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen.

Based in Western Springs, The Tower Chorale is conducted by Patrick Godon, who has been the Music Director since 2011.

"We'll end the show with a John Denver medley," said Godon. "And for most of the songs we'll have a soloist then have the choir come in, or completely set for choir, with some great arrangements. The first half will be a cappella, and the second half will include a band."

Godon, who is also the Director of Music at St. Gregory the Great Church in Chicago, discovered his love of conducting while a student at DePaul University.

"I love bringing people together and really thrive on it," he said. "I love the idea of bringing four different voices together, and also people from all walks of life."

Godon noted that while the members of Tower Chorale are mainly an older crowd, some younger participants have joined in recent years.

"We had a high-schooler for the Christmas concert. But the youngest are mainly in their 30s, the oldest in the 80s. They love singing, and the future looks very good for this group," he said.

For Craig Fisher of Indian Head Park, a desire to spend time with his daughters led to his involvement with the Tower Chorale, including now as chairman of the board.

"My daughters were in their teens and involved in Theatre of The Highlands, and I wanted to be with them," he said, "and I thought 'I could do that.' And the interesting thing is, when you join an acting troupe like that, you simply aren't their parents anymore, but a fellow actor, a very leveling experience."

While appearing in a production of "Sweeney Todd," some friends suggested he join the Tower Chorale.

"I'm a better actor than I am a singer, but I'm a better singer than I am a dancer," Fisher said. "It's been a challenging experience, without being overwhelming. After a concert, I'm all aglow, and it's an amazing feeling to

know this is my Tower Chorale. It's very rewarding. (Patrick Godon) is an excellent mentoring, teaching individual, and makes sure we put on a great show."

Fisher enthused about the upcoming "Folk Fest" concert:

"We've all heard (songs like) 'I've Been Workin' on the Railroad,' I'm sure we all have memories of singing it in grade school. But we've heard these songs so many times, they're like background music to our brains. Singing it in a four or six-part choral arrangement allows the audience to focus on the music and lyrics, and re-introduces us to so many of the songs that we've heard so often, and allows for new insights and joys associated with the music."

The Tower Chorale Folk Fest concert

7:30 p.m. May 15 and May 16

Nazareth Academy, 1209 W. Ogden Ave., LaGrange Park

\$20 adults; \$17 seniors and students; free children 10 and younger

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