

LONDON FREE PRESS Saturday April 8, 2000

## **Raising voices for music**

### **Orchestra London will be a beneficiary in a concert featuring Quartette**

**By James Reaney -- Free Press Arts & Entertainment Reporter**

The four strong women of Quartette are lending their voices to a couple of worthy causes in London on Tuesday.

The celebrated singing group -- comprised of Chatham's Sylvia Tyson, Winnipeg's Gwen Swick, Washington state's Caitlin Hanford and Nova Scotia's Cindy Church -- is appearing at the Grand Theatre as part of the Music Reigns gala fund-raiser for Orchestra London and King's College students.

"People get a lot of variety and they get harmony and they get four very different personalities that work together as one," says Hanford, the born-in-the-U.S.A. quarter of Quartette.

Tuesday's appearance, when Quartette shares the Grand stage with Orchestra London, is another major fund-raising appearance for the group. Others have taken them from Newfoundland to Western Canada.

Quartette has one of the deepest rsums in Canadian music-making -- including its own recordings. Tyson's credentials include the 13 folkie records with her former husband, Ian Tyson, plus 25 years of solo recording, a CBC Radio show and the Order of Canada.

"Sylvia is very clever and very unique and she's a fabulous writer and she's got a fabulous sense of humour," Hanford says.

Church's career has taken her to Alberta, where she recorded with Ian Tyson in the 1980s and was a Juno nominee with recordings on the Stony Plain label in the 1990s. Church, like Hanford, is expected to be in the lineup for the Home County Folk Festival this summer.

"Cindy is a beautiful singer, great interpreter, a really evocative singer. She's quite funny, too," Hanford says.

Swick, now of Elora, is an established songwriter who has recorded with everybody from Mendelson Joe to Don Harron.

"Gwen is amazing. She's an incredible songwriter. She's got really great vocal range . . . It's next to impossible to label it (Swick's songwriting), but it's just very cerebral and interesting and beautiful melodies."

All four members write and, in the democracy of the band, that's meant saying "no" to each other.

"We've all had songs turned down by Quartette, songs that we wanted to do," Hanford says. "No one is alone in that."

Hanford teaches art at a Toronto secondary school when she's not making music. She taught music in the Toronto school system for many years after studying at McGill university in Montreal and moving to Canada in the late 1970s.

"I can write really good songs, I think. Oh God, did I say that? That sounds terrible -- (in self-mocking voice) 'I can write really good songs.' No, what I mean is, I'm not prolific."

Songs and the sharing of them go to Quartette's origins. The group began at a 1993 songwriting workshop in Toronto. The late Colleen Peterson, Tyson, Hanford and Church came away ready to form Quartette.

Peterson became ill in 1996 and suggested Swick, a friend and past musical collaborator, join as a temporary replacement. Peterson died of cancer later that year. Swick became a full-time member in early 1997.

The amount expected to be raised at the Music Reigns gala for the orchestra and King's College students has not been disclosed. But John St. Croix, of London, an orchestra board adviser helping with its money management, says the orchestra's share must exceed the expected amount to help its current drive.

"As far as Music Reigns goes, their efforts are incredible for Orchestra London and we're very happy to be a part of that. We feel great about it," St. Croix says.

"But, the fact of the matter is, they have to have better-than-expected results for us to benefit in our fund-raising campaign."

The debt-plagued orchestra must raise \$330,000 by May 31.

## **FACT LABEL**

**What:** Music Reigns, a Gala with Quartette and Orchestra London in support of the orchestra and King's College students.

**When:** Tuesday; pre-concert reception 6:30 p.m.; concert 8 p.m.

**Where:** Grand Theatre, 471 Richmond St., London

*Tickets and details: \$95; evening includes food, refreshment and auctions; call 679-8778 or 433-3451, ext. 4500*