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Spiritus Wins Two Prizes at Prestigious International Choral Competition

Canadian amateur choir caps first international tour

CALGARY, Alberta (June 8, 2011) –The award-winning Spiritus Chamber Choir has capped a memorable first international tour with a tremendous showing at a prestigious international choral competition in Europe.

SPIRITUS earned second prize in the mixed voices category at the 40th Florilège Vocal de Tours international choral competition, held May 27-29, 2011 in Tours, France. The competition attracts some of the best choirs and vocal ensembles from around the world. SPIRITUS was the only choir from Canada – and one of only three from North America – invited to participate in this year's competition.

"It was a thrill for our choir to perform for an international audience!" says Artistic Director Timothy Shantz. "Earning an invitation to this competition was a victory in itself.

"Winning second prize and the Ministry of Culture prize was an added bonus."

France's Ministry of Culture awarded SPIRITUS a €1600 prize for the best performance of a work by a French composer. SPIRITUS won the award for its performance of Jean-Yves Daniel-Lesur's *Epithalame*, from the suite *Le Cantique des Cantiques*.

"I am very proud of our choice of Daniel-Lesur's music for this tour," says Shantz. "*Epithalame* really became a kind of signature work for our performance tour. Having our performance of this piece recognized by an international jury was a thrill."

"To hear our voices ring back at us as if we were bells was truly magical for me," says Dawn Coulter, a soprano with SPIRITUS. "I'm happy the Ministry of Culture got as much enjoyment out of it as we did."

SPIRITUS was in Tours on its first international tour, which included stops in Paris and Dijon. The tour included a 30-minute performance at the famed Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris.

"As a choral singer, this is a much treasured and most unforgettable experience," says Tom Van Hardeveld, president of SPIRITUS. "It's a great privilege to sing in venues ranging from Notre Dame to a recently restored 13th century church in the Burgundy, and to compete with marvelous choirs from many different parts of the world."

As part of its tour repertoire, SPIRITUS commissioned pieces by Calgary composers: *Cold Spell* by George Fenwick, *Alberta Autumn* and *Intruders* by Georgina Craig, and *Quiet* by Allan Bevan, which SPIRITUS used in competition. Fenwick and Craig are both choristers with SPIRITUS.

"It was a goal of mine to be able to represent Calgary on tour," says Shantz. "To be able to perform music by Calgary-based composers was critical to our role as cultural ambassadors."

The choir maintained a blog of its journey (<http://spiritusontour2011.blogspot.com>) and posted a few performances from the tour on YouTube.

*Since its founding in 1995, SPIRITUS has enriched the Calgary and Canadian choral scene with performances of high-quality choral repertoire and has released a number of recordings. Its most recent CD, *Of Stars and Solitude*, was released in May 2010, the same month that SPIRITUS was named a winner in the 2010 National Competition for Amateur Choirs by the Association of Canadian Choral Communities. Past conductors include David Wilson, Janet Youngdahl and Pierre Simard.*

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