

## Bringing silent film to life

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Silence may be golden, but the Near North Voices choir will make a classic silent film sparkle later this month and at the same time shine a light on women's issues as part of a new winter arts festival.

The 46-member choir, made up of Nipissing University faculty, staff, students and members of the community, will lend their voices to sing the soundtrack for the classic silent film *The Passion of Joan of Arc* during a screening brought to life by a live musical performance Jan. 30.

The performance is part of *Voices--A Midwinter Multi-arts Festival*, that aims to bring together amateur and professional artists from various mediums including music, film and visual arts. Running Jan. 24 to 30, the festival features a variety of events based on how women's voices have been suppressed through the ages. The proceeds of the festival are to go to True Self/Debwewendizwin Employment and Training, Nipissing Transition House and the AIDS Committee of North Bay and Area. A portion of the proceeds will also go to Roads to Care, a charity that facilitates treatment for women with cervical cancer in rural Uganda.

Adam Adler, the artistic director of Near North Voices, has wanted to do a performance in conjunction with a screening of the 1928 film for a number of years and thought the choir would be up to the challenge of singing a live soundtrack.

Though the film was made without music, in 1994 composer Richard Einhorn wrote *Voices of Light*, which was meant to accompany the film.

The music is not that difficult for the choir to learn but the texts are," Adler said, adding the texts are drawn from historical writings of medieval female mystics.

Some of the things that are said in those texts are really quite amazing," Adler said. The type of thinking that was going on 800 years ago, particularly around women and some of those issues, have not been resolved."

Performers have been practicing their Latin and wrapping their tongues around the medieval French poetry they will sing throughout the 82-minute performance.

It's challenging. Particularly with the medieval French, where there are some sounds that you don't hear with modern French," Adler said.

Choir member Cassandra Frank is looking forward to singing through the ups and downs and drama of the film.

Last year, what we sang reminded me of monks," she said. This year we are singing about Joan of Arc's capture and torture and trial. It's all over the place."

Frank was reluctant about the project the first time she saw the film. She said at first she thought the film alone was kind of cheesy but now she sees how both art forms come together to better tell the story.

The visuals add another element to it," choir member Carol Szabicot said.

Szabicot is looking forward to the moment when it all comes together and they can look out into the audience and see their reactions to the performance and film together.

We get to see what the audience feels," Szabicot said.

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### Voices -- A MidwinterMulti-Arts Festival

Jan.24--St. Andrew's United Church, 7:30 p.m., \$5.

The Passion of Joan of Arc prescreening with improvised organ accompaniment. A prescreening of the silent film accompanied by Robert Hall, associate professor of music at Laurentian University, improvises on organ.

Jan. 27 --Nipissing University, Room A222G, 12:30 p.m., free Voices of Light -- Gillian McCann and Susan Srigley from Nipissing University's Department of Religions and Cultures speak at a brown bag lunch research luncheon.

Jan. 28--W.K.P. Kennedy Gallery, 7 p.m. Free admission/donation. Jane Doe, Toronto artist Heather Gentleman opens an installation focusing on the historical and contemporary silencing of women.

Jan. 28 -White Water Gallery, 8:30 p.m., free admission/donation. Remembered Voices,work by four North Bay artists, Kim Kitchen, Lise Melhorn-Boe, Michelle Lariviere and Amy Wallace are featured in an installation focused on reclaiming women's lost voices.

Jan 30--St. Andrew's United Church, 7:30 p.m., \$20

The Passion of Joan of Arc screening with live performance of Voice of Light. The Near North Voice choir and members of the North Bay Symphony will perform the live soundtrack during a screening of the classic silent film The Passion of Joan of Arc.

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