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The Elora Festival and Singers announces
Westminster Abbey Organist to Perform with Elora Festival Singers

Elora, Ontario – Organist and Master of Choristers of Westminster Abbey, **James O'Donnell**, will perform with the Elora Festival Singers on Sunday, October 26 at 2:30 p.m., St. John's Church in Elora.

Born in Scotland in 1961, O'Donnell won a junior scholarship in organ and harpsichord from the Royal College of Music while still at school, and was elected organ Scholar of Jesus College, Cambridge, where he studied the organ with Peter Hurford, Nicolas Kynaston and David Sanger on an open scholarship. While at Cambridge he won several academic awards and prizes and graduated with first class honours. At twenty-one years of age, O'Donnell began to serve as Assistant Master of Music at Westminster Cathedral, and was appointed Master of Music five years later, the same year that he won first prize in the competition for the Royal College of Organists' Performer of the Year award.

Under his twelve-year leadership, the Choir of Westminster Cathedral consolidated its reputation as one of the finest choirs of its type in the world, and won much praise and several awards for its many recordings, notably the Gramophone 'Record of the Year' and 'Best Choral Recording' awards (1998) for a Hyperion recording, *Masses*, by Frank Martin and Ildebrando Pizzetti.

In January 2000, James O'Donnell was appointed to Westminster Abbey, where he is responsible for the direction of the music at the daily choral services and state occasions for which the Abbey is renowned. He also directs the Abbey Choir in its programme of concerts, tours, broadcasts, and recordings, including visits in recent years to the Far East, Denmark, Germany, Spain, and the United States, and the first two discs in a new series of recordings for Hyperion Records.

"I'm delighted to have an organist of such high regard join us," says Noel Edison, artistic director of the Elora Festival and Singers. "I'm even going to lend him my baton for some of the pieces we will perform," he adds.

The repertoire for the concert, *Lift up Your Heart*, will be totally British, with both sacred and secular pieces by such composers as Britten, Howells, Elgar, and Parry. O'Donnell will accompany the choir, and also play some solo works.

Tickets for the concert are \$35.00, and are available in person at 33 Henderson St., Elora, online at www.elorafestival.com, or by phone at 519-846-0331.