

# Gambrel Barn all dressed up for Elora Festival

## Handel concert opens fest's 29th anniversary

July 12, 2008

**ROB O'FLANAGAN**

ELORA

Never has a barn sounded quite so divine.

George Frideric Handel's "Solomon" rose to the rafters of Elora's fabled Gambrel Barn last night, as the Elora Festival soared into its 29th edition.

Women in black downs and men in black tuxedos filed into the cavernous rural venue, as about 600 members of the opening night audience awaited a transcendent performance of the reverent oratorio by the Baroque composer.

The wondrous countertenor voice of Robin Blaze and the powerful soprano of renowned Karina Gauvin uplifted a crowd that included local dignitaries and local farmers.

Noel Edison conducted the towering Elora Festival Singers and Elora Festival Orchestra.

A cool wind whipping through the building could not compete with the robust vocals and stalwart religiosity of the Handel.

"I grew up with the classical music in Germany," said Hanna Boos, a Guelph sculptor and music lover, who has attended the festival each of the past 23 years.

"Noel Edison has transformed it into an internationally known festival. It is very important for this area."

Thanks to a \$36,000 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, festival attendees will have more comfortable seats for their bums this year.

The grant helped pay for 750 theatre-style stacking chairs.

Festival chair Jay Baker tried out one of the new chairs prior to the start of "Solomon."

"They really are very comfortable," Baker said, adding that a ferocious storm overnight Thursday cause him to have a fitful night of worry.

"I was desperate this morning when we woke up to see it pouring rain," Baker said. "It's turned out to be an absolutely wonderful evening."

Having Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, one of the world's most celebrated sopranos, as the festival's headliner, has attracted much attention and sparked a rush on tickets, he said.

The Elora Festival continues to Aug. 3. Its diverse musical lineup is considered to be the best ever offered.

[roflanaqan@quelpmercury.com](mailto:roflanaqan@quelpmercury.com)

on the web

Visit the website [www.elorafestival.com](http://www.elorafestival.com) for a full lineup of performers or to purchase tickets.