

# Ovation Gala Includes St. Mary's Band & Ludmila Knezkova-Hussey

*by Jane Barry*

*The Greater Saint John Community Foundation*

Guests arriving at Ovation, the Greater Saint John Community Foundation's Gala Nov, 6, will be greeted by the stirring sounds of Saint Mary's Band. The vibrant group has local talent of all ages with a history unparalleled in Saint John music circles for its storied background and longevity. Their fifty members come from as diverse a background as our community itself. The brass/reed band is comprised of local members with a wide range of occupations, ethnic backgrounds and social diversity. It counts teachers, students, accountants, engineers and even a doctor, practising weekly in their hallowed headquarters on tiny Brinley Street, their home base for many years. The band has celebrated its centennial, being formed in 1903 as a youth outreach program of Saint Mary's Anglican Church. In the early years it provided music services to the community but in 1917 about two thirds of its members enlisted, going overseas as the Band of the 140th Battalion and then as the first brass band of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry in France. Their Bandmaster, C.H Williams, and two other band members lost their lives during World War One.

In 1919 the Band re-established in Saint John and by 1924 it had earned enough money to purchase new uniforms and instruments, still a challenge to this day. In the 1960s the Band expanded its horizons to include female members and all denominations. By 1988, the Band re-established its ties with the PPCLI Regiment and continues this affiliation by wearing an element of the regimental insignia on their uniform. In 2000 and 2010, the Band was able to update their uniforms, thanks to financial support from the Greater Saint John Community Foundation.

From the days when many community and militia bands featured wind instrumentalists, today, in Saint John, only the Saint Mary's Community Band remains along with the Third Field Regiment Band, the only military band in New Brunswick.

Although no new wind instruments have been purchased in recent years and many of the existing instruments are reaching retirement, a good collection of percussion instruments is maintained by the Band members while operating on an annual balanced budget. As part of its community music support mandate, the Band regularly lends these percussion instruments and shares its Brinley Street studio with other musical organisations, such as Symphony New Brunswick, the New Brunswick Youth Orchestra and school musical productions and clinics.

Andrea Lewis, a graduate of Saint John High, who teaches in School District 6, plays the flute, piccolo and accordion is the Band's Director of Music. Members credit her influence in attracting some twenty new members in recent years and giving the group a new lease on life. She has played with the New Brunswick Winds, 3rd Field Regiment Band, Black Cats Big Band, local amateur theatre and school musical productions, the Wholesteiners and Symphony New Brunswick.

Running the band takes a lot of volunteer time in many positions. Don Mitchener, President, Joanne Urdang, Vice President, Davin Sooley, Treasurer, Steve Clarke, Secretary, Clayton Misner, Assistant Director, Property Manager Gayla Hunter, Stage Manager Rick Sancton, Building Superintendent Ludwig Hartmann and Librarian Doug Reece all contribute their expertise.

Joining the Band in early evening on Nov. 6 will be the popular Saint John String Quartet. Ovation Guests will also get a selection Marco Polo The Musical, which recently premiered in our city as The Saint John Theatre Company, NB Youth Orchestra and Saint John High Concert Choir and Rothesay Netherwood School joined forces for a memorable evening.

Ludmila Knezkova-Hussey, (<http://www.ludmilaknezkovahussey.ca>) the Czechoslovakian-born concert pianist who, along with her husband and teenage daughter, now makes our community home, has graciously agreed to play not once, but twice during Ovation. She is going to let the spirit of the evening determine her selections. With a staggering list of accomplishments, the concert pianist and composer, Professor of Piano, choral conductor, chamber performer, clinician, conductor of piano Master classes and workshops, collaborative pianist, founder and developer of the Ludmila Knezkova-Hussey International Piano Competition has taught at many European universities and UNB-Saint John. She moved here with her family because of our area's cultural life.

A child prodigy, she first started playing violin at age three and has lived and studied music in several European countries, including Ukraine, Czech Republic, Russia, Germany, Canada and France and still regularly plays on European concert tours. Ludmila's celebrated performances have taken place in fifty-two countries on every continent. Tours have been presented at major concert halls, prestigious universities and for notable concert organizations worldwide. Among her numerous prestigious international accolades and awards, the International Order of Merit, England, being named one of the "2000 Outstanding Musicians of the 20th Century" from Cambridge, England, receiving the Paul Harris Fellow Award in both Ukraine and Canada and being granted the World Order Science-Education-Culture, in Belgium are close to her heart. Nearer home, she received an Honorary Doctorate from the University of New Brunswick and the Order of New Brunswick. We are very fortunate to have such talent in our midst and a professional with a generous community spirit.

Ovation tickets are available at the Foundation office, 40 King St., KV Drugs and Guardian Drug in Grand Bay-Westfield or go to [www.saint-john-foundation.nb.ca](http://www.saint-john-foundation.nb.ca).



Left Photo: Peter Walsh/Telegraph-Journal archive



Right Photo: Káté Braydon/T-J archive

Left: St. Mary's Band, led by Director Andrea Lewis, is practising for an appearance at Ovation, Nov. 6 at the Marco Polo Cruise Terminal. Over twenty talented performing artists and groups will take to two stages for a gala evening of fine food, art and prizes in support of the Greater Saint John Community Foundation.

Right: Ludmila Knezkova-Hussey, the Czechoslovakian-born concert pianist will play at "Ovation", a gala evening celebrating arts and culture, Nov. 6 at the Marco Polo Cruise Terminal. [www.ludmilaknezkovahussey.ca](http://www.ludmilaknezkovahussey.ca)



Community Profile is a weekly column highlighting community causes and work done by non-profit organizations in the Greater Saint John area. It is contributed by Jane Barry, executive director of The Greater Saint John Community Foundation. Contact the foundation at 506-672-8880, [sjfoundation@nb.aibn.com](mailto:sjfoundation@nb.aibn.com). To view other Community Profiles go to [www.saint-john-foundation.nb.ca](http://www.saint-john-foundation.nb.ca)