

## A CALL FOR SUPPORT

Dear Friends,

Christmas time is here again. And we are not having a merry little Christmas with Capella Regalis, but rather a merry massive one with these performances. We are not a group to take a major feast day lightly. To be sure, this choir knows how to party: place a feast in front of the men and boys and it doesn't stand a chance. But we have been working on this – we are trying to civilize ourselves.

I was thinking about this on the way home from a rehearsal with the boys a few weeks ago: Why do I believe so strongly that this model – the men and boys choir – offers something unique, even extraordinary, in the world of education? Why do I believe that in the hour and fifteen minutes we just spent learning music, we learned so much more than notes? I think it has to do with this civilizing thing.

In any given rehearsal, the boys are called upon to *listen* in a way that is unique to choral activity. They have to listen to themselves to be sure they've got the notes and are making the most beautiful sound possible, they must listen to each other to sing in tune, and they have to listen to me to keep up with the flow of the rehearsal (as they are so often reminded, half of singing in a good choir is simply keeping the focus – never letting your attention wander such that you don't know where we are, because it's no fun being lost!). This is heightened listening. To do this simultaneously with everything else is to learn to listen, over and over again, at every moment, lest you miss something of great import. I know that this is something most of us have to *learn*, because I've had to.

But there is something else that I was trying to put a finger on during that car ride home after a routine rehearsal. I think it is the fact that with listening comes a general respect for, and love of, the world around us. I would say that Capella Regalis, like any good sport, encourages this attitude in the constant requirement of teamwork. But when we are on tour, something noticeable has happened: The choir is not just loved and appreciated by audiences (whose warmth never fails to encourage) but by billeteers, restaurant staff, venue administrators, drivers, volunteers, cooks, innkeepers, you name it. People appreciate the men and boys, and are glad for their presence, *even when they have not heard them sing*.

This is extraordinary, I think. Out of the ordinary. We have had to learn this – how to strive to *give* to our surroundings, regardless of what we are doing, in consistent thankfulness for what we are receiving.

So I hope you will let me represent not just myself but the whole choir, as I express our thankfulness to you for all of the support you have given us and the sacrifices you have made to do so. Your encouragement does not fall on deaf ears and the support you provide to Capella Regalis will have manifest benefits for years to come.

Yours, Nick