



CAPELLA REGALIS CHOIRS

6036 Coburg Road, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3H 1Y9 www.capellaregalis.com

December 6, 2023

"History is a race between education and catastrophe." – H.G. Wells

Dear Friend,

About two weeks ago I was rehearsing with the boys of Capella Regalis in the nave of All Saints Cathedral, Halifax. "I don't want leaders and followers, I want leaders and leaders," I heard myself saying (things come back to haunt you in an acoustic like that). "Think for yourself; act for the group" was another one I heard – not for the first time – and I couldn't help feeling that it sounded like the stuff you might read in some cheap Corporate Leadership book you picked up at the airport.

But admittedly I *have* been thinking a lot about leadership these days. And since, as every schoolteacher knows, children have a way of teaching you that what you say and how you say it really matters, I've been homing in on what kind of leadership it is that I'm looking for among the boys and girls of Capella Regalis.

I would suggest that the leadership we need most is a rare kind. It is a turning away from self-absorption to cultivate a larger perspective. When I say "self-absorption" I'm not talking about selfishness – I see very little of that among the kids I work with. I am talking about our societal trend towards lonelier, more isolated, more self-focussed individuals. Many factors may contribute to this trend. But my concern is who will lead the generations of the future out of themselves enough to discern and participate in what is good, true, and beautiful in the world?

The big-time business leader Lisa Su said, "Great leaders are trained, not born." I honestly know of nothing quite so good as music for this training, and here is why I will make that claim with respect to Capella Regalis: I, the director, cannot lead the boys in singing their part. They have to do it. *Someone* has to step out and lead. Boys are inherently resistant to this, for all sorts of reasons. So I hear my own grating voice again echoing through the Cathedral in that rehearsal, "Do it for your friends! It's not enough that *you* know the notes. It's not enough that you know the notes and the rhythms. It's not even enough that you know the notes and the rhythms AND the words! You have to *do* it. And you have to do it in a way that others can join, which means you have to commit to what you're doing."

The kids in Capella Regalis have to learn the music and then perform it, make it happen, themselves. When a young person finally, through experience, has the confidence to lead their friends through the soprano line of a piece of music from Hildegard to Howells, that young person knows that what they sing is good, and that they are leading others to something wholesome, true, and of precious beauty. My wild hope is that every one of our choristers, each

in their own time, will experience this. What they have discovered then is the joy of commitment, the reward of hard work, and the perfect freedom of helping others. And the words we speak and hear and sing – whatever the vernacular – they do matter. The traditional language of religion (the language that Capella Regalis choristers of all stripes encounter at some point) carries a resonance beyond the fast-paced changes and chances of our personal feelings and beliefs. The mother of a long-time Capella Regalis chorister made this point to me recently, describing with some hilarity how her son had admonished her one day with the words “I just don’t think you’re keeping ever mindful of the needs of others, Mom.” That struck both her and me as pretty funny, but also strangely encouraging.

When you’re a chorister, it is not just the “other” in the choir that you learn to care for when you take that courageous step out of yourself to lead. The very act of performance is an empathetic act. When you sing, with commitment, the words of the Requiem as set to music by Gabriel Fauré, for instance (“rest eternal grant unto them...”), you can’t help but take into consideration those you love but see no longer, as well as those you do see standing right before you, members of the audience, supporters of the choir, mostly people older than you, bringing their own experiences, their sufferings and their joys, their whole personhood, into a sacred space to hear *you*, singing. One could say that all of what we do in Capella Regalis – every school show, rehearsal, concert, camp, tour, prayer at Evensong – each action is one part of the whole effort to step out of ourselves long enough to catch a glimpse of the wonder that surrounds us.

Thank you for supporting these choristers along the way, and for being a vital part of that wonder. We are grateful for your donation of any amount. This season, I invite you to consider enhancing your support of Capella Regalis by: 1) setting up a recurring monthly donation, or 2) if it is within your means, increasing your annual donation amount.

Yours,
Nick



Nick Halley, *Founder & Artistic Director*

How to make a tax-deductible donation

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1. BY CREDIT CARD (one-time or recurring): Go to capellaregalis.com/support, click on the “Donate” button for credit card donations, and complete our secure online form. You can make a one-time donation or set up a recurring donation through the online form.
2. BY E-TRANSFER: Send an e-transfer to vhalley@capellaregalis.com. In the message box, please state that the transfer is a donation, and include your mailing address for tax receipt purposes.
3. BY CHEQUE: Mail your cheque made payable to ‘Capella Regalis Choirs’ to:
Capella Regalis, 6036 Coburg Road, Halifax, NS B3H 1Y9.
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