

Dear Friend,

December 8, 2022

They say that it was not for lack of stones that the Stone Age ended. Nor was it a dearth of iron that led to the end of the Iron Age. We hope that the Fossil Fuel Era will come to a close, not because we run out of fossil fuels. And then there's the Information Age: I think we all know we haven't seen the end of that!

But I've begun to wonder whether our particular moment in history could be dubbed the Attention Age. It seems everyone is vying for our attention, constantly. Advertisers, politicians, and celebrity-status-mongers are only part of the vast army of attention-grabbers that seem to clamour in the wings, even if we *have* turned off our "devices". So the question that has occurred no doubt to many of us is: might attention be, unlike other precious assets, a finite resource? If we tire out the attention-giving muscles of our minds, will we lose our ability to discern that to which our attention is worth giving?

I would like to make the grand claim that Capella Regalis is, in its specific, small way, simply an attempt at offering something to young people that is worth their attention, and as much of it as they can give. As Artistic Director of Capella Regalis, I can honestly say: it is not easy to attract a young person's full attention to music-making. Since CR's inception, we have seen many a child with a learning disability, including the imperfectly-named ADHD, come through the choir (successfully, I might add). If I have learned one thing from teaching boys over the years, it is that it is not enough simply to present them with fascinating material, in the form of great music. I have to *show* them that it's worth their full attention, that the rewards (singing extraordinary music extraordinarily) are so far above and beyond what we can see in the moments of diligent drudgery, that we are all willing to keep coming back, contributing our whole selves to an effort that is bigger than ourselves.

I would also claim that this ability – to give one's attention to something one senses is worthwhile – can become habit overtime. It is an ability we can cultivate. And if we are learning how to give our attention to something, we may also be learning another virtue of which our age is not seeing a surfeit: that of humility. The strange thing about the world of music is that it is often the most excellent performers that are the most truly humble. This is true particularly of the non-celebrity types we encounter in our neck of the musical woods, but even Celebritydom has its human gems.

The 20th century philosopher Simone Weil said that attention is love. Perhaps if we have found something worth giving our attention to, we have found something we can love. I would suggest that music – that divine form of human expression – is one of those things. Thank you for continuing to give so many young people a chance to contribute their gifts to a worthwhile, potentially life-transforming endeavour. I do hope you will continue your support of Capella Regalis as generously as you can, in whatever way you can. You will find instructions for donating on the other side of this page.

Yours gratefully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Halley', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Nick Halley, *Founder & Artistic Director*