



CAPELLA REGALIS

MEN AND BOYS CHOIR

DEAR FRIENDS,

I remember the time long ago, perhaps nine years back — in the early days of Capella Regalis anyway — that I was trying to get the boys to translate the Latin text we were currently singing. “What does *caritas* mean?” I wondered aloud. And they began taking pot-shots at it, suggesting everything from pork tacos to expensive automobiles. Eventually, and remarkably, someone landed on “charity” and I thought that sounded about right. “So what does *that* mean?” I queried, fearfully. The reply came immediately from the back row, vigorously declaimed by one of our more earnest lads: “Fund-raising!”

That has really stuck with me. I mean for one thing there *is* an awful lot of truth to what he’s saying, it must be admitted. Charities do seem to be fund-raising all the time. But for us (and I trust for you), Capella Regalis, is about a whole lot more than fund-raising. It is for this reason that at this time, when we would normally be sending round our summer appeal letter, we are instead hoping to give everyone a little lift with an archival newsletter: a walk through what Capella Regalis has been and is still becoming. This moment of reflection is due certainly to the Covid-19 pandemic that has gripped the world, and brought our visible presence (regular performances in Halifax, not to mention the Canada Westward Tour we had planned for May) to a complete halt. But it is also a small celebration of a more particular, micro-cosmic event that we wished to honour, at least virtually, this June: the choir’s tenth anniversary. I hope these images and stories from CR’s history bring you joy.

“But what of the choir’s future?” you may well ask. “Will the choir be starting back up soon? Will there ever be a time when it will be back to full-throttle operation?” The poet William Stafford said:

The signals we give — yes or no, or maybe — should be clear: the darkness around us is deep. And the darkness around us, especially here in dear Nova Scotia, has indeed been deep these last few months. So please let my signals be clear: The answer to the second question is: Maybe. And to the third: Yes. Only one thing remains certain for me: the boys’ musical spirit will not be a casualty of the pandemic. But it must be nurtured, as ever, in all the myriad ways possible until that glorious day when we are able to sing together, with our friends in the congregation or audience, in the same space.

A friend of mine went to see the late, great Jessye Norman give what must have been one of her last singing masterclasses, way back

before the pandemic. The class was packed, not only with voice students but also with hundreds of fans of her extraordinary operatic career. The first student sang for her and afterward, following a kind remark or two on the student’s singing, she said: “Now, let’s get to work on that diction, shall we?” For the next three hours, she worked on each student’s diction — their pronunciation and the intelligibility of the words they were singing, regardless of which language — to the exclusion of all else. She didn’t talk about the larynx or about posture (except perhaps in subservience to the words). She didn’t talk about “vocal technique”. She gave no warm-up exercise tips. Nothing. Only rigorous, detailed, severely focused attention to the text. Lookers-on were no doubt disappointed, bored possibly. Even my friend, an instrumentalist and fabulous musician himself, confessed that he waited and waited, to no avail, for some non-text-related musical advice and



inspiration. **But for the students** — those lucky few singers who got to receive, or witness, her expert attention — that was a lesson they will never forget. The great Jessye Norman took great pains to be clear that we make music in order to communicate, to *connect*.

Perhaps the starkest reminder we have received from this global pandemic is that we are all, each and every human being, inextricably linked, biologically connected, not actually divided by borders or ideologies, like it or not.

Singing has always reminded us of that connection. Certainly great music connects singers to each other and to their listeners. But there is an even more basic connection unique to the medium itself: that fundamental marriage of text (words) and music (notes). This is what Jessye Norman was pointing to and it is the reason that I have at least once told the boys (with perhaps scant evidence but to offer some snobby encouragement) that “good choral singers are the smartest people in the world”. I mean of course that they have to read pitches, rhythms, *and* words at the same time. The communication of people to one another across time and space is also why, as in that rehearsal years ago, I found myself spending precious rehearsal minutes on the meaning of the words. Back then it was the succinct phrase *Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est*. (Where charity and love abide, God is there.) We were singing the music of Maurice Duruflé. His weaving of Gregorian chant (both tune and text) into a sumptuous impressionistic tapestry could only be the product of a twentieth century composer who had discovered a deep affinity and real connection with things that were over 1,000 years old.

Capella Regalis has reminded me countless times in services, concerts, and rehearsals, of our connection with each other, with the world throughout time, and with the love that moves the sun and the other stars. But it is my simple and fond hope that this little newsletter, with its partial glimpses of the past, present, and future of a small, local, charitable organization might serve you, our dear supporters, as a heartening reminder that, as Gerard Manley Hopkins came to understand in his time of darkness:

*And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things.*

Thank you for all the support, attention, and care you give to Capella Regalis.

Yours,

NICK HALLEY
Founder & Artistic Director
July 2020



SOME HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FIRST DECADE

★ Since its founding in 2010, Capella Regalis has offered a completely free choral training program for any boy who passes a basic audition. Approximately 100 boys have received training in Capella Regalis to date, and our outreach performances in local schools have introduced thousands of elementary school children to a worthy musical tradition.

★ Our normal weekly schedule has grown from one rehearsal to at least four each week: Two rehearsals for our performing choir (Senior Choir), one rehearsal for our training choir (Probationers Program) and one rehearsal for our teenage boys with recently-changed voices (Young Men), plus individual vocal coaching for Senior Choir choristers. On top of the basic rehearsal schedule, we have regular Sunday Choral Evensong and many special services, concerts, open houses, camps, and other events.

★ We have maintained a constant Choral Evensong series for each of our 10 years, bringing services of music and reflection to thousands of people in Halifax and around Nova Scotia and the Maritimes, and giving our choristers the opportunity to learn and perform music ranging from Gregorian Chant to Renaissance, Baroque, and Romantic composers, and the 20th-century masters. Through service and concert repertoire, the choir has sung texts in many languages, including Latin, English, French, Hebrew, German, Russian, Irish, Scottish Gaelic, and Yoruba.

★ We have released three CDs, completed five tours of Nova Scotia and PEI, and conducted eight summer Choir Camps. We have hosted men and boys choirs from Montreal and Ottawa in Nova Scotia, and we have received performance invitations from presenting organizations around the Maritimes and across Quebec and Ontario. The choir's many concerts over the years have included not only its own productions but also collaborations with other musicians and presenting organizations, and our boy sopranos have been featured in works including J.S. Bach's *Saint Matthew Passion* and Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610*, Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Bizet's *Carmen*, the Paul Winter Consort's *Missa Gaia/Earth Mass*, and Britten's *Saint Nicolas* and *A Ceremony of Carols*. Most recently, Capella Regalis was asked to premier a new choral work by famed composer John Rutter at the Scotia Festival of Music 2020.

★ We are helping to train choral directors and organists, with various Capella Regalis choristers choosing to learn the organ and study choral direction, as well as former Probationers Program directors going on to build music careers as church musicians and choral directors in their own right. Many CR alumni are currently singing in and even directing other choirs in Halifax and further afield, or pursuing careers in other areas of music.

★ In the ten years between its founding in 2010 and 2020, the choir's list of donors has grown ten-fold, from approximately 30 to 300 unique individuals/families and businesses who have donated to Capella Regalis. The list includes donors from Nova Scotia and across Canada, the United States, and the U.K. Countless others have contributed anonymously through the offering plate at choral services, and thousands of people have purchased tickets to Capella Regalis performances. Support has also come from the great number of people who have volunteered their time and expertise over the years, whether as musical mentors, Board members, business advisers, camp counselors, publicity assistants, fundraising helpers and networkers, concert presenters, website and social media managers, music librarians, robes stewards, photographers, craftsmen, special project coordinators, drivers in the transportation program, chaplains, party hosts, meal hosts, concert ushers and stage hands, CD sellers, and the list goes on.

FOR THE FULL CAPELLA REGALIS STORY, with year-by-year details and photographs from 2010–2020, visit the newly updated “Capella Regalis: Founding to Present” page on our website. Go to www.capellaregalis.com, click on the About tab, and you will see “Capella Regalis: Founding to Present” in the drop-down menu.



“By modeling itself on the great Cathedral choirs, Capella Regalis offers a rare culture of mentoring through which the boys can thrive and learn. And it does this within the context of developing musical literacy by singing some of the greatest works in our tradition, which is to say, it trains young men to be attentive, wakeful, disciplined and courageous.”

— Paul Halley, excerpt from an audience letter in December 2010

TOP: Inaugural concert, June 2010, St George’s Round Church, Halifax
BOTTOM: First Baptist Church, Halifax, December 2010



2010



2013

Church Point, Acadian Shore, May 2013



2011

University of King’s College, Halifax, September 2011



2012

St John’s Anglican Church, Lunenburg, December 2012

“I must confess I was not prepared for what I heard. You have managed to accomplish nothing short of a miracle in such a brief timespan – no small feat with boys in this day and age. ... [I]t is very exciting for me to hear such great music-making coming from my birthplace.”

— Christopher Jackson (the late, great founder and director of the Studio de musique ancienne de Montréal (SMAM)), excerpt from an email to Nick in November 2014



2014

St John’s Anglican Church, Lunenburg, March 2014



2015

Troop Island, St Margaret's Bay, October 2015



2019

BOTH PHOTOS: Cathedral Church of All Saints, December 2019



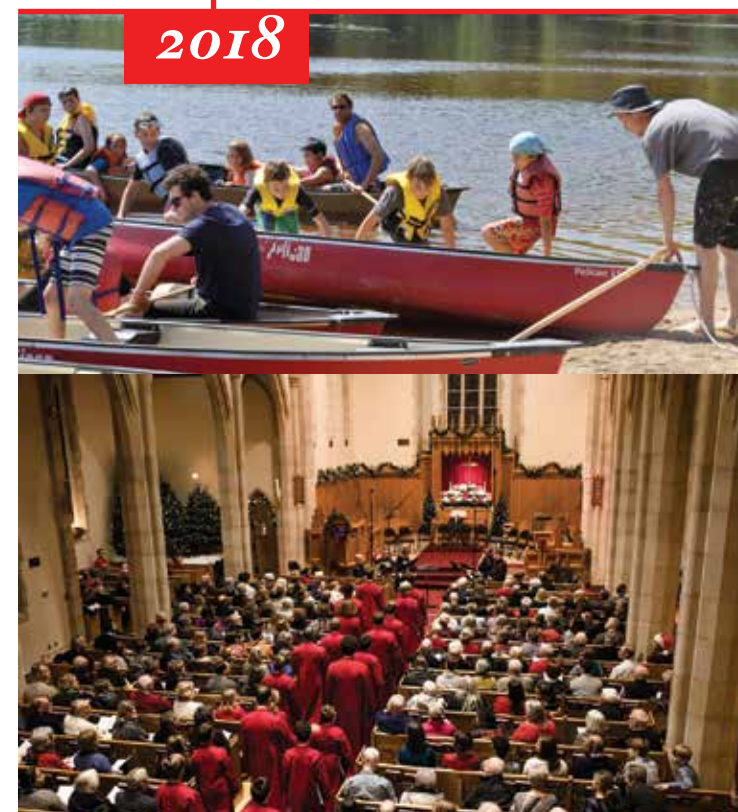
2016

TOP: Greenwood United Church, Baddeck, June 2016
BOTTOM: Cathedral Church of All Saints, Halifax, December 2016



2017

TOP: Indian River Festival, PEI, June 2017
BOTTOM: Cathedral Church of All Saints, November 2017



2018

TOP: Sherbrooke Lake, New Ross, August 2018
BOTTOM: First Baptist Church, Halifax, December 2018

“[A] trip down memory lane listening to Greene’s ‘Lord let me know mine end’ (a favorite, which I was introduced to, along with so many others, through CR), made me think to send you a quick email just expressing my gratitude for all the wonderful experiences, joys, mentors, and, above all, music, that I was lucky enough to be exposed to through the CR family. ... As I get older, attempting to carve out a life in music away from home, I find myself thinking often of how fortunate I am to know what I want to do with my life, to have the opportunity to do it, love it, and, occasionally, feel it touch the soul. All this makes life a joy to live, and I know, without a doubt, that it wouldn’t exist if not for a wonderful ride that began in a church at the age of nine.”

— Phineas Stewart (one of the first generation of CR alumni, a Prefect and later Young Man in the choir, now a musician in Montreal), excerpt from an email to Nick in November 2019



SOME MUSIC FROM THE FIRST DECADE

We have put together a music video showcasing three 20th-century Magnificats performed by Capella Regalis, in 2014, 2017, and 2019, respectively. You can find it on our YouTube channel:

youtube.com/capellaregalis



LOOKING AHEAD

CR staff has spent this Covid-19 shut-down time doing the following:

* Planning and building a new website, which will launch in the coming weeks. The new website will be a beautiful and easily-navigable presentation of the choir's recordings, videos, photos, and other archival materials; a technologically-robust programming (live-streaming) and fundraising tool; and a place where listeners can easily access and purchase our recordings and other items.

* Applying for grants, at both the provincial and federal levels, to help with future programming.

* Developing, in consultation with trusted audio-video experts, some live-streaming projects for the coming season, including live-streaming of Choral Evensongs, of *To Bethlehem With Kings*, and even of some other musical projects which we are not yet ready to reveal, but which we are very much hoping to bring to fruition. Of course, the feasibility of most of our performance projects depends on whether the choristers can begin rehearsing together (or in small groups) in-person in the fall. We are working on developing a simple at-home music listening and singing curriculum for the boys of the choir, to keep them on track in the meantime!

HOW TO DONATE TO CAPELLA REGALIS

Your support makes it possible for us to do all of this and to return for further decades of music-making. If you would like to make a charitable contribution to Capella Regalis, you can do so through one of the methods listed here.

Please note that Capella Regalis is an educational outreach program of Musique Royale, a music presenting charity. A tax receipt will be issued.

1/ BY CHEQUE

Please mail a cheque made payable to Musique Royale, with 'Capella Regalis' in the memo line, to:

Capella Regalis Men & Boys Choir
6350 Coburg Road
Halifax, NS B3H 2A1 Canada

We can accept cheques in Canadian or U.S. dollars., but only Canadian tax receipts will be issued.

2/ BY CREDIT CARD / ONLINE

Please go to www.canadahelps.org, and enter 'Musique Royale' in the search box. Once you're on the Musique Royale page, you enter your donation, and in the box titled 'Include a Message for this Charity', please state that the donation is for 'Capella Regalis'.

3/ WITH U.S. TAX RECEIPT

If you are a U.S.-based donor seeking a U.S. tax receipt, you can donate to Capella Regalis through the international Charities Aid Foundation, who will issue a receipt, but the minimum donation amount for this method is \$500 USD. Please contact Vanessa for more information: vhalley@capellaregalis.com.

4/ BY STOCKS OR SECURITIES

If you are interested in donating stocks or securities to Capella Regalis, please contact Vanessa: vhalley@capellaregalis.com.



A NEW WEBSITE FOR CAPELLA REGALIS

Stay tuned for our website launch announcement in the coming weeks! We look forward to sharing our new online archive and future music events with our community.