

CR Appeal Spring 2023

“Full-throated, whole-hearted acoustic singing still speaks. Perhaps it connects even more with a generation who are almost starved of it.”

Dear Friend,

It had been a few years since we did a “school show”. About a month ago, we shuffled into the gym of Joseph Howe Elementary in Halifax first thing in the morning on a Tuesday. There were 19 of us boys and men who could afford the time away from our own school/work and we had a few extra minutes to set up before our audience arrived for this first in a dozen shows. “Let’s warm up with Song for Canada” I said, referring to Paul Halley’s great pop tune paeon to the homeland. This was to be our closing number. I started pounding away on our rented keyboard and, just as we were getting into the second verse and the boys and men were warming up and sounding strong, the keyboard stand collapsed rather dramatically. Keyboard, cables, pedal, sheet music: it all went flying. It was a moment of great hilarity for the lads and it seemed a pity that the children of Joseph Howe Elementary missed it. I thought they might have found this the most enjoyable part of our show!

Truth be told, I was nervous about the school shows this time around. It had been a few years and we hear so much about short attention spans, endless screen time, apathetic youngsters, protracted adolescence and all the rest of it. What’s more, we’ve grown accustomed to sound systems everywhere blaring out “top hits” (or whatever you call that stuff you hear in gas stations and restaurants these days). I began to fear that acoustic singing wasn’t really going to cut it for the kids in the back of a crowd of 600. But all that doubt vanished as soon as I saw the expressions on those schoolkids’ faces.

As any Haligonian can’t help noticing, Halifax is growing at a rate of knots. It was a thrillingly diverse swathe of children we performed for in the area’s schools. In no school could I possibly get to all the questions the kids had, but those we did get to were striking:

“How do you get your voices to sound like that?” (Practice.)

“How old are you?” (This question can mean a lot of things! Me personally? One girl figured I was about 80. All of us collectively? We had one of the boys add it up and that day we were 307.)

“What do you aspire to when you go to sing?” (This one came from a little girl who couldn’t have been more than seven years old.)

My personal favourite was **“Are you really not using microphones?!”** (That was from a boy in the back row of a large gym.)

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At one show, we had a child from Newfoundland ask whether we ever sing with a Newfoundland accent, and at the end of the show, I was surrounded by a little crowd of kids eagerly enquiring “Do you know any songs in....” (Arabic, Urdu, Portuguese, Tonga...) We had communicated. The music had brought about that powerful connection between humans using their voices *and* their ears.

Singing is an art form that will, just like anything, die out (or at least be cordoned off to some small subset of “professionals”) if we don’t care for it. In the school shows I’m reminded of just how fundamental music is, and I am struck by the fact that without YOU, our kids would not be singing music in that way – nor would they have such opportunities to hear music like that. It fills me with gratitude to be able to say three things in particular to our young audiences: “1) We now have a Girls Choir. 2) All our programs are free. 3) We have transportation available for kids who would not otherwise be able to participate.”

I want you to know how wide an impact your support of Capella Regalis can have, and how many lives it can touch. I do fervently hope that you will continue your support of Capella Regalis, in whatever manner and to whatever capacity you are able.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Nick Halley', written in a cursive style.

Nick Halley
Founder & Artistic Director