

This weekend's performances are my 20th pair of Christmas concerts as music director of the Choral Society. What a journey it has been! As you look around at all the people gathered here today, in this magnificent and hallowed space, you can consider yourself a member of one of New York City's most dedicated classical music audiences. As performers, we are nurtured by your warmth and enthusiasm, challenged by your critical ear, and (in these concerts) enlivened by your energetic voices. Your responsive and responsible listenership sustains a valuable body of choral repertoire.

Music is what gathers us together today. Music at every level—professional and amateur, for every age, occasion, and walk of life—has been an enduring mission of the church and school community in which we practice our art. Many of our singers and orchestra players are themselves teachers of music. All of us were exposed to music from a very young age, receiving lessons in life as well as lessons in listening. This community recognizes that music must be taught as a matter of urgency to today's young people.

As a community of performers, we are a tapestry of human and artistic experience. Our choristers are volunteers, while our players and soloists are professionals; the composer, of course, makes no such distinctions.

All of us must work together to faithfully translate his or her vision into live performance. With their precision and concentrated expertise, the professionals elicit greater rigor from their volunteer colleagues. The volunteers, on the other hand, remind the professionals of the joy that led them into music in the first place. The combined performance evinces both discipline and passion.

A large, volunteer chorus is a living example of unity drawn from diversity—*e pluribus unum*. Painstaking rehearsal time is bent towards refining our individual voices into a single, collective instrument. In a choral rehearsal, everyone “speaks” and everyone listens—actively, intelligently. The process of making music requires trust, good will, critical thinking, hard work, and above all, optimism. We should instill, demonstrate and celebrate these qualities in all of our communities.

Music is an act of immersion but not submersion. As performers, the process of bending our individual voices to the communal sound makes us more, and not less, ourselves. There is a powerful feeling of finding in the midst of forgetting. A well calibrated performance elicits this same response in its listeners. We experience this “shock of recognition” whenever we forge a connection with a great work of art, whether in a darkened theater, a quiet art gallery, or among nature.

Only with this quality of directness and authenticity can a musical performance uplift and inspire. Everyone who has sung in a well trained ensemble is alive to the many layers of meaning inherent in the choral sound. Something mystical happens when a chord settles into perfect balance and alignment. It gives off a series of shimmering overtones that were, for the ancient composers, evidence of the divine. When we sing to the Universe, the Universe sings back.

—John Maclay, December 2018



THE JOHN MACLAY 20TH ANNIVERSARY FUND

Keeping the Beat!

Earlier this year, the Board of Directors of Friends of the Choral Society launched a drive to raise \$20,000 by 2020 to honor our maestro's 20th anniversary and help strengthen our community of singers and listeners.

We are pleased to announce that we have met and surpassed our goal, with support from the individuals and entities listed below:

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December 31, 2019. To contribute, please visit
www.thechoralsociety.org/anniversary.
The complete list of Fund supporters will be
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Thank you for your support!