

Chorister's Corner

Reasons to sing in the A&P Choir

Those who sing in a church choir rarely come to it late in life; usually, there is a long association with sacred or secular music in the home, at school, or in the community.

I have sung ever since I was a tiny tot, even before I joined any choirs at all... my family would sing Polish folksongs, Lenten melodies, Easter and lovely old Christmas carols both at home and at our parish church. Almost all of my friends in my school community, it seemed, sang in a choir of some sort. Whether it was at home, at school or at church, vocal expression was a given and natural way of sharing celebrations and marking important religious events, particularly at Christmas time (oh, those joyous hymns and carols!). What a grand feeling it was to sing a rollicking, exuberant melody or even a sad, melancholic one, out loud, all together, in concert with dozens or even hundreds of others!

Even impromptu moments of singing very, very loudly at home, and being quite silly about it (my Mom's specialty) while we cleaned the house, made our chores almost fun!

It felt GOOD to sing with others....but why?

Well, it would seem that singing, particularly singing along with others, as in a choir like the Choir of Saint Andrew and Saint Paul, is especially beneficial for the singer, in more ways than one.

Three main reasons why singing in the A&P choir is good for you.

Good for your body

Studies in Copenhagen and Great Britain have shown that singing along with others is good for your heart, lung function, and muscles of the core. When a group of singers breathe deeply together, concentrate on the conductor, and listen to each other, their heart rates become more regular and synchronised, their breathing capacity and lung function increases to a significant degree, showing improvement similar to the effects of yoga and Pilates, and their core muscles become more toned; singers even report sleeping more soundly after a choral singing session.

Good for your heart and brain

Choral singing is a well-respected and versatile tool in the medical toolbox; it can serve as a version of music therapy, fostering a sense of community, feelings of belonging, stimulating creativity and concentration, and encouraging positive mental and emotional states in people prone to depression, people suffering from illness, and people living with dementia. Choral singing has been used for decades in clinical settings like hospitals, hospices and seniors residences, but our A and P choristers also know that singing together has emotional and intellectual benefits for us all. Many choristers report that they leave rehearsals feeling more energized and happy than when they arrived; they feel challenged musically and intellectually in the company of like-minded musicians.

"I sing at A&P for the community of dear friends that I've made in the choir over the years, for the great music and inspiring music-making, and for the weekly challenge of sight-reading and refining new and familiar music. Singing at A&P has made me a better musician and helped me to appreciate the art of ensemble singing!" (Ellen Wieser)

Good for your soul

Many choristers at A&P come from religious backgrounds other than Presbyterian (I myself was brought up in the Roman Catholic faith). Despite any differences in our past religious experiences, one thing remains a strong and steadfast constant amongst A&P choristers; we sing to serve God, and we feel blessed to be able to do so in a church community as open and welcoming as Saint Andrew and Saint Paul.

"I sing in the choir of Saint Andrew and Saint Paul to sustain myself artistically as a singer/musician, but also to offer my gifts as much as possible to an appreciative and thoroughly beautiful congregation and public! The atmosphere of the choir is at once professional, of a very high standard, but also warm, like a family, and very inspiring in its eclectic tastes and talented members. It is a privilege to be a part." (Josh Whelan)

"I love the music program at A&P. Before moving to Montreal in 2005, I worked as a voice teacher and vocal coach in the US. So when I moved to Canada, I needed to find an outlet for all that learning and performing. The high musical standards of the choir plus the warmth of the church community was just the thing for this lonely immigrant!!!" (Wendy Glaubitz)

"I agree with my colleagues; singing at A and P is the best!" (Anna Mizera)

