



STUDENT TIMES

Jason Paulk, Editor <jason.paulk@enmu.edu>

Here's to Song: Remembering Our Time Together

by Cameron Colson

Column Editor's Note: Reflection abounds during uncertain times, and I'm sure many of our readers have spent countless hours remembering "the way things were" before our society become embroiled in a battle against COVID-19. As we try to resume some sense of normalcy and routine, planning "distanced" choral experiences, teaching via zoom, etc., many of us continue to struggle to articulate the depth and breadth of loss that we feel regarding the dearth of corporate singing, community, and interaction with friends, colleagues, students, and fellow musicians. The following article is a summary of reflections from undergraduate music majors at Eastern New Mexico University, compiled by senior music education major, Cameron Colson.

Every reader has their own story to tell regarding how their lives have been impacted and routines altered. It is our hope that this article increases empathy and com-

munity in our field, deepening our common bond. The unifying text in the article—*Here's to Song*—was written by Allister MacGillivray, arranged and set by Lydia Adams (Leslie Music Supply), which our ENMU Chamber Singers used as a closing piece on a fall recruitment tour.

Here's to Song

The candle flickers towards its last,
Our time together's ended;
The evening spent so swiftly passed,
No richer way to spend it.
Before we head our separate ways,
I'd like in truthfulness to say:
You've made this day a special day,
With songs and kindness splendid.

Here's to song, here's to time;
Here's to both with friends of mine;
Here's to friends who raise their voices high.
Kings have riches widely lain,
Lords have land, but then again,
We have friends and song no wealth can buy.

We each a different road must go,
To mountains, sea and city;
The hour has come to say adieu,
And all the more's the pity.
But first unite in hand and heart,
And sing a chorus ere we part;
For every end leads to a start,
We need not break so sadly.

And till our paths in future cross,
May blessings kindly greet you;
Until that time, I must, alas,
Only in memory meet you.
Often I will sit and stare,
And think upon this evening rare;
The company beyond compare,
For now, farewell and thank you.

“The candle flickers towards its last, our time together’s ended. The evening spent so swiftly passed, no richer way to spend it.”

Allister MacGillivray’s words in *Here’s to Song* affected musicians a little differently in 2020. For the choir students at Eastern New Mexico university, it felt as though the candle had been suddenly and unceremoniously blown out in the middle of planning, practicing, and preparing to share their choral music talent. Like many people all over the world, students were sent home to social distance and wait for news of how life would continue considering the outbreak of COVID-19.

Life changed fundamentally, and for these musicians it became a time to realize just how much choir had impacted their everyday life in such positive ways. Gone were the days of ensemble, their musical family, and the unique experience of sharing the joy of singing together in the same room.

“Here’s To Song” The Music and its Message

There is no doubt that the message of hope found in music that is sung is extremely powerful. It is natural for singers to find deeper meaning beyond just the simple words of a piece. For those participating in creating that message

in an ensemble, the experience is unique. Not only do the lyrics provide obvious and deep connection, but musical choices of phrasing, articulation, and dynamics—all elements of ensemble—help to create deeper meaning for the members of the choir. This deeper meaning combined with clear diction, purpose, and breath create a complete message that has a massive effect on both audience members and singers.

I’ve missed the gathering of all the different types of people coming together to make music. The passion we have for music is the greatest feeling. I miss hearing disso-



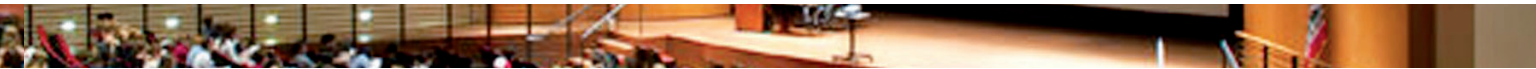
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nances in some songs and then resolutions of beautiful phrases or chords. Those types of pieces are great examples of what singing together is: varied dissonances in music are just like all of the different personalities and individuals who make up the choir, competing, arguing, clashing; then the chords align and unify, just like all those people working together to create beautiful music.

—Dominique Barrera
(Sophomore Music Major)

For now, the message that song brings can still live within our hearts, although it has been crippled by the inability to meet as performers to make those more unique connections. For now, many turn to those memories made in the past or continue to keep music a daily part of their life.

Life is much easier with a song. When we don't have choir and the world is pained, we find that we lose hope. I feel like I have missed singing, but it gave me the chance to realize that true music, true song, lies in our hearts. And while I do miss the warmth of choir, I know we each are united through the shared song of our hearts.

—Ryan Boddy
(Sophomore Music Major)

Since quarantine, I have felt so anxious, sad, or scared for the world. I have found myself watching my past performances with my choir in order to find comfort.

—Cecilia McAfee
(Senior Music Major)

“Here’s to Time” Time Spent Engulfed by Music

With an overabundance of time freed from many daily aspects of regular life, those whose lives revolved around the constant study and rehearsal of making music in a group have found a chunk of their life missing. Time spent in quarantine seems odd, either painfully slow or extremely fleeting, and in both cases can feel meaningless if spent wastefully. For musicians, hours of rehearsal time a day is missing. Some are limited in their ability to practice at home away from provided practice rooms. However, like the fleeting nature of “quarantine,” rehearsals were once so focused that hours felt like nothing at all.

Spending that time studying and practicing as an ensemble created moments unique only to the process of creating music as a group. Moments of unified breath, hearts aligning with one another, mouths unified in vowel shapes, harmonies locked in a powerful statement of togetherness, and even purposeful and connected silence. These moments, while technically brief in duration, made long-lasting mem-

ories. They are what make spending hours together focused on only a few pieces not only possible but extremely enjoyable and addicting.

I find myself desperately trying to find a replacement for the time I spent studying music in an ensemble, and while I practice and study individually, nothing has come close to the feeling of creating music with someone else. The closest I have gotten has been to increase the amount of

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people I communicate with verbally or through text, but nothing has compared to the nonverbal connection found in creating music with someone else.

—Cameron Colson
(Senior Music Major)

During the quarantine, musicians have done their best to connect through virtual settings. For many, the effect is similar: the music is just as beautiful and the message of overcoming difficulties rings true to the audience. However, even

these venues are extremely limiting and lack the same connection that musicians have come to love about collaboration. Singing alone to a recording track will never compare to the intensity of listening and response created in live music making. Like MacGillway writes, “We have friends and song no wealth can buy,” and this is largely due to a choir’s ability to gather together and rehearse and perform in person, creating its own energetic resonance.

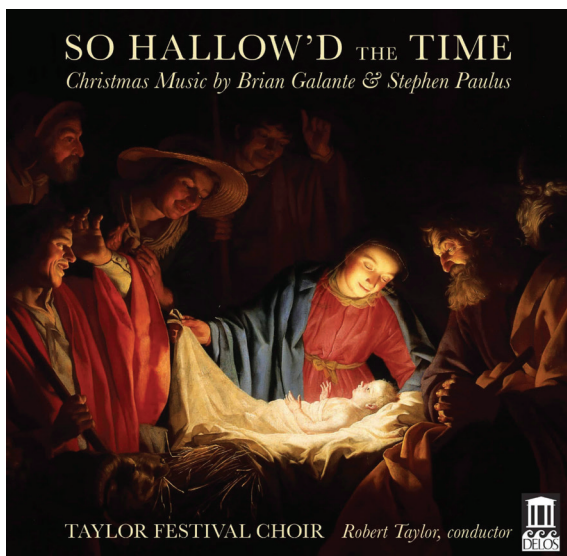
The instant I started to communicate with my fellow

music majors online, I realized just how much I missed making music with them.

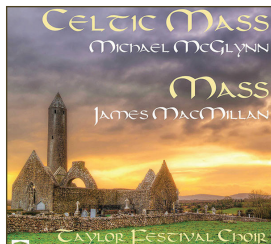
—Kyle Martin
(Senior Music Major)

“Here’s to Both with Friends of Mine” Our Music Family

All of what makes being in a choir powerful and beautiful includes the concept of true “ensemble.” A great ensemble is more than simply a collective of like-minded singers with



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intense focus; it includes a sense of community. For those musicians at Eastern New Mexico University, the loss of regular choir rehearsals was the loss of a regular in-person community. There is magic in a diverse community focused around creating a message of love, peace, and beauty, all the while hardly interacting verbally. It is the same sort of magic found in a well-oiled team of basketball players, the magic of nonverbal teamwork, where everyone is valued and supported.

I have missed the familial uplifting. No matter what we have going on in our lives, or if we're having a bad day. No matter our different styles, voice types, majors, etc., we all come into choir to sing together. We are all there to support each other. And since being quarantined, I have missed that feeling of unity immensely.

—Casey Hennigan
(Junior Music Major)

**“For Now Farewell
and Thank You”
Missing for Now, but Not
Forever**

It is clear that the lifestyle we had before the pandemic will likely not return to normal any time soon. Whatever changes will be made to how choirs will continue to operate, it is certain that music lives on within the voices of those that continue to practice, collaborate, and prepare

for the day when we finally do get to meet again. It won't come as a surprise to those true musicians if tears of joy and gladness accompany the first rehearsals back after such a long and fearful hiatus. In the meantime, we can only do our best to add to the voices calling for safety, hope, and peace as we wait for that glad day.

The following are more voices added to the love expressed about choir:

I miss working with talented musicians to achieve a common goal: sharing music and artistry with our community.

—Taylor Bassing
(Junior Music Major)

I miss the energy. Nothing beats the energy that being in a choir brings. Being able to make beautiful music with your fellow musicians with intense focus on your own musicianship is an experience

that creates an energy in the room that is unmatched.

—Nathaniel Ray Minton
(Sophomore Music Major)

I guess the thing I miss most from choral singing is the community that we create inside and outside of the rehearsal space.

—Devin DeVargas
(Graduate Music Major)

I miss the opportunity to rehabilitate each other after a rough day or during a tough week. It is so uplifting to walk into a room full of smiles and laughter with the anticipation of singing together. I miss it so much!

—Emily Valencia
(Senior Music Major)



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