

## **NORTH AMERICAN SINGERS' ASSOCIATION 2007 NATIONAL MUSICAL DIRECTORS FORUM**

The National Musical Directors' Forum took place in Oregon, Ohio on July 20 & 21, 2007 and was hosted by the Teutonia Männerchor and Damenchor. Over twenty Directors and officers of the National Board were present.

Richard McGinty (Houston, TX) and Ernie Flamm (Dayton, OH) served as co-moderators for the Forum.

This was the fourth meeting of the Musical Directors. Two key points were made that proposals to the Board need to be finalized and that the discussions need be important enough that it gives the choruses a reason to send and pay for their directors to attend in the future. Directors agreed that this is very important.

A series of topics were discussed by all present:

- Books need to continue to be published a year ahead of the national Sangerfest. Congratulations to Chuck Eakins on the last national book, and to directors for having prepared singers.
- The directors' Forum group will serve as the committee to select music to be considered for the 2010 Sangerfest. To have input into the 2010 book, directors will have to attend the Forums. The host director in conjunction with the National Music Committee will have the final say on program selections (agreed to by acclimation).
- The NASB Third Vice President (Richard McGinty) serves as the chair of the National Music Committee by virtue of the job description for the position. Richard is the first director on the NASB Board, and now with Ed on the Board there will be two directors to represent choirs. It is to be suggested that the NASB Board stipulate duties of the 3<sup>rd</sup> VP regarding the Forum.
- Each NASB district now has one representative on the National Music Committee, and that person is to get information from all choruses in their district, including music suggestions for the National Sangerfest.
- The Board needs to clarify how many numbers should be submitted and how individual districts should be represented by the chair.
- The Forum attendees will be used to sort through music submitted and narrow selections down for the national local host. Tim Pecsenye added that the Peoria national was the first where the National Music Committee selected the music in years, and the National Committee will still exist but meet as part of the Forum each year. If a district is not represented, they should still be able to submit music suggestions so that no one will be excluded, and we probably will get more directors to attend the Forum. The Saturday of the Forum could be the time when national music selection work is dealt with.
- National President Blondine Klimach added that district presidents are aware of the Forum, and each has their own way of choosing their music representative for the national committee – these topics will be discussed with the district presidents. Another option presented was that the music selection work could be done on the day following the Forum, so that both the Forum and the selection can be done with one weekend trip.
- Blondine stated that the Sangertag is where other business will continue to happen, including where you put in your bid to host a Sangerfest.
- Richard McGinty: the National Music Committee meeting for selection is called by him. He stated the Forum is growing up and plans for future hold that the Forum attendees make their own rules and set their own future, being independent and self sufficient. Richard could just say how it will be for selection – where and when and how – but the Forum attendees need to figure out what way it needs to be.
- Richard added that if we say to the districts to submit XX number of songs for the national Sangerfest, next year he will have the committee meet as part of the forum weekend. However, the order of program and final selections will be made by host music committee.
- Motion was made and passed: national Sangerfest music selection committee will meet in conjunction with Forums. The Forum in 2008 will begin the process.

Motion was made and passed that the national selection committee will meet two years prior to the national Sangerfest.

### **Topical Discussions:**

**Sangerfest musical selections:** specify something like 3/3/3 Manner-Damen-Gemischterchor selections. It was discussed that there are nine districts. Three songs in each category would yield 27 numbers in each category. District selections to be submitted could be made at a directors' meeting at each district level Sangerfest.

Communications: The question was raised: what is the expectation for communications from the district presidents. Is there a list of the districts, district presidents, available?

Communication within choruses sometimes is not where it should be either – directors often are not in the loop of things like newsletters. It was reported that NASB newsletters are not received by some directors. Question: can the NASB newsletter be sent directly to directors in electronic format. Tim – didn't know if person who does it has it in an electronic format. He will check. Because of the difficulty of communication within some choruses we should have emails with news and newsletters. (Editor's note: sounds like some team building is necessary in some choruses!)

Chuck Eakins mentioned that not only do we need to get information to directors, but the directors also need to commit to reading it.

Outreach: Richard McGinty reported he has heard lots of compliments over the Evansville national program. It was deemed positive that the book contained different kinds of music to a certain extent – with a different impact on audiences. It contributed to American/German audiences rather than German only audiences – this is our future audience – and will continue to be.

Competitive singing: Don Guske (Sheboygan, WI) discussed competitive singing within districts. It could be done on a separate day from the district Saengerfests. Three judges would be hired – perhaps from the music teachers' organization - with each choir singing two songs – judged with comments – and the first three winners announced – with a traveling trophy that goes to the first place group. He reported that groups in his area have gotten much better since they've had competitions. It has helped recruit new singers because people would rather sing with a choir that sounds good. They memorize the songs, no list is given, must sing one song in German at least, no solos. They've been doing it 25 years, separate from Sangerfest, and it has become very important to singers. They want to win. A few choruses who have been stronger tend to win mostly but a few have never won. A discussion followed about the Swiss choruses doing competitive events. They sing from memory. No first place – but they are allocated points. Choirs that get above a certain number of points qualify for gold or whatever status. Music can be in four categories based on type of music and difficulty. It was discussed that the playing field is not always level, and we need to maintain that winning is not always the goal. Al Hedeman (Peoria, IL) mentioned the barbershop choir experience. They are judged in three different categories and there is a first place chorus but singers tend to look at number scores, and they value higher scores each year to show their strength.

Tim mentioned that the choruses in the Wisconsin district are some of the best choruses, and their competitions have raised the bar among their choruses, have helped recruit new singers who want to sing well and be associated with a chorus that sings well. Even with the pros and cons it was felt that competitions will improve choruses.

**Gaining Membership:** It was mentioned that making choruses sing better is the best way to gain membership. Good singers want to sing with a good choir. Discussion continued on gaining membership. Persistence, asking and re-asking are necessary. Good singers need to be asked to sing with our choirs. It was discussed that we need to double our membership. We want younger members because the average age of singers is higher and higher. We need to get younger singers in our choirs. Some have been working with music schools to get students to join. Membership should be a "big ticket" issue with all choruses. It was discussed that joint concerts with schools, especially music/arts schools can generate new members, working a deal with local public radio to do public announcements – doing blurbs about our choruses in the media (eg: "shhhhh – it is a secret – oldest singing group in Houston is the Houston Sangerbund, not the symphony"). People do not know who we are. If we share who we are we might get more members.

**Outreach:** A director stated that they are at a turning point in their organization – there are opportunities to move forward such as running radio ads, doing several public concerts, and singing at churches, nursing homes, one of the local music schools. We need to make people proud of the German heritage, and keep stirring the pot in our communities.

It was added that concerts with other choirs are always good. They can be joint concerts with each choir performing. Other community organizations don't necessarily want to listen to the same kind of music all the time. Many have not heard German song. Fun traditional German folk songs used with community concerts will help us get more members.

It was mentioned that a chorus had a well-known guest conductor come in, placed an ad in the paper for the concert, used some of the national Sangerfest music, and it worked well.

A concern was discussed that many people are afraid of singing in the German language even though we promise to teach them. Some choruses offer German instruction before choir rehearsal. Lessons seem to be appreciated by singers.

It was suggested that our choirs set up German-fest mass/services where church choirs sing with our choirs. Even with a one-time event like this some that participate from the churches will become singers in our groups.

The discussion on getting and keeping new members continued with a concern expressed that our chorus leaders must present a welcoming attitude and exhibit leadership to develop ideas for recruiting members. The future plans for a Forum for chorus presidents were mentioned.

**Sangerfest redux:** Discussion moved to the fact that our choruses need to come to Sangerfest prepared to sing the music. The onus is on directors of individual choruses to make certain that their choirs are prepared. Some mentioned that their choruses incorporate songs from the Sangerfest book in their chorus spring performances. A problem occurs when choruses don't start rehearsing Sangerfest music until right before the event. A CD or tape of a choir singing the Sangerfest songs could help individual choirs prepare the music. It was mentioned that recordings are expensive and time consuming. However, it was said that recordings would help with issues of directors and singers who are not able to read music. Richard mentioned that for the next national in TX they want to have interpretive markings written in the book to help choruses rehearse the music like it will be at the actual Sangerfest performance.

Caution was expressed though that in any situation with mass choirs there will always be members of choirs that are used to doing things at different tempos, maybe aren't prepared, which perhaps we just can't avoid even when we do the best we can.

A director suggested that during rehearsals in their choruses, songs should be done in a variety of tempi with changes that would help prepare singers for whatever they might be directed to do at the Sangerfest. In any event, it was agreed that directors must take the responsibility to prepare their choirs appropriately.

#### **Session with the copyright lawyer presenting:**

**Local intellectual property attorney James D. Schweikert presented the legalities of copyrights. His presentation is available by contacting Tim Pecsénye. The following is a summary of his comments:**

- A copyright protects the physical copy, the physical manifestation of the music. Before there is a physical copy there is no copyright option. For example, a guitar player playing on the street has no copyright on anything he makes up – but the person passing by could prepare a physical manifestation of the music and have the protection of a copyright on it.
- Rearranging music could be a violation. Modifying a musical composition, taking a score and making a copy to pass out to friends who perform it constitutes three violations.
- The story or lyrics that go along with music can have separate copyrights.
- New arrangements of an old work could get new copyrights for value added to an old work in the public domain. Updated arrangements could have new copyrights still in effect. If you rearrange or re-notate a copyrighted work you could have a violation.
- The law has been amended several times to update the laws. Therefore, dates become important because the law may have changed.
- **There are implied rights. When you buy sheet music it does not mean you have the rights for a public performance. If you can't determine if what you are doing qualifies as a public or a private performance it usually is a public one. The minute people from outside of a private organization are there it makes it a public performance.**
- Just because no date is listed on a work does not mean it is not protected. In order to get a ticket for federal court they have to register it with the Library of Congress. Someone creates a work, you make an illegal copy, and as long as they register it before they sue you it can stand as a violation of law.
- Copyright is geographic and territorial. Even if the work is created overseas and is an overseas publisher, US rules may or may not apply to it. For example, if you are in Canada, all US laws don't necessarily apply. The laws of other countries do not apply if the work is used in a different country from where it was protected.

- Due diligence will not alleviate risk. It does not make it legal. Having shown diligence however could mitigate your damages. Willful violation will increase your damages. People who make reasonable efforts to get proper licenses will probably not be criminally prosecuted. Effort may mitigate a claim of willful infringement.
- Money changing hands is not the issue. If the work was used it had value and you have to deal with the law. It has to do with creating loss of profits for someone's work.
- Charging admission is not the point. The test of infringement about whether money exchanged hands or not, doesn't matter. Lost revenue for the holder of a copyright is a proof of violation. The argument is: Has there been lost revenue to the owners?
- Just because a work is out of print and you can't get a copy of it, or if it appears the publisher feels it does not have reason to be printed, it is a fact that they still own the work and have the right to withhold it. A work being out of print does not make it ok to copy it.
- The three licensing companies in this country are ASCAP, BMI and SESAC. ASCAP will take care of GEMA owned songs. The German government handles no licenses, but GEMA does.
- If you can't find or get a particular license you are not permitted to use the work.
- Some publishers provide their work to one licensing company, some to several, so you need to check all three (ASCAP, BMI, SESAC). Check GEMA if not in our systems. If it is not there you are probably ok to use the work. But you are making a risk assessment. If you are acting as a good actor your risk is minimized.
- If there is no system in place in your organization to monitor copyright issues, organizations generally do not like to pay their lawyers to sue you. They would rather just get your licensing fee. Being a good actor goes a long way to show you are ok and risk is lessened.
- If your history has been good, you lessen your risk. Example: If my car breaks down and I really need one it does not give me the right to go drive my neighbor's. The same principle applies with intellectual property.
- Just because it is out of print does not mean it is in public domain. Search government copyright records. If a copyright has not been renewed, or if it is a German product and is not in GEMA, it likely is in public domain. GEMA can only give you permission to do something in Germany. To perform in Germany, we need to contact GEMA for permissions to use music copyrighted in Germany.
- Once you have bought music they can't make you buy it again. You are licensing the public performance right. A lot of publishers grant the performance right when you buy the music.
- When annual fees are paid to ASCAP for licensing it does not mean we are covered to use those things owned by BMI, etc.
- There can be personal liability as well as organizational liability.
- Good faith/bad faith matters. Attempt to follow the law and keep reasonable records. That is what may make the difference.

#### **Saturday directors' discussions:**

The process of submitting music for the national Sangerfest was again discussed. Individual choruses will submit suggestions to their district and then the districts will suggest songs to the national music committee.

Discussions ensued about future Forums: who should attend - chorus Presidents, singers, accompanists? Should there always be a chorus president at the Forum to participate in discussions from the view of a chorus leader? Further, should the leadership forum the NASB Board is planning have directors represented? No decisions were voiced.

Discussion on the copyright issues continued. Directors emphasized that choruses just need to be more diligent and aware and try what we can do to be law-abiding.

#### **Master class with guest presenter:**

Eugene Rodgers, a doctoral candidate from the University of Michigan dealt with suggested warm-ups to develop tone, energy, relaxed body, breath control, agility with older singers. Thank you to the Teutonia choruses for acting as guinea pigs and to Nancy Waters of Toledo for accompanying.

- Digital hearing aids are better for musicians.
- For mature singers thorough exercise is the biggest help to singing well: proper nutrition, daily warm-ups, and daily hum-practice to keep the vocal chords moving. That's the beauty of music – you never get too old to play.
- We must remain insistent on developing a beauty of sound. Beauty is never overrated.

- People will do what is expected of them - take care of their voice, sing with beauty, drink lots of water, whatever you expect from your singers. The opposite also is true.
- With warm-ups it is OK if singers are uncomfortable. For example, some are uncomfortable with massaging other singers. "I want people to be comfortable." However, if a person wants to do nothing it is time for a one-on-one with them for you to understand why. Tell them to do as much physical warm-up as they can.
- Making people feel comfortable is important. Variances of ages brought together in a choir are important to take into consideration.
- Building musicianship throughout the rehearsal is what should be our focus.
- **Directors must come to rehearsal knowing the sound they want to hear – don't learn with the choir. Develop your dream – what do you want to hear – is key.**
- Conduct the choir that you envision rather than the choir you hear – or you can't move them to the next place. Engage all the singers.
- Deal with pitch and intonation – include lip and tongue trills, use silent singing.
- Staccato forces singers to be together.
- Take text out of music to focus on it as language with appropriate punctuation and emphasis. Then return to text with music using same emphasis. If choirs are having trouble with the music take the text out, then put it back together.
- Be an advocate of quality performance. If that means no memorization, then so be it.
- Consider using practice CDs of just text, for example, to learn words.
- Assume people know first. Save rehearsal time. We as choir directors talk too much. Just do it. If need be, explain.
- The conductor must show and move as the music indicates. Use gestures – sing what your hand is doing, and vice versa.
- Effective breathing is the key to warblers.
- Using counting instead of words provides automatic drive forward toward line and phrasing, good breath flow.
- Presenter is a firm believer in placing voices. If needed, change it every week. Strong voices need to be in the middle. Best pitch voices on end. Place two strong/two week singers together. With non-professional singers placing of singers/voices is one of the best things you can do.
- A trick – put all singers names on Excel, every week have a different seating chart. It would break the mindset that they have to sit where they always do. Put names on post-it notes – on the seats – and they have to find their names. This forces people to get comfortable singing with different people. You have to change the mind-set. Mix up the whole group, mix up parts too.
- Choir seating should reflect an orchestra - have to have a seating curve to be able to hear each other.
- This is an ensemble. No one person should be allowed to negatively affect the whole group. Get people used to switching – do it regularly – switch parts people sing. Have all women sing the alto part, then the soprano part; same for men.
- Do things differently so people don't get used to always doing the same thing.
- Challenging singers is important, but take it a bit at a time. Set them up for success. Use practice CDs. Record your music. Build in sectional work. You have to have sectional work if you want to do difficult music. Change call times – men at 7:30, women come in at 8:00, then vice versa.

#### **Return to general session with Forum participants:**

**Music Archive:** Richard discussed the previous plan to archive music. The person pursuing that project was not there for the Forum. The topic was tabled. The Board is aware and the NASB national archivist is researching it. The goal is to have public domain music in an archive we can all have access to for our choirs. We need to put links on the NASB archives for us to get to links where we can find more.

**Commissioning a new work:** Commissioning of a new work for a national Sangerfest was brought up but the person pursuing it was not there. Discussion ensued and a decision was made to take the issue off our agenda. It was felt a commissioned work would be taking a chance on getting a work that our choirs could use after the initial event for which it would be commissioned. A motion for such was made, seconded and approved.

**NASB Musical Primer:** A suggestion was raised about the NASB doing a manual of music reading, performance techniques, singing and music basics, or maybe pick one topic, and it should include tips on singing of German. Annette Jurcevic offered to get a draft together this fall and get it to the directors for a review and feedback. She is doing one for her work.

**How directors are chosen for the national Sangerfest:** Blondine read the constitution regarding the issue. Tim read the Board/NASB accepted recommendation from the Directors' Forum, and it was agreed that at the next Sangertag the issue will be discussed.

It was agreed that District Sangerfest directors should attend the Forum. Forum should be considered the place where the director for the national will be chosen, and it was felt that District directors should have priority

It was mentioned that it is important to have the national book available during the Forum prior to the national Sangerfest for directors to go through with other directors in attendance.

It was discussed that it is key to get in the national book songs that are useable with our home choirs. The kind of music in the national book has to be achievable by our choirs which are not huge or highly musically trained.

It was spoken that we are there for our own enjoyment, but we must keep in mind that we are also there for the people sitting at the program listening. We are performers – for audiences. And our programs must reflect what the audiences want to hear for their enjoyment of the concert with us.

**Directors' Chorus:** Richard brought up a point for consideration: do we, can we, have the directors' chorus sing at another time in addition to the Sangerfest, perhaps at a festival. Discussion ensued.

**Do we want a Forum again next year? Directors unanimously answered "YES".** The fourth weekend of July was suggested although Wisconsin said that is when they have their German festival. Then it was discussed that maybe the first weekend of August would be better. Some can't do that weekend due to festivals in their cities.

- It was suggested that maybe we change the weekend each year – rotate it – to allow some to come one year and others the next. District directors or an alternate should be able to be there. Dates for next year could be July 11-12 or 18-19 or 26-27.
- Reminders were mentioned that next year we need to use Saturday afternoon to choose the national Sangerfest music program.
- Another suggestion was made to maybe run the Forum all day on Friday starting early – perhaps at 9:00 a.m. to get more time. Then on Saturday concentrate on the national music selection. Or make Friday evening a working session with dinner here at the chorus instead of going out to a restaurant – to pick up more time for discussions/sessions.
- It was stated that next year our agenda will be full so there will not be time for a presenter. We need time to work on the national Sangerfest music selection which is maybe the most important thing for next year's agenda.
- Friday afternoon could be used to get the music selected. Then on Saturday the directors could rehearse through it. Six hours on Friday should get the selection job done.
- Richard mentioned that we need music submitted by districts in 20 copies – 3/3/3 from each of 8 districts. If there is no Damenchor in an entire district that district would not submit Damenchor music.
- We can build the agenda for the '08 Forum around the same time frames and get the selection job accomplished without presenters. Friday will be devoted to going through music submitted by districts.
- Forum results will be submitted via Richard to NASB Board for final approval.

It was decided that July 11-12, 2008, would be the dates for the next Forum, with National Music Committee meeting on Sunday, July 13. The Forum will again be hosted in Oregon by the Teutonia Mannerchor & Damenchor.

**Suggestion:** create a certificate for directors to document their attendance at the workshop. Might help some get support at their home chorus, plus help get CE's for some. Letter for this group will be prepared by Richard and signed by the president.