Greetings from the President...
Gary Luther

 Liebe Sänger, Sängerinnen,
 I hope you find the articles in this issue by Richard Kopp interesting. Richard has played an integral part in the revitalization of MGV Harmonia, which is celebrating its 50th Anniversary this year. We will be publishing more tips from Richard in future issues.

Our NASB Steering Committee conference calls each month are proving to produce a wealth of information and aid in keeping you up to date with current items of interest in the NASB through the newsletter I put out via email after each call. If you are not yet receiving the newsletter just submit an email to gary.luther@sbcglobal.net.

Many of us received information from the Deutsche Chorverband regarding changes in membership. Beginning May 31st, each choral group or district will be required to pay 0.50 Euro/annum per singer to receive the benefits of the Chorverband. A further 42 Euros will be required to receive 11 issues of Chorzeit/annum. We have requested further information from the Chorverband relative to an extension of the deadline to make a decision on payment. We have also requested a simpler method of payment rather than international wire transfer. We hope to have an answer relative to payment method in the near future.

Our NASB By-laws are in need of updating to reflect the current needs of our Association. I have formed a By-laws committee to assess the document and recommend changes. We have assessed the By-laws through National Association Meetings to date and plan to complete the editing before the end of 2017. When we have completed the evaluation, the current and recommended changes will be collated and sent to each chorus and district to be assessed. We intend to put recommended By-law changes to a vote at the Delegates meeting in Evansville, IN in May 2018.

I mailed a letter to those choral groups delinquent in paying 2017 dues. The list I was provided may have been slightly out of date and a number of choruses, which in the meantime paid, received the letter. I apologize if you are one of those choral groups and thank you for the payment.

Watch for an update on longevity award request procedures coming soon to the NASB website. Request forms and examples of the awards will be available.

Have a wonderful summer with your singing friends and families,
Mit besten Sängergrüßen,

Finding (and keeping) new Sängers
By Richard Kopp
Corresponding Secretary
MGV Harmonia, Kenosha, WI

This is the first installment a five part series on how to retain and add new singers to our choruses, written by Richard Kopp. Kenosha has added eight new singers this past year.

Our männerchor is not the same as the one I joined twenty-three years ago. Back then, the vast majority were German-born, and there was just a few American-born. Today, it is flipped. There are only 10 Germans left, and 28 Americans.

So, if we did actively seek new sängers, our choir of today would be a choir of 10. Sound familiar? So, how did we add 28? The following series of articles will detail what we did, what we are doing, and throw them all at you, because what may not have been familiar to you may be new to others.

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Eighty-five Years of the Damenchor of the Columbus Männerchor
San Antonio Liederkranz
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North American Singer’s Association
Nord-Amerikanischer Sängerbund
This past year, 2016, witnessed the celebration of the 85th Anniversary of the Damenchor of the Columbus Männerchor. The year was marked with many activities: the design of a special anniversary pin, news articles in various local newspapers written by the chorus vice-president, Johanna Wintrich, a Proclamation from Michael Stinziano of the Columbus City Council, special appearances at Oak Leaf Village and Mother Angelina McCrory Manor and the in-house publication of a 207-page history book, Voices of the Columbus Damenchor, which was compiled by the current president of the chorus, Gail Heffner and the historian, Christel Mattern. A composite poster with photographs of current singers was also created and hangs in the Niehaus Rehearsal room at the Valter’s at the Männerchor restaurant at 976 S. High Street in German Village, Columbus, Ohio.

The book, Voices of the Columbus Damenchor, contains the history of the Damenchor’s formation in 1931 and its subsequent affiliation with the Columbus Männerchor (the oldest continual German-singing society in the United States, founded in 1848). Several pages highlight the life and contributions of present director Dr. Marc Heeg and accompanist, Megan Rainey. There are also stories about former directors, Ron Markle and John S. Long as well as former accompanist Jan Maroscher. Stories and photos about famous guest singers, such as Otoniel Gonzaga, Rudolf Schock and Ernestine Schumann Heink are also included.

Thirty-seven Sangenschwestern (singing sisters) contributed their personal stories. Many of these poignant stories are tales of survival during World War II in Germany, Romania, Austria, Poland and the Crimea Peninsula. Photographs were dusted off and added to each lady’s tale. Many of the ladies became “war brides” and included photographs of their weddings. There are proud moments described as they became U.S. citizens, after suffering many hardships. Other singers tell the tales of their ancestors that came from Austria or Germany or Poland and shared family heirloom photographs. Associate (former) singers sent stories from other Ohio cities such as Cleveland, Dublin, Baltimore, Worthington — and as far away as Hilton Head Island in South Carolina. Several songs written by Damenchor singers, Charlotte Rossbach (Ad Fidelitas) and Waldtraut “Wallie” Kildow (Singen und Freundschaft) were also included. The history book contains forty-seven favorite German recipes from the ladies as well.

The books and commemorative pins were presented to singers and patrons of the project at the 168th Stiftungfest of the Columbus Männerchor held at Capital University on November 20, 2016.

The Columbus Damenchor in 2015 at the annual Christmas Concert in St. Mary Catholic Church, German Village, Ohio. Director at that time was John S. Long and accompanist was Dr. Marc Heeg, who is the current director of the Columbus Männerchor, Damenchor and Kinderchor.
By David Nelson

The San Antonio Liederkranz, whose name means “wreath of song,” was established in the summer of 1892 by the German Catholic immigrant congregation that had built St. Joseph Church 20 years earlier. Under the auspices of the Rev. Henry Pfefferkorn, the choir was formed to beautify the German services and sing at the German festivals of the parish and the community. Then as now, it was an all-male chorus, beginning July 11, 1892, in the parish hall, where 14 men met to establish the organization. Fr. Pfefferkorn continued to direct until around 1909 when he turned it over to Otto Hilgers who continued to direct until 1931. During that time, Liederkranz became a fixture not only in church but in the German singing-society world and in local popular entertainment. As a full ensemble, an octet or soloists, members sang at beer gardens, parish festivals, Protestant churches, club meetings, weddings and funerals.

Over the years, Liederkranz has built a statewide and international following. The choir has performed at many large religious and civic gatherings, among them the Bicentennial of the founding of San Antonio in 1931, the Texas Independence Day Field Mass at Washington-on-the-Brazos in 1938, and the Papal Mass in San Antonio in 1989. The choir has toured Germany three times, with two performances at the residence of the president of the Federal Republic of Germany.

“We’re probably the only choir in the United States that still sings the Latin Mass (regularly),” says Leonard “Buzz” Gittinger Jr., past President of the Liederkranz. The choir sings four different Latin versions and two in German, the latter used only for special occasions, such as the feast of the church’s patron saint, Joseph the Worker. “That we still sing in church, as an outgrowth of that founding purpose, has been a major factor of our continuance. That, and the quality of the music.”

While other German singing societies have disbanded, due to infighting or inertia, San Antonio’s Liederkranz has been in continuous, active existence since it’s founding. There are still some legacy families, such as the Gittingers (Leonard Jr., Leonard III and Leonard IV) and the Aschbachers (Paul Sr., Paul Jr. and Jacob), who descend from early members and grew up hearing Liederkranz sing in church. At the same time, current members are acutely aware of the need to recruit new singers who will appreciate and extend the tradition.

Today, the ranks of the Liederkranz include about 50 active singers, ranging in age from the upper 20s to the mid-80s. They come from many ethnic and religious backgrounds, but many descendants of the original immigrant families still sing. There have been only six directors over the choir’s 125-year history. Every year the chorus is invited to sing at area churches and various secular festivals.

Liederkranz President Mark Mueller’s great-grandfather was one of the early members of the group. Mueller says that some of the old songs in their repertoire are sung in a dialect no longer heard in Germany, and that German linguists have come to San Antonio to study that dialect.

The choir doesn’t have a picture of the 1892 Liederkranz, but fairly recently a photo of the 1896 singers was located in files in the Alamo. It includes great-grandfathers of some of the current choir members, including Mueller’s.

The chorus presents Christmas and annual spring/summer concerts and participates regularly in the Sängerfest of the Deutsch-Texanischer Sängerbund and the Texanischer Gebirgs-Sängerbund. The Liederkranz also sings at other German festivals, at Masses and services of various denominations, and for private occasions.

The Liederkranz has remained true to its purpose, “to promote and perform male choral music of all kinds, with particular emphasis on German and Church music; to serve as a choir for St. Joseph’s Catholic Church; and to increase awareness of German tradition and culture.”

This year includes several events which commemorate the Liederkranz’s 125th anniversary. On June 25, the annual Summer Concert will take place in the new Tobin Center for the Performing Arts. In commemoration of the original foundation at St. Joseph’s, a special service will be celebrated by Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller on Aug. 6. The Christmas Concert will take place on Dec. 3, 2017 at the McAllister Auditorium of San Antonio College.
North American Singers Association Foundation

The Nord-Amerikanischer Sängerbund has created a charitable foundation that will provide for scholarships and other charitable gifts. We are very happy to announce that the IRS has approved the North American Singers Association Foundation. Contributions to the Foundation will now be tax deductible to the extent provided by law.

All contributions can be sent to:

North American Singers’ Association Foundation
Paul Bockstege, Treasurer
1917 Hawkeye Dr.
Evansville, IN 47720

Remember, your contributions are tax deductible!

Wisconsin Sängerbezirk 2017 Sänger Kommers is frosting on the cake in a Golden Year!

The Männergesang Verein (MGV) Harmonia Kenosha’s performance was judged as the finest by a panel of professional choral judges and the chorus took home the Wisconsin Sängerbezirk Traveling Trophy for their superb performance in the annual Sänger Kommers competition. Winning the trophy is surely a sweet “frosting on the cake” experience in a year commemorating the choral group's fiftieth anniversary since its founding. This year already has become a truly Golden Year for them with an extremely entertaining and successful Spring Concert in April and now “The Trophy” in May, and there are still seven more months to go. Congratulations Gentlemen!!!
New Sängers

worked well for us, may well work for your choir.

It all begins with a vision. Many years ago, one of our far-sighted choir presidents recognized they were all getting older, and without new voices, the choir would dwindle to nothing in a decade or two. He established a “bring your son or grandson to practice” night. No strings attached, just sing (or listen) to a rehearsal; afterwards there was beer and sandwiches, as well as a good dose of gemütlichkeit.

In my first year, an older first tenor asked me why I didn’t join earlier (my dad was a second tenor), I replied: “Nobody asked me”. Point number one: ask, ask, ask. There are many other ways by which we added new sängers to our choir. Let’s begin by looking at some of these strategies and how they may apply to your choir.

First, German music is strongly associated with Christmas, Church hymns, and Oktoberfest. Does your repertoire cover any of these categories? As a choir, these are prime opportunities to sing to the public. A Christmas concert can be as simple as caroling at a mall, or as big as taking part in an International Christmas Fest. Every year, we perform a set of 12 to 15 songs. We also have a food booth, where we can sell brats and kartoffelsalat, and home-made cookies. Revenue producer and prime way to talk about the choir. We have picked up several very good sängers this way.

After our concert, we normally head over to a local bar (who advertises in our annual concert book), and we then let loose with all kinds of songs. The patrons there love it, and we can show some range with not only Christmas songs, but seemannslieder, volkslieder, and trinklieder.

That leaves church hymns. A natural place to sing them is in church. Over the years, we have sung in many churches, and this too has been very fertile for getting new sängers. Most churches have their own choir, and if you sing with them, you have access to people who would be perfect to invite to your practice. We have a unique opportunity NOW, because of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Never will German hymns be in higher demand. Within 20 miles of our choir hall, there are 28 Lutheran churches. (See the article on preparing for this event).

500th Anniversary of the Reformation is our best chance to recruit new Sängers

By Richard Kopp
Corresponding Secretary
MGV Harmonia, Kenosha, WI

This is the second installment a five part series on how to retain and add new singers to our choruses, written by Richard Kopp. Kenosha has added eight new singers this past year.

An opportunity that focuses on German singing is soon upon us. This may be your best chance to recruit sängers. The 500th anniversary of the Reformation will be in October, 2017.

When else will a German choir be in such demand, at churches no less? As in my previous article, churches are a gold mine for recruiting sängers. A great hymn to learn is obviously “Ein feste Burg /A Mighty Fortress”. It is in every hymnal, be it Catholic, Lutheran, or any other shade of Protestant.

I began preparing for 2017 four years ago. To date, I have arranged or found 29 hymns for Männerchor. If you are a mixed choir, you have an easier time finding great music that can be easily performed in a church setting, with or without accompaniment.

In addition to Ein feste Burg, some other good selections would include: Nun danket alle Gott/Now Thank we All our God; Lobe den Herrn/Praise to the Lord; Wacht auf/Wake, Awake; Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern/How Lovely Shines the Morning Star.

Scour your music library and look for anything composed or written by Johann Crüger, Paul Gerhardt, Nikolaus Decius, Philipp Nicolai, Johann Heermann, Melchior Teschner, Joachim Neander, or even Johann Sebastian Bach, who harmonized many of the hymns written in the first hundred years after the Reformation.

When preparing, don’t sing EVERY stanza of a hymn. It will get stale and boring, not to mention long, as many of the hymns from this period regularly contained fifteen to twenty stanzas. If need be, select three appropriate verses and move on to the next hymn. Also, work with your Director. We are not church choirs, and rehearsals can get tedious if all you sing is hymns for the next year and a half.

Typically, you need a repertoire of five hymns. That way you can cover a hymn before the service, one during the service, one at the time of offering, and a closing hymn, or one for after the service ends.

In addition, a Sanctus, Agnus Dei, Offeratorium, or Nunc Dimittis are good too. “Heilig ist der Herr/Sanctus” by Schubert is probably the best known among our choirs.

If the church has more than one service, use the time in between services to socialize with the parishioners. Usually, at least one of your sängers is a member there, and is the best person to “break the ice”. Be prepared to give out information about your choir, practice times, and benefits of being a member.

Better yet, work with the church’s choir, if they have one. There is strength in numbers, and you just might pick up a singer or two. At the least, you will have freundschaft und gemütlichkeit with them.

Good luck with your preparations. If you need further assistance, or just want to bounce ideas around, feel free to contact me at: kopper@wi.rr.com. I have about 200 hymns arranged for männcherchor, and can point the Gemischterchöre to about 600 arrangements.
This 1886 program had 84 choirs and 2,550 singers, exceeding the previous number of participants by over 600 singers. It was the first time there were more than 2,000 singers in attendance.