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Conductors! Stay up-to-date – Be Successful...



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Dear Friends of Choral Music,

This edition of the European Choir magazine is directed mainly at those of you who are conductors – appealing to you to “Stay up-to-date – Be successful! ...”

When I reflect on this appeal, the first question that occurs to me personally is what “success” means in the context of choir work. I feel sure all conductors will have their own ideas about this: for some winning competitions is an essential component of success, while others will want to demonstrate that the largest and widest ranging repertoire possible has been acquired in their time as conductors, and yet others experience the sweet smell of success most keenly of all when a particularly ambitious concert has gone well.

Whatever way we as conductors may take in striving for success: we must never lose sight of our singers! “Without my choir I’m nothing!” The singers need their conductor, but s/he needs the singers at least as much! This being the case, shouldn’t the wellbeing of our singers be the main focus of our work? Isn’t it this that defines whether or not we are successful as conductors?

Let’s just think: Our singers sit in our rehearsals and give us their free time (unless we happen to be conductors of professional choirs). Our choristers want to be stimulated, helped to move forward and also to be challenged.

I can’t challenge the singers in my choir unless I am at least one step ahead of them in every aspect of choral work, and it is essential that I myself master all the things I demand of them; these include, for example, vocal techniques (both familiarity with one’s own voice and knowledge of what problems other singers could have are needed), choral voice training, full and precise knowledge of the scores