

San Francisco Girl's Chorus Testimonial

As the Artistic Director of the San Francisco Girls Chorus, I first approached The King's Singers with the goal of developing a collaboration between our organizations. We originally wanted to schedule a concert with them in San Francisco but then the pandemic arrived. This changed all our plans but also brought new possibilities such as the idea of an online residency. Once a month The King's Singers, based in London, taught and mentored our Bay Area singers, isolated in their homes in California. We were thrilled to welcome The King's Singers as our first Virtual Artist in residence for 2020.

The King's Singers created a thoughtful, engaging and interactive online program alternating between short lectures, accessible to our 56 singers, and practical exercises in breakout rooms for a more personal approach. It was exciting to be able to build those workshops around the needs of our choristers. The online format allowed us to focus on the individuals, so we chose to develop themes such as developing Facial Expression, practicing singing with emotions and showing the impact on the audience. On a more technical side, the use of breath, articulation to emphasize the text, analysis of the words, musical styles, singing without a conductor, how decisions are made in a chamber group and the importance of listening and respecting each other.

Our choristers needed to then apply all of these concepts to a project. We chose to create a collaborative video of *Hallelujah* by Leonard Cohen arranged for our two organizations where our singers will also have opportunities to be soloists along The King's Singers.

Beside the obvious musical benefits of those workshops, I wanted to highlight how this collaboration has had a deep impact on our singers. It is so important for young people to see professionals moving forward despite difficult circumstances. They witnessed The King's Singers' strength of character, flexibility, adaptability and professionalism. By listening to each singer individually, The King's Singers asked them to expose their vulnerability as singers and showed them how to transform it into strength through their musical interpretation.

The King's Singers proved that they could use constraints as opportunities and gave them the confidence to be outside of their comfort zone. Being seen, heard and supported is essential for our teenagers who have been facing isolation for one year now here in the U.S. This validation coming from The King's Singers has been really meaningful.

I will always be grateful for The King's Singers professionalism, creativity and sense of humor. I want to thank them for bringing us back to the essential, The Music, for reminding us that studying our repertoire and voice technique with discipline is a powerful tool which will definitely help us all maintain our sense of community. Thank you for the inspiration!

Valérie Sainte-Agathe

San Francisco Girls Chorus Artistic Director