

Why Choruses Matter

[Abridged from the "Chorus America" website: www.chorusamerica.org]

To sing like this, in the company of other souls, and to make those consonants slip out so easily and in unison, and to make those chords so rich that they bring tears to your eyes...this is transcendence. This is the power that choral singing has that other music can only dream of.

- Garrison Keillor

According to a new national study by Chorus America, an early introduction to the performing arts is a building block for life-long learning - it helps to build social skills, community involvement, and enhances academic skills in general. Additionally, choral singing provides an extraordinarily accessible entry point for arts exposure, with fewer barriers to participation - economic, cultural, educational - than those posed by other art forms.

The broad appeal of choral singing is based in the unsurpassed opportunity it gives each singer to participate in an activity that involves them artistically, builds community, enhances their skills, and results in a product of great beauty. In working toward a beautiful choral sound, people contribute to an artistic product greater than themselves and forge friendships that change the course of their lives. The synergy of this musical mission infuses choral organizations and their singers with energy and purpose that result in extraordinary contributions to their communities - through stellar performances and recordings of great works, the creation of new repertoire, innovative educational programs, and cooperative partnerships with other community organizations.

Chorus America's study explored the depth of feeling that participants had about their choral experience, with many reporting that the requirements of choral singing - discipline, attention to detail, teamwork, and the social value of the experience - combine to improve their daily lives, in both their work and in family relationships. Many choristers testified to the degree to which their choral singing made them more aware of other people's life experiences, helping them to bridge social gaps. "That connection with people exposes me to ideas...that aren't otherwise available," one respondent said. Seventy-four percent said they "agreed strongly" that choral participation had helped them develop new friendships.

Choral groups and choral singers are diverse in the broadest sense: involving people from every region of all ages, in myriad musical styles from classical to gospel. All of these various groups promote cultural excellence, community and national pride. Their performing venues are equally diverse - from community festivals and shopping malls to major concert halls - ensuring that choral music touches all members of a community, regardless of economic status, age, or ethnic origin.