



DEUTSCHER CHORVERBAND

# SÄNGER ZEITUNG

Issue Number 36

Fall, 2017



## Greetings from the President... Gary Luther

Liebe Sänger, Sängerinnen,

We are eight months away from our Sängertag gathering in Evansville, IN. As I see it, this meeting will be a turning point for our Association. Our last Sängertag in Dayton was a wonderful event, however, those of us participating recognized that the change in demographics, economics and technology was presenting a transition we could not let go by without addressing the future issues facing the Association.

• In spite of all our efforts to stimulate membership to partake in the Saengertag, Delegates meetings, or the National Saengerfest, the attendance numbers continued to dwindle at these functions. The average age of our membership continues to increase as active singer involvement declines due to age and passing.

• The cost of traveling to Sängertag, or for that matter Sängerfest, is escalating with each passing year. Our singers on a fixed income should not be burdened with excessive costs. This factor alone is a significant reason participation at National events is on the decline.

• Our last delegates meeting, although scheduled to be a two-day event, was completed in approximately two hours. Our NASB Steering Committee has recognized this as a major reason to reassess our Association's by-laws and prepare to present recommended changes to the participants at the upcoming Sängertag meeting.

The Steering Committee agreed to the formation of a By-laws Committee to evaluate and rewrite our document for presentation at the Sängertag meeting in May. The Committee has worked through the By-laws and began drafting recommended changes. As a rough preview of the direction we are negotiating our way through:

• Rather than a Saengertag the year before the Saengerfest, the Executive Committee will schedule conference calls with District representatives at least on a quarterly basis. A newsletter based on the conference calls would be sent to all choruses and singers via electronic means following the conference calls. The newsletter would also be posted on the NASB website and Facebook. A Sängertag will continue to be published to advertise the choral activities throughout the Association.

• To assure the proper voting weight is given to each District, the District Officer will have voting weighted on the number of active choral groups in the district.

• Sängertags will continue to be every three to five years as currently specified in our By-laws. We will recommend the ven-

ues for the Fests be held in cities offering amenities at a more reasonable rate than large metropolitan cities.

• If changes on protocol or By-laws are needed in the future, they would be made at the Association meeting to be held before or after the NASB Saengerfest, if not by mail.

I have served the Association as president for nearly five and one half years. I thank each and every one of the officers that have provided direction and guidance; have been proactive in their responsibilities as listed in the By-laws; and especially Blondine Klimach our President Emeritus for her guidance these past years.

With that, please begin evaluating who your representative will be for the period beginning June 2019. We need to express our appreciation to the younger singers in such a fashion that we honor them by offering them positions on the NASB Board, chairpersons of committees, and additional enticement to become proactively involved. The new slate of officers to be sworn in in 2019 are selected at the Evansville Sängertag.

Wishing everyone a wonderful fall and winter season,

I remain,

President, NASB

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Nord-Amerikanischer Sängerbund

# Finding (and keeping) new Sängers

## Bier, Oktoberfest, and Lieder

**By Richard Kopp**

*Corresponding Secretary  
MGV Harmonia, Kenosha, WI*

*This is the third 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.*

The second pillar of German culture, as seen by Americans, is Oktoberfest. Our choir has had great success in getting people to at least try to sing with us as a result of this type of singing. In our choir, we prepare for Oktoberfest by taking a weekend day and enjoying our fellow singer's comradeship. Typically, we dine as a group at a restaurant, sing a few songs to the servers, chefs, and patrons.

Later, we will stop for ONE beer at an establishment that is German/European themed, or has advertised in our program concert booklet. Again, a few lieder are sung, much to the delight of those present.

We have picked up support members, active singers, and have even had requests for songs to be sung in German. Much goodwill comes from doing this.

In your locale, places to try this would be a microbrewery. They love the association of German lieder with their product. It truly is a natural fit. Another prime location is a German restaurant. You can sit at a table, order some appetizers, for you do not have to eat a full meal everywhere you go. Ask the waitstaff or owner if you can sing them a song. They usually are very enthusiastic about it, and the goodwill you get is always worth it.

Other benefits to you may be an advertiser for your concert booklet or a request to come back. We have been surprised by German tourists who were in the restaurant, to people who came to our concert, to being treated to a beer and an appetizer by the owner of the establishment.

I am not advocating beerfests, but done properly, a few bierlieder sprinkled with

an "Ein Prosit", and maybe a volkslied or two do great wonders for getting people to know who you are, and maybe even give you a singer or two.

On that thought, a bar is usually the only place you will find Karaoke. This is another great way to find singers. One of our sänger, who is 76, serenaded his wife on their anniversary with a fabulous rendition of Sinatra's "My Way". If he can do it, so can you.

Remember, you are trying to recruit American singers, and you have to meet them half way. The days of more German immigrants coming over are long gone. The singer you are looking for, probably has German roots, or served in the military stationed in Germany. They have certain perceptions of what a German is, and the beer association is a strong one. Remember, churches are good too, so if you feel uncomfortable with this advice, skip it and concentrate on the ideas that appeal to you and your choir.

# Finding (and keeping) new Sängers

## Weihnachten and Singing

**By Richard Kopp**

*Corresponding Secretary  
MGV Harmonia, Kenosha, WI*

*This is the fourth 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.*

The third pillar of German singing culture, and my personal favorite, is the Advent and Christmas season. No other culture has such a rich heritage of song. You can use this to your advantage to get singers. Almost every American knows the melody, if not some of the words to "O Tannenbaum" and "Stille Nacht".

Even if you sing everything in German, most people will recognize the melodies. As an added bonus, the opportunities for singing at this time of year are only limited by your choir's schedule. Caroling at

an assisted living center is great fun, builds goodwill, but probably won't get you any singers. But they are great for getting out in the public and singing. After all, if your choir only meets for practice and maybe a concert a year, why are you choir?

This leaves community events and churches. With the rich heritage of German song, you will have ample choices for Advent, church appropriate Christmas hymns, and for other singing engagements, you can add English language songs. We have picked up extremely high quality singers by doing this. Our local museum event also allows us to sell brats and kartoffelsalat, cookies, and homemade crafts in their lobby. The profits help keep us a prosperous group. Since we committed to singing at the event, over the years we have become the showcase act, and have the prime singing time, and have had to sing at for example, 11am, and then again at 1pm.

Just make sure you vary your songs from year to year. At one time, our Christmas book consisted of 12 songs, or about 22 pages. Today, we are up to 60 Christmas songs or about 86 pages. This enables us to include songs from Poland, England, France, Eastern Europe, Spain, and Italy. Americans who are from those cultures really appreciate it when the choir does something besides German.

Many of your choirs have been in existence much longer than mine. Scour your music library for songs that haven't been done in awhile. Or, order from the many German publishing houses. Lately, a great deal of good music has been found on the Internet, which is in the public domain. There is no excuse in singing the same songs year after year. Your singers will get bored, as will your audience. Keep it fresh and keep learning new arrangements. You will not be disappointed.

# Finding (and keeping) new Sängers

## Other Ideas for Recruiting

By **Richard Kopp**

Corresponding Secretary  
MGV Harmonia, Kenosha, WI

*This is the fifth 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.*

Now that we have looked at the three best ways to recruit, you may find they are not your three best. Every city and choir has different situations. What works for us may not work for you. Therefore, this article is designed to give you more ideas to try, or at least think about.

My only advice to you is to think differently than what you are used to. Forget about trying to recruit Germans. You want Americans who have an appreciation for German culture, and can sing.

To recap, we've looked at churches, church choirs, karaoke, bar/restaurants, Oktoberfest, and Christmas time as prime recruiting grounds.

So, what is left? How about places where German is taught? High school and college are likely. Perhaps you could meet with the instructor and offer your choir to sing for them, or they make a field trip to your rehearsal. After all, the best way to learn a language is to sing it. I once convinced a teacher to give a student (and singer) extra credit for translating a song into English. This is harder than it sounds, because poetic German had to be given as poetic English.

Another overlooked recruiting area is family. My experience is that sons and daughters are not interested until their own children are older. Grandchildren are good because they all look up to Oma and Opa, and love to emulate them. Singers just waiting to be asked.

When you get a new singer, they will need help. Perhaps help

them with the pronunciation of a song you are learning. Translate the song for them so they know what they are singing. That alone helps bring out the emotion of a song, as opposed to just singing words.

At practice, help the new singer by putting them next to strong singers. This helps them stay in tune. If your choir uses them, a practice CD with their part is very helpful.

Finally, keep trying. Just because something doesn't work the first time, don't give up. We keep trying all of the ideas I've written about because we have had success in all of them.....just takes longer in some areas.

In our area, we only have 130,000 people and have added 28 American born singers. Milwaukee is an hour away from us, and has TEN times our population. I would give my right arm to recruit up there. Chicago is also an hour away from us, and has FORTY times our population. I would give up my first-born to recruit new singers there. I point this out, because if we can do it.....so can you.

We are in our 50th year, and our current choir has only 10 German born singers, and 28 American. Our goal was 40 singers or 10 per section. However, with the success we have had, we are revising it to a stretch goal of 50 singers. Good luck and keep at it! You may be surprised at what happens.

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# Wisconsin District Choruses at Milwaukee's German Fest

The Wisconsin District Singers have been performing for the opening ceremony of Milwaukee's annual German Fest for over twenty-five years. Although the location of the opening ceremony within the Henry Meier Festival Park has changed over the years, the singers have been performing for enthusiastic audiences in the large Sprecher Oktoberfest tent near the main entrance in recent years. This past year they sang for over twenty minutes just prior to the start of the ceremony which officially opens the festival to welcome visitors for a weekend of Gemütlichkeit.



Doug Scott, director for the opening ceremony with singers from the Wisconsin Sangerbezirk at the opening ceremony.

On the Sunday morning of German Fest the singers assemble one more time as the Wisconsin Sangerbezirk Chorus for the traditional church service in the amphitheater on the south end of the German Fest grounds. The church service originally was ecumenical but in recent years has rotated with a Protestant Service one year and a Catholic Mass the next year. The choir shares the stage with the Freistadt Alte Kameraden Band for the hour long service featuring the musical talents of both groups.

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## *Sangertag 2018, Evansville, Indiana*

The dates for Sangertag 2018 are June 15 - 17, 2018. Hotel rooms have been blocked. The meeting room is reserved and there will be coffee and donuts for breakfast and lunch will be served. The contracts have been signed and the budget is being prepared to set the registration price. Glenn Boberg, Sangertag Chairperson, is attempting to keep the registration price in line with past meetings. More information to follow with the next Sanger Zeitung.

## More news would be good news

A lot of news here from Wisconsin, but they are not the only members of the Nord-Amerikanischer Sangerbund. There are over 70 choirs nationwide and we could sure use some news about your choir. Send your news to the Editor, Ron Kabitzke, e-mail: [lutheran@wi.rr.com](mailto:lutheran@wi.rr.com).

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Readers for the first and second lessons of scripture from Milwaukee's Kulturvereinigung Saturday School recite the readings in both English and German. The Officiant this year was newly installed Auxiliary Bishop James T. Schuerman of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.



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