



# CHAPTER THREE

## *LARGE GROUP PERFORMANCES*

### Engaging the Elderly

# LARGE GROUP PERFORMANCES



ENGAGING THE AUDIENCE

*<sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,*

*<sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest heavens,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." (Luke 2: 13-14)*



*Painting by Tissot: Shepherd and the Angels*

Ladies and gentlemen, please study the amazing painting by Tissot above and note the description in Scripture from Luke of a great company of heavenly host that appeared with the angel to announce the birth of Jesus. Although scholars debate whether the singing came from the voices of angels or other heavenly beings, we can be assured that a group or choir announced the birth of our Lord.

Also, it gives us an indication of what God thinks about the importance of singing as a group of people together in praise to him. Isn't it thrilling to know that those lowly shepherds, viewed as outcasts in the eyes of society, were offered the gift of hearing the musical sounds of heaven that awaits the ears of every Believer someday?

Certainly, Scripture offers numerous verses that either depict a group of people praising God in song or encourages every individual to do the same on a daily basis. Thus, a choir of worshipers sang at every service in the Jewish Temple as a part of the religious ceremony, and also as a response to receiving blessings. Additionally, research is filled with descriptions of the role music and dance played at Jewish wedding ceremonies held in private residences. Also, as the children of Israel climbed the hill up to the Temple, the Psalms of Ascent flowed as music from their lips in praise to the Father. Isaiah 55:12 substantiates the importance of music in God's mind with the verse: **"For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."**

Another, more current example of the significance of music to the survival of the human race occurred during the 18th and 19th centuries in the United States when slavery existed, motivating groups of African Americans to sing together the words from the spiritual song "Go Down Moses":

*"Go down, Moses  
'Way down in Egypt land,  
Tell ole Pharaoh,  
To let my people go."*

Then, later on during the Civil Rights Movement, African Americans would lift their voices with great purpose and sing the beautiful old spiritual, "We Shall Over Come".

*"We shall overcome,  
we shall overcome,  
we shall overcome someday!  
Oh, deep in my heart I do believe  
we shall overcome someday!"*

Folks, there is simply no way to measure the impact of singing these spirituals during this cruel time when freedom for these children of God did not exist, as it related to their very survival individually, and as a people. They were not only lifting their voices up to God as a cry for assistance and courage but allowing music to bring the world's attention to their plight in the process.

Given the fact that Holy Script is replete with verses that include music and dance as ways to praise and communicate to God, the writer went on a search to locate the benefits of singing in a group for all of us. Not only is there a magnificence attached to the sounds of musical strains saturating every square inch of a large sanctuary, but a mystery as to why they address each worshiper's brain in a customized manner. Researchers are fascinated by the human brain's ability to enrich a single note of music for each listener in a way that is amazing and according to need. Perhaps this puzzle is due to the mystery still not uncovered of the location in the brain from where emotions emanate.

In this collection, the focus will be on benefits received from music by individual listeners, as well as those performing in a large group for an audience. Additionally, ways to engage the elderly in music will be the thrust of every category explored. Above all, the point will be stressed to remember that

singing does not require a person to be a professional or even possess the ability to carry a tune. Since God hears our voice in perfect harmony, *"Sing when the Spirit says sing!"*

An article written by Stacy Horn that was published in Time Magazine reveals some astounding evidence of the impact and benefits music has on man in a variety of ways. Horn stated: *"When you sing, musical vibrations move through you, altering your physical and emotional landscape. Group singing, for those who have done it, is the most exhilarating and transformative of all. It takes something incredibly intimate, a sound that begins inside you, shares it with a roomful of people and it comes back as something even more thrilling: harmony."*

Ladies and gentlemen, if you have ever enjoyed a concert or cantata sung by a choir, Horn's remarks should be easily internalized. Repeatedly, this writer has witnessed waves of jubilation sweep throughout the congregation as a body of voices are lifted in praise to the Lord. Even more fascinating is to observe the body language of the listeners; depending on how the brain is receiving the strains. Sometimes, tears of joy or sadness will flow unabashedly down their cheeks, while a gentle shower of blessings appears to have relaxed the physical being of others. Several will even have hands raised in the air as a praise to God and will be swaying back and forth as a demonstration of their feelings. Folks, there is nothing more precious than to soak in the reaction of a sweet old saint quietly listening to the strains of a familiar hymn with so much emotion that one can almost see peace like a river gently flowing as it saturates the soul.

Thus, as a constant reminder of the importance in lifting our voices in praise to our Creator, let us commit to memory the Scripture from Psalm 138:5 that reads, *"They shall sing in the ways of the Lord---*". All it requires to establish the importance for this memorization process is to bring to mind the moment our fetters fell off while kneeling at the foot of the cross; a time so important to the Father that at the happening, all the heavenly hosts broke forth in song out of gladness that a soul had just been forgiven.

Certainly, this writer recalls the reaction of her own earthly father after he had witnessed his youngest daughter's decision to give her life to Christ. He was so full of joy on the return trip home from church that, after crossing the Elk Creek bridge, he proceeded to honk his car horn for a half a mile up a hill to Grandpa and Grandma's home, waking them out of a sound sleep. Then, after getting them up, our family gathered in their living room for a time of singing and rejoicing. Since Scripture describes the heavenly hosts as breaking forth in song when a child of God asks for forgiveness of sin, let us add to this special evening, the setting being that of an ordinary country home, along with voices emanating from the celestial city. How exciting! And.... all those repenting of sin receive the same response! How thrilling to internalize the fact that our Heavenly Father loves each one of us to that extent!

### Large Group Singing for Health Care Facilities

The method most community members throughout the world choose as their way of ministering to the elderly population residing in health care facilities, is performing as a group; mainly at Christmas time. This being the most frequent method of choice, it seemed only natural to use this technique as a starting point for music engagement.

In other words, rather than the community group performing for the elderly people being the entire focus, how might the listener be more involved and literally become a part of the program? What would be some techniques visiting performers could use to engage the listener?

In order to accomplish this task, it was obvious that a pilot needed to be conducted through the cooperation of a single large performing group so that several techniques could be applied or adjusted for the creation of a model.

Therefore, Schweitzer United Methodist Church choir director, Cheryl Moll, was contacted to see if she would join in the effort by using a group already visiting nursing homes called,

**“The Senior Saints & Joy Pickers”.** This particular choir of approximately 25-30 retired individuals used a combination of voices accompanied by musical instruments that had a reputation for playing lively music that caused toes to tap. Thus, after receiving a nod from everyone involved, the project was off and running.

Ladies and gentlemen, after laying the groundwork, it took only one performance to realize that we had struck gold. In order for you to be able to take advantage of the model, please now enjoy the photographs of this wonderful happening.

## **GATHER THE RESIDENTS!**

- 1) Talk About the Event prior to happening:** As the date for the performance nears, remind the residents that it is almost time to hear the group. Tell them how wonderful the music was in the past. This creates interest and gives them something to look forward to in their lives. They will also invite their family members to attend.
- 2) Needs of the performing group:** Prior to the day of the performance, make contact with the music director or person in charge to inquire about their needs. (Number of participants, chairs, piano) Then have the space set up well in advance of their arrival. You can even ask about the pieces they will be performing and have fun practicing some of the songs with the residents in advance.
- 3) 15 minutes prior to the performance, go from room to room and gather the residents.** Remember, the aging process causes the elderly to forget. Even though they want to come, they will not recall the day or time. Think your calendar of events posted in their rooms or on a board in the hallway is enough???? Think again! Go get the residents!
- 4) Activity Director:** Introduce your performing group in a way that will not only welcome them, but also remind your audience to sing, clap, and move in time with the pieces of music. This not only engages the audience, but also shows respect to those performing. After all, they have given time prior to visiting the facility practicing the chosen selections. Groups want to perform at facilities where engagement takes place. Proof: Watch the reactions on the faces of the performers when they spot the residents taking part!



**Activity Director Tim Introducing the  
Senior Saints & Joy Pickers**



# **SCHWEITZER SENIOR SAINTS & JOY PICKERS**

*SCHWEITZER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
Springfield, Missouri*



*MUSIC DIRECTOR CHERYLL MOLL INTRODUCES  
EACH SELECTION!*



*Anticipation*



*LET THE SINGING BEGIN !*



*And...sing they did!*





*Songs the residents sang when in their 20's were selected.*



*They picked and sang!*



The residents were  
given: **INSTRUMENTS**



*And...then what happened?*



**Watch the brain on music!**



# Trouble & Double Trouble!





**Go  
Girl!**



**And...The Beat Goes On &  
On & On!**



## DANCING & NOISE!



# CLAPPING & JOY



# TENDER MOMENTS



**TOUCHED MY HEART!**

Makes me want  
to sing!



**AMAZING GRACE!**



*THAT SAVED A WRETCH LIKE  
ME!*





## SAVORING THE MOMENT!

*Think this is wonderful? It has just begun! Enjoy the program unfold in the remaining chapters. You will see dancing, the birth of a nursing home choir, videos and those old saints lifting the rafters! Who says old people are over the hill? Don't believe it for a moment!*