

My civic engagement activity

The Goethe School



My civic engagement activity is a very interesting and exciting one.

In this magazine, I will inform you in detail about the best civic engagement activity I can imagine.

Henri Duin





About the author

Henri Duin is 14 years old and in the 9th grade at Goethe School in Essen-Bredeney.

Already when he was 6 years old he started to love singing; initially he was a member of the “Spatzenchor”, afterwards he was part of the “Schwalbenchor”; both belong to the “Musische Akademie Emden”.

During this time period he had the opportunity to participate several times in the traditional Christmas concert in the “Martin-Luther” Church in Emden. In each concert the young performers were watched by more than 1000 visitors.

After Henri Duin had moved from East Frisia to Essen, he sang for the “Goethespatzen” Choir for two years; meanwhile he has been part of the big school choir of Goethe School for three years.

Henri is sure that further years will follow...

Preface: What do I get out of it?

Dear readers,

What do you do in the afternoon or at the weekend when you do not work or go to school? Many students do nothing. Nothing useful things, I mean. They don't do sports, don't do any creative things or civic engagement activities. When you ask them to become involved they only say: "Why? What do I get out of it?"

No, I don't mean that such activities like playing FIFA on the XBOX or watching TV are forbidden. No, but it is simply not good, when somebody sits all the time in his room and plays computer games. The right mix is important. I mean, when you have a choir rehearsal and golf training or other things once or twice a week and homework to do, then it is okay when you play a video game sometimes.

It might be that you think I sound like a boss which tells you what you have to do or not to do, don't you? No, I don't want to tell you what is good for you. I don't force you to do anything, I only want to give you a recommendation, because its unhealthy, when you play too much.

However, especially civic engagement activities are very good for you and other people! You help others and maybe even yourself! This is so good! I want to show you now one civic engagement activity which I do at the moment and is a very nice one, I think!

I wish you a pleasant time with this magazine!

Henri Duin

Chief Editor

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The Choir in general – important facts

First of all, I want to present you the choir in general. General information and facts are after all the most important things when you want to get to know something.

The Choir of the Goethe School Essen is an after-school club which rehearses¹ many songs for two concerts in a year. The activity is voluntary – but you can get points for it in the “Oberstufe”.

The choir rehearsal takes place every Monday at five o’clock in the auditorium of the Goetheschule. It takes one and a half hour until half past six.

Everyone who is in the classes 7 to 12 can participate in the choir. Remember: you don’t have to be a world-class-singer! There are many guys who are in the voice break² and cannot strike the right note like as otherwise and I know a few guys who aren’t the best musicians and sing in a choir too... “The children have the right not to strike the right note for now so that they can explore their own voice”, our choirmaster³ said once in an interview of the WAZ.



Every year about 120 girls and boys are in the choir. However, there is a choir for the younger guys at our school too, its name is “Goethespatzen”.

At concerts the Goethe School Orchestra (in which you can participate too! – but I’ll tell you nothing in this magazine! 😊) accompanies the choir. This sounds even better. 😊

We sing very different songs. The spectrum of the songs we sing is very big and varied: songs from the Renaissance, however, we sing more modern pop songs too, additional “a-cappella”-songs and jazz music.

Once a year the choir does a trip to Aachen which is very cool too.

Our motivation – why do we sing in a choir?

We don't do this without any reasons – that would be absurd. The majority of the choir members have reasons for that which I tell you now.

First of all, we want to impress and satisfy⁴ the concert visitors at our concerts. After all they even pay 7.50€ to see us and then we have to sing very well! (Our choirmaster Mrs. Zywietz-Godland says this sometimes too...). In addition, it is great to invite your family members to a concert – they will be proud of you! No matter, if it was great or terrible...

Besides, we want to improve our singing skills when we are in the choir so that we get a better grade when we have a singing test in class every semester. This is really true because the students who are in the choir often have better grades in the singing tests than the ones who aren't. However, we want to sing well not only for music lessons, but also for our whole life. Furthermore, singing in a choir is a great way to relax from all the stress from everyday life.



You also can see now how others benefit from singing in a choir. When a choir has concerts, many people come to it.

Then they see maybe (in our case, of course! ☺) a beautiful concert, so they can benefit from our activity because they had a nice time during the concert. And the choir members have health advantages (you will read more about that later). You can call this a “Win-Win-Situation”. In our case, we use the money to finance a choir trip once a year. To this, I come now.

But the main reason because we sing is: it is fun!!!

The choir trip – only a big fun?

Once a year the whole choir (though, mostly not the whole choir comes along) goes on a trip to Aachen. Mostly, this is very funny. I tell you now more about it.

The choir trip is every year in September and takes 3 days. Our choirmaster, Mrs. Zywietz-Godland, books a youth hostel in Aachen every year. In this youth hostel are many rooms in which we can rehearse better for our concerts. We rehearse in different voice samples⁵ in different rooms but sometimes we mix the voice samples so that different voices rehearse together. I describe now how a such choir trip works:



On a Wednesday afternoon (mostly 16 o'clock) we leave for Aachen. Our first rehearsal is in the evening. Afterwards, we play little games, the first children have to go to bed between half past nine and ten o'clock. This is the youth hostel in Aachen

At the next day, we have a rehearsal during the morning. After lunch, we do a little tour of the city of Aachen. Every year we do this little tour. But there are differences: this year we did a guided tour through the old historical town hall which was very interesting. In the year before we did a guided tour through the famous Aachen cathedral which was very exciting, I think. In addition to this, we can walk through Aachen and see the beautiful downtown area. At about 16.30 o'clock we are back in the hostel and rehearse again.

On the last day, we do a rehearsal all together at the end so that we see what we have already learned.

Mostly, the choir trip is a very good help to understand and sing the songs better so that we can return and say that it was a very useful thing.

Our choirmaster – a very cool person!

Our choirmaster is not just a choirmaster. She is music teacher at the Goethe School, soprano and conductress⁶. She founded the Choir and the Orchestra in 1984! In addition to this, she has led the “LandesJugendChor Nordrhein-Westfalen” since 1989 with her husband.

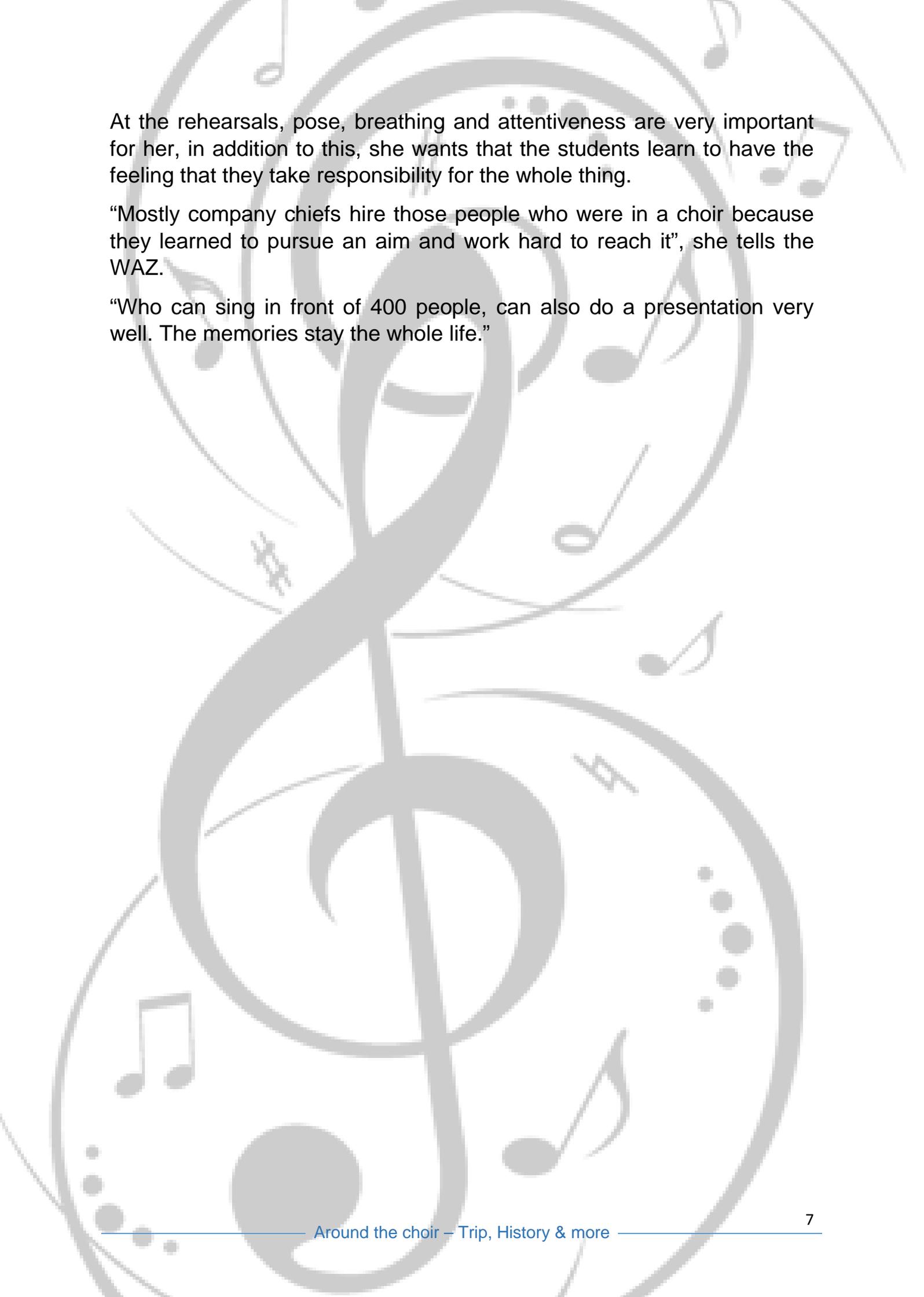
Mrs. Zywietz-Godland studied school music, anglistics⁷ and choir management at the university in Essen and Cologne. She participated in many conducting courses⁸ and completed a vocal training⁹. As a singer, she took part in many concert tours of many famous choirs. Moreover, she formed many Oratorios and chamber concerts¹⁰.

In 1984 she founded the choir. “I’ve got to know the hard music world myself, that’s why I have chosen the music teacher profession for me because I like to see what the students are doing from what you offer them.”, she said in an Interview with the WAZ in 2014. “As a choirmaster,



you need a lot of patience and humour and you must tolerate that the boys grunt more than they sing when they have their voice break”, Mrs. Zywietz-Godland added. Over the last 32 years she found and promoted many talents who became famous musicians later.

“It is not about fun. For that our effort is too big. We want to reach our aims”, she said to the newspaper. Usually she prepares the songs for the Christmas concerts already in the summer holidays. Her husband – he is choirmaster at another school in Essen too – mostly helps her.



At the rehearsals, pose, breathing and attentiveness are very important for her, in addition to this, she wants that the students learn to have the feeling that they take responsibility for the whole thing.

“Mostly company chiefs hire those people who were in a choir because they learned to pursue an aim and work hard to reach it”, she tells the WAZ.

“Who can sing in front of 400 people, can also do a presentation very well. The memories stay the whole life.”

A loooooooooooooong history...

The Christmas concerts in 1984 were the first concerts which the choir did. From then, many concerts were shown on the stage from the auditorium in the Goethe School Essen, the choir grew and grew to what it is now. A loooooooooooooong history begins...

In December 1984, the first concerts took place in the Goethe School. The Choir sang excerpts from Georg Friedrich Händel's "Messiah". From this time the choir prepared two different concert programs every year and showed it in 9 concerts per year. The spectrum of songs is very big and varied: songs from the Renaissance to modern ones, "a-cappella"-songs and jazz.

New young guys from the "Gothespatzen" often get along very well with the older boys and girls. And it has happened that students, who already had the "Abitur", stayed in the choir for a few years longer, although they weren't students anymore.



When you are very good at singing, you can be nominated for the "LandesJugendChor Nordrhein-Westfalen", which Mrs. Zywietz-Godland leads, too. In this choir are only the best singers from North-Rhine-Westphalia.

In 2014 – 30 years after Mrs. Zywietz-Godland founded the choir – we sang as an anniversary the same songs (Messiah) again. That was great.

At the moment, we sing among other songs the song "Zadok the Priest", which was made by Händel too, for the coronation¹¹ of King George II in 1727 and has been played since that year at every coronation of an English king or queen. It is also known as the UEFA Champions League Hymn.

Only for fun? What we learn + Facts about a very special activity

Singing is a lot of fun but you also learn much for your life and your professional career. It is beneficial for the health, too. I explain you now what is so good about singing, what you learn at the same time and if singing people live longer than the ones who don't.

At first I'll describe the physical advantages of singing.

Singing deepens¹² the breathing, that's why there is a better oxygen supply¹³ of the body organs and the brain. Additionally, intensive, periodical singing increases the Cardiovascular fitness¹⁴.



Professional singers also have a higher heart rate variability¹⁵ (this is an important value for fitness). This heart rate variability in a singer is as high as in an endurance runner¹⁶.

In addition, singing makes happy! When you sing the body releases happiness hormones. Besides, singing strengthens¹⁷ the immune system. Trials showed¹⁸ that

when you sing the percentage of Immunoglobulin A in the blood rises. (Immunoglobulin A combats¹⁹ pathogens²⁰.)

Finally, singing ensures²¹ that the body reduces stress hormones.

Explorers detected that singing people live longer than the ones who don't. According to that, Swedish scientists examined over 12 000 people in the 1990s and discovered that members of a choir have a bigger life expectancy²². Very young kids who sing have advantages, too: their language, thinking and coordination are developed better than in the case of others.

Next, I'll present you psychic advantages of singing. First, singing strengthens the self-confidence (this may be useful in the job) and the self-worth, and it creates affinity²³.

But this is not all, we learn a few things in the choir, too. At first, you discover how to listen carefully. You get an opportunity to work on your ear, too. I mean, to pick your part out of the other voices which surround you is a quite good practice for your ear. In a choir, you often improve your social skills, that means in a choir are many people with the same interests or taste of music.



Moreover, you learn multi-tasking in a choir. Really! You have to watch the choirmaster to look what he or she is doing, keep an eye on the notes and know when to sing. At concerts, this is easy because I know the text by heart²⁴ and can look at the choirmaster then. You see, this trains your memory too. And you have to concentrate on your performance during the whole gig too. Very easy...

Over three million people in Germany sing in a choir. However, a few experts say that fewer and fewer people sing themselves, especially during Christmas time. A reason for that could be that many people had bad experiences with singing when they were children or somebody said them they couldn't sing. But this is not true. I think: Who can speak, can sing too.

And now an interesting fact at the end: Did you know that the human being could sing before he could speak? Yeah, this is true because the voice can more than speaking. In Stone Age²⁵, for example, singing had other advantages, e.g. for a woman a singing man was more attractive than a one who didn't. For a woman singing had another function, namely that they communicated or calmed their children. But one characteristic of singing was especially important: singing strengthens the solidarity! Music is something joint²⁶ and joint activities strengthen the solidarity in a group. This was important when they wanted to survive.

All in all, you can say that singing is a very nice activity with which you can have fun and you can do something for your health at the same time.

(yeah, in my example it wasn't 100 percent public but all in all "normal" choirs are public.

- 5) Mostly, Civic Engagement Activities are done together with other people. But that includes not only participating, but rather offering criticism against somebody or other forms of self-organizing.

Well, that were all points. All in all, you can say that civic engagement activities are such ones in which you have to invest time, money or/and other things. The aim is the strengthening of the social community and the public welfare.

Civic Engagement Activities - Examples

There are so many examples of Civic Engagement Activities.

I will show you now a few ones so that you have an idea:

- 1) First there is an easy membership or an active cooperation (whatever you like ☺) in a sports club (e.g. foot-, basket-, volleyball), an organization or a party.
- 2) Second, there is the voluntary, unpaid work in caricatural institutions like hospitals, schools or museums.
- 3) Then there is the political engagement: you can vote at a voting or at a plebiscite.
- 4) In addition to this, you can take part in a demonstration for or against something, e.g. the anti-nuclear-movement or the feminist movement.
- 5) Finally, you can donate to churches or foundations.

That weren't all things you can do. In the internet, you find many other activities which you can do in your free time.

And, remember one thing: all these activities have one in common:

They are so good for our community!

And what did I learn? A little review by me

Of course, you can write a review or a reflection only when you already did something. In this case, I do a little reflection of my last years in the choir.

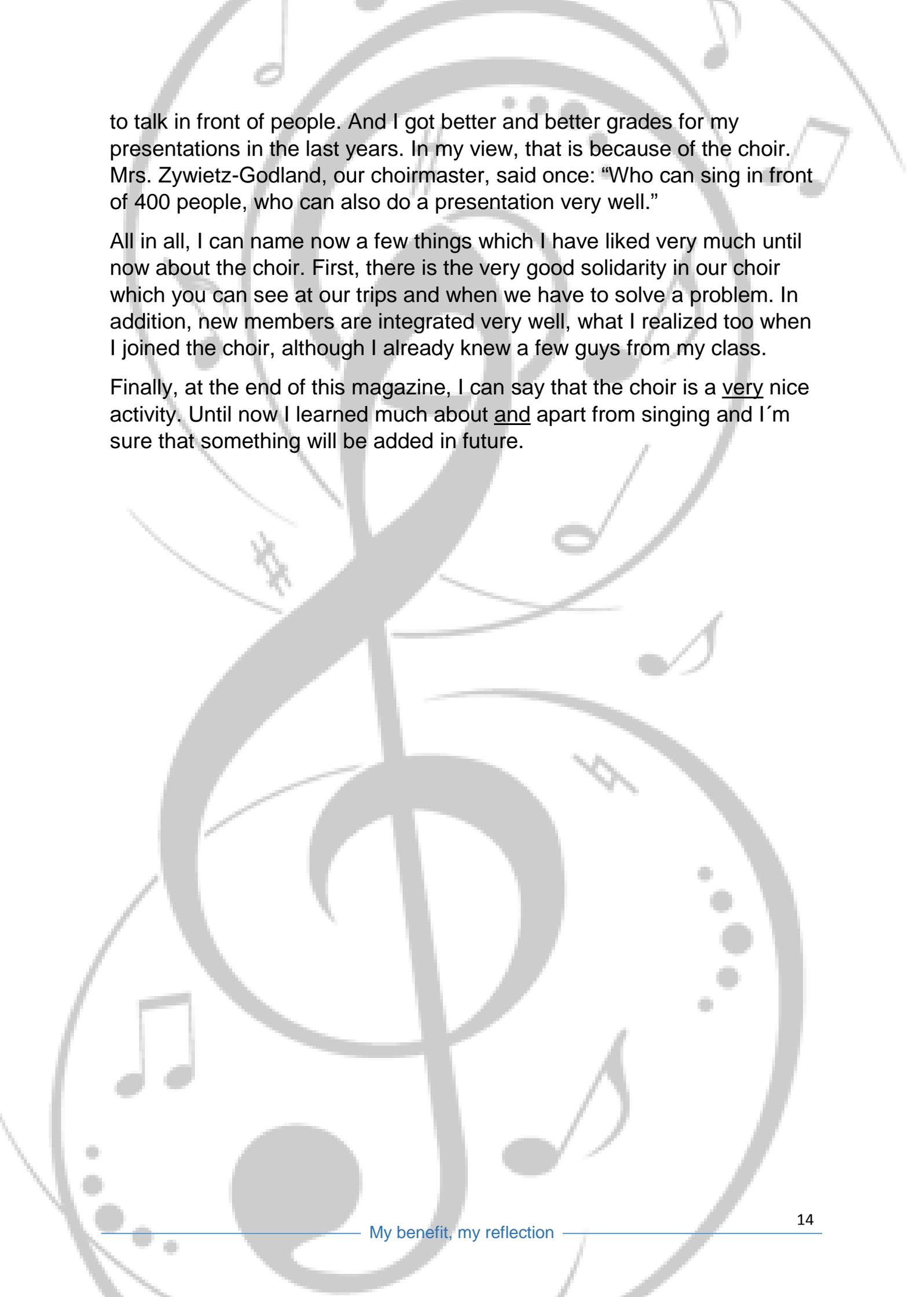
When I came to a rehearsal for the first time, it all was very unusual for me because in the choir I had been before it was different. Now we had 4 different voice groups: Soprano, alto, tenor and bass. So, I and a few other students had to sing to our choirmaster because she had to say in which voice group we had to go – although I had done this already in class when we had our singing tests it was very unpleasant to me again. However, in such a situation you learn to cope with unpleasant situations better and become more confident.

In addition to this, until now, we had very complicated songs in different languages. An example: last year we had songs with texts from the Middle Ages²⁷! This is very complicated to learn sometimes. So, I can say that you learn complicated things to understand better and faster. This can be good later in the job.

Additionally, I learned that singing is good for your health! The whole stuff (yeah, not all, but a few things) which I wrote a few pages ago, I learned from our choirmaster because she told us!

Furthermore, singing is quite good for our community. Singing brings people of different cultures or even hostile peoples together! A good example is that people of different nations, e.g. Israelites and Arabs, meet every evening at the beach of the Red Sea. Another sample: There are many choirs in other cities which admit refugees too because singing is a good medium to learn the language – as I already explained – and in a choir, people improve their social skills and this is important to integrate refugees.

And there is another thing too: when I came to the grammar school, I couldn't do a presentation very well...I didn't like it to speak in front of a group at all. But during the last months, I realized that I don't find it bad



to talk in front of people. And I got better and better grades for my presentations in the last years. In my view, that is because of the choir. Mrs. Zywietz-Godland, our choirmaster, said once: "Who can sing in front of 400 people, who can also do a presentation very well."

All in all, I can name now a few things which I have liked very much until now about the choir. First, there is the very good solidarity in our choir which you can see at our trips and when we have to solve a problem. In addition, new members are integrated very well, what I realized too when I joined the choir, although I already knew a few guys from my class.

Finally, at the end of this magazine, I can say that the choir is a very nice activity. Until now I learned much about and apart from singing and I'm sure that something will be added in future.

Pictures

On this page you find a few impressions of our choir and the concerts.



You see the choir at a concert in 2010 (left picture) and at a summer concert in 2014.



This is a picture of one Christmas concert last year.

And here you see one picture of the “Goethespatzen”, the school choir for the younger guys.



This picture was taken in front of our school.



This picture is from a Christmas concert in 2004 as you can see, because of the Christmas tree in the background.

Vocabulary List

Maybe you read through this magazine and did not understand a few words. That's why I created a little vocabulary list for those words.

Number	English	German
1	(to) rehearse	proben
2	voice break	Stimmbruch
3	choirmaster	Chorleiter/-in (Chorleiterin)
4	(to) satisfy	jemanden zufriedenstellen
5	voice samples	Stimmproben (alle „Mitglieder“ einer Stimme sitzen in verschiedenen Räumen und proben ihren Text)
6	conductress	Leiter/-in
7	anglistics	Anglistik (Wissenschaft der englischen Sprache und Kultur)
8	conducting course	Dirigierkurs
9	vocal training	Gesangsausbildung
10	chamber concerts	Kammerkonzerte
11	coronation	Krönung
12	(to) deepen	etwas vertiefen, stärken
13	oxygen supply	Sauerstoffversorgung
14	Cardiovascular fitness	Herz-Kreislauf-Fitness
15	Heart rate variability	Herzratenvariabilität
16	Endurance runner	Dauerläufer
17	(to) strengthen sth.	etwas (ver)stärken
18	Trials showed	Studien haben ergeben
19	(to) combat	bekämpfen
20	pathogens	Krankheitserreger
21	(to) ensure that	für etwas sorgen
22	Life expectancy	Lebenserwartung
23	affinity	Zugehörigkeit, Affinität
24	by heart	auswendig
25	Stone Age	Steinzeit
26	joint	gemeinschaftlich
27	Middle Age	Mittelalter

Sources

Text (read on 10/18/16, 10/19/16, 10/20/16 and on 05/11/16 again):

- Interview with Mrs. Zywietz-Godland:
Elli Schulz: Chorgesang schult seit 30 Jahren fürs berufliche Leben: <http://www.derwesten.de/staedte/essen/sued/chorgesang-schult-seit-30-jahren-fuer-das-berufsleben-id10102094.html>

Other information (all read on 05/11/16 again to check):

- <http://www.ljc-nrw.de/7-0-Die-Chorleiter.html>
- <http://www.goethemusik.de/index.php/ensembles/grosser-chor>
- <http://www.goethemusik.de/index.php/ensembles/bredeneyer-schulorchester?id=2>
- <http://www.goethemusik.de/index.php/ensembles/grosser-chor/22-unsere-chre-und-orchester-seit-1972?showall=1&limitstart=>
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- <http://www.dummies.com/art-center/music/singing/the-benefits-of-singing-in-the-choir/>
- <http://www.rylanholey.com/2012/06/top-10-reasons-why-you-should-join-a-choir/>

Pictures (all downloaded on 10/20/2016)

- Background Picture on the Title Page: self-taken at the summer concerts in 2016
- Picture on page 4:
<https://stbarnabasclaphamcommon.wordpress.com/category/worship-2/>
- Picture on page 5: https://www.cartoonstock.com/directory/m/musical_theaters.asp
- Picture on page 6: self-taken on 09/04/15
- Picture on page 7: <http://www.ljc-nrw.de/7-0-Die-Chorleiter.html>
- Picture on page 9: https://de.pinterest.com/pam_schrock/choir/
- Pictures on page 10:
http://www.sparkpeople.com/mypage_public_journal_individual.asp?blog_id=4106935 **and** <http://www.stphilipmillersville.org/2016/09/15/parish-news/choir>
- Picture on page 11: <http://www.govst.edu/Service/>
- Pictures on the top on page 13: <http://www.goethemusik.de/index.php/medien/galerie>
- Picture on the bottom on page 13: <http://www.goetheschule-essen.de/die-schule/geschichte/chronik/dezember-2015.html>
- Picture on the top right on page 14: <http://www.essener-ruhrperlen.de/bredeney/historische-gebäude-in-bredeney/goetheschule/>
- Pictures on the top left and on the bottom on page 14:
<http://www.goethemusik.de/index.php/medien/galerie>