

An Interview with David Lang, Artistic Director of the Reston Chorale

By Patricia O. Pearson

Just minutes into David Lang's audition with the Reston Chorale last spring, choristers knew they had found their new conductor. Now preparing for the final concert in his first season as artistic director, we asked David Lang about this new direction in his musical career.

Lang's well-known work as an organist and accompanist led him into directing church choirs. "When I began conducting my very first choir," he says, "I studied voice, I read books, I went to workshops and conferences and made it my business to learn how to coach, teach, and conduct a choir, not just wave my hands. As I began to see the fruits of my labor, I realized how much fun I was having. I really enjoy the choral experience."

It was serendipitous that the Reston Chorale began its search for a director just as David Lang, who was then accompanist and assistant to the director of the Master Chorale of Washington began to wonder what it was like on the podium. "The timing was perfect. Master Chorale folded, and I was forced out of the nest," he admits. "I was very interested in conducting a community choir. I knew it would be different from a church choir. There would be opportunities to perform larger scale pieces as well as non-sacred works. While I was confident about taking on a big chorale job, I was nervous also. I had never conducted or prepared a jazz program."

How does he view his first year with the Reston Chorale?

"The biggest success has been the overwhelming excitement about our first two concerts. I have noticed a remarkable surge of energy and quality in our performances, and this moves audiences." Lang anticipates the same kind of excitement on May 16 when the chorale will perform works from Beethoven and Cherubini.

What does Lang see going forward?

"My vision for the Reston Chorale is to bring the music we perform to our audiences as the composer intended it to be heard. The ongoing challenge will be that of funding so that we are able to present the best possible product to our audiences."

As artistic director, Lang is well aware that meeting the costs of rehearsal space, music, and hiring instrumentalists for concerts is difficult in good times; in hard times, when public and private arts money is reduced, it's even more difficult. David Lang knows the chorale must rely more than ever on private donations, but he remains undaunted by the challenges ahead.

"What amazes me is the rich history and tradition of the Reston Chorale. Community choirs

are an indication of the importance of culture. They are organizations for people with similar interests; a means of education and inspiration not only for those singing, but also for those listening. Reston has proclaimed a commitment to the arts by supporting a chorale for over forty years!”

For David Lang, the opportunity to direct the more than one hundred members of the Reston Chorale is “a dream come true.”