

Silver Linings: Commitment and Engagement

By David L. Mennicke



At Concordia University, St. Paul, we've been fortunate to have been able to meet face-to-face, with distancing, masks, and 30-minute rehearsal times. This has led us to working on less literature and more focus on skill-building. Unable to do live concerts, we've engaged in sharing recorded videos of our music. The "silver linings" have been manifold:

- Growth in musical/vocal independence
- With greater distancing of singers, I and the singers can distinguish individuals who are singing well, or who need assistance
- That distancing, and doing less literature, has led us to greater attention on details, with each singer becoming more aware of and owning of their own performance
- Putting out our concerts on video has reached a greater (and very appreciative) audience
- We've learned and made use of technological teaching aids that we didn't access before the pandemic (including guest clinicians and collaborations at a distance)

Perhaps the greatest "silver lining" has been the palpable increase in singers' level of commitment and engagement in our choral community. The glamorous aspects (concerts, tour) were taken away from us, but what remains—making music together in community—is more than enough. Learning and embracing the intrinsic value of our precious art is a wonderful gift that will carry us into the future.

Dr. David L. Mennicke is Professor of Music / Director of Choral Studies and Coordinator of Ensembles & Recruitment/Chapel Cantor at Concordia University in St. Paul, Minnesota.