

Annual Meeting: May 2019

**Remarks by Dr. George Case**

What a year! We have tackled the most challenging music we have sung in NCS during my tenure thus far! And sung it with beauty and great accomplishment. You should be very proud of yourselves, as I am! This year has been filled with American music and interactions with wonderful soloists and most especially Andrew Maxfield as our composer in residence. Andrew asked me to share this letter with you:

Dear George and Everyone Who Makes NCS So Great,

Being your Composer-in-Residence has been a highlight of my recent life. Each drive up to Newburyport reminded me of what a special, beautiful place it is and what terrific people you are.

Thank you for treating my music so well! I was delighted with the performances. I enjoyed the opportunities to interact with you in December, during April's Saturday presentation for the choir, at the May lectures and concerts, and mingling in the margins. I certainly hope we have the chance to collaborate again!

How many of the world's ills would dissolve if people everywhere sang in choirs together? Can't you just imagine members of Congress taking a quick break from political haranguing, mixing into sections, and singing Copland? I mean, it's easy to question your neighbor's intonation, but hard to hate your neighbor when you're making music together! Well, maybe it's a silly dream or just a nice metaphor, but I'll cast my vote for singing and more singing. Hats off to NCS for modeling the kind of community that can be created and sustained through music. I wish you success as you recruit new generations into this kind of community and continue to be a voice for the kind of America I'd like to live in.

Warmly yours,  
Andrew Maxfield

High praise, indeed! And I will echo many of his thoughts.

First, we must begin with gratitude. I am grateful to my collaborator and dear friend Kirsten, who though not here tonight, is one of the best colleagues I have enjoyed in my career. She is truly an NCS treasure. In addition, many thanks and congratulations to Conor for his work and his leadership this year. We look forward to continuing under your baton next year, Conor, and thank you for your cheerful spirit, wonderful musicianship, and contributions to our community. Finally, a thank you that will be echoed many times this evening... to you the board of directors, your leadership, stewardship, and passion for this organization is unmatched and the greatest key to our success. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

In this speech every year, I take a moment to reflect upon the successes of the year and a moment to think ahead to the future. This year, I'd like to do something slightly different: I'd like to reflect on the past five years as we have grown together and how we then look towards the future.

I would like to take this opportunity to say how thankful I am for my time with the Newburyport Choral Society over the past five seasons. Together with Solomon and Joanne's leadership and an extremely dedicated and productive board, we have reinvigorated an organization, developed it artistically and financially, served the people of Newburyport with great concerts, and remained a cultural force on the north shore. I am proud to be a part of this legacy and proud of the work we have done.

When I reflect on my time as Music Director, I am drawn first and foremost to the excitement and spirit that has characterized my time with NCS. The chorus has grown in

skill and number, and it is a decidedly more energetic musical community than when I first began. I believe it is from here that all truly great music making – and truly the purpose for a community organization – derives: this sense of joy in our work, love and service of our community, and a person-first orientation.

Secondly, I am reminded of great musical successes, most especially our All-Beethoven Concert, which featured Kirsten at the piano and was the first of many “firsts” for our organization during my tenure. Other “firsts” are the composer-in-residence relationship with Andrew Maxfield, the successes year after year of our December concerts and the solidified relationship with the Greater Newburyport Children’s Chorus, and of course *Annelies*.

Thirdly, the orchestra and soloists during these five years have increased in quality. We have become a place that people want to sing and play and truly value the work that we do. This was never more evident than in the *Annelies* program and all of the exceptional community engagement work done around that concert. To have the orchestra and soloist thank me for the opportunity to be a part of this program and to be a part of the Newburyport Choral Society speaks to the quality with which we have gone about our business. It is from the *Annelies* concert onwards that I experienced the remarkably strong commitment of this board to this organization. It was a watershed moment for us, and I believe will be something from which the board can draw inspiration for a long time to come.

Finally, I am proud of the structural changes we have made together for the betterment of NCS. The Board is more facile, more technologically relevant, and more easily able to adapt to change and meet challenge. The addition of the Assistant Conductor position and the relationship built with Boston Conservatory at Berklee through this relationship puts NCS on a footing shared by few other choruses. The chorus and organization are able to

deploy resources and more fully support concert programming, which is crucial to the success of any organization.

It is with gratitude and sadness that I announce that the 2019-2020 season will be my final season as Music Director. Life takes us in different directions and that means joinings that bring joy and partings that are unlooked for.

My desire in announcing my departure more than a season in advance is to give adequate time for the Board of Directors to fully engage a new Music Director. NCS will always have a friend and champion in me.

I know that NCS has a bright future. I am proud to have served as Music Director immediately following Dr. Weale's multiple decade tenure, and I know that more great music making is ahead for this organization under its next Music Director. The assets of the chorus are unmatched: a dedicated board of directors, an exceptional music staff, and a loving and dedicated membership. The next Music Director will be greeted with much to take NCS into its next chapter.

I will miss making music with NCS; I will miss my fellow board members; and I will miss the community of Newburyport – I will miss each and every one of you. I will never be able to adequately express my gratitude for the relationships built here, for the music we have made, and for this chapter in my life.

We head into the next year, with a choral society poised for a year of great music making, of celebration, of goodbyes, and of a bright and joyous future. The December concert will uplift and excite our audiences, as usual, and Elijah will truly be an experience fitting for the 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this extraordinary choral society. I look forward to spending this next year with you, my dear NCS.

Thank you, from the bottom of my heart.