



Continuation Utrecht Cathedral Choir In Danger

Due to the announced, major cutbacks at the end of this year, the continued existence of the Kathedrale Koor Utrecht (KKU) will be seriously threatened. The KKU fears that the superb quality of the choir and its unique repertoire will be lost. Also the connection with talented young singers of the Utrecht Cathedral Choir can no longer be guaranteed. In order to avert this disaster the choir is now urgently looking for means to be able to continue at the same quality level after November 2020.

The Kathedrale Koor Utrecht celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2019. The choir has its very own place in the history of Dutch choral music, partly due to the connection with the Utrecht Cathedral Choir School. Pupils from this special primary school receive singing and music lessons every day in addition to the regular curriculum. From group 7 (age app. 10 years) onwards, they also receive, as a member of the KKU 3 hours choral rehearsal a week, under the direction of the choir conductor, Gerard Beemster. In our country only in Haarlem there is a comparable primary school after the model of the world-famous choir schools in, for example, England and Germany. The influx of young vocal talent in the Cathedral Choir and the intensive tutoring of the choir by a professional top conductor lay the foundation for exceptionally high quality. The Cathedral Choir regularly performs at home and abroad and is an icon of the Dutch (church)music cultural heritage.

Retirement

The current conductor Gerard Beemster will retire at the end of November 2020 after an employment of over than 31 years. The church board of the parish, which includes the St. Cahtarina's Cathedral, is the formal employer of the church musicians. Partly as a result of the financial framework of the Archdiocese for church musicians, the church board is forced to reduce the existing employment from 12 to 4.5 hours per week on that occasion; this also includes the hours of choir rehearsal for the Choir School students. The contribution to the management costs also ends.

All in all, this means the basic conditions for maintaining KKU's current quality level are abolished. The continuity of the Choir's existence must therefore be feared, unless financial support from third parties is found!

Premier Division

The KKU is more than just a parish choir, it has a supra-regional and even national significance and provides its services in special celebrations of the Archdiocese. The KKU makes a vital

contribution to the premier division of Dutch choral life, which has been taking shape inside and outside of churches for centuries. As received as in November 2019 Pope Francis underlined the importance of high-quality church music during a conference:

'The choir accompanies the celebration and is - with its specific repertoire - a qualified voice of spirituality, community, tradition and liturgical culture.'

Particularly in Cathedrals, music as part of the liturgy must be maintained at the highest quality level. That should certainly also apply to the Utrecht Cathedral, which, after the decision of the Archbishop to keep this church open, has focused on revitalization.

Bridges

The decision of the church board has no direct consequences for the Cathedral Choir School as such. The continued existence of the Choir School and the regular (non-liturgical) music education at school is **not** affected by the measures of the parish board. However, the bridging function the KKU conductor still has at the moment, would disappear in the current plans. Also, for the development of the talented students the KKU would regret it if these young people were no longer part of the natural 'habitat' the cathedral offers them as a training place and stage. It is no coincidence that the world's leading choirs with a similar signature are associated with vital liturgical communities.

Alarm Bell

This choir has great significance for city and country in terms of singing by children as well as adults. The extinction of the KKU would be a major loss not only for the cathedral but also for the Utrecht Choir School and the Utrecht community. Therefore the choir board and church board together are looking for solutions and would like to get into contact with people and organizations who want to commit themselves to the KKU for a longer period and for substantial amounts. Only structural support can save our choir.

End of message

Note for editors:

You can find background information on our website www.kathedralekoorutrecht.nl

For more information, please contact

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