

Akkoortje 4 English

The "Vier redeloze zangen"

Every week, as we sing in the Town Hall Choir, we are (almost) complete in the Scottish Church and we sing our lungs out. Janneke, our conductor, regularly subtly reminds us that singing together becomes more beautiful if we listen to each other and follow the directions of loud and soft in the music. Yet as singers, we are more of the motto of Rotterdam opera singer Francis van Broekhuizen: 'When in doubt, sing loud'. But, beautiful singing or not, loud or soft, if neuropsychologist Erik Scherder is to be believed, singing increases the quality of our lives.

Most people can sing before they can talk. We often come into contact with tunes at an earlier time as infants. Your mother humming to you as you lay in her arms as a tiny package. Your father 'pompompoming' as he is putting you to bed. A grandmother who sings songs of the past to you for your comfort. These are just a few examples. Singing makes you feel connected as people and that is exactly what happens to us in the choir too. You could call a choir a social pressure cooker.

Singing does even more to us. While crooning songs, your body produces hormones that make you feel happier: oxytocin. That's why many people all over the world sing karaoke. Perhaps this is a new idea for our after-choir drinks/snacks? Anyway, mind you: after a choir rehearsal, you walk out feeling more cheerful than the moment you came in. By producing oxytocin, singing is highly addictive.

That addiction can be enhanced by humour. Laughing while singing or in between songs increases the feeling of happiness. By having fun together, you feel more comfortable and connected. Humor comes around as funny situations arise, such as the other day when both Nico's were farcical looking for each other in the church. John Lanting, the deceased actor, director of Theater van de Lach, was nothing like it. Jokes are also embedded in the choice of repertoire. Just think of the facial expressions of some choir members when we sing 'You never walk alone' for instance. All the tronies from The Muppet Show are recognisable. It's a silent show. You might ask: why, why? That song is not funny but by definition connective: the goosebumps are reserved for the sports fans among us.

Humor has a strong effect on our well-being when we choose witty song lyrics as a choir.

Singing funny songs raises oxytocin levels in our bodies. In short, we can safely say that the

combination of singing in the choir, feeling connected to each other and our collective humor makes us happier people.

Which finally brings us to the key question: where have 'De Vier Redeloze Zangen' gone? In the light of all the above arguments, should not we restore 'Er woonde in Jemeppe, Een nachtegaal in Echternach, Archibaldus van Oostzaan en Mathilde'? In these chants, the humor is not only in the text, but also in the music. One and all nods to famous poets and composers! So Janneke and choir members, what holds us? Come on with de redeloze zangen and towards even happier lives, haha!