

THE NEXT THREE MONTHS

by Donald F. Jensen

Summer can be refreshingly rewarding for choir directors, organists, and teachers whose primary work is concentrated from September to May. While most of us work just about as hard in the summer as any time else, the style of activity often changes, with a different mood and a contrasting tempo.

No less important to the year's work and infinitely more significant in the growth of the individual is the way he uses his June, July and August. Key words associated with that growth include SLOWING, STUDYING, SHARING, SELECTING and STIMULATING. A healthy measure of each can lead to a memorable summer and a truly fresh start in the fall.

SLOWING the pace that characterized the previous months allows minds dulled with frenzied routine and frustrations to become creative again. Filling extra summer hours with healthful recreation is an added remedy for occupational fatigue. Try using that choir hour for a period of calisthenics, swimming, tennis, riding, or any physical discipline you wouldn't otherwise begin.

STUDYING precipitates growth in any field. Accepting the responsibility for training young people presumes a willingness to maintain one's own growth. Summer reading of at least one provocative text related to music or the church should be a minimum goal for Guilders. Likewise, studying a major organ or choral work with score and recordings expands the mind as well as the spirit.

SHARING ideas through seminars, conferences and workshops enables one to see his music making as a real part of a much larger drama than that which takes place in his own choir room or organ bench. Seminars and workshops provide not only training but more important perhaps, they provide the dialogue supporting growth in any field. Attend at least one seminar or conference this year with the spirit of sharing your own ideas as well as learning others.

SELECTING priorities during the summer can promote better goals for fall. Weak or outworn programs which have done little to bolster the church or enhance the growth of persons should be re-evaluated in an atmosphere of creative thinking. Antique methods can be relinquished in favor of new techniques. Just as the gardener selects the best seeds for sowing, so can the choir director select his most fertile ideas and materials for fall.

STIMULATING the senses is no permanent substitute for genuine motivation, but I think a large amount of sensory stim-

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ulation is necessary, especially in the summer months. While our culture is full of both good and bad things to excite one's senses, a generous share of wholesome sensory experience can encourage emotional health and the ability to cope with all of life. Summer is a good time to develop our *hearing, seeing, smelling, and feeling*, and in so doing enlarge our creative sensitivity to all concepts of beauty and art.

A musician's *hearing* is of utmost importance to him. We often take our hearing experiences for granted instead of developing a continuing craving for beautiful sounds. Take every opportunity this summer of "sound bathing" at a fine orchestral concert which is unsurpassed for those who work with music. The varied sounds of nature as well are an aural refreshment for all musicians who will take time to listen.

While *visual* experiences are more numerous and varied than ever before, they are mostly perceived in miniature, through the television screen. For exciting visual variety, good movies can bring a much greater panorama to the viewer. Beyond this and accessible to most all of us this summer is some share of America's majestic mountains, her breathtaking coastlines and seascapes, and her beautiful forests and plains. Look at them creatively as you travel and let their grandeurs expand your mind.

Summer's memorable aromas not only augment other experiences but offer their own sensory contribution. The heavy fragrance of a garden in bloom is freely experienced by all, even though it begs a poet's description. And adding their own goading to the sense of *smell* are new mown hay, pickling cucumbers, and the warm air of a summer morning. Who can not add his own to this list?

Crowning summer's sensory bouquet is the *feeling* of fresh grass on bare feet, of warm sand on tired toes, and of fresh lake breezes on the faces of sunning bathers. What blessings are there amidst summer's unique feelings!

Did you say you would be busy this summer? O yes! But will you be busy with the right things? Take another look at the next three months. Plan your own summer! SLOWING, STUDYING, SHARING, SELECTING, and STIMULATING.