

# MENTORING FOR CHOIRS DIRECTORS

Peter Watts

As people who have chosen to be choir directors, many of us have someone who we look up to, someone whose advice we respect. I was fortunate to have sung for many years under Peter Godfrey and I valued greatly the wise counsel and support he gave. Later, working as Karen Grylls' assistant with the National Youth Choir, I was able to observe her inspiring and meticulous work in detail. These strong influences shaped my own development as a choral conductor.

The Association of Choral Directors is providing a framework for more formal mentoring, whereby more experienced choir directors can provide support and guidance for those less experienced. But there's no need to wait for that! You could go out and organise your own mentoring as one enterprising conductor did last year.

During 2011, a choral director came to me to ask for advice. After an initial chat we settled on a mentoring scheme. We agreed on a fee and a schedule whereby I would visit the choir rehearsals fortnightly. At the first rehearsal I introduced myself to the choir, commended their conductor on the step taken, and the choir for supporting it by willingly being observed over a period of weeks. I then sat back and watched.

It was fascinating. After each rehearsal the choir director and I had a discussion about what had been achieved and together we devised strategies for future rehearsals. At the end of the period I was able to speak with the choir about their role, and have an intensive session with the conductor at which I presented a full report. I certainly found it interesting as it made me think back to basics of why I do certain things at rehearsals, why I couch instructions in particular ways, what I am actually listening for as I rehearse. I hope the choir director found it as interesting and helpful as I did ☺.

You may not want to organise anything specifically like this, but do look out for the opportunities that NZCF, through the [Association of Choral Directors](#), is offering, when an experienced choir director can observe you at work. This could happen either live or via on-line resources. It may be scary, but it's a great way to learn, so don't be afraid to have a go!

*For more information on this and other topics see [www.wattsandwatts.co.nz](http://www.wattsandwatts.co.nz)*