

ente

■ TRAVELLING

Singing and hearing

Singing in a cathedral is a marvelous thing, but it is not the same as listening in a cathedral.

The interesting thing about being in a choir is that from your vantage point in the group you never hear the music the same way as the listeners. We hear our individual parts, watch the conductor, and notice the other parts being sung around us, but those sitting some distance from the choir hear us as a whole, and apparently the effect is even more stunning for them than it is for us.

I got a little taste of this today when I stood at the entrance to York Minster and heard the ethereal sound of singing drifting downwards from some upper space that I couldn't see.

As I climbed the ancient steps to the choir room the sound enlarged more and more until I was standing among the singers, who were rehearsing for the upcoming Evensong. As I joined them, I had an overwhelming sense that people who sing together have an experience that is unlike any other on earth; if only there were some way to communicate the wonder of creating these glorious sounds, everyone in the world would want to do what we do.

I think being in this cathedral, built for sounds and beauty, heightens the



Natasha Regehr

TRAVELLING

power of the exquisite music we produce wherever we are. And the proof is in the insights of the listeners. One gentleman had sung in a choir at York Minster many years earlier, and for his birthday he wanted nothing more than to return and hear that marvelous choral sound again. Was it worth the trip? After the service, he remarked that he had "never heard better." Other attendees were clearly moved as well, including the Harts, visiting York today from our very own city of Peterborough.

They travelled 3,400 miles to experience the majesty of this place; but the voices they heard tonight can also be heard four times a year at the smaller, but equally resonant George Street United Church - where we build our own cathedral in downtown Peterborough every time we sing.

Natasha Regehr is a member of the Peterborough Singers, and will be sending updates during the choir's stay in York Minster, U.K.