

03/03/2008 ABC Notices

Class of 2008

Week 8 of the course.

Some of you have been asking me about TCS rehearsals, and how much effort I generally have to put in to get to grips with the pieces. I have noted the looks of trepidation...

**Now is not the time to go wobbly.
Do not panic.**

(I've managed to misquote Margaret Thatcher and Corporal Jones in quick succession.)

You should not run away with the idea that all current Tyndalers can sight-sing with one eye closed; only a gifted few can do it accurately first time round.

I think Ian told us the following anecdote: When Handel went to Dublin to rehearse for the premiere of 'The Messiah', he asked for the choir to be good sight readers. At the first rehearsal, things didn't go too well, and Handel was not best pleased, saying he thought he'd asked for sight readers... One gentleman replied, "We are, Sir, but not at FIRST sight..."

Preparation is all

TCS is extremely fortunate to have Ian as our conductor. Unlike some choral conductors, Ian puts in a huge amount of effort to make our lives easier.

Ian prepares a rehearsal schedule. We therefore know in advance which sections of which pieces we will be working on at any given rehearsal. We can therefore prepare by looking at the score, reading the words, looking for the pitfalls. For some pieces, Ian prepares CDs for us to listen to, sing along to whilst reading the score. It all helps.

A current example

I am learning Brahms Requiem with Cirencester Choral Society at present. I had heard it only once in my life; when TCS did a workshop performance of it two years ago. (I didn't sing – I was in the kitchen.)

I now have a CD of the piece in performance, so that I get an idea of how it sounds. I have downloaded the MIDI file from the site Bethan gave us (Cyberbass) and I sing along to this with my pencil and score in hand, marking where I find I can get my cues – from the soprs, tenors, or basses, or accompaniment... whatever works. Most of it makes sense very quickly, and I find out equally quickly where the stinky bits are. These I work on repeatedly until I get the hang of it. Then I try to sing along to the performance CD... that usually flushes out the remaining problems, and I go back to the MIDI practice version to iron out the wrinkles. How many times have I sung through it at home? Half a dozen, maybe.

Once the notes are reasonably familiar, I can then start paying proper attention at rehearsals to all the other details; diction, phrasing, dynamics... and, of course, glancing more frequently at the conductor!

I don't want you to think that this 'homework' is a boring slog. It's something to get the brain working, and is a very satisfying part of my hobby. The payback is HUGE; I heard a performance of Vivaldi's Gloria last year and could sing along to EVERY NOTE. (I'm sure the performing choir was delighted...) If Mozart's Requiem comes on the radio, I run for my score and sing along. Makes a change from Frank, Ella, Queen, Black Sabbath, ABBA, Pink Floyd, Fleetwood Mac, Amy,...

And finally...

On March 10th, Ian will be taking our lesson (Bethan is on hols) and a reporter from the 'Gazette' *may* be visiting us. A red letter day!

Julia, Secretary