

Arizona ACDA Summer Conference
Monday, July 17, 2017

Conducting

...From the Inside Out

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**There are no bad choirs,
only bad conductors.**

Elaine Brown

DISCLAIMER



Conducting

- Musicianship
 - > Musical Skills
 - > Technical Skills
 - > Score Study
 - > Preparation
- Communication
- Connection

- Bottom line....all about Relationships

Why This Session?

Conducting Philosophy

Video Clip

Larry Livingston

- Conviction
- Know the tune
- Be the music

**What Makes a Good
Choral Conductor?**

What Makes a Good Choral Conductor?

- Eye contact
- Goals/artistic vision
- Inspiring energy
- Clarity/Clear Gestures
- Patience
- Interpretation and understanding of the music
- Time Management
- Being "Picky"/ Attention to Detail
- Energy/Drive
- Understanding
- Passion
- Dedication
- Being invested/ Committed
- Communication
- Bonding
- Energetic
- Flexible
- Disciplined
- Prepared
- Score Study
- Personality
- Knowledgeable
- Friendly
- Relatable
- Vulnerability
- Coordinated (physically)
- Analytical
- Consistency
- Prepared
- Efficient
- Musical/Good Musicianship
- Adaptable
- Foresight
- Community
- Connection
- High Expectations
- Confidence/Poise/ Professionalism
- Experience
- Control
- Humility
- Good Sense of Humor
- Problem Solving
- Attention to Text
- Posture/Alignment
- Well-Natured/Down to Earth
- Looking Cool
- Open Minded
- Fosters a Nurturing Community
- Charismatic

The Conductor's Roles

Hilary Apfelstadt
University of Toronto

Conducting is the art of communication, both gestural and verbal. In addition, conducting involves not only musical leadership, but also interpersonal skills. Thus the following statements pertain both to musical and “non-musical” aspects of conducting.

1. A conductor is a musician who can demonstrate the ability to:

- ◎ Conduct music of various styles with clarity and expressivity
- ◎ Know the score thoroughly (be able to sing/play all parts; be able to assist a choral ensemble from the keyboard as needed; listen perceptively while conducting).

2. A conductor is a scholar who can demonstrate the ability to:

- ⦿ Prepare a written score analysis
- ⦿ Articulate clearly principles of choral/instrumental technique
- ⦿ Discuss related readings
- ⦿ Describe theoretical and historical aspects of selected compositions.

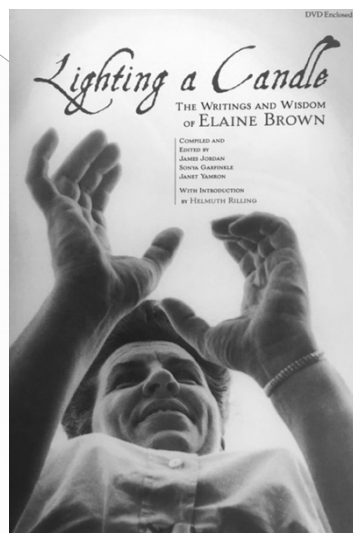
3. A conductor is a teacher who can demonstrate the ability to:

- ⦿ Prepare a written rehearsal plan with specific strategies for teaching the music
- ⦿ Apply principles of choral/instrumental technique
- ⦿ Evaluate the outcome of teaching/rehearsing

4. A conductor is a **leader** who can demonstrate the ability to:

- ◉ Describe various leadership styles of conductors
- ◉ Apply these styles as appropriate
- ◉ Relate to the musicians in the ensemble in a professional and personal manner.

Resources



Elaine Brown

- ◎ One must understand that a choir is not a mass of people, but rather a group of individuals. The only communication that is meaningful is a one-to-one relationship with each singer.

Elaine Brown

- ◎ Breath is a wordless communication medium for conductors. Without breath, there can be no connection.

Elaine Brown

- ◎ Connection in an ensemble can only happen through a realization that living and life bring meaning to what we sing and how we sing it.

Elaine Brown

- ◎ Conductors must strive to understand what real and honest one-to-one communication is with every member of the ensemble.

Elaine Brown

- ◎ Score preparation provides a blueprint of the architecture of a work. That architecture must be clear in the conductor's mind from the first rehearsal.

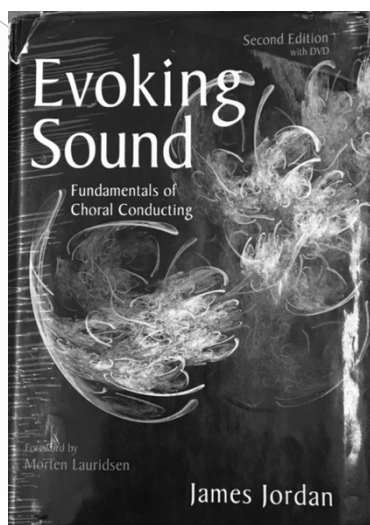
Elaine Brown

- ◎ Choirs will "sing as they are able to sing." That is, when human things are right within an ensemble, much progress will be made toward meaningful music making.

Elaine Brown

- "They say – those who know make music creatively. Those who don't, talk."

Resources



Evoking Sound

Fundamentals of Choral Conducting

James Jordan

Approach

- Develop from the inside out rather than the outside in
- Importance of breath in conducting
- Important role of listening
- The power of humanity and honesty on the podium
- Awareness of both their body and the sound they conduct through listening
- Encourages conductors to trust and listen to their instincts
- Conductor = role with singers

“The spirit, breath, and consequent gesture of a conductor are so influential that the sound an ensemble produces is always a reflection of the conductor’s very spirit.”

James Jordan

Envy and the Conductor: Mimetics

- What do musicians envy?
- What does mimetic mean?
- As conductors, what dilemma do we face?

The Mimetic Triangle

Awareness of One's Reactions to Sounds:

The moment of
Conscious Choice

The Conductor as
an Affirming Soul

Actions Set in Motion by Words

The Recipe for the Right
Mimetic Choice

Solitude and Quiet:
Gaining Access to Good
Mimesis

Evoking Sound
Fundamentals of Choral Conducting
James Jordan

CONNECTION

- ◎ Marries human expression to sound through the human spirit
- ◎ Connection with SELF – OTHERS - SOUND

Evoking Sound

Fundamentals of Choral Conducting
James Jordan

Alignment

- Most important skill: Ability to open your body so breath can fall into it.
- Body Alignment adversely affected by muscle tension; unlearn poor postural habits
- Alexander Technique
- Poor Alignment
 - > Inability to allow air to enter the body
 - > Inability to support the musical line
 - > Poor tone and pitch difficulties
 - > Rhythm

Evoking Sound

Fundamentals of Choral Conducting
James Jordan

Four Concepts of Good Use:

- Allow the neck to release so the head can balance forward and up
- Allow the torso to release in length and width
- Allow the shoulders to release out to the sides
- Allow the legs to release away from the pelvis

Strive for these in daily life – not just when conducting or singing

Evoking Sound

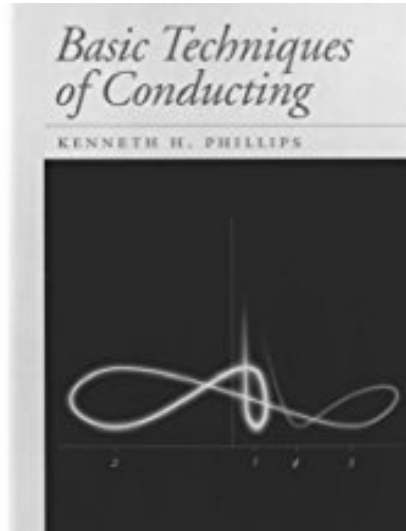
Fundamentals of Choral Conducting

James Jordan

- ⦿ Preparation of the "Inside"
 - › Anticipatory position: anticipates the receiving of sound from the choir
 - › Open Center Channel
 - › Each Hand/Arm works on its own axis
 - › SHED THE BAGGAGE OF THE WEEK/DAY/HOUR
- ⦿ Arm Position
 - › Greeting a friend; embrace; arms outstretched/slightly curved
 - › Carrying Groceries
 - › Space under your arms
 - › Sound exists directly in front of you. Should not reach for the sound, but your hands should be in a position to "touch the sound"
- ⦿ Hand Position
 - › Handshake
 - › Shape = mirrors the shape of the vowel
 - › Fingertips assist with rhythmic clarity and placement of consonants
 - › The shape of the hands directly influences the color of vowels being produced by the choir

- ⦿ Alignment
- ⦿ Assume a welcoming position
- ⦿ Planes
- ⦿ Right Axis; Left Axis
- ⦿ Communication Channel
- ⦿ Ictus: exact moment the beat occurs
 - › Communicating a clear ictus or beat is central to good conducting technique.

Resources



Basic Techniques of Conducting Kenneth H. Phillips

- Preparatory Gesture
 - > Initial gesture that the conductor gives just before the music begins and it is one of the most important techniques that a beginning conductor must learn to execute.
 - > Gesture sends 4 messages:
 - The Dynamic Level
 - The Tempo
 - The Articulation Style (legato, staccato, marcato, etc...)
 - The preparatory Ictus and the downbeat Ictus.
- The speed at which the preparatory gesture moves set the TEMPO for the music. This tempo must be set in the conductor's mind BEFORE the preparatory gesture is given.
- The ARTICULATION of the music is conveyed by the roundness or angularity of the preparatory gesture. Music that is LEGATO will have a greater roundness or curve, while STACCATO or MARCATO styles will be more angular.

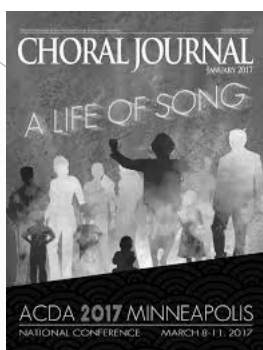
Basic Techniques of Conducting

Kenneth H. Phillips

Articulations

- Legato = communicated by rounded rebound motions that flow in a curvelike fashion from beat to beat. The larger the loop or curve of the rebound, the more legato the articulation. (***) Keep the ictus clear)
- Staccato = communicated by angular rebound motions that move in a quick, "checklike" fashion from beat to beat. In softer/lighter music, this motion comes from a wrist action that springs or snaps on the ictus.
- Marcato = communicated by deep angular rebound motions that move in decisive, accented fashion. There is almost no "wrist" action as wrist and arm become unified. A complete stop follows the quick snap of the rebound before the gesture moves quickly to the next ictus. Showing Marcato requires space between each ictus. This is accomplished by the momentary stop or pause of the rebound action between beats.

Resources



Choral Journal

"Maintenance for the Conducting Gesture – A Brief Checklist"

Britt Cooper, Choral Journal V.58 #8

- Conducting with a Singer's Posture
- Conducting with Proper Alignment and a Natural Plane
- Natural and Consistent Hand Position
- Clean Conducting Patterns
- Left-Hand Gestures
- Avoiding Unnecessary Backbeat Subdivision
- Mouthing Words
- Staring at Music

"The Seven Deadly Sins of Choral Conducting"

William M. Folger, Choral Journal, V. 53, #3

- Lack of Preparation
- Multiple Preparatory Gestures
- Lack of Eye Contact
- Over Conducting
- Unmusical Conducting
- Inefficient Listening
- Cessation of Learning

Resources

Choral Conducting/Teaching Real World Strategies for Success

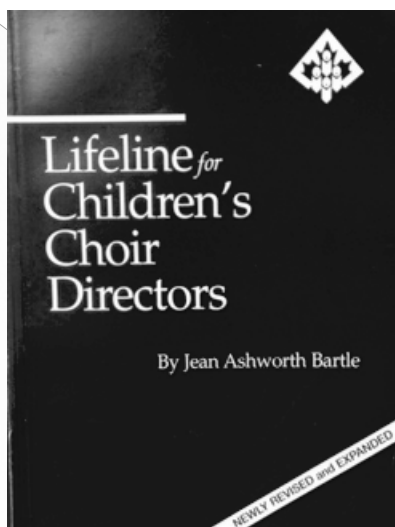


Choral Conducting/Teaching Real World Strategies for Success

Sandra Snow

- Role of the Conductor/Teacher
 - > Listens in Sound
 - > Analyzes Score
 - > Adapts
 - Willing to abandon plans if not working
 - > Improvises
 - Brainstorms in real time
 - > Facilitates
 - Agent of change on the podium: Non-verbal and verbal strategies
 - > Kill and Drill: Drill...stop, stop, stop...
 - Agent of change on the podium: Not good enough...Boring; does not encourage independent thinking; talking about music/directions
- Gesture is our most important teaching tool.
Critical thinking produces:
- More accurate judgments
 - More natural pacing
 - More potent rehearsal strategies

Resources



Lifeline for Children's Choir Directors Jean Ashworth Bartle

- Practice your conducting in front of a mirror:
 - > Is the beat in your right hand crystal clear?
 - > Does the beat indicate legato or marcato singing?
 - > Is the activity in your arms contained within a 14-square-inch framework?
 - > Are your shoulders busy?
 - > Do your elbows remain relatively close to your body, or do they move excessively as though you are ready to take flight?
 - > Do your eye contact and facial expression look inviting or intimidating?
 - > Do your motions and facial expression reflect the mood of the piece?
 - > Are you able to use your left hand independently for cues and expression?
 - > Does your stance appear authoritative and in control?
 - > Is your wrist too stiff? Too loose?

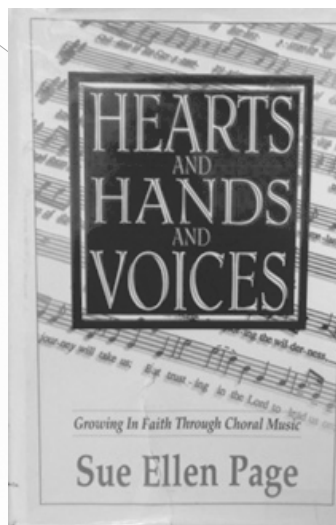
Lifeline for Children's Choir Directors **Jean Ashworth Bartle**

- ◎ Effective conducting leads to effective singing.
 - › If a piece starts on the fourth beat of a measure, tell them and show them that you will give them 'three" beforehand. (The "prep" is everything!)
 - › Anticipate changes in time and subdivide the beat just before the time change, not after or simultaneously. Everything must be shown, before it happens!
 - › Conduct tempo, not rhythm.
 - › During performance, the conductor must be concerned about interpreting the music for the choir and not impressing the audience.
 - › Don't be a time-beater! A metronome could replace you. Gain independence of those two arms.
 - › Be consistent. Your aim is to help the singers have confidence, not to create confusion.
 - › Ask someone who knows (that is, someone who looks as if they conduct well and has an excellent choral or instrumental ensemble to prove it) to appraise your conducting. They will anyway, and they might as well tell you face to face so you can benefit.

Lifeline for Children's Choir Directors **Jean Ashworth Bartle**

- ◎ To Mouth or Not to Mouth
 - › The bottom line must be that anything a conductor can do to help the performance be convincing and artistic should be done, as long as the conductor is using standard patterns and the gestures don't detract from the music.

Resources



Hearts and Hands and Voices Growing in Faith Through Choral Music Sue Ellen Page

- Why would a person with obvious conducting skills bother to work with “kiddie choirs”???
- Long tradition of children’s choir directors who have caricatured this “standard”: wrist and elbows flapping away, heads pecking out a beat...
- If repertoire is skillfully chosen and well taught with a healthy singing technique, the director is three quarters of the way to achieving optimum choral tone. But unless the conducting is also of high quality, the tone, indeed every other aspect of the choral experience will never be what it might.

Hearts and Hands and Voices

Growing in Faith Through Choral Music

Sue Ellen Page

- Acquiring an Image of Conducting
 - › Conducting should be studied; finding opportunities
- The best conductors know that there is always more to see and observe. No good models around? One can learn at least as much from the negative habits of others as from scrutinizing the finest technique.
- Ask Questions!
- Instructional DVD's
- Record yourself
 - › Did the choir respond the way the conductor wanted them to? What was happening in the gesture when response was not what the conductor intended? Try to diagnose what got in the way or what was lacking. Did facial expressions agree with gesture or were there mixed messages? Did preparations for attacks, the shaping of phrases, dynamic changes, etc. come early enough? Too early?

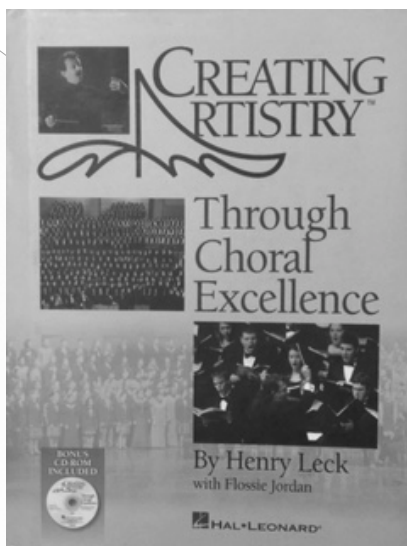
Hearts and Hands and Voices

Growing in Faith Through Choral Music

Sue Ellen Page

- Habit vs. Intentionality
 - › A goal for all conductors is to have our carefully practiced technique on "automatic pilot" – habitual.
 - › Unfortunately, poor technique becomes habitual as well.
 - › Mouthing words...
 - › Efficient Gesture, Well-tuned ears, well-trained eyes, a voice class as part of each rehearsal.
 - › Score study

Resources



Creating Artistry Through Choral Excellence Henry Leck

The Effects of the Conducting Gesture on Choral tone

- Conducting gestures inspire musical singing.
- Each gesture has implications for choral sound.
- Use conducting gestures combined with the Laban elements of space, weight, and time.

Creating Artistry Through Choral Excellence Henry Leck

Laban Effort Elements

- The use of SPACE affects articulation.
 - A gesture may be direct or indirect as it moves through space. If direct, all strokes are in straight lines from one beat to the next, even the rebound of the beat. If indirect, all motion is in a curve, not straight, with the hand wandering on its way between the beats.
- The use of WEIGHT affects intensity.
 - The weight of the movement may either be heavy, giving resistance to the motion, or light, with easy gentleness.
- The use of TIME affects the flow of the music.
 - Time may be sustained with continuous, unceasing motion or with quick movement from one point to another instantly.

Creating Artistry Through Choral Excellence Henry Leck

Laban Effort Elements in Combination

- Float, Wring, Glide, Press, Flick, Slash, Dab, Punch
- Signal choristers to sing sustained legato tones by conducting a FLOATING style, lightly wandering from one beat to the next.
- WRINGING movements elicit smooth but heavy, full, and continuous sounds from the choir.
- GLIDING motions indicate precise, easy, and sustained sounds.
- PRESSING invokes precise, full, and heavy continuous sound.
- FLICKING motions call for the sound to be light, easy, and disconnected.
- SLASHING evokes sweeping, full, forceful, and swift sounds.
- DABBING encourages gentle and sudden sounds.
- PUNCHING elicits striking, forceful, and prolonged tones.

◎ Who is Rudolf Laban? (1879 – 1958)

- *1879, Hungarian, early years preoccupied with observing movement**
- *1910, founded first dance group in Munich – the movement choir.**
- *1926, founded the Choreographic Institute in Wurzburg – later moved to Berlin. – Specialized in Eukinetics – dance notation system**
- *1930, director of Berlin State Opera – recognized as one of Europe's most famous choreographers
Nazi Regime – unable to work, moved to England
Introduced Modern Educational Dance into the schools.**
- *1946, Laban Art of Movement Guild formed**
- *1954, Laban Art of Movement Centre was formed as an educational trust to perpetuate his work and to promote and provide education in the art of movement.**

◎ What did Laban believe?

The act of moving was a link between the physical and mental experiences of life. He believed that through the act of moving, one experienced an interaction of mind and body.

He believed movement was everywhere – it could be seen, organized and understood in a still leaf, child at play, simple walk, all aspects of our daily life.

◎ What are the Laban
Effort Elements?

Flow, Weight, Time, Space

◎ What are the extremes
of “Flow”?

Free flow; Bound flow

◎ What are the extremes
of "Weight"?

Light; heavy

◎ What are the extremes
of "Time"?

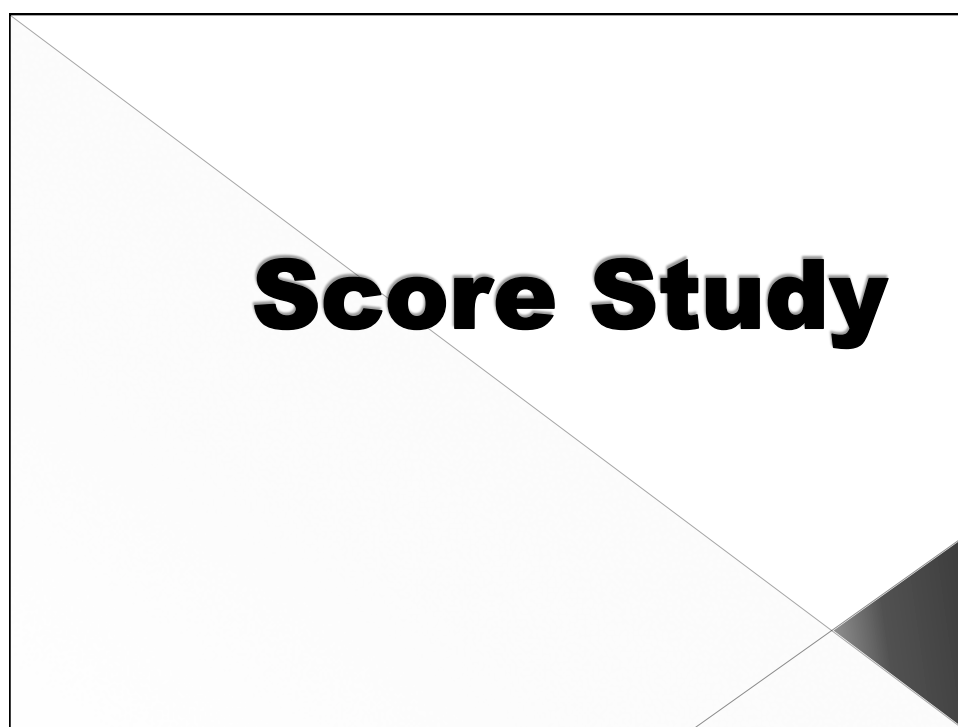
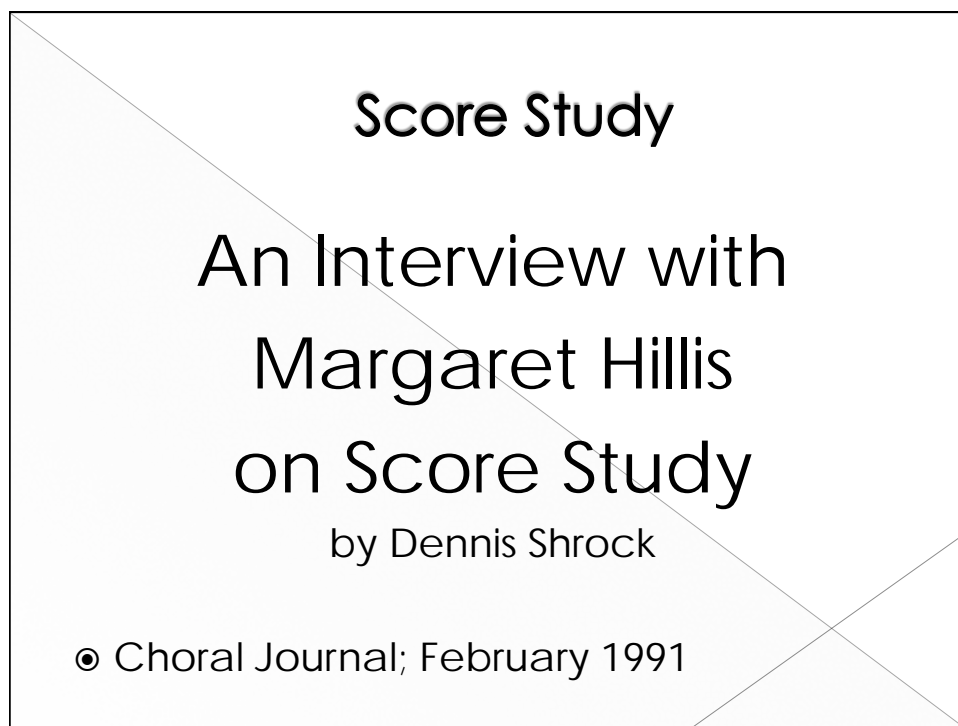
Sustained; quick

◎ What are the extremes
of “Space”?

Direct; indirect

◎ List the 8 Laban Efforts
in Combination, and give
an example of each.

Float	Flick
Wring	Slash
Glide	Dab
Press	Punch



Score Excursion

- ◎ Explore the piece 3 times before you do any markings!
 - › Play the piano part
 - › Play/Sing EACH part separately, then in various combinations

Composer Information

- ◎ Background information that may help determine performance practice, or “colorings” of the music.
- ◎ Time period/Country/Historic Events that may have influenced the compositional style.
- ◎ Consider various traditions and cultural approaches to the performance of the music.

Text

- ◎ Poetry
 - › Any special considerations?
 - › Information about the Poet
- ◎ Is the text used to express key words for subtle emphasis? Possibilities for various colorations of tone quality and dynamic nuance.
- ◎ Are the lyrics age & text appropriate for your choir?
- ◎ Language – IPA
- ◎ Syllabic stress considerations

Harmonic Analysis

- ◎ Rhythm – the writing down of chord roots as they fall
- ◎ Assignment of functions: tonic, subdominant, dominant (with this you know where your are going when it comes to cadences.)
- ◎ Form

Bar Line Analysis

- ◆ Determines how phrase groupings fall
- ◆ Phrase Goals
- ◆ Black Pencil and Transparent Ruler
- ◆ Write in measure numbers

Color Coding

- Red (Anything that's strong): F, FF, FFF, Crescendo; Series of red arrows above the score for accelerando
- Blue (for the opposite): PP, P; Decrescendo; squiggly line for rit...
- Green: MP, MF
- Brown: Reinforce Accents
- Other colors to highlight: Tempi, cues/entrances;
- Meter Square = 4 3 = Triangle 2 = V
- Markers/Watercolors
 - > Melodic material; score divisions; important elements of the music
 - > Soloist
 - > Principal melodic material; first subject (color); 2nd subject (lighter shade)
 - > Stronger the material, the stronger the color (Where those tunes reappear, always in the same color)
 - > Voices part of the instrumentation

● Sing each part again!

- > Mark phrasing, entrances, releases, dynamics, minute details affecting expression.
- > Mark any difficult intervals for the singers (this will help create warm-ups!)

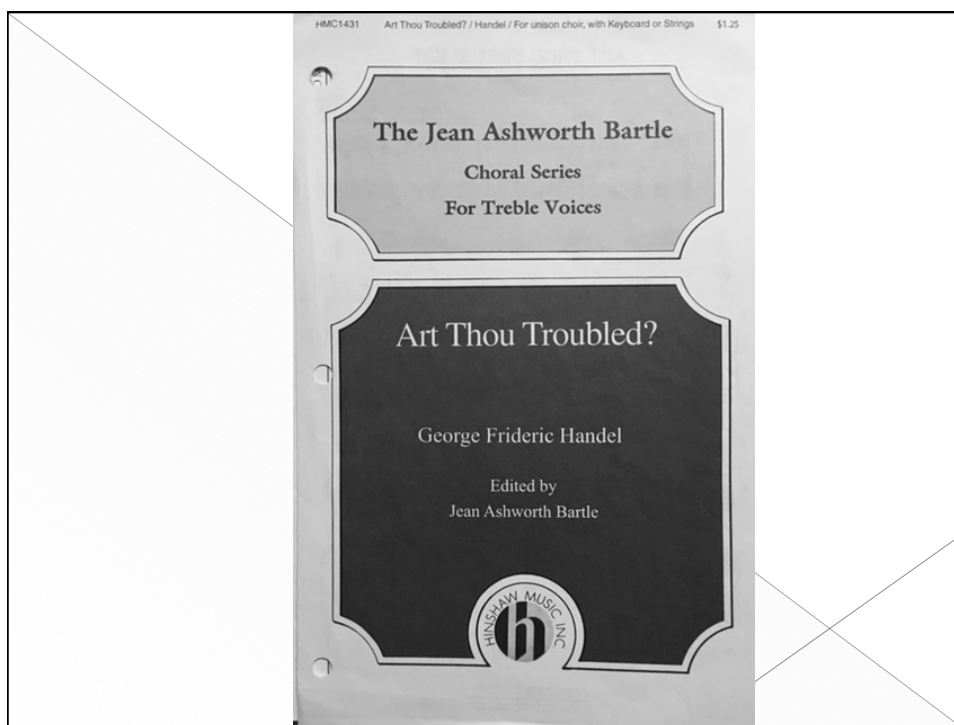
Ready to Study!

- To make sure I've not only seen everything on the page, but I'm able to HEAR everything on the page!
- Muscle Memory: Reinforce Alexander based alignment sensations and thoughts and stay aware of Body Mapping principles and concepts.
- Sing EACH part; noting difficult passages, vowel concerns, register shifts. Study the score for potential vocal technique problems. Incorporate these issues into your warm-ups and rehearsal planning.
- Study and experience the breath of the piece carefully; breathe and exhale as the choir would
- Breathe the color of the style and effect of the piece. Textural colors/colors with music; hear purple, inhale purple

*Once a score is totally marked,
it is basically memorized!*

Resources

- Jordan, James Mark., and Eugene Corporon. *Evoking Sound: Fundamentals of Choral Conducting*. Chicago: GIA Publications, 2009.
- Shrock, Dennis (1991). An Interview with Margaret Hillis on Score Study. *Choral Journal*, XXXI (7), 7-12.
- *Choral Conducting/Teaching Real World Strategies for Success*, Sandra Snow (DVD)



2

ART THOU TROUBLED?

For Human Choir, with Keyboard or Strings*

W.G. BOTHERY **Larghetto** From *Rodelinda* GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL
edited by Jean Ashworth Bartle

Keyboard

5

Art thou trou-bled? Mu-sic will calm thee,

10

Art thou wea-ry? Rest shall be thine, rest shall be

15

*Singing parts are available from the publisher.
4450-776-008-1

3

15

Ma-rie, source of all glad-ness,
thine.

20 *meno cresc.* Heals thy sad-ness. At her shadow, Ma-rie

25 *mp* ma-rie, ev-er di-vine. Ma-rie,

30 *f* ma-rie call-eth, With voice di-vine.

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Ramsey, SING TO ME

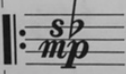
Ramsey, SING TO ME

SA
piano
duration: 2:40

Janeal Krehbiel
CHORAL SERIES

Sing to Me

music by
Andrea Ramsey
poem by
Ella Wheeler Wilcox



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Princeton Girls' Choir
Come, Ye Makers of Song
3163083-34 255

COME, YE MAKERS OF SONG
Ruth Watson Henderson
\$1.75

Also available as part of this set of songs
by Ruth Watson Henderson:


VG-273 WHEN MUSIC SOUNDS
For S.S.A.A. Choir and Piano

VG-274 MUSIC ON THE WATERS
For S.S.A.A. Choir and Piano

PRINCETON
GIRLS' CHOIR

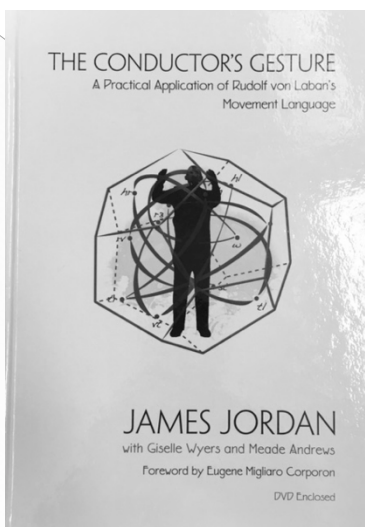
Jean Ashworth Bartle

Toronto Children's Chorus Choral Series
Jean Ashworth Bartle, Editor

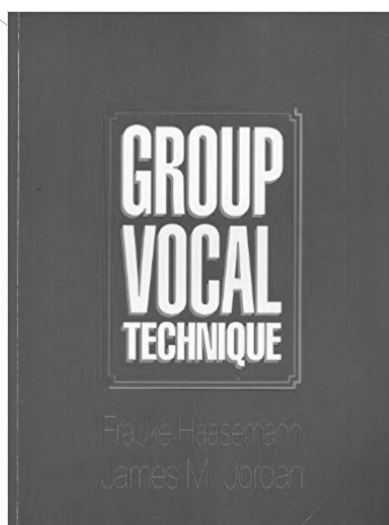


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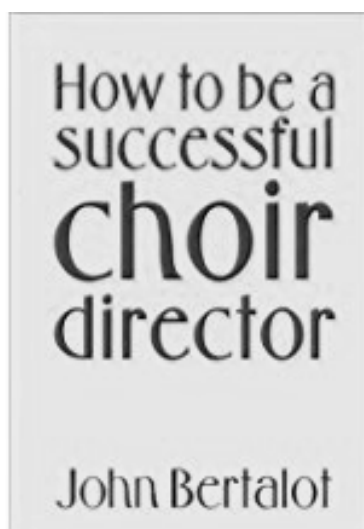
Resources



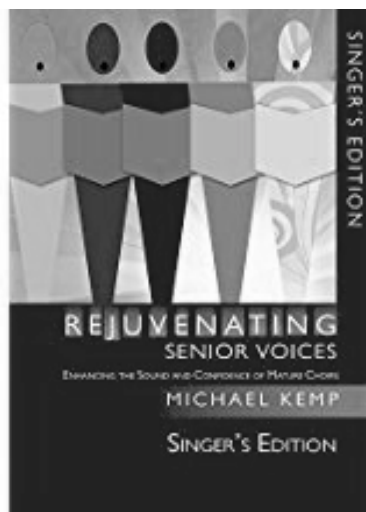
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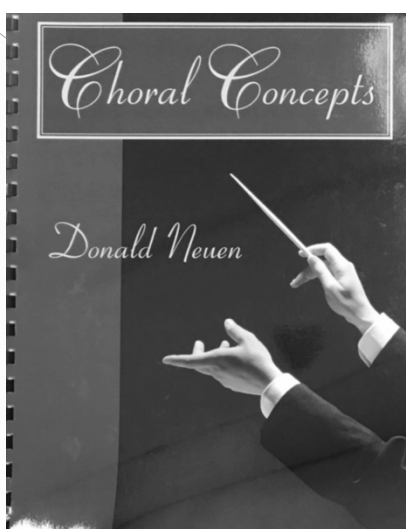
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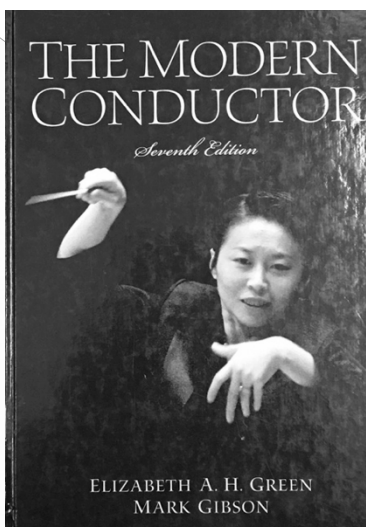
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Resources



Resources

