

The Newsletter

Farewell to Jackie



It was with great sadness that Chairman Mervyn Harris said goodbye on behalf of the choir to long-term member Jackie Rice who retired in May.

Jackie first joined the CBBC in 1957 and recalls singing 'nothing but Bach' with Cuthbert Bates. She left to have her family and re-joined in 1986 with Denys Darlow and recalls singing the Herbert Howells Stabat Mater as her first concert.

Mervyn thanked Jackie for all her work in recent years as ticket secretary and presented her with some flowers.

Party in the City ... Hu-lo—Hu-lo



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Breathing for singing



Why is breathing for singing so important? Because without breath, without air, we have no voice... we have no sound!

We need breath in order to produce the sound that is our voice. This is why most singing teachers emphasize breath training right from the very beginning, putting students through rigorous breath training in order to build a good strong foundation for singing.

However, before we move on to even the most basic of our breathing exercises, we need to first know how to execute good breathing for singing. This would involve a certain muscle in our body called the **Diaphragm**, as well as other supporting muscles around the diaphragm.

Our diaphragm is actually a thin sheet of muscle separating our rib cage from the rest of our organs below it (including our stomach and intestines). Its function is to regulate the flow of air in our body, by contracting and relaxing whenever we inhale and exhale respectively.

You may have noticed by now,

that you can't really control your diaphragm when you breathe. It moves involuntarily, meaning you can't tell it to go up or go down like other muscles like your biceps or triceps. What you can do though, is to inhale and exhale, and this causes the diaphragm to contract and relax automatically.

So, how do we practise our breathing exercises if we can't control how our diaphragm moves? We can control the muscles surrounding the diaphragm, namely the **intercostal muscles** around our ribs, as well as our **abdominal muscles**. These muscles are under our conscious control, and you will be practising some basic exercises for these muscles when you do your breathing exercises for singing.

Let's begin by first drawing in a deep breath of air!

Imagine that you are sucking in a strand of noodle or spaghetti or sucking a deep breath of air through a tiny straw, and letting the air go directly into your abdominal area. Try it now and feel the air being drawn into your abdominal area, moving downwards as well as sideways. Of

course, the air does not actually enter your stomach when you breathe. This is only for visualization and instructional purposes!

Some important points to note: Your shoulders and chest area should be relaxed when you inhale. If you find that your chest area lifts up high or your shoulders are raised when you inhale, then just rest both hands on your chest and repeat the inhalation exercise with your hands resting on a stationary chest.

Raising your chest and shoulders is a common habit, but it really causes us to draw a shallow breath, and this creates problems later when we need more breath to support our singing, especially for high notes or for long phrases in a song.

(Apologies for the ever so slightly patronising tone of this piece, but I thought it was worth including. Ed.)



Merv, the CBBC's own agony uncle and international man of mystery, is back to help you solve your problems in this occasional series

Ask Merv...

Dear Merv,

I am writing to seek your renowned help and advice. You see the trouble is that I am a sensitive sort of chap and the Musical Director is asking me to sing like a Tongan Warrior! Actually I quite fancy the grass skirt, but I'm afraid that the whole thing is all a bit too butch for me.

Do you have any advice to help me to toughen up and be a bit more 'macho' like all those rough basses?

Sensitive

P.S. I've also noticed that the MD also keeps trying to push me away from my position where I can gaze up adoringly at him, and seems to be trying to distance himself from me! Am I being paranoid?

Sensitive.

Pull yourself together! Are you a man or a tenor? Everyone, even a tenor, has an inner Tongan Warrior in him, (just ask the altos!) and you've just got to get it out!

The answer (as with everything to do with singing) is practice. Make sure you are alone in the house, and stand in front of the mirror in your bedroom and practice being a fierce Tongan Warrior. This will involve stamping and banging and much sticking your tongue out and grunting. The sort of thing that New Zealand rugby players do before a match.

And if your neighbours complain at the noise — just go and do it outside their houses—and yes, you are paranoid!

Merv

The 10 rules of how to learn Music

Are you one of the many members of the Choir who find learning music difficult? Here are some tips.

- 1. Practice the music.** You obviously won't be able to memorize your music when you don't even know how to sing it!
- 2. Recognize phrases.** Divide the music into a number of easily recognisable phrases. This will not only give you a better understanding of the music, but when it comes time to actually start memorizing it. Most phrases are four to eight bars.
- 3. Begin repeating the first part of the song.** The length of this section depends on how well you know your memory to have been in the past; if you know you remember things well, extend the length, but if you're forgetful, make it shorter, even if it's just a phrase or two. Keep reading off the music at this point.
- 4. Sing it once without looking at the music.** Sing it from memory. It should be in your head, since you were repeating it over and over. Stumble through to the end, even if you forget a few notes.
- 5. Look at the music again.** Find what you did right and what you did wrong. If you need to, sing something that you missed.
- 6. Sing/play it again without looking at the music.** Keep singing it from memory and reviewing how you did, until you can sing the music from memory five times in a row.
- 7. Move onto a different chunk.** This will, again, depend on your memory. Repeat the process you used with the first chunk, but sing this chunk by itself.
- 8. Link the two chunks together.** Play from measure one to however far you memorized. Keep repeating this until you can sing it from memory five times in a row.
- 9. Continue this process until you have memorized the song.**

Another way to memorize music is to start at the end and sing the last bar, sing it by memory, go on to the second to last bar, and repeat the process till you can sing the whole song.



Spirituals .. What's in a name?

The term *spiritual* is derived from *spiritual song*. The King James Bible's translation of Ephesians V.19 is: "*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*" The term *spiritual song* was often used in the black and white Christian community through the 19th century (and indeed much earlier), and *spiritual* was used as a noun to mean, according to the context, *spiritual person* or *spiritual thing*, but not specifically with regard to song. *Negro spiritual* first appears in print in the 1860s, where slaves are described as using *spirituals* for religious

songs sung sitting or standing in place, and *spiritual shouts* for more dance-like music.

Musicologist George Pullen Jackson extended the term *spiritual* to a wider range of folk hymnody, as in his 1938 book *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands*, but this does not appear to have been widespread usage previously. The term though has often been broadened to include subsequent arrangements into more standard European-American hymnodic styles, and to include post-emancipation songs with stylistic similarities to the original Negro spirituals.

Although numerous rhythmical

and sonic elements of Negro spirituals can be traced to African sources, Negro spirituals are a musical form that is indigenous and specific to the religious experience in the United States of Africans and their descendants. They are a result of the interaction of music and religion from Africa with music and religion of European origin. Further, this interaction occurred only in the United States. Africans who converted to Christianity in other parts of the world, even in the Caribbean and Latin America, did not evolve this form.

(TG for Wikipedia! Ed.)



Editorial

Well, the time is almost come when I hand over the reins of The Newsletter—in fact I have one more issue. Sadly no one has yet come to volunteer to take it over so unless they do the Newsletter will sink without trace after the July 2011 issue. That would be a shame.

Great party in the City and a much depleted Choir made a good sound in the Abbey,

sandwiched in between two offerings of Grenville! It is so sad that so many people chose not to support the Choir at the Party in the City. The date has been in the Newsletter for about a year so there was really no excuse for having other appointments. Onward then to the Summer concert itself. In case you are having difficulties learning the music in this issue we publish some tips for getting it into the brain. They may

help.

Also on the front page we say goodbye the Jackie Rice who has sung with all three CBBC MD's. (Coyly she won't say who's the best!) Jackie gave much of her time and effort to support the CBBC over the years and will be sadly missed, though she says she's going to be at every one of our concerts.

See you in July then Jackie!



We're on the Web!
www.bathbachchoir.org.uk

Material for publication in The Newsletter should be passed to Bob Hussey as soon as possible. Bob can be contacted on 01225 316 899 or by EMail at bob@resolve-uk.com.

The Choir Diary

Mon 6 Jun
Thu 23 Jun
Fri 15 Jul
Sat 16 Jul

Schools Term 6 starts
Choir Committee Meeting
Compulsory Rehearsal
Summer Concert Duke Ellington *Sacred Music*
David Fanshawe *Pacific Song*
Michael Tippett *5 Negro Spirituals* (from memory)

Willett Hall, KES
Wiltshire Music Centre

Fri 22 Jul
Mon 1 Sep
Mon 5 Sep
Mon 19 Sep
Fri 21 Oct
21 - 24 Oct
Mon 31 Oct
Fri 4 Nov
Sat 5 Nov

Schools Term 6 ends
Schools Term 1 starts
First Rehearsal Winter Term
AGM after short rehearsal
Schools Term 1 ends
Choir Tour to Rome
Schools Term 2 Starts
Compulsory Rehearsal
Autumn Concert Goodall *Eternal Light*
Whitaker *Lux Arumque*
Górecki *Totus Tuus* (abridged)
Pärt *Beatitudes*
Taverner *Syvati*

Willett Hall, KES
Willett Hall, KES

Willett Hall, KES
Bath Abbey

Dates for Carols rehearsals are: 7, 14, 18, 21, 25, 28 November and 2, 5, 9 and 12 December.
14-16 Dec
Fri 16 Dec

Carols by Candlelight
Schools Term 2 ends

Pump Room

2012

Tue 3 Jan
Mon 9 Jan
Sat 28 Jan
Mon 6 Feb
Fri 10 Feb

Schools Term 3 Starts
First Rehearsal Spring Term
Workshop Bach *B Minor Mass*
Open Rehearsal
Schools Term 3 Ends

Willett Hall, KES
St Michael's Without
Willett Hall, KES