



Basic choral discipline revisited

Never Too Young or Too Old

In a mere five years, Boston City Singers (see Resources) has built a strong choral organization based on “inclusion, diversity and joy.” Led by New Zealand native Jane Money, BCS helps young singers to “learn about themselves, each other, and the world around them” through musical training, performing and collaborating.

Five training choruses prepare younger children (grades 2-6) to move on to the Concert Chorus division. A recent Saturday morning rehearsal demonstrated just how well prepared the young singers will be when their moment arrives. The session was disci-

plined, yet cheerful and nurturing, incorporating considerable one-on-one attention. As the children practiced, they received virtually non-stop reinforcement of basic vocal technique that really is appropriate for choristers of any age.

Tom Morris, Training Program Director and Director of the Jamaica Plain (Boston) Training Chorus, had the children stand for a thorough stretch and then a gentle 5-4-3-2-1 warm-up on oo. Morris asked them hold a finger against their chins as a reminder to keep jaws dropped. When the tone got a little thin, he picked up a slinky ball as a visual cue, reminding them to fill up the back of the

throat with space for a “tall ah.” Soon they launched into the little ditty shown below.

An overhead projector made it possible for the children to keep their eyes straight ahead while reading lyrics marked for breaths, carryovers, word emphases and the like. As the rehearsal progressed, Morris advised:

- Sit up tall on the edge of your seat
- Put an expression on your face; make your face show what you are singing, as if you were an actor.
- If you can't make it through the end of a long line of music, take a stagger breath by leaving out a

(continued on page 8)

Backbone Straight

learned from Joan Gregoryk
-Children's Chorus of Washington, DC

① Back bone straight and chest held high ② Keep your chin down here's the rea-son why

③ Or-gan pipes and voi-ces too ④ All sound best when the air comes through

optional Ostinato

Or-gan pipes and voi-ces

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(continued from page 3)

word.

None of these instructions seemed new to the singers, and they responded to them instantly. When a passage or run-through seemed a little lackluster, the director gave my favorite instruction — one we all need from time to time:

- Don't forget to push that little button at the base of your ear to turn on your brain! ||

Tom Morris has taught at the elementary and middle school levels for more than 15 years. He holds a Master of School Leadership and a Master of Kodaly. In addition to directing the Jamaica Plain division training programs for the Boston City Singers, he teaches at the Peirce School in Newton, Mass.