

Musical Analysis and Score Preparation

Mrs. Gomez is reflecting back on her third period's rehearsal, trying to decide what had gone wrong. The Girls Ensemble had been extremely frustrated while rehearsing the new piece she had selected for them to perform at the graduation ceremony in two weeks. In fact, things had gone so badly she wonders whether the choir's cool reception of the piece can be overcome.

Mrs. Gomez had not had time to study the music before the rehearsal, but she wasn't particularly worried. She figured she could just learn the piece along with the girls. As she thought back over the rehearsal, however, she was surprised to realize that her lack of preparation had made a difference! Because she couldn't provide the guidance necessary to lead the choir through its first experience with the new music, Mrs. Gomez was frustrated with herself. And because of this lack of leadership from their director, the choir was unsuccessful musically and equally frustrated. The rehearsal had almost been a total waste of time.

Unfortunately, situations such as this one happen more frequently than they should. Because of an unrealistic schedule or an

unforeseen event or emergency situation, choral directors may have to go into a rehearsal without adequately studying the music. Of course, emergencies do happen, but these circumstances should be the exception and not the rule. Careful preparation of the music to be rehearsed will yield benefits ranging from rehearsal discipline all the way to the final performance of the music.

Aural and Visual Study of the Music

The first thing most directors want to know when they find a new piece for their choir to perform is how the music sounds. Listening repeatedly to recordings of various performances of the music is always helpful in formulating a concept of the work as a whole. So you will have a variety of interpretations to consider as you formulate your own interpretation, listen to several different performing groups if available. If no recordings are available, playing the piece on the piano will give you a good idea how the music sounds. Remember, however, that the music will have a slightly different sound when a choir sings it than when you play it.

After establishing a holistic concept of the piece, more detailed study at the piano or by singing each individual line yourself will help you become familiar with each part and its relation to the other parts and to the accompaniment, if any. First, take the time required to play or sing each individual part from beginning to end to locate any difficult intervals or rhythmic patterns singers will encounter. After studying, listening to, and singing each individual line, play various combinations of parts together to discover how the different voices relate to one another, any difficult intervals between parts, if the voice parts cross each other at any point, and potential rhythmic difficulties created by all parts singing together. Finally, play the accompaniment to discover its relationship to the vocal parts. Is it independent or supportive?

Listening to recordings, playing the piece on the piano, and singing each individual line will help to create an *aural map* of the music to be rehearsed and performed. An aural map is a model in the director's mind and ear of the way the music should sound when performed correctly. This sound is so securely in place that the director can evaluate the choir's success without the aid of the



Conductors studying the music prior to rehearsal. Photograph by Thom Ewing.

piano. As the singers rehearse the piece, their efforts will be measured against the director's expectations. Obviously, if the aural map is not in place by the first rehearsal, the director will not know whether the choir's efforts are correct, and consequently, will have little idea as to how to help the singers improve. This was part of Mrs. Gomez's problem in this chapter's scenario.

In addition to the aural study, you must make a detailed visual study of the score prior to the first rehearsal. Aspects of the music to notice include tempo, text, dynamics, important entrances, repeated motives, potential rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic difficulties, diction problems, and so forth.

The questions and their answers shown in Figure 7.1 will serve as a guide to show just how thorough a choral director's study of the music should be. This study needs to happen before the first rehearsal. The questions on the form may be used for any piece of music, but what will be a significant question for one musical selection may not be significant for another.

Because this study is intended for the director's preparation for rehearsal, answers to the questions should have a direct impact on how you will approach the piece with the choir as well as what teaching strategies you might use. Through your study, you may dis-

Audience

Soprano I Lift thine eyes. O lift thine eyes to the

Soprano II Lift thine eyes. O lift thine eyes to the

Alto Lift thine eyes. O lift thine eyes to the

(for rehearsal only)

④

mean - tain, whence com - eth, whence com - eth, whence com - eth

mean - tain, whence com - eth, whence com - eth, whence com - eth

mean - tain, whence com - eth, whence com - eth, whence com - eth

Figure 7.1 G. Schirmer's Choral Church Music, No. 26. "Lift Thine Eyes to the Mountains," trio from *Eligah* for three-part chorus of women's voices *a cappella*. Copyright © 1918 (Renewed) by G. Schirmer, Inc. (ASCAP). International copyright secured. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of G. Schirmer, Inc. (ASCAP)

⑧

help Thy help com eth
 Thy help com eth from the

help Thy help com eth from the

cresc. *dim.*

⑫

from the Lord the Mask - er of heav - en and

Lord, from the Lord, the Mask - er of heav - en and

cresc. *dim.* *dim.*

Figure 7.1 Continued

⑮

earth - He hath said thy foot - shall not be

earth - He hath said thy foot shall not be

p *cresc.*

⑳

now - ed. Thy Keep - er will nev - er aban - der

now - ed. Thy Keep - er will nev - er

pp *pp*

Figure 7.1 Continued

23

nev - er, will nev - er slum - ber, nev - er slum -
 slum - ber, nev - er, will nev - er slum -
 slum - ber, nev - er, will nev - er slum - ber, will
 nev - er, will nev - er slum - ber, will

26

ber - Lift thine eyes, O lift thine eyes
 ber - Lift thine eyes, O lift thine eyes
 ber - Lift thine eyes, O lift thine eyes
 nev - er slum - ber - Lift thine eyes, O lift thine eyes

30

to the moon - like, whence com - eth, whence
 to the moon - like, whence com - eth, whence
 to the moon - like, whence com - eth, whence
 to the moon - like, whence com - eth, whence

33

com - eth, whence com - eth, help, whence
 com - eth, whence com - eth, help, whence com -
 com - eth, whence com - eth, help, whence com -
 com - eth, whence com - eth, help, whence com -

Figure 7.1 Continued

36

corn - alt., whence com - alt., whence com - alt. help.
 alt., whence com - alt., whence com - alt. help.
 alt., whence com - alt., whence com - alt. help.

Figure 7.1 Continued

cover potential difficulties within the music that can be solved easily by creating warm-up or sight-singing exercises to deal with the problem. Locating these potential trouble spots in the music and contemplating possible solutions to the problems before rehearsal will save valuable rehearsal time.

Title: "Lift Thine Eyes"

Composer: Felix Mendelssohn

Publisher: G. Schirmer (Hal Leonard) HL 50292660

TEXT

1. What (who) is the source of the text? Psalm 121:1-3.
2. What meaning and/or mood does the text convey? The text is an inspirational and uplifting one that suggests God will offer help throughout our lives.
3. Is there any word painting? If so, where? Yes. The melodic line ascends on the text "Lift thine eyes"; high ranges for the words "Lord" (measure 13) and "mountains" (measure 31); the melodic and harmonic movement is minimal on the words "Thy keeper will never slumber" (measures 21-24), suggesting the steadfast and faithful nature of God's promise to be with us throughout our lives.

4. Are there any potential diction problems? If so, where? Yes. The words "Lift Thine" (pronouncing the "t" followed by "Th"); singing through the "r" of "help"; a deep enough "ah" in the diphthong of "mountains"; and the final vowels in "mountains," "cometh," and "heaven."

5. Does the text present potential problems with word stress? If so, what words and where? Yes. Singers will have a tendency to stress the final syllables of "cometh," "mountains," and "moved," and will possibly want to do the same type of thing on the second note for the word "earth" (measure 16).

FORM

1. What is the overall form of the composition? The form of the piece is ABA', with the B section containing three smaller sections within it (a from measures 8-16, b from measures 17-20, and c from measures 21-27).
2. During which section does the climax of the entire piece occur (if there is a climax)? The climax occurs on the words "never slumber" in the B section, right before the return of A, measures 25-27.

MELODY

1. Does (do) the melody(ies) consist predominantly of short or long phrases? The phrases are predominantly long ones.
2. Is the melody predominantly conjunct or disjunct? The melodic movement in Section A is predominantly disjunct, while the melodic movement in Section B is more conjunct.
3. Is there a short melodic motive on which much or all of the piece is based? If so, what is it? No.
4. Are there any problem intervals (within one part or between parts)? If so, what and where? Generally, no. In measure 31, Soprano I may have difficulty controlling the descent from g² down to d¹ with the change in dynamics required, and all parts will have to listen and tune carefully during the harmonic changes within the subsections of the B section.

HARMONY

1. In what key is the music written? Does it modulate? If so, to what key(s) and where does it happen? The A section is in the key of D; the B section is written in A major and E minor, and concludes with a dominant seventh chord in the key of D major to set up the return of the A' section.
2. Is the harmonic rhythm predominantly fast, medium, or slow? The harmonic rhythm is medium during the A section, and medium fast in the B section.
3. Describe the harmonic language. The harmony in the A sections is diatonic. Related to the brief modulations, the harmony is more chromatic in the B section.

4. Are there any significant points of dissonance? No.
5. Are there places where the chord movements may be difficult or awkward for the choir? If so, where? No.

RHYTHM

1. Is there one rhythmic motive on which much or all of the rhythmic structure is based? If so, what is it? No.
2. What is the tempo? Does this make any rhythmic execution difficult? If so, what and where? The tempo is marked "andante" and will not make any rhythmic execution difficult.
3. Are there any meter changes? If yes, what note value will remain constant? The meter remains in 2/4 throughout.

TEXTURE

1. Is the texture generally thick or thin or does it change? If it changes, where does it change? The texture is generally thick, with all three parts singing together most of the time.
2. Is the composition predominantly monophonic, polyphonic, homophonic, or a mixture? Describe. The A sections are homophonic, while the B section is more imitative.
3. Characterize the accompaniment and its relationship to the choral parts. The piece is unaccompanied.

DYNAMICS

1. What is the overall dynamic scheme of the piece? The dynamic scheme for Section A: *p sfz p*; Section B: *p* < > *p*; *p* < > *sub*; *pp* < > *f* > > ; Section A': *p sfz p sfz p*.
2. Are there any places where dynamics are "written into the music?" (through the addition of voices or use of range, etc.) If so, where? Yes. The use of range helps to create the *sforzando* in measures 2, 29, and 35-36. "Thy keeper" begins *pianissimo* and the voice parts adding on to the Soprano I help to create a *crescendo*. Range helps to create the climax in measure 25.

RELATIONSHIP OF PARTS

1. Are there places in the music where one section of the choir is more important than the others? If so, where? Due to the homophonic texture in the A and A' sections, the melody (Soprano I) is very important. In the B section, all entrances are important. In measure 30, the syncopation in the Soprano II part will need to be brought out.

2. Are there any groupings of choir sections into duets, trios, or other textures? If so, where? In measures 21-24, the Soprano II and Alto move together as they answer the Soprano I's preceding statements.
3. Are there rhythmic or melodic similarities between parts that could be taught at the same time? If so, where? Yes. "Thy help cometh" (measures 9-11) and "Thy keeper will never slumber" (measures 21-24) are similar.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. During what period of music history was the piece written? The piece was written in the early Romantic period.
2. What characteristics of the period are found in the music you are studying? Characteristics include an emotional setting achieved chiefly through the use of extreme dynamics; sudden changes in dynamics; and soaring melodies.
3. What performance practices would be applicable to the study and performance of this piece? "Lift Thine Eyes," a trio from the oratorio, *Elijah*, was written for three solo voices. To be faithful to Mendelssohn's original intent, the piece should be performed by three soloists. Frequently, however, this trio is included in choral anthologies and on music contest lists, and is often sung by choirs of girls or women. A full-bodied sound would certainly be appropriate since, during the Romantic period, women rather than boys would have sung this piece.
4. What circumstances (personal, musical, and/or historical) surrounded the composer at the time this piece was written? Mendelssohn (1809-1847) was a German composer whose music was influenced more by Bach, Handel, and Mozart than by his Romantic contemporaries. *Elijah* was composed in response to an invitation from the city of Birmingham, England to be performed at its annual music festival where Mendelssohn had previously conducted his oratorio, *St. Paul*. Written between 1844 and 1846, *Elijah* was performed just fifteen days after its completion. (Mendelssohn died in 1847 at the age of thirty-eight.)
The original language is German, and the text of *Elijah* is based on 1 Kings 17-19. Authorities claim that the English translation, which is most often heard, is far more popular than the German original. "Lift Thine Eyes" falls right before the equally popular and well-known chorus "He, Watching Over Israel," which is also written in the key of D major.

CONDUCTING CONSIDERATIONS

1. Check the meter and tempo of the composition. What conducting pattern will you use? Since the tempo is marked *andante* and the meter is 2/4, the piece should be conducted in a 2 pattern.
2. Check the text and tempo of the composition. What style(s) of conducting (*legato*, *marcato*, etc.) will be appropriate? Will this style

8 *B(a)*

help. Thy help com - eth, come - eth from the

help. Thy help com - eth, come - eth from the

help. Thy help com - eth, come - eth from the

8 9 10 11

16 *B(b)*

earth - He hath said, thy feet shall not be

earth - He hath said, thy feet shall not be

earth - He hath said, thy feet shall not be

16 17 18 19

12

from - the Lord, the Mark - et of heav - en and

Lord, from the Lord, the Mark - et of heav - en and

Lord, the Mark - et of heav - en and

12 13 14 15

20 *B(c)*

now - ed. Thy Keep - et will ser - ve or shall not be

now - ed. Thy Keep - et will ser - ve or shall not be

now - ed. Thy Keep - et will ser - ve or shall not be

20 21 22

Figure 7.2 Continued

Figure 7.2 Continued

23

nev - et, will nev - et shum - ber, nev - et shum
nev - et shum

shum - ber, nev - et, will nev - et shum
shum

shum - ber, nev - et, will nev - et shum - ber, will
shum - ber, will

23 24 25

26

ber - lift thine eyes, O lift thine eyes
ber - lift thine eyes, O lift thine eyes

ber - lift thine eyes, O lift thine eyes
ber - lift thine eyes, O lift thine eyes

nev - et shum - ber, lift thine eyes, O lift thine eyes
nev - et shum - ber, lift thine eyes

nev - et shum - ber, lift thine eyes
nev - et shum - ber, lift thine eyes

26 27 28 29

Figure 7.2 Continued

30

to the room - tains, whence com - eth, whence
to the room - tains, whence com - eth, whence

to the room - tains, whence com - eth, whence
to the room - tains, whence com - eth, whence

to the room - tains, whence com - eth, whence
to the room - tains, whence com - eth, whence

30 31 32

33

com - eth, whence com - eth, whence
com - eth, whence com - eth, whence

com - eth, whence com - eth, whence
com - eth, whence com - eth, whence

com - eth, whence com - eth, whence
com - eth, whence com - eth, whence

33 34 35

Figure 7.2 Continued

serve as a helpful reminder as well as facilitate rehearsal procedure. Rather than identifying the place to start by giving the page, score, measure, and beat, you can simply say "Begin at the B section."

Connecting Your Study with Rehearsal Activities

The preceding study of Mendelssohn's "Lift Thine Eyes" is not simply an isolated intellectual exercise, but rather a preparation that can and should have a direct impact on what happens in rehearsal. What you discover during a study of this depth will provide a guide for teaching the music to the choir.

For example, the mood of the piece was described as inspirational and uplifting. This character should be reflected both in the director's conducting gesture and facial expressions. A discussion of the text and its mood will facilitate the singers' understanding of the words they are singing and may encourage an inspired expression on their faces as they sing. This expression may have a positive effect on the entire musical performance.

The formal structure of the piece (ABA') may suggest to the director that the final A' section be learned immediately after the beginning A section to highlight similarities and differences. The medium-fast harmonic rhythm discovered in the B section may suggest that the director rehearse slowly, out of rhythm, each chord so that the choir can hear clearly the harmonic changes. In measure 30, the syncopation in the Soprano II part will need to be brought out. In rehearsal, the director may want to rehearse the Soprano I and Alto alone before adding the Soprano II. This way, the beat is solidly in place in the outer voices before adding the syncopation. In addition, the choir, and especially the Soprano II part, has the opportunity to hear just how interesting and important those two syncopated notes really are.

Summary

Nothing can substitute for the careful preparation of music prior to the first rehearsal. Studying the music both aurally and visually can yield valuable information that impacts the entire rehearsal process including your level of confidence, the efficient use of time, and your choice of teaching strategies.

The image shows a musical score for Soprano I and II. It consists of two staves. The top staff is for Soprano I and the bottom staff is for Soprano II. The music is in 4/4 time and features various dynamic markings such as *p* (piano) and *f* (forte). There are rehearsal marks indicated by a vertical line and the letter 'A' or 'B' above the staff. Some measures are circled in red. The score includes notes, rests, and bar lines.

Figure 7.2 Continued

in measure 16, the Sopranos I and II could carry their release across the bar. This way, the new entrances may be blurred somewhat, but it is certainly an option. The point is that you, the director, must go through the music and make decisions such as these before the first rehearsal, so that you can inform your singers what they are to do.

Another important part of score study and preparation is the identification of places where the choir will want or need to breathe and shouldn't, for various reasons. Such a place exists between measures 2 and 3. Using the symbol that resembles a star will help remind you to remind your singers, through your conducting gesture, that they are not to breathe here. Having them mark the same thing in their music will help as well.

Important entrances can be marked by placing a bracket wherever they occur. This way, when you glance down quickly at the score, these events will be highlighted and can be seen clearly. Look at measures 8-10 and note the markings for each part; the same thing occurs in measure 17, and in measures 20-25. Notice how the brackets call attention to the entrances and make them easier to see.

Circling dynamic changes and tempo changes is often a good idea, and writing in the letter scheme for the form of the piece can

Singing each individual voice part, playing the piece on the piano, and listening to various recordings will help create an aural map of the music against which your singers' efforts in rehearsal will be measured. A visual study of the score will further your understanding of such aspects as tempo, text, diction, important entrances, form, dynamics, and the relationship of parts. A study of this magnitude will also reveal potential difficulties within the music so that you can mark them in your score and plan several remedies prior to rehearsal.

Mini-Projects

1. Select two compositions with which you are not familiar but which are likely to be recorded. Listen carefully and repeatedly to at least two different recordings of your selections. Decide which performances you prefer and why.
2. Take the music selected in No. 1 to the piano and play through each part individually and then in various combinations. Mark in pencil any potential trouble spots that you discover.
3. Analyze both selections using the questions on the form used for "Lift Thine Eyes."
4. After listening to and analyzing the two pieces, use a red pencil to mark the music for rehearsal.

Additional Reading

- COOK, NICHOLAS. (1987). *A guide to musical analysis*. New York: G. Braziller.
- DUNSBY, JONATHAN. (1988). *Music analysis in theory and practice*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- LARUE, JAN. (1992). *Guidelines for style analysis* (2nd ed.). Detroit: Monographs in Musicology, No. 12.
- WHITE, JOHN DAVID. (1994). *Comprehensive musical analysis*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press.

CHAPTER 8

The Rehearsal

The rehearsal was going badly, and Mr. Friedman was getting more and more frustrated. The choir's attention span had long since expired, and he was at a loss as to what to do next, but the class period wasn't over for twenty more minutes and he couldn't just leave the students idle. What could he do to recapture their attention?

I. Planning the Rehearsal

The mental discipline required of directors to plan the details and sequence of events for the day can allow them the freedom to run a more efficient and effective rehearsal. At first glance, this statement may seem like a contradiction in terms when discipline is mentioned as allowing freedom! On closer scrutiny, however, you may see that studying the music and planning the events for rehearsal can give you freedom of focus; that is, your attention can remain almost entirely where it should be: on the singers and their efforts, rather than on yourself and what will happen next. Mr. Friedman would have certainly benefited from a carefully-constructed rehearsal plan. In fact, his rehearsal may not have deteriorated into the shape it was in if he had given some thought to the day's activities.

Because of the element of the unknown that is present in every rehearsal, however, a rehearsal plan should be exactly that: a plan