

Dear singers,

Can you believe we are just two days away from the end of our 20th anniversary season! It's been a pleasure and a privilege to spend even a small part of those twenty years with you, and I look forward to many more wonderful years ahead!

We have had an outstanding season, by any measure. Messiah. Beethoven 9. Joyful Noise. Holocaust Commemoration. Kodaly. Mendelssohn. We are on an upward trajectory: our numbers continue to grow, our musical skills are improving each week, more people than ever before are directly involved with the chorus, either as an officer, board member, producer, section leader, etc. And most importantly, it seems we are all enjoying singing together each week. Enjoying the music, enjoying each other.

There were so many memorable moments for me this season, but if I had to pick one, it would be something that didn't involve me at all: Learning that our section leaders organized multiple sectional rehearsals outside of our regular rehearsal time to help each other learn our music, and that so many people actually showed up! This showed real leadership, commitment to the music and our chorus, a willingness to go above and beyond to help one another, to make our concerts the best they can be. Thank you.

There were SO MANY people responsible for making this such a successful season. So many people who put in hundreds of hours to make the Chorus run. It's impossible to name them all here, so I would just like to thank all the officers, board members, producers, section leaders, people who worked on the program, people who worked on the auction, and EVERYONE else who gave their time and/or money to the Chorus.

A special thank you to our wonderful accompanist, Tatiana. We will miss you so much, but we are so proud of you for your wonderful new job! Our loss, their gain. You have been a dream to work with, and I share any musical success we have had this year with you, 50/50. We wish you all the best.

And one more special thank you to our President, Jim Hickey, who has done an exemplary job in his first year as President. The leadership of this chorus is strong, and it starts with Jim. Thank you, my friend.

Now, we still have a lot of work to do before Friday! Some things to think about:

1. LOOK UP! LOOK UP! You must, must, must look up at least once in EVERY measure on Friday night. No excuses. To be blunt, it is incredibly selfish to sing the entire concert, or even an entire page, looking into your score, singing to yourself. We are the Cambridge

COMMUNITY Chorus. Singing is a COMMUNITY activity. We are not performing these pieces for ourselves. We are performing them for our audience, for our city, for our community. Share these pieces with each other, the audience, and me. If your goal is to simply to stand on stage and sing each piece without making a mistake, with your score in front of your face so nobody can see if you make a mistake, you are in the wrong chorus. Messiah was great because everyone decided to look up for 2+ hours. Kodaly and Mendelssohn will only be great if you do the same tomorrow.

2. Smile! Use your eyes and your faces to communicate with the audience.

3. Texts: Spend some time with these two amazing texts. Sit with them. Read them. Then read them again. The trombones and horns can play REALLY LOUDLY, and completely overwhelm you at times. But we have the words, they don't.

4. DICTION!! Doesn't matter how great the texts are if nobody can understand the words. You need to exaggerate the diction on EVERY WORD. Even when you're tired. Even 15 minutes into the Kodaly. Even in the second half of Mendelssohn, No. 6. EVERY WORD.

5. RHYTHM! If you do not sing on or, better yet, slightly ahead of the beat when singing with an orchestra this size, your words will be swallowed up as if you never even sang them. You cannot be late on any entrance. Ever. DON'T SING SCARED.

6. BREATHE. We devoted 10-15 minutes each week on vocal warm-ups. Now is the time to use what we've learned. Deep, diaphragmatic abdominal breath every time. Breathe like the beginning of a yawn. Breathe early. Breathe often. Stagger when necessary (don't be a hero!).

7. LISTEN. Be aware of each other and yourselves. Think about what you want to sound like BEFORE you make a sound, Don't just open your mouth and hope you'll like what comes out. Hear your part in your head BEFORE you sing it.

and finally, RELAX. I listened to recordings from Monday night, and there were SO MANY wonderful moments. So many moments that sounded better than any of the commercial recordings I own. Many moments where you sounded like a fully professional chorus. You have put in the time and effort on these pieces. Now enjoy them.

Love you all, see you tomorrow at 5.45.

Jamie