



SING
for
PLEASURE

SfP Pointers

#2: Singing with Teenage Boys

This is something which a lot of conductors worry about, particularly when working with boys whose voices are changing.

- ❑ The best advice here is that **boys should continue singing through the voice change**, singing whichever part is most comfortable on any given day; it is no longer considered good practice for a boy to continue singing treble in a kind of pseudo-falsetto until his voice gives way ('breaks') as this can create a very forced tone in the emerging baritone voice. If you are unsure about the voice change then I can highly recommend reading some of the work done by John Cooksey, Jenevora Williams, and Martin Ashley.
- ❑ In terms of repertoire, it is important to remember that **children (whether boys or girls) respond best to quality and challenge**; often our preconceptions about what children will like can cloud our judgement over what to choose. If you are going to take a pop route, perhaps ask your singers for suggestions; I recommend getting a **very long list from them so that you can weed out the inevitable litany of songs containing profanity, songs with melodies so dull you'd send them back if they were GCSE compositions, or pieces which appear to be nothing more than shouting to a beat.**
- ❑ **Once you've chosen your song, writing an arrangement** isn't as hard as it seems: start by spreading the melody throughout all of the parts you have available (young baritones get justifiably annoyed if they are consigned to a perfunctory bass-line, so do give them the melody every now and again) and construct simple harmony lines above and/or below, taking on-beat notes from the chords in the accompaniment.
- ❑ Don't, however, forget that **there is a lot of repertoire out there** (several hundred years' worth) so you don't always need to reinvent the wheel. It is also worth looking at the SfP songbooks for inspiration: my boys particularly enjoy singing *Circle March* (in ***O lux beata***), *Strike the bell* (in ***Sing a Song of Sixpence***), and *Go down Moses* (in ***Jean Harlow***).

The SfP songbooks mentioned above can be purchased from our online shop:

www.singforpleasure.org.uk/shop/