

VOICE for LIFE SONGBOOK

Songs to get your choir singing!

A transcript of the podcast in which Voice for Life Co-directors Leah Perona-Wright and Esther Jones talk about the Voice for Life Songbook, and how to use it. Interspersed with actuality from a rehearsal of a choir directed by Leah, and extracts from the accompanying demonstration CD.

CHOIR REHEARSAL ACTUALITY: Warm up

CHOIR MEMBER: OK, it's Tuesday evening and we meet from six thirty till seven thirty, and we normally start with some warm-ups, and then Leah might take us through some pieces that we've already learnt or teach us some new things.

REHEARSAL ACTUALITY: Leah Perona Wright teaches top line of *Sing with me* (No 13, Page 45)

LEAH PERONA-WRIGHT: Always during my rehearsals I try and make sure I incorporate warm ups at the beginning to get them focussed on what we are doing.

REHEARSAL ACTUALITY continued

LEAH: And I find it a really useful tool as well to use warm up songs; it gets them singing in parts, but also it's just fun!

REHEARSAL ACTUALITY: *Sing with me*, Voice 2 part.

CHOIR MEMBER: Yeah, I think the warm-ups are really good; it's nice to be challenged each week with something different. Some of them are quite entertaining, and keep us amused.

LEAH: I'm Leah Perona-Wright, and as well as being a Co-Director of the Voice for Life Programme for the Royal School of Church Music, I am a choir director of a children's choir and a youth choir in Surrey which is in the south of England.

CHOIR MEMBER: They tend to be fairly simple melodies, and not too hard to pick up, and once you've got them, they're catchy.

REHEARSAL ACTUALITY

ESTHER JONES: Hi, I'm Esther Jones, and I am a Voice for Life Programme Co-Director. We hope the book will be of use to anyone who works with young singers, but in particular people working with young church choirs, and also school choirs, particularly in church schools where they're looking for music to sing in assembly.

DEMONSTRATION CD EXTRACT: *Now thank we all our God (No 15, Page 53)*

LEAH: Singing should be fun! That has been the main thing in the back of my mind while we have been compiling this. So actually I've even road-tested some of these things on my choir, before we've put them into the book, and I know Esther has done the same.

DEMONSTRATION CD EXTRACT: *Freedom train (No 9, Page 34)*

ESTHER: In the book we talk about how to approach rehearsals in general, with some general advice on running a rehearsal, but also with each song we've written training notes to suggest how you might like to approach learning a particular song.

DEMONSTRATION CD EXTRACT: *O when the saints (No 20, Page 80)*

VOICEOVER / EXTRACT FROM NOTES (Page 80): *Make sure the choir knows when to enter after the piano introduction. You could help by counting the rests with them the first time through...*

MUSIC UP

ESTHER: Take for example *O when the saints (Page 80)*. There's a short descant to go with it – and in our training notes we explain how you might like to go about teaching it by rote, because it's very simple to learn.

MUSIC UP

VOICEOVER / EXTRACT FROM NOTES (Page 80): *Encourage the singers on the descant part to "feel" rather than count the rhythm for their first entry. It may help them to begin by singing the start of the melody line....*

MUSIC UP TO END

ESTHER: The music itself might look a bit more daunting on the page with the syncopated rhythms, but it's very simple and quick to pick up. We've even recorded a demonstration track of this song and all the others as well, so that

people can listen to the CD, and learn the music from that if they don't feel confident in teaching it themselves.

REHEARSAL ACTUALITY: Leah (not an alto!) starts to teach Harmony 2 part of *I'm gonna sing* (No 39, Page 220)

LEAH: Effectively you get them singing in parts without them realising they're even doing it by using ostinatos – very simple riffs – which is a repeated pattern over and over.

REHEARSAL ACTUALITY: adds Harmony 1 part

LEAH (over): And a case in point is *I'm gonna sing* (Page 220) one of the traditional African-American songs in the book. They might not get it right first time, sometimes they can't remember the words, or they might get a rhythm wrong. But if you just do it again, and get them to do it a couple of times so that it is established. Then you can even leave them going round and round, while you then go to your next group, sing them their part, and build it up.

REHEARSAL ACTUALITY: Leah says “And again, come on!”

LEAH: While Esther and I were involved in compiling the songbook, I think both of us were very aware in our experiences of being choir trainers, that it is a quite lonely job in many respects. And you are trying to inspire your singers to want to be involved in the choir. You're trying to find music that's challenging for them, that's exciting for them to sing.

DEMONSTRATION CD EXTRACT: *God the singer* (No 23, page 95), bars 60 - 70

ESTHER: We're running some workshop sessions up and down the country, to give people ideas and input into how to do this, and it's really valuable to go and see how someone else does it.

For more information on events in your area visit

<http://www.rscm.com/events>

MUSIC UP

ESTHER: We're really pleased that **VOICE FOR LIFE** seems to be taking off around the world, particularly in the **USA**, but in other places as well, **South Africa** and **New Zealand, Australia**. We're really pleased to see so many people taking the scheme on board.

For more information about the **VOICE FOR LIFE** programme visit
<http://www.rscm.com/vfl>

For more information about **RSCM International** visit
<http://www.rscm.com/international/>

REHEARSAL ACTUALITY: *Halle, halle, hallelujah!* (No 38, Page 218)

CHOIR MEMBER: I really love singing in groups, I find it makes the music come alive and through this choir I have made so many new friends, who might have different interests to me, which I really like about it.

REHEARSAL ACTUALITY: Leah says “Well done!”

ESTHER: The scheme is really proving useful as well to lots of choir trainers, who want some support in knowing how to best train their choristers of all ages. We have great hopes that as more and more people get involved with the scheme, that we will see rising standards in church choirs and in school choirs.

DEMONSTRATION CD EXTRACT: *A Song of peace and joy* (No 24, Page 102), bars 43 - end

CHOIR MEMBER: This new book - yeah - looks as though there's some good stuff in it!

MUSIC UP TO END

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