

What a wonderful way it will be to bring to a climax ten years of Really Big Chorus summer schools – Bach’s monumental **B Minor Mass**, rehearsed and performed in the rarefied surroundings of Keble College, among the Dreaming Spires of Oxford. This greatest of all choral and orchestral baroque masterpieces requires very considerable work in advance from all of us if we are to succeed in creating something very special in the relatively short time we are together in August 2024. It’s never too early to begin personal preparation.

***SOME SINGERS WILL HAVE A NOVELLO SCORE AND OTHERS WILL HAVE BARENREITER. IF YOU ARE SINGING FROM THE NOVELLO EDITION IT WILL BE ESSENTIAL – IN ADVANCE OF THE WEEK – TO WRITE IN THE BAR NUMBERS IN ALL THE CHORUSES WE SHALL BE SINGING, AS THE PAGINATION IS DIFFERENT FROM THE BARENREITER. THIS WILL SAVE US A LOT OF REHEARSAL TIME.***

***AND PLEASE NOTE THAT WE WILL NOT BE REHEARSING OR PERFORMING THE CREDO (SYMBOLUM NICENUM)***

The movements we are most likely to include are as follows (dark print indicating chorus involvement).

**No. 1 – KYRIE – SSATB**

No. 2 – Christe eleison – soloists soprano duet

**No. 3 – KYRIE – SATB**

**No. 4 – GLORIA IN EXCELSIS – SSATB**

**No. 5 – ET IN TERRA PAX – SSATB**

- in Novello this section is a continuation of No. 4, but in Barenreiter, it has a new number as movement 5. When writing in the bar numbers in the Novello score, do not begin again at bar 1, but continue counting on from the previous bar

**As a result, the movements from here onwards are different between Barenreiter and Novello.**

No. 6 (5 in Novello) – Laudamus Te (solo soprano)

**No. 7 (6 in Novello) – GRATIAS AGIMUS TIBI – SATB**

No. 8 (7 in Novello) – Domine Deus (solo soprano and tenor duet)

**No. 9 (8 in Novello) – Qui tollis peccata mundi – SATB**

No. 10 (9 in Novello) – Qui sedes ad dexteram patris (solo alto)

No. 11 (10 in Novello) – Quoniam tu solus sanctus (solo baritone)

**No. 12 (11 in Novello) – Cum Sancto Spiritu – SSATB**

**SANCTUS (SSAATB)**

**OSANNA (DOUBLE CHOIR)**

Benedictus (solo tenor)

Agnus Dei (solo alto)

**DONA NOBIS PACEM – SATB**

**NB: The Qui Tollis movement (No. 8 in Novello, No. 9 in Barenreiter) is marked Second Soprano but this should be sung by all sopranos**

**In No. 9 (No. 8 in Novello – qui tollis peccata mundi) – the bar counting begins with bar 1 on the word *tollis*, NOT on the upbeat word *qui***

**General notes:**

It will be essential that we have a good balance between first and second sopranos, as there is much divided writing between the two. This is crucial even in the first bar of the Mass. Similarly for the altos in the SANCTUS and OSANNA. The list of movements on the previous page makes clear the vocal divisions.

Throughout the work, it will be a great help for you to mark, with a pencil cross in the margin, which line you are singing – particularly in the 5, 6 and 8-part choruses. Done in advance, this again will save you (and me!) rehearsal time.

There are a lot of RUNS in many of the movements and these need to be looked at very carefully well in advance of the week. Note that we will be singing with a baroque band, which means that all the music will be performed a semitone lower than printed.

In the SANCTUS movement, wherever your part has a dotted quaver followed by a semiquaver, these should be sung as a triplet – e.g. the words *Dominus* and *Sabaoth* – so that it goes with the other parts singing triplets.

The opportunity to sing Bach's B Minor Mass doesn't come round very often and one of the reasons for that is the demands which Bach places on all the voices. So this is a wonderful opportunity for all of us to share in the wonders of this great work. Do not underestimate the difficulties – nor indeed the tremendous rewards – and do as much work on the notes, the rhythms, the words and the general feeling for the glorious music well in advance of our being together. Every moment you can spend on the score in advance will pay huge dividends. Try to listen to recordings whenever possible, to get the overall feeling – commercial recordings, internet and/or Choraline learning aids. The more we all know how it should sound, the more likely we are to be able to make it very special.

In other words – like good scouts and guides – BE PREPARED! If you are, then I can guarantee a summer school which none of us will ever forget.

**Brian Kay**