



AUDITIONING: DON'T LET AUDITION ANXIETY HOLD YOU BACK...

an article from David Close, Artistic Director & Conductor Emeritus

Lay a 6" plank that's 10' long on the ground and ask anyone to walk on it. "It doesn't present any challenge," I hear you say. Take that same plank, raise it 100 feet in the air and ask anyone to walk on it. What happens? Panic, fear and trembling, sweaty palms, heart palpitations, copious perspiration, a heart wildly racing and a knot in the pit of the stomach. It's obvious what the difference is. The first instance provokes no fear; the second, absolute terror.

Auditions can be like that. Highly accomplished musicians are not immune. A superb violinist at an audition for a major orchestra pointed out, "You work all your life for an opportunity like this and, if the audition does not go well because of nerves, the whole trajectory of your career can be ruined in an instant."

Enter the prospective chorister who saw an ad in the paper or online or a poster in the local laundromat. He or she summons the courage to make the phone call to inquire about how to become a member. She may have sung a little in college or he might have sung in his high school glee club for a semester or two. They both may never have auditioned for those groups. Now they are ushered into a room of strangers who appear to be sitting in judgment and a renowned "maestro" who is about to ask them to do things they've never done before...TERROR!! We at the Oratorio Society of Queens know how daunting this all can be. How do we know? We've all been through it – and some of us, many times!

When prospective members make the call to the OSQ phone number, they are greeted by a welcoming voice who gives them an overview of the chorus and the process, all the while calming their fears and developing a relationship of trust. When they arrive at the audition, they are welcomed again and ushered into the audition room where they are again welcomed and introduced to the members of the 'listening' committee who are themselves caring and sensitive members of the chorus. The "Maestro" also welcomes them and gently demonstrates the simple little scale patterns that they will sing while he accompanies and encourages them. He explains to them that this is done to see if they will be comfortable with a higher or a lower part in the chorus. He has them match pitches to check to see how well they can manage learning by 'ear' while he encourages their correct choices. Finally he asks them to sing something: a song, a tune, whatever is most comfortable and shows off their voice to the finest. All of this is designed to allay their fears while trying to gain some insight into their musical abilities.

While we do our best to take the terrifying aspects out of the experience of auditioning, we do recognize that is still a stressful experience. But we know and hope they recognize that it is worth 'rising to the challenge' because it means they have a really good chance at singing great music with a super chorus for some really wonderful audiences.