

## Chapter VI (Supplementary).

### VOICES.

#### Technical Terms.

Among all the confused terms employed in singing to denote the compass, register and character of the human voice, there are four which may be said to represent elemental types: soprano, alto or contralto, tenor and bass. These names are used to denote the composition of the chorus with sub-divisions of *firsts* and *seconds*, to determine how the parts must be divided. (Sopr. I, Sopr. II etc.) While the range of an instrument is exactly governed by its construction, the compass of the voice, on the other hand, depends on the individuality of the singer. It is therefore impossible to define the exact limits of each of these vocal types. When it is a question of dividing choristers into 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> parts, those with the higher voices are classed among the firsts and *vice versa*.

Besides the principal terms mentioned above, the names mezzo-soprano (between sop. and alto), and baritone (between tenor and bass) are also employed.

*Note.* In the chorus mezzo-sopranos are classed with 2<sup>nd</sup> sopranos or 1<sup>st</sup> altos, baritones with 2<sup>nd</sup> tenors or first basses, according to quality and timbre of voice.

Apart from these denominations which represent the six principal solo voices, a quantity of others are in use to denote either compass, timbre or technique, such as light soprano, *soprano giusto*, lyric soprano, dramatic soprano, light tenor, *tenorino-altino*, *baryton-martin*, lyric tenor, dramatic tenor, *basso cantante* ("singing bass"), *basso profondo* (deep bass) etc. To this lengthy list must

be added the term *mezzo-carattere*, of intermediate character (between lyric and dramatic soprano, for example).

If we try to discover the real meaning of these designations it soon becomes apparent that they are derived from widely different sources — for instance, “light soprano” implies agility and mobility in the voice; “dramatic tenor”, the power to express strong dramatic feeling; *basso profondo* signifies great resonance in the deep register.

Minute examination of all the methods of attack and emission of sound lies within the province of the singing master and to enumerate them here would only perplex the student. The same applies to the position and exact limits of register (chest voice, middle and head voice in women; chest voice, mixed voice and falsetto in men). The work of a teacher of singing consists in equalising the voice throughout its whole compass, so that the transition from one register to another, on all the vowels, may be accomplished imperceptibly. Some voices are naturally even and flexible. The professor of singing must correct faults in breathing, determine the range of the voice and place it, equalise its tone, increase its flexibility, instruct as to the pronunciation of vowels, modulation from one grade of expression to another, etc. A composer should be able to rely upon flexible and equal voices without having to trouble himself as to the abilities or defects of individual singers. In these days a part is seldom written for a particular artist, and composers and librettists do not find it necessary to entrust a certain rôle to *foriture* singers, another to heavy dramatic voices. Poetic and artistic considerations demand greater variety of resource in the study of opera or vocal music in general.

## Soloists.

### Range and register.

I advise the composer to be guided by Table F. which gives the approximate range of the six principal solo voices. A bracket under the notes defines the normal octave, the register in which the voice is generally used. Within these limits the composer may write freely without fear of hardening or tiring the voice.

The normal octave applies also to declamatory singing and recitative; the notes above it are exceptional and should be used for the culminating points of a passage or for climaxes, the notes below, for the fall or decline of a melody. Employing voices in unusual registers for long periods of time will weary both singer and listener, but these registers may occasionally be used for brief intervals so as not to confine the voice too strictly to one octave. A few examples are added to illustrate melody in different types of voices.

*Examples:*

- The Tsar's Bride* [102—109] (for extracts cf. Ex. 256, 280, 284) —  
 Marfa's Aria (Soprano).  
 " " " [16—18] — Griaznov's Aria (Baritone).  
*Snegourotchka* — The 3 songs of Lell. (Contralto).  
*Sadko* [46—49] (cf. extract, Ex. 120) — Sadko's Aria (Tenor).  
 " [129—131] — Lioubava's Aria (Mezzo-sopr.).  
 " [191—193] (cf. extract, Ex. 131) — Bass Aria.

**Vocalisation.**

A good vocal melody should contain notes of at least three different values, minims, crotchets and quavers (or crotchets, quavers and semiquavers etc.). Monotony in rhythmic construction is unsuited to vocal melody; it is applicable to instrumental music, but only in certain cases. *Cantabile* melody requires a fair number of long notes, and a change of syllable in a word should occur at a moment when the voice quits a long sustained note. Short, single notes, changing with every syllable produce a harmonious effect. Owing to the requirements of diction, extended melodic figures sung *legato* on one syllable must be used with care on the part of the composer; to perform these the singer must possess greater command over flexibility and technique. The possibility of taking breath in the right place is one of the conditions essential to all vocal writing. Breath cannot be taken in the middle of a word, sometimes not even during the course of a sentence or phrase in the text; hence the voice part must be suitably interspersed with rests.

## Table F. Voices.

### Chorus:

Musical notation for the Chorus section, featuring four staves: Soprano, Contralto, Tenor, and Bass. Each staff contains a melodic line with three distinct segments: 'exceptional', 'normal', and 'except.'. The Soprano staff uses a treble clef, while the other three use bass clefs. Brackets and dashed lines indicate the boundaries of these segments across the staves.

### Soloists:

Musical notation for the Soloists section, featuring six staves: Soprano, Mezzo-soprano, Contralto, Tenor, Baritone, and Bass. Each staff contains a melodic line with three distinct segments: 'except.', 'normal', and 'except.'. The Soprano and Mezzo-soprano staves use treble clefs, while the other four use bass clefs. Brackets and dashed lines indicate the boundaries of these segments across the staves.

*Note.* It must be remembered that there are some words upon which the voice may not dwell, or sing more than one or two notes. These words may be nouns, pronouns, numerals, prepositions, conjunctions and other parts of speech. It would be impossible and ridiculous, for instance, to write a sustained note on such words as “who”, “he” etc. The voice may dwell on certain words which, so to speak, possess some poetical colour (1).

*Examples:*

- No. 303. *Sadko* [236] — Sadko's Aria (Tenor).  
 „ [309—311] (see extract, Ex. 81). Volkhova's Cradle  
 Song (Soprano).  
*Snegourotchka* [9] — Fairy Spring's Aria (Mezzo-sopr.).  
 „ [187—188], [212—213] (see extracts, Ex. 102 and 225)  
 — the two Cavatinas of Tsar Berendey (Tenor).  
 „ [247] — Miskir's Aria (Baritone).

**Vowels.**

As regards vocalisation on one syllable, on long sustained notes and in the high register, the choice of vowels is a matter of some importance. The difference in the position of the mouth and lips in forming the open vowel **a** and the closed vowel **ou** is apparent to everyone. The series of vowels from the point of view of open sounds is: **a, i, o, e, u**. In women's voices the easiest vowel on high notes is **a**, for men it is **o**. The vowel **i** softens the penetrating quality of the top notes of a bass voice, and the vowel **a** adds to the extension of range in the very lowest compass. Lengthy florid passages are often written on the interjection **ah**, or simply

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(1) Here the author approaches a question so well known to the Russians that it does not require any further elucidation for their guidance. But a whole book would have to be written to form a compendium of practical rules on this subject, and to point out the errors which nearly all French composers openly commit — even those who are famous for their sense of diction and literary style. We can only conclude that the question has come to be considered of minor importance in France, perhaps on account of the lack of definite stress on the syllables of words, which is characteristic of the French language. It is not within the translator's province to discuss the question of French versification or to elaborate the excellent maxims laid down by Rimsky-Korsakov, the first, among many, to touch upon this delicate and important subject.

(Translator's note.)

on the vowel a. Owing to the restrictions imposed by literary and dramatic laws, the composer can only follow the above rules to a limited extent.

*Examples:*

*Snegourotchka* [293], [318—319] (cf. Ex. 119).  
No. 304. *Sadko* [83].

**Flexibility.**

Voices possess the greatest amount of flexibility in their normal octave. Women's voices are more supple than men's, but in all types, the higher voice is the more agile, sopranos in women, the tenor voice in men. Although capable of performing florid and complicated figures, different varieties of phrasing and the rapid change from staccato to legato, the human voice is infinitely less flexible than a musical instrument. In passages of any rapidity, diatonic scales and *arpeggios* in thirds come easiest to the voice. Intervals bigger than fourths in quick succession and chromatic scales are extremely difficult. Skips of an octave or more starting from a short note should always be avoided. Preparation should precede any extremely high note either by leading up to it gradually, or by the clear leap of a fourth, fifth or octave; but sometimes the voice may attack a high note without any due preparation.

*Examples:*

*Snegourotchka* [46—48] (cf. extract, Ex. 279) — *Snegourotchka's*  
Aria (Soprano).  
„ [96—97] — *Lell's* first song (Contralto).  
*Sadko* [196—193] (cf. extract, Ex. 122) — *Hindoo* song (Tenor).  
„ [203—206] — *Venetian* song (Baritone).  
*Pan Voyevoda* [20—26] — *Maria's* cradle song (Sopr).

**Colour and character of voices.**

The colouring of the voice, whether it be brilliant or dull, sombre or sonorous depends upon the individual singer, and the composer has no need to consider it. The chief question is interpretation and may be solved by the judicious choice of artists. From the

point of view of flexibility and expression voices may be divided into two classes, *lyric* and *dramatic*. The latter is more powerful and of greater range, the former possesses more suppleness and elasticity and is more readily disposed to different shades of expression. Granted that the rare combination of the two classes is the composer's ideal, he should nevertheless be content to follow the main artistic purpose which he has set out to achieve. In complicated and important works the composer should bear in mind the characteristics of the various voices he employs; moreover, if he use two voices of the same calibre, e. g. 2 Sopranos or 2 Tenors, he should discriminate between the range and register of their respective parts, writing for one slightly higher than the other. It is no rare occurrence to meet with voices of an intermediate character (*mezzo-carattere*) combining the qualities of each type to a modified extent. To such voices the composer may assign rôles demanding the characteristics of each class, especially secondary rôles. At the present day, besides the rôles suitable to the dramatic and lyric type of voice, it is customary to give prominence to those demanding some special qualifications, voices of a certain tenderness or power, a specified range or degree of flexibility — attributes decided by the artistic object in view. In casting secondary and minor rôles the composer is advised to employ a medium range and less exacting demands on technique.

*Note.* After Meyerbeer, who was the first to write for a special type of heavy mezzo-soprano and baritone, Richard Wagner created a type of powerful dramatic soprano, of extensive range, combining the quality and scope of the soprano and mezzo-soprano voices; likewise a similar type of tenor, possessing the attributes and compass of the tenor and baritone together. To demand that voices shall be equally brilliant and resonant in the high and low register, that singers shall be endowed with a super-powerful breathing apparatus and an extraordinary faculty for resistance to fatigue (Siegfried, Parsifal, Tristan, Brünhilda, Kundry, Isolde), is to exact something little short of the miraculous. Such voices are to be found, but there are some singers with excellent though not phenomenal vocal powers, who, by the constant pursuit of Wagnerian parts endeavour to increase their range and volume, and only succeed in depriving the voice of correct intonation, beauty of tone, and all subtlety of *nuances*. I believe that less exacting demands and greater perception of what is required, skilful and judicious use of the high and low registers of the voice, a proper understanding of *cantabile* writing combined with orchestration which never overpowers the vocal part will be of greater service to the composer, from an artistic point of view, than the more elaborate methods of Richard Wagner.

## Voices in combination.

Treating solo voices in a polyphonic-harmonic manner is the best method of preserving their individual character in *ensembles*. A distribution which is wholly harmonic or entirely polyphonic is seldom found. The first plan, largely used in choral writing, simplifies the movement of the voices too greatly, eliminating their melodic character; the second method is wearisome and somewhat disturbing to the ear.

As a general rule the voices are arranged according to the law of normal register. Crossing of parts is rare and should only be done with the intention of emphasising the melody in the ascending voices above those adjacent in register, e. g. the tenor part above contralto, the mezzo-soprano above the soprano, etc.

### Duet.

The combinations most conducive to the proper movement of parts are those of two voices related within an octave 8 

Sopr.	M.-sopr.	C.-alto
Ten.	Bar.	Bass.

 Movement in tenths, sixths, thirds or octaves (the last very seldom) will always produce satisfactory *ensemble*, and if the parts progress polyphonically, it need not happen *frequently* that they are separated by more than a tenth, or that undesirable crossing of parts will result.

### Examples :

*Sadko* 99—101 — Sopr. and Tenor (cf. Ex. 289, 290).

*Servilia* 143 — Sopr. and Tenor.

*Ivan the Terrible*, Act I 48—50 — Sopr. and Tenor.

*Kashtcheï the Immortal* 62—64. Mezzo-sopr. and Baritone.

Voices related in fifths and fourths, 5 

Sopr.	C.-alto
Ten.	Bass.

 4 

C.-alto	Ten.
5	Bass.

 should progress nearer to one another; it is rare for them to move in tenths, common in sixths and thirds; they may also proceed in unison. The two voices are seldom separated at a greater distance than an octave, and certain cases will require crossing of parts, which, however, should only be for periods of short duration.



*Examples :*

*Snegourotchka* [263—264] — Soprano and Alto.

\* *The Christmas Night* [78—80] — Alto and Tenor.

\* *Legend of Kitesh* [338] — Tenor and Bass.

Voices related in thirds;

3 [Sopr. M.-sopr. Ten. Bar.  
M.-sopr. C.-alto Bass Bass]

may move in unison, in thirds and sixths, and admit very largely of the crossing of parts. Separation by more than an octave must only be momentary, and is generally to be avoided.

*Examples :*

\* *The Tsar's Bride* [174] — Sopr. and Mezzo-sopr.

\* *Tsar Saltan* [5—6] — Sopr. and Mezzo-sopr.

In the case of voices related in twelfths: 12  $\left[ \begin{smallmatrix} \text{Sopr.} \\ \text{Bass} \end{smallmatrix} \right]$ , intervals approaching one another do not create a good effect, for this transplants the deeper voice into the upper register and *vice versa*. Singing in unison is no longer possible, and thirds are to be avoided; the use of sixths, tenths and thirteenths is recommended. The voices will often be separated by more than a twelfth and crossing of parts is out of the question.

*Example :*

\* *Tsar Saltan* [254—255].

Relationship in tenths 10  $\left[ \begin{smallmatrix} \text{Sopr.} \\ \text{Bar.} \end{smallmatrix} \text{ or } \begin{smallmatrix} \text{M.-sopr.} \\ \text{Bass} \end{smallmatrix} \right]$  is fairly common. The explanations given above are also applicable in this case.

*Example :*

*Snegourotchka* [291—300] (cf. extract, Ex. 118) Sopr. and Bar.

The use of similar voices in pairs:  $\begin{smallmatrix} \text{Sopr.} \\ \text{Sopr.} \end{smallmatrix}$ ,  $\begin{smallmatrix} \text{Ten.} \\ \text{Ten.} \end{smallmatrix}$  entails singing in unison and thirds. They should rarely be separated beyond a sixth, but crossing of parts is inevitable, as otherwise the resultant volume of tone would be too weak.

*Note.* Other possible combinations: C.-alto, M.-sopr. Bar., Ten., call for no special remarks.

*Examples:*

\* *The May Night*, Act I pp. 59—64 — Mezzo-sopr. and Tenor.

\* *Sadko* 322—324 — Mezzo-sopr. and Tenor.

As a general rule, writing for two voices is only successful when the progression of parts is clear, when discords are prepared by a common note, or are the outcome of conveniently separated movement and correctly resolved. Empty intervals of fourths and perfect fifths, elevenths and twelfths should be avoided on the strong beats of a bar, especially on notes of some value. If, however, one of the voices assumes a melodic character, the other forming the harmonic accompaniment in declamatory style, it is not absolutely necessary to avoid the intervals mentioned above.

*Note.* It is not within the scope of the present work to consider the writing of vocal parts in closer detail. This question must be left to the professor of free counterpoint. It remains to be noted that the human voice accompanied by the orchestra is always heard independently as something apart, something complete in itself. For this reason a composer may never rely on the orchestra to fill up an empty space or correct a fault in the handling of voices. All the rules of harmony and counterpoint, down to the last detail, must be applied to vocal writing, which is never dependent upon orchestral accompaniment.

### Trios, quartets etc.

All that has been said regarding the relationship of voices in duet applies with equal force to the combination of three, four, five or more voices. An *ensemble* of several voices is seldom purely polyphonic; as a rule, although some parts move polyphonically, progression in thirds, sixths, tenths and thirteenths is used for the remainder. Declamation for some voices on notes forming the harmony is also possible. This variety of simultaneous movement of vocal parts renders the comprehension of the total effect less difficult for the ear, and sanctions the distribution of distinctive and suitable figures or tone colouring to certain voices with other figures or timbres which may be proceeding at the same time. The skilful arrangement of pauses and re-entries facilitates the understanding of the whole, and gives desirable prominence to detail.

*Examples :*

*Snegourotchka* [267] — Trio, *Finale* to Act III.

*The Tsar's Bride* [116—118] — Quartet in Act II.

” ” ” [168—171] — Sextet in Act III (cf. extract, Ex. 283).

*Servilia* [149—152] — Quintet in Act III.

The movement of solo voices is seldom purely harmonic in character with predominance given to the upper voices homophonically treated. The blending of all the parts into an harmonic whole, without any distinctive predominant feature in any one part (as in a chorale) is employed for songs or *ensembles* in traditional style, prayers, hymns, etc. If this method is adopted for the quartet

of voices, <sup>Sopr.</sup> <sup>Alto</sup> <sup>Ten.</sup> <sup>Bass</sup>, it will be noted that widely-spaced part writing

is the most natural and suitable form (especially in *forte* passages), as the four voices can sing together in their proper registers (low, middle and high), while, in close part writing they may find themselves at a given moment in registers, which are entirely foreign. But both methods should be employed, as, otherwise, it would be impossible to guarantee equality in even the shortest succession of chords.

*Examples :*

*Snegourotchka* [178] Hymn of Tsar Berendey's subjects.

No. 305. *Legend of Kitesh* [341].

The second half of the last example is an instance of six-part harmonic writing; the upper voice stands out prominently, the rest form a kind of accompaniment.

## Chorus.

### Range and register.

The range of choral voices is slightly more limited than that of soloists. The exceptional register may be considered as two notes above and below the normal octave. The dotted lines extended still further indicate the limits upon which a composer may rely in very exceptional cases, as every full chorus must contain a few

voices of more than average compass, in this respect approaching the solo voice in character. In many choruses one or two bass singers may be found who are able to go still lower than the limit of the exceptional range (they are called *octavists*). (1)

*Note.* These uncommonly deep notes must be moderately well sustained and can only be used when the whole chorus is singing quite *piano*; they are hardly applicable except in unaccompanied choruses (*a capella*).

The difference in range between the "firsts" and "seconds" in each type may be fixed as follows: the normal octave and the exceptionally low register should be allotted to the "seconds", the same octave and the exceptionally high register to the "firsts".

The composition of the chorus is approximately as follows: for a full chorus, 32 singers to each of the 4 parts sopr., alt., ten. and bass; for a chorus of medium size, from 16 to 20, and for a small chorus from 8 to 10 singers. The number of women will often predominate, and more voices are given to the "firsts" than to the "seconds".

On account of stage requirements a chorus may have to be divided into two or even three separate parts. This is a great disadvantage, especially with a small chorus, as each chorister becomes more or less a soloist.

The methods of writing for operatic chorus are very numerous. Besides the primary harmonico-polyphonic arrangement, containing the whole musical idea, the voices may be made to enter separately, singing or declaiming phrases of varying length; they may progress in unison or in octaves; one vocal part may repeat certain notes or the whole chorus reiterate certain chords; one melodic part may predominate (the upper part for preference), the others forming an harmonic accompaniment; isolated exclamatory phrases may be given to the whole chorus or to certain portions of it, and finally, the entire chorus may be treated in a purely harmonic manner in chords, with the essential melodic design allotted to the orchestra. Having outlined the principal methods of handling the chorus, I advise the reader to study vocal and orchestral scores where he will find many illustrations impossible to deal with here.

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(1) *Contrebasses* voices as they are called when mentioned in French works are peculiar to Russia, in which country they are plentiful.

(Translator's note.)

There exists another most important operation, the division of the chorus into different groups. The most natural method is to divide it into men's chorus and women's chorus. Less frequent combinations are altos, tenors and basses, or sopranos, altos and tenors. There remains yet another point to be considered, the subdivision of each part into two's and three's. Men's and women's choruses, considered as distinct unities may alternate either one with the other, or with the principal chorus. For this reason subdivision increases the possibilities of choral writing, and, as I have already remarked, it is only by the study of choral works that the student will acquire mastery over this branch of composition, the fundamental principles of which can only be faintly outlined in the course of the present work.

### Melody.

Melody is more limited in the chorus than in the solo voice, both as regards range as well as mobility. Choristers' voices are less "settled" and not so highly trained as those of soloists. Sometimes solo and choral melody are similar in point of range and technique, but more often the latter is lacking in freedom and variety of rhythm, restricted as it is to the repetition of short phrases, while the solo voice demands broader melodic outline and greater freedom in construction. In this respect choral melody more closely resembles instrumental melody. Pauses for taking breath are not so important with chorus singers as with soloists; the former do not need to breathe all together and each singer may take a slight rest from time to time, thus obviating the necessity for sudden complete silences. The question of suitable vowels is likewise of secondary importance.

The change from notes of short value to long, vocalisation on syllables and other questions mentioned above are equally applicable to choral melody, but in a minor degree. Not more than two or three notes should be written on one syllable except for fanciful and whimsical effects.

### Example:

No. 306. *The Golden Cockerel* [262]; see also before [123].

## A. Mixed chorus.

### Chorus in unison.

The simplest and most natural combination of voices is sopranos and altos, or tenors and basses. These combinations produce ample and vigorous tone, and the mixed timbres serve to give prominence to a melody in the upper or bass parts. In practice the other voices are often divided to thicken the harmony. The combination of altos and tenors produces a peculiar mixed tone quality, somewhat *bizarre* and seldom used.

*Examples:*

*Snegourotchka* [64].

*Sadko* [208] (cf. Ex. 14).

### Progression in octaves.

The most beautiful and natural combinations are sopranos and tenors 8  $\begin{bmatrix} \text{Sopr.} \\ \text{Ten.} \end{bmatrix}$ , altos and basses 8  $\begin{bmatrix} \text{Altos} \\ \text{Basses} \end{bmatrix}$ ; they produce a tone both brilliant and powerful. Progression of sopranos and altos, or tenors and basses is seldom practised. Though the latter combinations may occur in choruses for women and men alone, they can only be used in melodies of restricted length. The difference of register in which the voices move does not permit of the same balance of tone obtained by voices of a distinctive kind.

*Examples:*

*Snegourotchka* [60], [61] — Carnival Procession.

„ [113] — Wedding Ceremony.

*Sadko* [37] — Chorus of Guests, 1<sup>st</sup> Tableau.

Dividing kindred voices in octaves is seldom done, 8  $\begin{bmatrix} \text{Sopr. I} \\ \text{Sopr. II} \end{bmatrix}$  etc., except perhaps in the basses 8  $\begin{bmatrix} \text{Basses I} \\ \text{Basses II} \end{bmatrix}$ , when the progression of parts demand it, or it is required to double the bass part in octaves.

*Examples:*

*Ivan the Terrible*, Act III [68] — Final chorus (cf. Ex. 312).

*Sadko* [341] — Final chorus.

A beautifully round tone results from doubling men's and women's voices in octaves 8  $\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{Sopr. + Altos} \\ \text{Ten. + Basses.} \end{array} \right]$

*Example:*

*Snegourotchka* [323] — Final chorus.

Brilliance and vigour is achieved when sopranos and altos progress in thirds doubled in octaves by tenors and basses also in thirds: 8  $\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{Sopr.} \\ \text{Altos} \\ \text{Ten.} \\ \text{Basses} \end{array} \right] 3$ .

*Examples:*

*Mlada*, Act I [24]; Act II, before [31].

*The Golden Cockerel* [235].

On the rare occasions when the whole chorus progresses in double octaves the usual arrangement is:

$\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{Sopr. + Altos} \\ \text{Ten.} \\ \text{Basses} \end{array} \right] 8$ , or else  $8 \left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{Sopr.} \\ \text{Altos + Ten.} \\ \text{Basses} \end{array} \right] 8$ .

*Examples:*

*Snegourotchka* [319].

*Sadko* [182].

### Voices (*divisi*); harmonic use of the mixed chorus.

The purely harmonic progression of a four-part mixed chorus is more natural and resonant when the harmony is of the widely divided order, so that the volume of tone is equally distributed throughout.

*Example:*

No. 307. *Sadko* [144] — Beginning of 3<sup>rd</sup> tableau.

To secure a well-balanced *forte* chord in close part writing the following distribution is recommended:

$\left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{Sopr. I} \\ \text{Sopr. II} \\ \text{Altos} \\ \text{Ten. I} \\ \text{Ten. II} \\ \text{Basses I} \\ \text{Basses II.} \end{array} \right]$

Three harmonic parts in the high register (2 sopranos and altos) are doubled an octave lower by 2 tenors and the 1<sup>st</sup> basses. The lower part is undertaken by the 2<sup>nd</sup> basses. In this manner the tenors sing in the soprano octave, the 1<sup>st</sup> basses in the alto octave and the 2<sup>nd</sup> basses are independent.

*Examples :*

*Snegourotchka* [327] — End of the work.

*Mlada*, Act II [20] — Procession of Princes.

*Ivan the Terrible*, Act II [19] (cf. Ex. 212).

Division of parts can be adopted when one of them is entrusted with a melody, the remainder forming a sufficiently full accompaniment. The choice of parts to be divided depends upon the range of the upper one. When a harmonic-melodic phrase is repeated in different keys and registers, it may be necessary to distribute the parts and divide them in another manner, so as to maintain proper choral balance. As an illustration I give two extracts of identical musical context, the second (*F* major) being a third higher than the first (*D* major). In the first example the altos are added to the sopranos to strengthen the melody; the tenors and basses *divisi* form the harmony. In the second example the melody being a third higher may be given to the sopranos alone; the altos therefore take part in the harmony, and consequently the lower parts are divided in a different way.

*Examples :*

*Sadko* [173] and [177] (cf. Ex. 205 and 206); compare also the same music in *G* major [189].

No. 309—310. *Ivan the Terrible*, Act I [77].

Example 307 is an instance of widely-spaced four-part writing forming the harmonic basis, with the melodic idea in the orchestra. In Example 308, the same in musical context, the melodic figure is given to the sopranos, and among the other parts which form the harmony the tenors are divided.

*Example :*

No. 308. *Sadko* [152].



In polyphonic writing exceeding 4 part harmony the voices should be divided so as to obtain the necessary number of actual parts. One part may be divided into as many as three different parts, 3 sopranos, 3 altos etc.

*Examples:*

No. 312. *Ivan the Terrible*, Act III [69] — Final chorus.

*Servilia* [233] — Final chorus.

*Mlada*, Act IV [35—36] — Final chorus.

In *fugato* writing and fugal imitation for mixed chorus the distribution is generally in four parts, but this number may be increased for cumulative effects as in the example quoted. In such cases the composer should be careful as to the arrangement of the final chord, the summit and climax of the passage. After the entry of the last of the voices the progression of such a passage should be handled with a view to the tone of the final chord. The treatment should be such that concords produced by divided voices or different groups of voices retain their full value; and if the final chord be a discord its effect may be heightened by means of crossing of parts. The reader is advised to examine carefully the progression of parts leading up to the final chord in each of the examples given above, paying special attention to the distribution of these final chords. Crossing of parts must not be effected at random. The arrangement of choral parts follows the natural order of register and can only be altered for short spaces of time to give momentary prominence to some melodic or declamatory phrase.

*Examples:*

*Ivan the Terrible*, Act I [79], Act II [5], Act III [67].

## B. Men's chorus and women's chorus.

In writing a three-part female chorus the division should be either

Sopr I	Sopr.	Ten. I	Ten.
Sopr. II or Altos I;	the same for men:	Ten. II or	Bass I. The choice
Altos	Altos II	Bass	Bass II

of distribution depends upon which voice is to predominate, or the register in which the group is to be placed. The manner of divid-

ing the parts may change, one following the other at will. In four-part harmonic writing the method of division is self-evident:

Sopr. I	Ten. I
Sopr. II	Ten. II
Altos I	Bass I
Altos II	Bass II

To give prominence to a melody in the middle part in three-part harmony, the following method may be adopted:

Sopr. I	Ten. I
Sopr. II + Altos I, or	Ten. II + Bass I.
Altos II	Bass II

If, in three-part writing, the melody has to stand out in the upper part, the harmony may be either widely-divided or close.

*Examples:*

*Ivan the Terrible*, Act I [25–26], [23–31] (Women's chorus).

*Sadko*, before [181] — Men's chorus (cf. Ex. 27).

No. 311. *Sadko* [270–272] — Women's chorus.

In four-part choral writing close harmony is preferable, otherwise the upper part will be in too high a register and the range of the bottom part too low.

*Examples:*

*Sadko* [17] — Male chorus.

*Ivan the Terrible*, Act II [36–38] — Female chorus (cf. Ex. 296).

Distribution in two parts which is generally polyphonic does not call for any special remarks; the same may be said of chorus in unison.

*Examples:*

*Sadko* [50] — Male chorus.

*Mlada*, beginning of Act I.

*Ivan the Terrible*, Act III [13–15].

*Servilia* [26].

} Female chorus.

If male and female choruses are handled in a purely harmonic manner close part writing should be adopted. This is the only way to secure proper balance of tone in chords given to voices

of the same kind. Successions of chords in three parts are more frequent than those in four; sometimes a series of chords is practicable only in two parts.

*Examples:*

*Snegourotchka* [19] — Chorus of Birds.

„ [281—285] — Chorus of Flowers (cf. Ex. 26).

In *fugato* writing, and fugal imitation in three parts, allotted to a chorus composed of voices of one kind, the principal subject is given to two parts, the counter subject to one; by this method the doubled themes will stand out to better advantage.

*Examples:*

*Sadko* [20—21].

\* *The Tsar's Bride* [29—30].

Male and female choruses, apart from the part they play as individual unities, may be introduced as separate groups in mixed choruses alternating with the whole *ensemble*.

*Example:*

*Snegourotchka* [198] — Hymn of Tsar Berendey's Subjects (cf. Ex. 166).

As a general rule a female chorus does not contain the real harmonic bass part when this part is situated in the low register, so that no octaves are formed between the real bass and the lower choral voice. Harmony in a chorus for women is generally given to the three upper parts, the lower part acting as accompanying bass. It will be noticed that this rule may lead to the employment of chords of the sixth and empty consecutive fourth's and fifth's which should be avoided. In example No. 311 (*Sadko* [270]), this is remedied by the high position of the bass part; later an empty interval ( $\frac{4}{3}$ ) occurs, but only for a moment, and still further on another such interval is avoided by the union of all the voices in the octave ( $\frac{B}{B}$ ). In Ex. No. 304 (*Sadko* [83]) the harmonic bass in the low register is carefully omitted, but when transferred to the upper register it is doubled.

I conclude the present chapter with the following necessary observations:

1. The operation of dividing voices undoubtedly weakens their resonance, and as the reader will have observed, one of the principal factors in good orchestration is *equal* balance of tone in the distribution of chords. But in choral writing the question is somewhat different. The orchestra, even after repeated rehearsal always *plays from music*; the operatic chorus, on the other hand, sings by heart. The chorus master can carry out the composer's instructions as to the division of parts in one way or another, varying and adjusting the number of singers to each part. By manipulating some shade of expression he can maintain a balance of tone between divided and undivided voices. In orchestral material the composer has to handle a great number of timbres, widely different in character and volume of tone. In the chorus there are but four qualities. A chorus moving about the stage cannot convey varying shades of expression so exactly as an orchestra seated at the desk. It may therefore be safely assumed that a composer is entitled to some licence in the question of dividing choral parts; dealing with the orchestra involves greater foresight and care.

2. In trying to obtain equal balance in writing three-part choruses for male or female chorus I have often resorted to the method of doubling the middle part as recommended on p. 149. The chorus master is at liberty to equalise the chorus by transferring voices from one part to another. In choruses divided into three parts I have noticed that chorus masters are in the habit of giving the upper part to Sopr. I, or Ten. I, and the two lower parts to Sopr. II and Ten. II divided. I consider this arrangement unsound, as the balance of parts can never be equal. The attention of chorus masters is called to the necessity of strengthening middle parts, for the expedient of giving prominence to the upper part concerns melody alone and leaves harmony out of the question.

3. Skilful management of choral parts is a fairly safe guarantee of clear and satisfactory performance. Miscalculations in writing are a great hindrance to study, and the most experienced chorus may come to grief through faulty progression of parts. If the progression of parts is correct, if discords are properly prepared,

sudden and remote modulations, even of the harshest and most uncommon kind will be comparatively simple and may be approached with some degree of confidence. This is a fact which composers do not always bear in mind, but singers know it well and appreciate its importance to the full. As an instance I quote the very difficult modulation which occurs in Ex. No. 169 (*Sadko* 302). I doubt whether it could be sung if written in any other way. Careful endeavour on the part of a composer is better than useless struggle inflicted upon the performer.

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