

IN PRAISE OF SONG

A PSALM FOR ST STEPHEN

O Stephen our Conductor, how excellent is thy name:
thou has set thy name above the Huddersfield.

For they who know thy voice put their trust in thee:
for thou hast never failed them that heed thy words.

Thy wrath endureth but the twinkling of an eye, and in his
pleasure there is life: heaviness may persist at Malbank,
but joy commeth at the concert.

For who then can compare us with other performers such as
gather at Worcester: for surely those assessors are past the
age of discerning what is good and excellent.

Brethren, it is a good thing to sing together in harmony:
though this can only be achieved after such toil, and agony,
for those who must submit to our practising.

Woe to those who bury their noses in their copy with scarce
a glance at the conductor: in so doing we may delight our
pianist, but endanger the life and health of Stephen.

For he is to be obeyed at all times, with the exception of
soloist: whose exalted position gives freedom to flout the
authority of the almighty.

O Catrin, behold the baton white, and steely eye in Stephen's
face: as faltering in anticipation he awaits your pleasure
to bring in the voices of his choir.

Such freedom is not recommended to lesser mortals such as
we are: it may well bring forth outbursts of wrath or a
plea for mercy.

Far better it is to be a conductor than referee: to hold
a stick in preference to a whistle.

Remember that time is the essence of all things, even more
important than the pitch: A black spot with a stick is one
beat, a hole with a stick is two beats, and a hole without
a stick shall count as four beats.

Little tails go tripping along at a fine old lick, especially
when doubled or trebled, but remember that the "H" between
notes is silent, as in 'urricanes which 'ardly ever 'appen in
Uddersfield.

Sopranos, breathe before thou openest thy mouths: and think
the note before starting

but be not tardy, lest thou miss the beat, for if the baton falls
before thy voices sound, then shall your smile be quickly
turned to fear.

You're flat again, Joy says you are, so who dares dispute
the fact: lift higher - no not that - I mean your voices.

Impress me now, drop your jaws, and do not wobble: and basses
take that grin from off thy faces.

Meanwhile the Altos wait their fate: and some have been known
to fall asleep or chatter.

So when called to do their bit: then are they two beats late
in beginning.

At last a mellow and ladylike tone is achieved: it soundeth
good, but was not quite what the composer had in mind.

One more time, and it seems much better: now with the sopranos; but they are still exhausted, and have forgotten to breathe; so we'll come back later.

The tenors are enjoying themselves greatly; for promotion to the front row surrounds them with the ladies.

So a call to action goes almost unheeded: and their first attempt is weedy.

Then with their blood running wildly through them, they rush madly on: While Stephen tries to catch them up, pleading for mercy before he slips a disc, or dislocates his thumb.

Sadly their efforts have been lacking in poetry: and the high notes sounded forth like a strangled turkey.

Bases, asleep on the back row, are almost forgotten: it's a shame to disturb them, as we can manage quite well without them.

Except for those few moments of glory: when they must carry the melody, before slipping back into a coma.

For the rest of the time they grumble away in the background: quite unaware of the pitch or the necessity of breathing.

But a call to be more Butch can hardly go unheeded: and their sound goeth forth like the voice of many thunders;

Together now, and to us it does not sound too bad: we wait in fear of judgement over all that we have done.

A shrug, a "Ye-es", not bad, a promise of another go another time: let's try another piece, before we set off home.

Now since our fame has spread to other lands: and Cecil keeps the public well informed of our existence.

The Press takes far more notice of our excellence: so look out Worcester, Europe, or even London.

Ambition soars, what may be next: on Radio 3, or even Telly.

Who knows, but this is certain: we suffer much, but we enjoy it.