



3/5 Management of collective vocal practices Tours, 18/22 – Saint-Lô 23 October 2014

Comments of Nancy about the warm ups

I attended two full warm-ups, and dipped in and out of another two, "Rythme" and "Vocal Games in French", both of which seemed enjoyable (in particular the energetic Rhythm warm-up).

The "Organic Choir" warm-up, led by Peder Karlsson, began with light stretching and a physical warm up, some communal massage (!), some breathing and buzzing to get the voice working, and then went on to explore the principles of organic choir as a way of completing the warm up and getting us all singing. To begin with, we were given a short musical phrase which could be learned quickly by ear. Once this phrase had been learned (on the vowel sound of our choice), we were invited to improvise harmonies and to sing the phrase while moving freely around the room. This helped with relaxation, and people naturally moved into different registers of their voices as they repeated the phrase and became more relaxed.

After learning a simple melody, we were encouraged to add our own harmonies as and when we liked, allowing freedom of the voice and creative expression. While this was enjoyable, we didn't warm up our voices much before starting to sing. As a person who takes some time to get started in the morning, I would have liked a bit more gentle vocalising before getting into song learning and improvisation. However, this was an enjoyable, social and relaxed warm-up session which introduced the spirit and principles of Organic Choir well.

The "Voice and Qi Gong" warm-up led by Melanie Jackson, explored the relationship between voice and body and using the practice of Qi Gong to access balance and energy in the body. The session helped delegates to achieve a higher level of awareness of their bodies, alignment, openness and relaxation, all of which were of benefit to the voice. Breathing exercises which accompanied the postures got the breath working on gentle fricatives, while the postures warmed-up the body.

In conversation with other delegates, several people commented that while the warm-ups introduced them to new techniques and styles, the short amount of time available meant that the actual warm-up element was severely abbreviated in order to allow enough time to explore the specific content that was being demonstrated. In a sense, these sessions were being asked to do double-duty and due to time-constraints, the actual vocal warm-up was left behind on some occasions.

As the remainder of each day's timetable was lecture and discussion based, with few or no opportunities to sing, it was suggested that future conferences could start with a short session which is devoted entirely to physical and vocal warm-ups, and that an afternoon singing session could be used to introduce specific techniques and methods.