

Conducting Day led by Dr Douglas Coombes MBE [12-2-2022] – North Wing Auditorium, Homerton College with The Ensemble of Friends

#### Observations/Feedback from Conductors

Emily (Homerton)

I thoroughly enjoyed the day, I felt like I had been thrown in at the deep end, and was definitely one of the less experienced conductors taking part, but the choir and Douglas were both very supportive and allowed me to gain a lot of confidence and new skills. I enjoyed conducting as part of a concert setting as it made me be more self-sufficient in what I was doing, knowing that Douglas wouldn't intervene, as well as giving me the chance to show my friends what I'd been doing! I had a fantastic time and hope I can do it again at some point

Evie (Cardiff University)

The conducting day at Homerton was a hugely invaluable experience. I learnt so much more about conducting not just from Douglas, but from my fellow conductors and also the choir. As a student conductor, I haven't had the chance to conduct such an impressive choir before, and the Ensemble of Friends were such a pleasure to work with. Their sense of unity and trust between one another when they sang meant that their reaction to each of the conductors' gestures were accurate and true to their meaning. Douglas' direction and comments were not only informative and practical but his advice was purposely directed at our own style of conducting and interpretation. Something I've learnt from Douglas that is so important in conducting is that there is no one way to do it. Conducting isn't about the 'right way' of doing something, but the best way of communicating your interpretation to the choir without getting in the way of the music. Douglas' advice during the conducting day when responding to each conductors' gestures were always focused on adjusting and refining the conductors' interpretation and not creating clones of his own style. It was a pleasure meeting the other likeminded conductors who attend Cambridge and to learn from their techniques while they conducted their pieces. Overall, I feel very privileged to have taken part in the day and I look forward to using everything I learnt in my own rehearsals.

Frankie (Homerton)

First of all, thank you for arranging and being a part of the conducting day, it was sensational. The conducting day was invaluable to me. Firstly, it is a testament to the choir and Douglas for being such a well-connected community. It is clear you are all great friends (very fitting what with the ensemble's name) as the level of trust and cohesion in choral tone is excellent. This togetherness enabled me to feel like I was working with a connected group – and that I was a part of this group – rather than thirty-or-so individuals. The kind and encouraging smiles from people in the choir and easy laughter ensured I could maintain a relaxed atmosphere in the

rehearsal. I felt so much growth being able to observe different conducting styles. I thought it was interesting being able to work with such experienced singers as well, and I found a relaxed style of leadership fostered a sense of mutual respect between myself and the group. The day also helped me build up my endurance and focus – all in all a Saturday well spent.

Tim (Magdalene)

It was a well-supported, nourishing experience from Douglas, the performers, fellow conductors and the audience. I felt obvious improvement on my technical side from Douglas' advice in the rehearsal; practical knowledge from talking to performers, stylistic comparison by observing other conductors, thought-provoking questions and answers with everyone in the audience in the end about the nature of conducting and reflections of the day in general. The choir was an especially supportive group and I would like say thank you to Homerton and everyone who has made this an unforgettable experience.

Janet (Homerton Alumna)

Thank you so much for a wonderful day at Homerton, and for sorting it so that I could join in. It was a real privilege!

I've got to take my hat off to you both and to all the members of the choir for your energy and stamina for getting through such a long day - we the conductors only had our specific times of intense concentration, whereas you all had to focus the whole time. It was very impressive and inspiring.

Thank you also to Homerton for the very welcome refreshments to keep us going before the evening concert.

The choir were so kind and receptive to whatever we were trying to encourage them to do - do please pass on grateful thanks!

Many thanks again!

Amber (Homerton)

Thank you very much for the opportunity to take part in the conducting workshop! It was a wonderful day, and a really insightful experience. I learnt a lot about leading an ensemble, from Douglas, the other conductors and the choir itself, and it was a very valuable learning experience.

Lorenzo (Homerton)

The Conducting Day was a great experience. Although expecting to be nervous, I was immediately put at ease by the choir, which was very friendly and helpful. Douglas' tips as I went along were very useful and it was great to be able to try them out in real-time with a supremely responsive group of singers. I felt like I made a lot of progress during the day, and the format whereby I could observe the other conductors' different styles and learning progress further boosted my confidence knowing that I was not alone! Thank you very much for organising the day, and I hope to be able to join again next year!

<Group Photo 1.jpg>

Sent from my iPad