

Keeping the cage clean

(excerpted from an original article by David Rayl, President, Missouri ACDA)



Robert Shaw
1916-1999

Robert Shaw was once interviewed by a reporter following a particularly beautiful performance of the Brahms Requiem. The reporter asked the maestro: “How do you account for a stunning performance like the one we just heard?”

To which Mr. Shaw is said to have replied: “About 95% of a great performance is hard work, (pause) and the other 5% (long pause) is hard work.” The reporter looked perplexed and Shaw, with a twinkle in his eye, continued: “If we expect the dove to descend, we’d best have the cage cleaned out and ready for him.”

Editorial Comment: *(Howard Meharg, NW-Notes)*

Members of our choirs may well question our passion and our insistence for right notes, appropriate tone quality and all the rest of the many factors which make for beautiful choral music. I always say that we are doing our absolute best to rid our performance of those things which draw attention away from the beauty of the music. (Is this cleaning the cage?) When the listener hears us out of tune, a voice not blending, a phrase which doesn't convey the sense of the text or ugliness in the tone quality, we fall short on a kind of moral or spiritual responsibility. It's that simple and it's that important. If beauty is, indeed, an attribute of God, then we can't take lightly our passion for catching those glimpses of the divine.