

Gurt Lush tenors - few useful notes

General

It's absolutely fine if you are a lady reading this that thinks you are also an alto – many of us switch between alto and tenor on different songs and these notes are just to help out with the tenor parts for those songs that you do sing tenor on. Don't worry about it, feel free to ask your voice rep if you want advice on any of it, and try to sit on the divide between tenor and alto so that it makes it easier to swap for different songs.

These are not official notes from Sam, although they have been verified with him, and they are not exhaustive. The content below has stemmed from questions raised during our extra sessions or individually by you, or are things that I have remembered to write down during choir practice. The notes are intended to help you, not scare you into thinking it's too serious or there is lots to learn!

First/Second tenor split for harmonies - we decided some time ago that, since numbers of tenors have grown recently and as we didn't know the overall split between first and second tenors, that it would make sense for lady tenors to sing up for the first voice part and men to sing down for second. This close to the concerts, just continue singing whichever you have learnt, but for future, try and split it that way unless you really can't – it'll make for a nice, rich sound overall if we can manage that.

Sam will either give the key note for a piece to start us off (in which case each section has to find our own starting note from it) or he will give the actual starting note. He should make it clear which one he's giving at the start of each song.

Try to breathe in during the last two beats of his counting us in so that your body is prepared to sing and the audience doesn't hear a big, sharp intake of breath.

For everything, but particularly songs where there are pauses or dramatic dynamics (quiet to loud bits), keep a close eye on Sam as his hand gestures will direct us.

Blood and Gold

- it's fine for lady tenors to sing alto on this one
- on the second line, remember to pronounce the 'p' in captain so you get three syllables over the triplets - 'Ca-p-tain at their head'
- bar 16 first verse - pronounce 'to the dance' as 'ta da dance'
- bar 16 second verse – pronounce 'mother the drum's' as 'madder da drum's'
- watch Sam for dynamics and pauses

Zaspo Janko

- it's fine for lady tenors to sing alto on this one
- second tenors that are singing with the basses in the first verse – in bar 6, the 'o-ci' is sung simply as two notes (not as written with the extra semi-quaver to lead into the main note of the 'o')
- 'o-ci' sung over four notes (e.g. in bar 14) should be separated by an 'h' so that you sing 'oh-ho chi-hi' which will help to separate the sounds and prevent it sounding like a football chant!

Pressure drop

- practice your Jamaican accent!
- see if you can add in the claps now that we don't have to hold music
- remember to drop the s on 'drops' every time so we sing 'when it drop, oh you gotta feel it'
- Basses sing the tenor line too throughout the song but take the bottom line when it splits for harmonies, so all tenors should take the top line (unless it's really too high for you)
- Don't forget to sing the "2nd repeat of the verse" with Altos and Sops in bars 37 to 40 (as printed), as Sam tends not to look at the Tenors & Basses at this point and we often forget it (or most of us forget it and the one or two that remember end up sounding like they are the ones that got it wrong!)

Green green rocky road

- in verse 2, exaggerate the American slack pronunciation on 'Baltimore' so it almost sounds like 'Bal-di-more'
- there was previous question over the pronunciation of 'promenade' - confirmation that Sam wants 'prom-in-aid'
- in verse 3 we should change it to sing 'See that bird up in the sky? He don't preach, he just fly' (change the 'flies' to fit with 'sky' and then 'cry' and 'by' in verse 4)

- bars 38-40 – watch the tune! The ‘y’ of ‘rocky’ is lower than you think and the ‘in’ of ‘promenade in’ is higher than you think (quite a few of us have been singing the two the opposite way round to written)
- bar 46 to the end – we sing up the scale, starting with 2nd bass, 1st bass, 2nd tenor, 1st tenor, 2nd alto, 1st alto etc. When it gets to your note (2nd tenor sings the 3rd note, 1st tenor sings the 4th note) sing it and stay on that note for the rest of the bar and the following bar (watch Sam), then repeat ‘green green’ on the same note, swelling throughout the second ‘green’. After a brief pause from Sam, the word ‘road’ is whispered dramatically (even though it’s written in capitals and looks like we should be shouting it!)

Swing down

- in the final glissando note, quite a few of us have been singing a 5th from C down to F even though it’s written as sliding down a full octave. Luckily, Sam prefers this and says it will be good back up for the basses, so continue to sing it (you can stick to the lower note if you have been managing it)
- Sam will give a signal for the “ahums” in bars 15 to 19 so watch his hands!
- roll your R on ‘rock’ if you can and put a ‘k’ on it, and a ‘d’ on ‘Lord’
- Bars 68-75 – Sam is getting the 1st basses to sing this verse with the Tenors

Spin

- Bars 17 and 18 – most of us have been singing it with a rest between ‘maiden’ and ‘you’d’. It should actually run straight on singing a full crotchet beat on the word ‘you’d’ (as printed, not as sung on the CD)
- Bars 9- 16 – 1st Tenors should sing a “D” (the note that the Altos had been singing up to Bar 8) while 2nd Tenors stay on the “G”.
- Bars 5- 16 – the “mm” should be sing as a pair of bars: it should swell in sound for 1 bar and then decrease for the next bar.

As I went down to the river

- some men tenors may be singing the bass line; some lady tenors may be singing the alto line. It is also acceptable to sing the alto line an octave below – it’s a bit of a free for all on whatever line you fancy!
- the sequence during the repeats for the 2nd word in Bar 5 is 1st sisters; 2nd brothers; 3rd fathers; 4th mothers; 5th sisters (when we only sing the chorus after the solo)
- in bar 3, “starry crown” and “robe and crown” alternate between each verse (with “Starry Crown” on the 1st verse and back to starry again for the final chorus only after the solo)

Ederlezi

- bar 17 – the ‘Sa’ should be nasal and open out when your mouth changes shape to form the ‘O’ sound of ‘Sa-o Roma’. The ‘Sa’ needs to start as quietly as possible and build into the change in sound for the ‘O’ too.
- dynamics are important for this one – dye away on ‘dy-yé’ as soon as the ‘yé’ leaves your lips but continue to sing softly until the end of the next bar (watch Sam)
- the very last phrase (bars 65, 66) is whispered – no tune at all, even though it is written as a ‘tuned whisper’
- be aware that the basses sing an octave higher than is printed in bars 30 to 36 - this means they are singing above the tenors in some places! Don’t be put off!

I am a river

- the order of verses written on the back of the sheet has been changed to shorten the piece – we all come in at the start, sing through a couple of times with repeats and all end together – but watch Sam for dynamics as that’s what makes it interesting
- think ‘classical’ vowels and no Bristolianisms!
- put a very slight stop in your voice between ‘I’ and ‘am’ to prevent the words slurring into each other (imagine a violinist bowing the same note twice in the same direction with a brief stop)
- pronunciation of ‘river’ should be ‘riv-ah’ to avoid the slip into Bristolianism
- pronounce the ‘k’ in ‘like’ and ‘d’ on ‘land’
- if you are able to sing whole phrases in one breath, do so to make it smooth (e.g. ‘I am a river flowing to the ocean’ then breathe). If not, take a large breath to prepare at the start and a discrete top up breath in the middle of the phrase without a loud, sharp intake of breath

You got to move

- basses are singing the tenor line so they take the bottom notes when we split and all tenors sing up (unless you can’t)
- bar 9/10, ‘You may be high’ – the note for the word ‘high’ is actually low! (see contrast to the corresponding note for ‘move’ in the first line ‘You got to move’)
- bar 33 – the ‘move’ when we go up to the high G (or lower with the basses if you can’t) is much shorter than previous ones and we quite often aren’t ready to move straight into ‘You got to move’ again

- leave a split second pause between the final 'move' and the 'Ah!'

The letter

- attempt the Irish lilt with the mordants in bars 3, 7, 11 – a very quick wobble up to the note above and back in the time of the note that's written
- for the last line (second half of bar 12 onwards), first tenors sing up an octave if you find the penultimate bar too low – it's better to make it a definite choice and sing the whole line up an octave than stumble on the last bar and have to jump up there
- Bar 14 – the F Natural on "had" is lower than previous Fs but the E following it should be brighter as it's only a semitone down.
- we sing the last line after every verse and repeat again to finish
- note the accents on 'weal' and 'like' in the second half of the last line – these two syllables are emphasized and this last phrase should be energetic after a little slow down in 'oh you're wed to a poor man, but if I had my way'

I'm a believer

- despite how silly we feel, Sam would really like us to play air guitar for the intro and when we 'dow now now' later on – and attempt a guitar noise too, don't try and sing the words as written!
- bar 34 (second time bar after the repeat) – note the 'dow now now' bit is shorter than in the intro and we go straight on into 'Then I saw her face Then I saw her face'
- bar 41 'Now I'm a believer' – slow down and watch Sam to go straight back to normal tempo for 'I'm in love'
- bar 51 'I couldn't leave her, I'm a believer' – ditto slow down and watch
- bar 61 - keep the very last phrase staccato and particularly the last 'face' short

All you need is love

- after the 'trumpet' intro (squeeze the air out of the corner of your mouth!), firsts take the long 'love' line and seconds take the 'luh luh luh luh' line
- bar 9 – firsts take a big breath and hold the 'love' for a count of 12
- note the timing as written when we have the main tune, as it's quite hard to all stick together if you try and sing it as you might know it. e.g. in the first line 'There's nothing you can do that can't be done', the word 'thaaaat' has a full crotchet beat (not equal shorter length syllables as you might think). Same all the way through the tune in bars 14 and 16 on all verses
- bar 26 going into the second time bar after the repeat – watch Sam and echo the sopranos with 'Love is all you need' – keep watching as the repeat getting quieter could last as long as he likes!
- bar 31 – watch for our cue for the staccato ending 'All you need is love' and keep the 'love' short

Mas Que Nada

- Bar 2 – 'Dmm' – really emphasize it, like a drum beat (need to check how Sam describes it at another rehearsal because I can't remember!)
- Bar 2 – 'bap' – make sure you pronounce the 'p'
- Bar 3 – accent on the 'ba!'
- Bar 8 (and every time it features throughout) – 'aria raio' is pronounced 'ah – rye – a ray - oh'
- Bars 11/12 (and every time throughout) – 'Oba' – the emphasis is on the 'ah' sound (the 'O' disappears quickly)
- Bars 21 and 37 – 2nd tenors should sing a G Sharp – this is higher than you may think so be careful! It is only a semitone down from the previous A on "Oba".
- Bars 22 - 28 – first tenors should sing an A, (while 2nd Tenors sing an E), all through including doing the "dmm doo bap ba" on an A
- Bar 22 onwards – keep the 'Ba ba ba' section light and exciting, with accents on each "ba"
- Bar 28 – the 'doo bap' should be short, light, staccato notes); especially the F sharp note for the 2nd Tenors
- Bar 37 – Sing Mas!" instead of "Ba!"
- Bars 38 - 44 – first tenors should sing an A, (while 2nd Tenors sing an E), all through including doing the "dmm doo bap ba" on an A.
- Bar 45 – (1st time bar) – finish the "ba" after 2 beats to leave a gap before going back to Bar 6 for the loud "Ooooo"

Locus iste

- General: be careful about the letter "s"! There are a lot of sses in this piece and they need to be short and very accurate otherwise it sounds like a gas leak! If in doubt about where an s should go, don't sing it!
- Bar 1 and elsewhere – pronounce "Lo-" as in "lock"
- Bars 2 & 6 – short "ste" - -come off quickly (i.e. only a quaver) so we can hear the basses "aa"

- Bars 4, 8, 12 and elsewhere: The ending to “est” should be a short sharp sound – don’t prolong the “s” and get off the “t” as soon as you can.
 - Bars 10-12 – first tenors can sing up an octave if necessary
 - Bars 21 – 28 – be careful not to sink to low as you go down the scale – think up as you go down to prevent going flat!
- Bar 40 – Sam wants a gradual increase in volume from the 1st beat of bar 40 through to forte in Bar 41.

Dani su bez broja

Bars 22 to 25 – these are spoken in a loud clipped voice to imitate a darbouka drum

Bars 48 to 49 & 56 to 57 – “Ni” is pronounced as “Night” (without the “t”!)

Bars 68 to 69 - these words are spoken in an untuned whisper

Bars 80 to 81 - these words are spoken in an untuned whisper

Bars 88 to 96 – sing the “Ne mogu ni kora ka” in a light fashion – not too heavy or pronounced

The Cuckoo

The 1st verse is sing all together – Sops, Altos, Tenors and Basses in harmony;

the 2nd verse is just Altos and Sopranos in harmony;

the 3rd verse is Tenors and Basses in harmony;

the 4th verse is a repeat of the 1st verse and is sing all together in harmony.

Bar 10 – Be aware of the B flat on the words “for”, “of” & “and”!, it is lower than all the other Bs we have sung!