

## IT'S THE LYRICS!

by Kirby Shaw

### For Choir Directors And Singers

If you're like me, you yearn for your choir to sing with greater inspiration and you want to be the kind of choral teacher who inspires your singers to reach that goal. Here's what I've learned (mostly from Rodney Eichenberger and jazz singer, Carmen McRae),-- give yourself permission to have a point of view about the lyrics. Words and the way we express them enable us to reveal how we feel!

Start here!... choose songs with great lyrics, like "My Romance" or "If Ever I Would Leave You." Why are the lyrics great? Because they paint a picture, they take you to a place and time, they make you feel the way the lyricist feels. Make a habit of circling the yummiest words in every song you sing.

Watch your mouth!... it's capable of articulating words the way an artist's paint brushes paint a picture! When you say "soft" the "f" determines how soft and the "t" is like a kiss on the cheek. Linger on the "m" in "moon" and it fills the sky. The "k" in "twinkling" makes the stars do just that.

Look at yourself!... in a mirror in the privacy of your own home. No one has to know you practice reading lyrics aloud (as though you wrote them from your own experience.) Go ahead,-- get your face on and get dramatic! You'll surprise yourself and your students will love you for it!

No one gets away!... with just "reading" the words, not you, not your students. Have each of them pick an expressive phrase and say it like they mean it! And what a great opportunity to give each other support and encouragement.

You're only human!... and it might feel risky, scary, vulnerable. But that's why we love music so much,-- it enables us to say things we might not be able to say in any other way!

Sir Laurence Olivier was quoted as saying,  
"Be bold, and mighty forces will come to your aid!"

I believe him!  
You and your choir have the opportunity to share your humanity  
with your audiences. Go for it!!