

Issue no.44 JANUARY 2012

# Amici news

The newsletter of The Amici Singers  
The Amici Singers is a Registered Charity No.277766



## for your DIARY

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2012

**Saturday 21 April** Concert in Leamington Spa  
**Saturday 19 May** Rehearsal for Quedlinburgh at Sandy Methodist Church  
10.00am-4.00pm.

Please bring your own lunch. Tea & coffee will be provided

**Thursday 24 May** Amici AGM N.B. 7.30pm start

**Saturday 2 - Wednesday 6 June**

Visit to Quedlinburg

**Saturday 23 June** Amici Concert

**Saturday 6 October**

Southend Concert with The Orpheus Singers

**Saturday 1 December** Christmas Concert

### 2013

**Saturday 29 June** Amici 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concert in Bedford Corn Exchange

All further details will be announced, placed on the notice board and in some cases e-mailed

### AMICI REHEARSAL DATES FOR 2012

**5 January - 29 March**

**5 April - 28 June** – Note that there is a rehearsal after the summer concert

**6 September - 29 November**

- The head should be relaxed, held up evenly and naturally and not 'pushed to one side
- The hands should be at the sides. They should not be behind the back or grasped in front, or folded, which will cause body tension
- Always remember that if we stand incorrectly, we put many muscles under stress, and often we will not notice or feel the problem at the time - but we will pay for it later

#### Sitting

- Do not cross the legs. This is often done out of habit and to rest music on the lap
- When music is on the lap, this makes the singer look down, causing tension around the neck and encourages the body to sag. Then when the singer looks up, the back of the neck becomes tight. Constant straightening up from the sagging position, which often means pulling back the shoulders, raising the ribcage and arching the back



#### POSTURE

In spite of reminders from time to time, some sit and stand in a way which does not help singing. So here is an article I wrote a while back for the newsletter of *Up Beat*, an association for conductors (and would be conductors) I founded in 2008. (Incidentally it has been very successful as there are now over 300 members – and still growing.)

- Posture is possibly the most important part of singing. Bad posture quickly leads to tiredness,

bad breathing, poor tone quality and the wrong attitude to singing

- When singing vary the position of the singers. Do not leave them too long sitting or standing

#### Standing

- The feet should be firmly on the ground and slightly apart, not wider than the shoulders with an even distribution of weight - do not put weight on one hip with a resulting one stiff leg and the other bent

- Legs should never be crossed. Also legs must not be locked, but knees should be relaxed and very slightly bent

- Tension in the legs affects the whole body and the breathing

- Feel tall with shoulders back and chest reasonably high - but never raise the shoulders, especially when taking a breath. This will break up the flow of air and restrict the quality of sound. Raising the shoulders often takes place when you ask singers (especially young ones) to take a big or deep breath. I never say "Take a big breath." I just say "Breathe." Incidentally I never use the word 'concentrate.' So often singers (again especially young ones) often 'screw' up their faces and become tense when told to 'concentrate'



is tiring and also causes wear and tear on the voice and brain. So always hold up the music in a relaxed comfortable position, so that only the eyes move, and not the head, to look at the teacher/conductor.

• So when sitting it is a good idea to sit forward with both feet on the ground, at right angles to the ground and with legs slightly apart. Make sure that everyone is sitting on the two bony knobbls of the buttocks. These can easily be found by sitting on the hands. No matter how well padded the individual, these knobbls can be found.

N.B. It would help if section leaders had a word aw well with those they notice with posture problems. Choir members can help by being conscious of their own posture, as well as others.

### **Good breathing technique for singers**

Good breathing technique is vital for voice control when singing. Singers will never be able to sing powerfully, sustain tone gracefully and sing emotionally without mastering proper breath control.

When you are taking a breath for singing, breathe from the bottom of your lungs up. When you develop good breathing habits for singing, you will be able to feel the breath all around your lower abdomen, not just the front. Your chest and shoulders must not lift as you take in your breath or else the singing voice will sound strained and tensed.

#### **Singing From Diaphragm**

1. You will be frustrated with your singing effort if shallow breathing is your breath control foundation. Shallow breathing is air stored on your upper lungs where your throat and the upper chest meet.
2. Correct and good singing breathing technique begins with the diaphragm and also the breath support muscles.
3. Keep the chest up all the time. Breath should flow in silently to fill the cavity of a flexed chest. Breath must not be used to hoist up a collapsed chest. With the chest raised, breath is no longer driven out by the dead weight of the body, but is controlled by the diaphragm which is a powerful muscle.
4. The key to correct use of diaphragm and breath support muscles is the expansion of your lower abdomen when taking in your singing breath. You have to exercise and develop this technique until it comes naturally to you as a breathing habit even when you are breathing normally when not singing.
5. As you are practicing your singing breath control technique, do take notice of how much noise you make when you draw your breath. This is because many singers believe that a noisy breath is a deep breath which is not true.
6. When you breathe, take sips of air and not in gulps. Always breathe in evenly.
7. Silent breathing should be the aim of a good breathing habit. Again, practice silent breathing until it becomes your natural singing habit. Breathing should be as natural and quiet as possible.
8. Noisy breathing is usually caused by a throat that is constricted and it is an indication of shallow breathing contrary to what many singers think.
9. When full inhalation has been made, do not keep the breath 'corked' up by stiffening the throat and neck muscles
10. If you are afraid to expand your tummy when you are taking in your singing breath, fearing the fat tummy look, this will lead to tension in your abdomen and your diaphragm with its breath support muscles will not be working at its optimum potential. Most singers are not even aware that they are

holding all these tensions.

11. One of the most important lessons to good singing technique is to relax, so as to achieve the 'floating voice' quality. With so much tension in the singing support muscles, the relaxed floating voice will be difficult if not impossible to achieve.

This tension is probably the result of years of stomach in chest out posture inculcated since young.

#### **Vocal Exercises For Good Breath Control**

1. Start with taking a few quiet breaths. As you breathe in, expand your lower abdominals all around including the sides and the lower back. Make a mental note on how a quiet breath feels. Now release the air steadily and sing 'Ahhh' to a note in the middle of your range (not too high and not too low) as you release the air with your tummy going back to its original position. The sound quality you produce should be steady with what some call a floating tone to it. It must be emphatically emphasized that the amount of air required for good singing is very little. Therefore, a proper amount of air attached to a note should be just adequate, nothing more, nothing less.

2. Hold up your hand and imagine that on the tip of each finger is a bright strong flame. Now try to blow out each flame with an energetic 'Pht! Pht! Pht! As you do this be aware of what your abdominal muscles and diaphragm are doing.

3. Place your hands on your tummy at the point where a blow would cause winding. The tips of the fingers should be lightly touching. When you breathe in your fingers should part. On exhalation the fingers should come together.

4. Panting energetically using *Ah* will make you realise the work done by the diaphragm. Leslie Woodgate, for years the outstanding choral trainer, says of this exercise in his book *The Chorus Master*: "A simile which may prove useful is that of a spout of water with a ball bouncing on the top of it. The water is the support (the column of air coming from the diaphragm) and the ball, the voice. Directly the support is decreased the voice flattens.

**Q: How many conductors does it take to change a light bulb?**

**A: No-one knows, because no-one was looking!**

**Singer at the end of an audition: "So, what do you think of my singing?"**

**Conductor: "It could be worse."**

**Singer: "That's not a very nice thing to say."**

**Conductor: "Okay, it couldn't be worse."**

## MISSA BREVIS pro urbe QUEDLINBURG

*Missa Brevis* means 'Short Mass', but over the centuries the term came to represent different settings. In the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century it meant the complete setting of the Mass, including the *Gloria*, in which all the movements are kept short. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries the term meant mainly a setting of the *Kyrie* and *Gloria* only. Less common was the setting of the *Missa Brevis* in which there were four or five much abbreviated movements which meant that sometimes parts of the text were omitted or different texts were sung at the same time. More recently the term has come to mean a setting of the mass without the *Credo*.

A PHONETIC PRONUNCIATION AND TRANSLATION OF LATIN MASS FOR MISSA BREVIS PRO URBS QUEDLINBURG (*Short mass for the town of Quedlinburg*)

**The following is just a guide to achieve unanimity. I am favouring Italianate pronunciation**

### KYRIE

Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son, Chris - te e - le - i - son.

**Kee-ree-ay ay-lay-ee-zohn, Kree-stay ay-lay-ee-zohn.**

*Lord have mercy upon us, Christ have mercy upon us.*

### GLORIA

Glo - ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - o

**Glaw-ree-ah een ek-shel-seece Day-oh**

*Glory be to God on high*

Et in ter-ra pax ho - mi-ni - bus bo - nae vo-lun - ta - tis.

**Ate een ter-rah pahx o-mee-nee-booce boh-nay vo-loon-tah-teece.**

*And on earth peace to men of goodwill.*

Lau - da - mus te, Be - ne - di - ci - mus te

**Lou-da-mooce tay, Bay-nay-dee-chee-mooce tay.**

*We praise thee, We bless thee.*

A - dor - a - mus te, Glo - ri - fi - ca - mus te.

**Ah-dor-ah-mooce tay, Glaw-ree-fee-kah-mooce tay**

*We worship thee, We glorify thee.*

Gra - ti - as a - gi - mus ti - be prop - ter ma - gnam glo - ri - am tu - am.

**Grah-tsee-ahce ah-jee-mooce tee-bee prohp-tair mahn-yahmm glaw-ree-ahm too-ahm.**

*We give thanks to thee for thy great glory.*

Do - mi - ne De - us, Rex cae - les - tis.

**Doh-mee-nay Day-ooce, Rex chay-les-teece.**

*O Lord God, Heavenly King.*

De - us Pa - ter om - ni - po - tens.

**Day-ooce Pah-tair om-nee-poh-tens.**

*God the Father almighty.*

Do - mi - ne Fi - li - u - ni - ge - ni - te Je - su Chris - te

**Doh-mee-nay Fee-lee oo-nee-jay-nee-tay Yay-zoo Kree-stay**

*O Lord, the only begotten Son Jesu Christ*

Do - mi - ne De - us, Ag - nus De - i Fi - li - us Pa - tris

**Doh-mee-nay Day-ooce, Ahn-yooce Day-ee Fee-lee-ooce Pah-treece**

*O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father*

Qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di, mi - se - re - re no - bis

**Kwee toll-eece pek-kah-tah moon-dee, mee-zay-ray-ray noh-beece**

*Thou that takest away the sins of the world have mercy upon us*

Qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di, sus - ci - pe de - pre - ca - ti - o - nem nos - tram.

**Kwee toll-eece pek-kah-tah moon-dee, soo-shee-pay day-pray-kaht-see-oh-nem nos-trahm.**

*Thou that takest away the sins of the world receive our prayer.*

Qui se - des ad dex - ter - am Pa - tris mi - se - re - re no - bis

**Kwee say-days add dex-tay-rahm Pah-treece mee-zay-ray-ray noh-beece**

*Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us*

Quo - ni - am tu so - lus sanc - tus, tu so - lus Do - mi - nus

**Kwoh-nee-ahm too soh-looocce sahngk-tooce, too soh-looocce Doh-mee-nooce**

*For thou only art holy, Thou only art the Lord*

Tu so - lus al - ti - si - mus, Je - su Chris - te

**Too soh-looocce al-tees-see-mooce, Yay-zoo Kree-stay**

*Thou only art most high, Jesus Christ*

Cum Sanc - to Spi - ri - tu in glo - ri - a De - i Pa - tris. A - men.

**Koom Sahngk-toh Spee-ree-too een glaw-ree-ah Day-ee Pah-treece. A-main.**

*With the Holy Ghost in the glory of God the father. Amen.*

### SANCTUS

Sanc - tus Do - mi - nus De - us Sa - ba - oth

**Sahngk-tooce Doh-mee-nooce Day-ooce Sah-bah-oht**

*Holy, Lord God of Hosts*

Ple - ni sunt cae - li et tair-rah glo - ri - a tu - a.

**Play-nee soont chay-lee ate tair-rah glaw-ree-ah too-ah.**

*Heaven and earth are full of thy glory.*

### HOSANNA

Ho - san - na in ex - cel - sis.

**Oh-zahn-nah een ek-shel-seece.**

*Hosanna in the highest.*

### BENEDICTUS

Be - ne - dic - tus qui ve - nit in no - mi - ne Do - mi - ne.

**Bay-nay-deek-tooce kwee vay-neet een no-mee-nay Doh-mee-nee.**

*Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

### AGNUS DEI

A - gnus De - i, Qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di,  
**Ah-nyooce Day-ee, Kwee tol-leece pek-kah-tah moon-dee,**

*Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,*

Mi - se - re - re no - bis.

**Mee-zay-ray-ray noh-beece.**

*Have mercy upon us.*

A - gnus De - i, Qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di,  
**Ah-nyooce Day-ee. Kwee tol-leece pek-kah-tah moon-dee,**

*Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,*

Do - na no - bis pa - cem.

**Doh-nah no-bis pah-chaim.**

*Grant us peace.*

### AN DIE MUSIK BY FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

An die music (*To Music*) by Schubert, is one of his best loved songs. It was composed in 1818, but not published until 1827 when it was dedicated to the Viennese piano virtuoso Albert Sowinsky. This was a year before the composer's death at the young age of 31. Schubert based the song on a poem by his friend Franz Schober (1798-1882) who was born of Austrian parents in Sweden. They first met in 1815 when Schubert was teaching in his father's school in Vienna and was unable to devote much time to composing. The friendship was such that Schober, who loved Schubert's music, invited the composer to live with him in his mother's house. Schober's family was well off and with his mother's and father's agreement, he supported Schubert so that he could become a full time composer.

The only time that Schubert wrote the words for a song was in 1817 for *Abschied von einem Freunde* (*Farewell to a friend*) when Schober left Vienna. When he returned to Vienna in 1822 the two friends once again lived together. Unfortunately Schober never received recognition in his lifetime or after. His poems were never published and he is only remembered for the 12 poems that Schubert set.

### GUIDE TO THE GERMAN PRONUNSIATION OF AN DIE MUSIK (Many thanks to Kate Mingay for this - and for Hollahi)

#### AN DIE MUSIC (TO MUSIC)

Du hol - de Kunst, in wie - viel grau - en Stun - den,  
Do hole - de coonst, een vee - feel grou - en Shtoon - den,

Wo mich des Le - bens wil - der Kreis um - strickt,  
Vo misch dess lay - bens veel - der Cries oom - shtrickt,

Hast du mein Herz zu war - mer Lie - bent - zun - den,  
Hast do mine hairtz zoo var - mer Lee - bent - zoon - den

Hast mich in ei - ne beß - re Welt en trückt!  
Hast misch een eye - ner bess - rer Velt en - troockt!

Oft hat ein Seuf - zer, dei - ner Harf' ent - floss - en,  
Offt hat eynz Soyf - sser, dy - ner Harf - ent - floss - en,

Ein sü - ßer, hei - li - ger Ak - kord von dir  
Eyn soo - sser high lee - ger ac - cord fon deer

Den Him - mel beß - rer Zei - ten mir er - schlo - ssen,  
Den Him - mell bess - rer tsay - ten - meer air - sshlo - ssen,

Du hol - de Kunst, ich dan - ke dir!  
Do hol - de koonst ish dan - ker deer!



Franz Schubert

## ENGLISH TRANSLATION

by Vreni Mark

Oh sweet art, in how many grey hours  
in which life's wild circles have entangled me,  
you have enflamed my heart to comforting love  
you have lifted me to a better world.

Often a sigh has floated from your harp  
a sweet and holy chord from you  
opened heavens of better times for me  
You, sweet art, I thank you for this.

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## HOLLAHI

a TRADITIONAL GERMAN Folk song

No one knows the date of this folk song or who wrote the words and music. As with many such songs there are a number of versions of the words but the tune generally remains unchanged. When I worked for the BBC it was always a popular song when it appeared in *Singing Together* which I wrote and produced. When a friend of mine learnt that I was taking over the programme he commented: "That's the programme that has Hollahi on every term." In reality it only appeared once every seven years when I was in charge.

1. Horch, was kommt von drau - ßen' rein,  
*Horch vas comt fon drou - ssen rine,*

Hol-la-hi, hol - la- ho! *Ho-la-hee, Ho - lah-ho!*

Wird whol mein Feins lieb - schen sein  
*Vird vole mine fines leeb - shen sine*

Hol - la -hi -a- ho! *Ho-la-hee - a- ho!*

Geht vor - bei und schaut nicht 'rein,  
*Gate four - by oond shout nish - trine,*

Hol-la - hi, hol -la- ho! *Ho-la-hee, Ho - lah-ho!*

Wirds whol nicht ge - we - sen sein,  
*Virds vole nisht ge - vay - sen sine,*

Hol - la -hi - a- ho! *Ho-la-hee - a- ho!*

2. Leu-te ha - ben's oft ge - stagt,  
*Loi - ter haa - ben soft gey - sargt,*

Hol-la-hi, hol-la-ho! *Ho-la-hee - a- ho!*

daß ich ein Feins lieb - chen hab'  
*Dass ish eyn Fines leeb-shen harb*

Hol-la-hi-a-ho! *Ho-la-hee - a- ho!*

Laß sie re - den schweig fein still,  
*Lass zee ray-den shwyg fine shtill,*

Hol-la-hi, hol-la-ho! *Ho-la-hee, Ho - lah-ho!*

kann, ja lie - ben, wen ich will,  
*Can, yar lee - ben, ven ish will,*

Hol-la-hi-a-ho! *Ho-la-hee - a- ho!*

3. Leu - te sagts mirs ganz ge - wiß  
*Loi - ter sargts meers ganz gey weess*

Hol-la-hi, hol-la-ho! *Ho-la-hee, Ho - lah-ho!*

Was das fur ein Lie-ben ist,  
*Vass dass fore eyn lee-ben eest,*

Hol-la-hi-a-ho! *Ho-la-hee - a- ho!*

Die man lie - be kriegt man nicht  
*Dee man lee-ber kreegt man nisht*

Hol-la-hi, hol-la-ho! *Ho-la-hee, Ho - lah-ho!*

Und 'ne an - dre mag ich nicht  
*Oond ne an- drer mag ish nisht*

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## ENGLISH TRANSLATION

by Vreni Mark

Hark who's entering from outside,  
My sweetheart maybe coming in?  
Passes by but looks not in  
Perhaps it wasn't her at all?

People often have said  
that a sweetheart I have got,  
Let them chatter, I keep still  
I can love whom I will.

Tell me people to be sure  
What kind of loving is this?  
The one I love I cannot get  
and another I don't want.

Once, when I am dead  
I'll be carried to the grave,  
Erect no tomb stone then for me



Sir EDWARD ELGAR

### SABBATH MORNING AT SEA

*Sabbath Morning at Sea*, a poem by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, first published in 1839, was set to music

by Sir Edward Elgar as the third song in his song-cycle *Sea Pictures*. The first performance of *Sea Pictures* took place on October 5<sup>th</sup> 1899 in Norwich at the Norfolk and Norwich Festival, conducted by the composer and sung by Clara Butt dressed as a mermaid and not wearing a corset "and guiltless of all confinement" was the contemporary description. The poem is difficult to understand but as I see it, it is about hope. The sad, weary narrator is alone aboard a ship at night at the start of a long voyage. The comforts of home, friends and Sunday worship have been left behind. There is a submissive contemplation of the contrasting untroubled sky with the turbulent surface. As morning comes, the voyager communes with God who created both sea and man. Light and then hope dawns.

# Trends and changes in running a choir

In recent years rules concerning running a choir have gradually been changing. This has been brought about by how choirs of a very high standard are being run in other countries. In this country there is slowly dawning, the realization of the correlation between standards and discipline. It may come as a shock to some Amicis who think we have now become so very formal, but I can tell you, that in league with most choirs in the UK we are light- years away from what is now happening with some choirs. Some even say that this is the reason that the majority of the world's top choirs are now not from the UK. Now I am not necessarily advocating all of the following, though I do think we could incorporate some, and I thought you would like to read about some of the rules in the constitution of a local choir, Shannon Express, of whom I am President. When you read them you may think that it would be enough to drive people away from choirs that have such rules. In fact that does not happen and numbers do rise. The membership of Shannon Express has now risen to nearly 70. And they do have fun with plenty of laughter and good humour. Anyway, let your section leader know what you think.

Whether you are new to barbershop singing or a seasoned hand, there will be things that you need and want to know about club life at Shannon Express.

To help you feel at home as quickly as possible and to help you find your way around chorus life you will be appointed a Buddy. Whilst you should feel free to ask questions of any of the club members, all of whom will be pleased to help you, your Buddy will actively provide assistance to help you understand how we work, who to see for what, what is going on at a given time and what the jargon means that will become part of your common club vocabulary. Please enter the contact details of your Buddy below, so that you can contact them whenever.

You will be issued with sheet music and a teach CD (see section on Resources for more details) for one of the songs in the chorus' current repertoire and given some guidance on how to use them. You can always ask your Section Leader or Buddy for help at this stage.

You will now need to start doing some preparation at home in starting to learn the song. Time will be set aside on rehearsal nights to review your progress and offer help and instruction. Again this will be done in private. At the discretion of the Musical Director you will be invited on to the risers from time to time perhaps to join in if the chorus is rehearsing the song that you are working on and if you are happy to do so, or to just stand and listen and start to get a feel for being in and amongst the chorus.

A member of the Costume Team will be quick to accost you with a tape measure so that you can be kitted out with your stage wear and walking out gear.

The cost of club membership is £18-00 per month. It is preferred that payment is made by standing order though other arrangements can be made with the Treasurer if needs be.

Financial help is available to those who become unemployed and there are reduced rates for students and juniors.

- Rehearsals - Blue trousers, blue club shirt of your choice, black shoes, black belt.
- Walking Out (this is the term for what is worn when in public but not on stage) - Blue trousers, blue club shirt, black shoes, black belt.
- Generally it will be long sleeved shirts for Walking Out unless

it is particularly hot weather. You will be informed by the Chorus Manager if short sleeves are allowed for an event.

- Stage Wear - Black dress suit, white dress shirt, black patent shoes, cummerbund, bow tie, cufflinks and braces (not supplied) if required. Always take both sets of cummerbunds and bow ties with you - we generally wear both during the course of a performance.
- Watches are not allowed to be worn when on a sing out - they catch the light and can dazzle your audience. (More terminology - a 'sing out' is when we perform to the public). It is the responsibility of each member to keep their wardrobe clean and presentable. If you need any alterations carrying out then please either speak to Tina who may be able to do this for you or you can pay yourself to have your suit 'fitted'. Please do not cut and carve the items yourself - unless of course you happen to be a tailor - in which case don't hide your light under a bushel!

Arrive with a clean body and clean clothes - it can get hot on the risers and it's not fair to inflict the bad odours of a rigorous day on those about you. If you do find that you are getting a bit unsavoury then there is deodorant in the toilets for you to use in order, my friend, that you may once again become fragrant. When called please take your place on the risers promptly.

Pay attention to whoever is out front - it is tempting to have a brief chat with people around you on the risers but please do all you can to resist the urge. When people gasbag to each other, firstly they are not listening to what is being imparted from the front, and secondly they are distracting those about them. The direction and definitive answers come from the front and if the Chorus is to perform as a unit it needs to take one instruction.

If you have a question please raise your hand and wait to be invited to ask it.

- Respect the questions asked by others.
- Laugh with people and not at them.
- Don't talk or hum when the pitch pipe is blown.

If you wish to get on the risers whilst the Chorus is under direction please stand to the side of the risers in view of the MD and wait to be invited aboard.

If you need to get off the risers to use the loo or just need to sit out for a bit then please feel free to do so - you do not need to ask but please don't make a fuss about it. If you feel unwell then don't be embarrassed - let the people around you know straight away so that we can take appropriate action - nothing that we do is more important than the wellbeing of our members. There are First Aiders within the Chorus who will take charge of the situation. If you are not feeling well enough to sing, but are well enough to attend a rehearsal, then that's not a problem at all - just sit out and watch the proceedings.

When a singer truly feels and experiences what the music is all about, the words will automatically ring true.

*Montserrat Caballé - the famous operatic soprano*