

Reflections on the 5 Funny Pieces for the Young Choir

In January 2018 the music score *5 Funny Pieces for the Young Choir* was published by Gehrmans Musikförlag in Stockholm, Sweden. Front cover and illustrations were made by Anna Gunneström, the photo by Per Buhre and the engraving by Martin Möller.

Together with percussion colleague Fredrik Duvling I was asked to write a pedagogic material with rhythms for a young choir.

The artistic challenge was:

1. How can we encourage young people to be interested in rhythms?
2. What is written before in the same spirit?
3. What is fun and what is inspiring for a young musician?

Fredrik and I started to focus writing a piece with rhythms, easy to play and perform by a group without any instruments. An inspiration was the piece *Rock Trap* by American composer William Schinstine for body percussion quartet. After many years of master classes with short of time, we know by experience, we needed a piece with not more than two parts and a possibility to learn a choir the piece in maximum 20 minutes. We wrote a piece containing a beat groove with some mouth sounds like “tsss” and “plop”. After a few trials in different master classes we edited the pieces in a way that fit our wish and we called the piece *Body Rhythm*.

At the office of the publisher Gehrmans I went through the material they had published before for a young choir and understood there was not much in same spirit I was looking for. They had nothing for a speech choir and because of that, we composed *Bosh and Tosh*, based on the limerick with same name, by Edward Lear from 1848. Could we also use a simple instrument for everybody in the choir? A funny, and very cheap, instrument is the kazoo which sounds like a bee flying... The result was a piece for speech choir and kazoo name, *Let it bee*, where a choir in three voices are chasing a flying bee... ☺

The pieces we now had written was kind of noisy pieces and in what way could we come up with a soft dynamic piece? We also had in mind the difficulty to find instruments for everyone in a choir. Is there something that most people have within reach that could be used as an instrument?

- Paper, let's use a sheet of empty sheet of paper!

We composed “A piece of Paper”, a graphic score where the choir creates sounds using a piece of paper in very soft dynamic. It also became a challenging chamber music task where you have to follow each other very precisely.

All together, we composed 5 Funny Pieces with varying aspects and with a level of rhythms and notation. For a young choir, it was important the level should not be more difficult than it's possible to learn the pieces without a score. We also tried to have a big focus on humor. With the mixture of humor, the right level of difficulty and variation of style and character we think we found what is fun and inspiring collection for the young musician.

