

SCORE

267. BREATH

The unit of life is the breath.

The choir is divided into two groups.

The first group are Sustainers. If you are in the first group you will:

Take a breath

Choose a note that no-one else seems to be singing.

Sing that note for as long as the breath lasts.

Continue, choosing fresh notes if necessary, or if you feel like it.

The second group are Declaimers. If you are in the second group you will:

Take a breath

Sing as many syllables on as many notes as fast as possible. Do not attempt recognisable language; speed and density are of the essence here. Listen to the other members of your group while singing. Keep going until the end of your breath. Then join the Sustainers.

There are three members of the Declaimers; no more and no less. Your membership lasts for one breath, and is not renewable. The three people should not be predetermined – the group should negotiate this membership as the piece progresses. As soon as someone runs out of breath and joins the Sustainers, someone must replace them. But only one person. It is a balance the group must maintain.

The piece ends when there are no more people to join the Declaimers. At this point, every member of the choir finishes the breath they are singing with, and the piece comes to a halt – unless any member of the choir wishes it to begin again, at which point they draw breath, and begin singing. The other sixteen then have a duty to repeat the entire process, bring the Declaimers up to quorum and maintain them there until everyone has left the Declaimers again. In this manner, the piece lasts until everyone is satisfied that it has lasted long enough.

Phil Hargreaves 2007