

Singing the Fauré in French

There are two main vowel sounds that English singers find difficult. One is the “u” in words like “sur”.

The other is the “e” with an acute accent “é” as in the last word of the piece “comblé”.

1. The French “u”.

1a. “Sur” doesn’t rhyme with the English “sear”. The vowel should be more of a “see”.

1b. The only other “u” in the piece is in “unique” (fortunately). It’s NOT a “you”, or an “oo”. (If you really want to do it properly, you have to SAY “ee”, but with your lips in an “oo” shape. Practise everyday words like “tu”, “rue”, “du” in front of a mirror! Don’t think “oo”. Think “ee”.)

2. The “e” with an acute accent. It is NOT an “ay”. It is almost an “ee”.

It is NOT a diphthong. (Try saying “way” or “say” very very slowly. You will hear that you are saying TWO vowels like “way-ee”. That’s a diphthong. Notice what happens to your tongue as the vowel changes. It moves up towards your palette, and presses against your upper set of dentures. THAT’S where you want it to be for the “e” acute.)

So, for “comblé”, “éternelle”, “égal” etc, make sure your tongue is up there. You won’t go far wrong if you sing “comblee”; if you DO sing “comblay”, it’ll be ok ONLY if your tongue’s up there.

3. Other points.

3a. Roll your “r’s” as much as you can.

3b. Lots of words end in an “e”, like “paisible”, “silence”, “jette”. This last syllable is pronounced, and Fauré writes a note for it. It’s a bit like “uh”.

3c. The 3 nasal sounds. “en”, “an”, “in”, “on”. No English equivalent I’m afraid. I’ll have to say them to you. The first two are the same. All 3 come at the bottom of page 2. “rompons”, “silence”, “divin”. Ideally you just pronounce the vowel, and NOT the “m” or the “n” that follows.

3d. Just for the basses. In your first entry you have an “oh” sound (“au Très-Haut”). It is NOT a diphthong like in English. Say “show” very slowly, and you will hear 2 vowels. “Shoh – oo”. In French, just say the “oh” bit, and NOT the “oo”. See also the entry at the top of page 7 “O Christ”.

Do email me if you’ve got any questions. Merci. À lundi prochain. Tim timvenner@aol.com