

## Words, words, words.....

*Die Meistersinger von Nuernberg rehearsals, an update by the German coach*

Rehearsals are progressing at a very intensive pace. I am full of admiration for the singers who have had to learn a huge amount of words, their roles are long and very wordy.

An added complication is the fact that the language is conversational, there are contractions , **omissions of syllables** which change the pronunciation:

Examples: **s'ist** instead of es ist it's

**Die Weis'** ends in an unvoiced s instead of Die **Weise** where the s is pronounced as a z

**Tongue twisters** where all the consonants have to be pronounced: sag' ich's, versteh' ich's ,  
Christ's Vorlauffer,....ist's so bewandt , der Allergescheitst', sich spreizt, hier fraegt sich's , Winterszeit,

Mir ahnet, dass **mir's** Sorge macht: you have to slide from an s into a z, both have to be clear but no elision

If a word ends in ig, it is pronounced as ich : example **selig** , but if the ig is followed by a consonant as in **selige** the g is pronounced as g

You elide mein' ich, sag'ich, but you must separate vor /allen Dingen , nor vorallen Dingen;  
all/allerlei not allallerlei

**End consonants** are important, otherwise we do not get the meaning of the word: Kunst**t** , (Art) we need to hear the t, the word has to be finished

**Consonants at the beginning of a word** have to be placed before the beat, otherwise we only hear the vowel: **K**unst

The difference between **short open** and **long closed vowels** is very important, because the wrong pronunciation will change the meaning of the word:

Examples:

Evchen little Eva the e has to be closed, otherwise it sounds like Aeffchen meaning little monkey

**Ehre** honour the e has to be closed otherwise it sounds like Aehre which is a sheaf of wheat

To compound the confusion, often Wagner put **a long closed vowel on a short note, or a short open vowel on a long note: an equivalent in English is ship – sheep which have to be clearly distinguished**

Sometimes a rhyme is impure: Fuss (foot) is long and closed, rhyming with muss (must) which is short and open

**Word endings** can be confusing: in the first line of Walther's prize song in Act2 he sings 'in rosigem Schein' (in a rosy glow) , in Act 3 there is a subtle variation : im rosigen Schein , both mean the same, the grammar is slightly different because Walther improvises. But he must not mix the two versions: in demands **the ending- em,** im demands the ending –en .

**The article** changes according to the position of the noun in the sentence:

**Die** Kunst (art) which is feminine, but 'Hier gilt's **der** Kunst' (dative case)

The right balance has to be found between singing a line legato where it needs to be, and keeping the tone conversational when necessary.

Finally the challenge of the riot scene in Act 2: it is a challenge for all the cast and the chorus, they have had to learn so many words, the apprentices have different lines from the Meisters, the Meisters have individual lines, the chorus is divided into several parts, and it's all fast and furious, and they have to fight with each other on stage. It could be a nightmare, however it's all held together by a bass line which is based on Beckmesser's song.

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