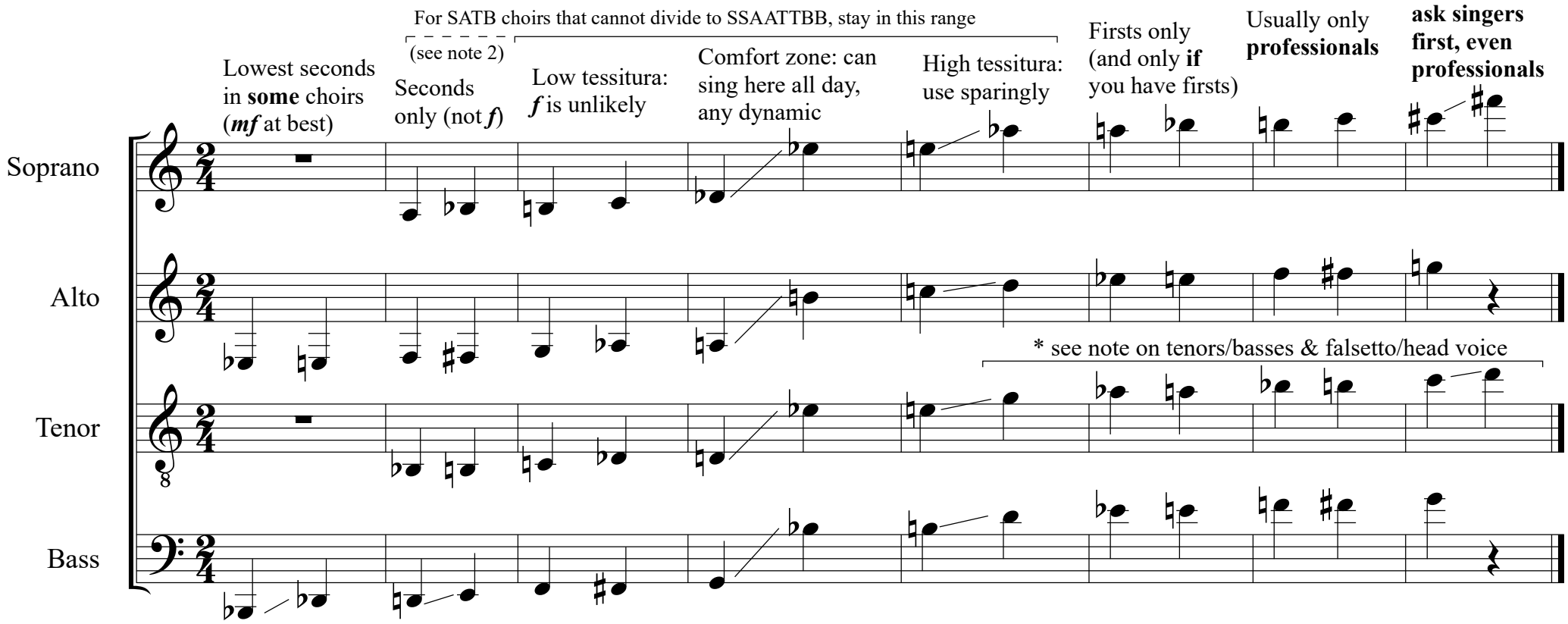
Ranges for choral singers: a rough guide for composers (version for SATB choirs)

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1. Lowest range for altos and basses: this should be available from at least a few singers in most choirs that can do large challenging works (Mahler 8, Rachmaninov Vespers, Talbot Path Of Miracles), and in most professional groups with 4 or more per section, but in a smaller or amateur choir, don't use that range without checking first. Easily drowned out by higher notes, best used in isolation.
2. You can use the "seconds only" SAT ranges for choirs with only a single section if you double it with a lower part - they can usually get the notes but they'll be quiet.
3-4. Choirs will be fine with a piece that sits entirely in the "comfort zone" with maybe a few low notes, but we like variety within that range. ***ff*** is better on high notes.
5. Long passages in the high tessitura can be very tiring and result in the voice 'drying out'; even more so for notes above this. Going back to low range helps to recover, sometimes better than an extended rest. Try to avoid frequent movements in and out of the high tessitura. It's easier to sing loud than quiet up there. **For unauditioned or beginner choirs**, the top two notes of the high tessitura are best avoided as they will be unsuitable for some less experienced singers (especially sopranos/tenors).
6-7. The highest first tenor and first soprano notes will be very penetrating. If the choir only has a single section on a part and cannot divide, avoid "firsts only" ranges.
8. Not to be used unless you are absolutely sure that the singers can hit these notes and they have personally assured you that they are comfortable with them.
* Tenors (and some basses) can use falsetto or full voice to hit high notes; the highest notes (F# and above for tenors) can be quiet or loud, but try to avoid ***mf*** or ***mp***. Most tenor soloists will prefer to use chest voice throughout though, so the highest notes from a solo tenor will be very loud. Some singers can go higher in falsetto.

If you'd like to learn more about writing for choir or arrange a private consultation, please contact me at hutchingsmusic@hotmail.com.
I'm based in Edinburgh, Scotland, but can travel to give school/college/university masterclasses, or give advice by email and/or Skype.

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