
Mark Wilson is Director of Music at Mt. Zion United Methodist Church and Director of Music for St. Paul's Middle School for Boys in Baltimore, MD.

A Study Plan for Mark Wilson's

Lift Every Voice

(CGA-514)

"Lift Every Voice" was written for treble voices, but could also be sung as a two-part men's chorus anthem. This study plan was written for unchanged treble voices.

The warm-up for "Lift Every Voice" should be developed around skips of thirds, fourths and fifths. The descending *sol - mi* skips should be given special attention so that *mi* does not drop too low in pitch. Give the chorus time to tune each skip carefully before moving to the next note.

At the second rehearsal, review skips of a third with special attention given to the larger skips of fourths and fifths, ascending and descending.

Introduce the words and rhythm of the first four measures by speaking the text in rhythm with emphasis on the consonant "d" in the word "Lord." The "deh" ending should be spoken on the eighth note rest in measure 9. Choir members enjoy over-emphasizing this consonant during the first rehearsal, but will pride themselves in its correct placement as the anthem improves in future rehearsals. A soft "z" sound ("zih") should conclude the word *praise* in measure 11 as well as a soft "e" in measure 13 to finish the word *joy*. Choristers may be reminded often that the congregation will hear this text for the first time when the choir sings it as the anthem. Each

93

word needs careful enunciation in order for the text to be correctly understood upon first hearing.

Teach the canon beginning at measure 21 on the syllable "loo." Ask the choir to sing only the first three notes, listening carefully to the descending skips of a fourth and a fifth. Be sure that the pitch on *sol* in the descending fourth is not sung below pitch. The choir should learn the canon in two sections. Teach everyone part I, measures 21-28 and part I, measures 31-37. Students will readily hear that the first section ends with a descending pattern and the second section ends with an ascending pattern. Then ask the part II singers if their first pattern concludes with an ascending *or* descending scale pattern. Once the choir is singing these two patterns in unison, ask a leader from each group to demonstrate the canon in two parts. Then challenge the choir to sing the canon in two groups.

Review the canon "tunes" during the next rehearsal but quickly move into singing the canon in two groups.

This is an ideal piece for choristers to learn to take a deep, quick breath. As you learn the new text on page 5, ask the choristers to breathe quickly and deeply on the eighth rests in measures 41, 45, 47 and 49. Watch to be sure no shoulders are raised as the children breathe.

Be sure the choir carefully enunciates the new text on page 5. Measure 44 would be an ideal place to teach students to eliminate the "r" sound in "earth." The choir should focus on the "uh" sound and add "th" on the eighth rest in measure 45 for a clean ending to the phrase.

Be sure to direct ritards and dynamic changes carefully as you teach the pitches and rhythms. The addition of handbells at measure 81 will add a festive flourish to conclude this piece.

Jane Foster Knox is the lyricist for this piece. She is currently director of the youth choir at Plymouth Congregational Church in Lincoln, Nebraska, and writes lyrics for several composers.

... Mark Wilson