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A Study Plan for

A Gladsome Voice

(CGA-527)

by Bob Burroughs

The text for “A Gladsome Voice” comes from an anonymous lyricist from the 17th century, later translated by Catherine Winkworth (1829-1878). The text provides several things to consider with the children:

- 1) we must praise God with a happy voice
- 2) we rejoice because God gave us His only Son
- 3) Jesus came to earth to serve in sadness so we might go to heaven and reign in gladness
- 4) because Christ was poor, we are rich
- 5) a prayer for a glad new year

The music allows the children to learn good phrasing, to sing a repetitive phrase, and to zero in on the scale patterns, 1-5.

Session 1

The anthem should be introduced to the children by teaching them to sing the Eb-F-G-Ab-Bb passage (scale steps 1-5) in the Eb key—in the rhythm of the first phrase. This is also useful as a warm-up exercise, going up to the fifth note and back again to “tonic.” Soon add the upper Eb so the children will be singing Eb-F-G-Ab-Bb-Eb—then sBb-A natural-Bb. Use an open vowel, like “loo,” so the children can reach the Eb without straining or raising their heads. Help them to keep the sound in the “mask.” Help them to notice the “A natural.” Discuss *accidentals* and their use in music and what effect they have in music. Make sure they don’t go to the Ab.

Now, teach the children the first phrase, “Let us with a gladsome voice praise the Lord of heaven,” still using “loo.” Remember the anthem is in a “joyful” 2/2 tempo. Sing it several times, until it becomes well-known in their minds. Change vowel sounds often in the process. No breath is allowed after the word “voice.” Help them to see how

important it is to carry over the entire phrase—making grammatical sense as well as musical sense.

Now add the text to that phrase, making sure good consonants are present, as well as proper vowel placement. For instance, the first two words should be “leh-tus,” or to use a “word picture” so they will understand better, “let-tuce.” The “t” should come on the word, “us.” This is called an “elision,” where one or more words are run together or connected. The word “of” should be almost “ahve,” with a dropped jaw. Don’t allow children to dull the vowel sound with a “slack jaw.” There should be lots of “oo” sound in the words “who” and “to” in the second phrase. They will have a tendency to sing “hew” and “tew,” if not careful. A quick breath can be taken after “rejoice” in measure 8, and another in the third phrase, in measure 16, after “homes.” Show the children that this same vocal pattern occurs three times in the first stanza. It is the first phrase, the second phrase and the fourth phrase. Only phrase three is different. The stanzas might be remembered as being in “A-A-B-A” form.

Lead the children in singing these three phrases, with just the keyboard reinforcing the melody. Repeat the process as necessary until the children have a grasp of the melody—then, add the keyboard accompaniment on those three phrases. Repeat this several times. Then move on to the next activity.

Session 2

Refresh the children’s memory of the tune in phrases 1, 2, and 4, by using it to vocalize, reminding them of the form of each stanza of the song (A-A-B-A), and letting them sing the three phrases, first with keyboard playing just melody and then with keyboard playing the accompaniment, while they sing the vocal line.

Now it is time to teach phrase 3, or the “B” phrase. The “A-natural” might give some trouble, so careful preparing of that vocal line is important. Let the children vocalize, using “loo,” with the high Eb down to the C-Eb-Eb-D-D-C. Next, add the Bb, so you have Eb-Eb-D-D-C-Bb. Note with the children that the next note is altered, because there is an *accidental* present in the vocal line. Ask if anyone knows what kind of *accidental* it is. Then show them that the interval from Bb to A natural is a half step. Vocalize them up the scale from the low Eb as follows: Eb-F-G-Ab-Bb-A natural-Bb. Then do the same thing, using an Ab. This will let them distinguish between the A natural and the Ab. Do this several times, until they are comfortable with the “A natural.” Ask them to find another “A natural” in the same phrase, and it occurs in measure 13. Let them sing the “B” phrase with the keyboard assisting. You may take a quick breath in measure 12, after the word “comes.” Sing this several times until the children are comfortable with the line and then allow the keyboard to play the accompaniment below the melodic line. When you feel they are comfortable with the line, go to the beginning and let them sing the entire first stanza. By now, it should almost be from memory.

On the piano, play from measure 18 through the key change, and allow the singers to sing stanza two without any comment—everyone singing the melody line. Children will note, with your assistance, that the last vocal phrase is extended. Instead of two half notes, there are two whole notes! That should not give the singers any problem, but some may not be watching you and will probably sing a “solo”! Sing the second stanza again, calling attention to the “B natural” in this key, instead of the “A natural.” Since the key is one whole step higher, a new *accidental* will be required, and it happens to be “B natural.”

Go back and work on several word pronunciations, such as “poor.” Children will have a tendency to sing “pore”! Make sure the “oo” is in “poor.” Another word to watch will be “ever.” Don’t let too much “r” get in the way of the vowel.

It is now time to teach the second part. Allow all the children to learn both parts. At this age, there isn’t really a high and a low voice in most of their voices, so offer the children the opportunity to learn both parts.

Using “loo,” ask the children to sing the first phrase of the second stanza several times, with the keyboard doubling the melody. Note with them that this same voice line occurs in the second “A” phrase, measures 27-30. Ask them to look at the third “A” phrase, to see if it is *same* or *different*. It is, of course, different. The melody is “step-wise” in measures 35-36, and there is a big leap, or *interval* in measure 37. This will be the hardest part! Have them sing it several times until the confidence to sing the interval is there.

For the final “run-through” in today’s session, let the children stand and sing the entire anthem, perhaps alternating the first and second parts between voices until you find the proper blend.

Session 3

In this final rehearsal before your performance of the anthem, review with the children the proper vowel pronunciation of the key words, the difference between “Ab” and “A natural,” the form of the stanzas of the anthem (A-A-B-A), and the second part.

Now, a full “run through” should be possible — once or twice with music, to refresh the memory, and finally, from memory—and then, ready for a performance.

By now, the children should have accomplished the following things in the two previous sessions:

1. Singing the entire anthem from memory, including the second part.
2. Understanding accidentals: the difference between a flat and a natural, both in vocal and visual understanding.
3. Learning what an “interval” is.
4. Discovering that “form” of each stanza of the anthem is A-A-B-A.
5. Developing proper pronunciation of certain words in the anthem that are trouble spots.

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I hope you have enjoyed preparing and singing this anthem as much as I enjoyed writing it. I pray this blessing on you and on your choir:

“O Master Composer,
Orchestrator of the universe
Creator of the moon, stars, sun and the earth that
revolve in perfect harmony,
Bless the notes and words these children sing
to Your praise
for Your honor
and to Your glory, that we may be
Music to Your ears, perfect unisons and tuned harmonies to please You.
May the lives they live fit the master score you have
planned for their existence in Your symphony of
living. Amen.” □