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Plans and Suggestions for Teaching Jeffrey Honoré's "All Good Gifts" CGA-593

by Betty Bedsole

At first glance, Jeffrey Honoré's "All Good Gifts" appears to be a lengthy anthem. However, the amount of repetition makes it not only accessible to a wide variety of choirs, but quite simple for most. The piece is strophic with a recurring unison or two-part refrain. It can be sung in unison by a children's choir or by combined choirs with congregation.

In reference to performance options, the composer writes:

"This anthem was designed to have many performance options. Originally written for children's choir with adults joining in on the refrains with harmony, the work can stand alone for unison choir or adults in SATB. The stanzas can be sung by different sections (as indicated) or by any combination you desire. The bells and descant offer more variety, and are optional, as well as the congregational refrain which begins at letter E, but can be added at any refrain."

The refrain is melodic and easy to sing.



To teach the refrain to the congregation, consider having a congregational rehearsal prior to the morning worship service. Print the refrain in the order of worship to assist the congregation in singing it. Ask them to listen as the choir sings the refrain. Then lead the congregation in singing the refrain several times, until they seem secure. Tell them when it will occur in the service and how you will indicate that it is time for them to sing. Simply turning to the congregation and conducting them is probably the clearest indication.

Another option for teaching the refrain is to introduce it at another service, perhaps as part of a fellowship time on Wednesday evening or at prayer meeting. A third option would be to use it as part of the service music (perhaps as a Call to Worship) for several weeks before you ask the congregation to sing it with the choir.

In teaching the refrain to the children's choir, help them learn to read the musical score by the use of Kodaly hand signs and tone syllables. Use warm-ups including the following patterns:



After introducing the patterns with hand signals, use flash cards to show the children what the patterns look like on the musical score. Ask them to locate the fourth pattern (MSD) on page one of the anthem (measures five and nine). Depending on your own skill with the hand signals and the experience of your children, you may want to introduce the other patterns of the refrain in the same way.

1. Echo sing.
2. Show the pattern on flash cards.
3. Find the pattern in the music.

Talk with the children about similarities and differences in the two patterns ("around us" and "O thank you, God").

Ask the children to sing with you the parts they have learned (measures five and six and measures nine and ten) and listen to the patterns they have not yet heard (measures seven and eight and measures eleven and twelve). Have the children echo sing the new phrases with hand signs and tone syllables. Then show them flashcards containing the new patterns.

Using an overhead projector, project the entire refrain with notes and tone syllables. Help the children sing the refrain using hand signs and tone syllables. Then have them sing the refrain on the syllable "loo" to focus the sound and establish good head tone placement. Finally, ask them to look at their music and sing the refrain with words.

Teach stanza one, using an overhead cell of notes and tone syllables for children to read. When they can do this with confidence, have them sing the first stanza with the words. Depending on the skill of your choir, break the stanza into phrases or short patterns to facilitate the reading process.

Re Mi Mi Fi Fi So La Ti So

Re Re Do Do Ti, Re

Mi Mi Fi Fi So La Ti So

Do' La So Fi So

(Explain that the tone syllable for G would be “Fa” but because it is raised a half step by the sharp sign the tone syllable is “Fi.”)

For stanza two, play the two parts together on the piano to illustrate how the music sounds. The harmony part needs to be in the vocal line as well as in the accompaniment. Then place a cell with notes and tone syllables on an overhead projector for the children who will sing the harmony part. When they seem secure, add the melody. This stanza could be sung by children, sopranos and altos from the adult choir or both.

Men in most choirs will be able to read the harmony part at C, though some may need to hear it played on the piano or sung by the director first.

If adults have difficulty reading the four part section at letter E, have the accompanist play the four parts for them to hear how it all fits together. Then practice the women’s and men’s parts separately before asking them to sing the four parts together.

The four part refrain at G is the same as at E except that a descant has been added. The descant can be sung by children or by a few sopranos.

Teach the coda, which consists of the last four measures with an upbeat.

Practice with the children and adults in their separate rehearsals, then rehearse with combined choirs several times before singing the anthem in the worship service.

This piece is, of course, learned over a period of several weeks. The amount of time spent each week is determined by the reading ability of the choir. Be careful not to present too much new material at one rehearsal. Each week build on the work that was done the week before.

“All Good Gifts” is especially appropriate for a Thanksgiving service or the Sunday following Thanksgiving, although its general praise nature would make it useful for other services as well. If your church has a special environmental emphasis, this anthem would be most appropriate.

The activities immediately following will help children learn the anthem while developing music reading skills. The detective game should be played *after* the aural presentation suggested above. Children need to hear and see before they are asked to write.

Chorister’s Page Music Detective Game

Use the detectives’ code to find the tone syllables for “All Good Gifts.” First you will see the major scale. Then you will see an altered scale that is also used in this song. The note is G sharp, we call it “fi” instead of “fa.”

Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do'

Do Re Mi Fi So La Ti Do'

All Good Gifts

Congregation Refrain

Jeffrey Honoré

Mi So Do Mi Fa Mi Fa La So

Fa

La Ti

Do' Do

Stanza

Mi Mi Fi Fi

Re Mi

La Ti Do' So

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