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A Study Plan for Kenneth T. Kosche's

"Now Sing a Song of Joy" CGA663



This lyric piece may provide a talented soloist or a select group of children the opportunity to "solo" the melody for the first stanza. While children may sing this piece alone if the accompanist plays the vocal parts assigned to the mixed choir, it is a more special experience to combine the children with an adult choir.

Week 1

- A. "The Tune is the Thing."
Before the children look at the music:
1. Play the tune alone all the way through: measures 4-21.
 2. Next, play the accompaniment with the tune (same measures), taking care to emphasize the tune in the right hand.
 3. Ask the children to "characterize" the melody. What is it like? What kind of mood or feeling is conveyed? What sort of words or ideas could be sung with a tune like this?
- B. Now have the children look at the music. Show them that their part is always the top line, even though each page looks a little different from the others.
1. Start at measure 4 with the pickup note and have the children sing through stanza one as best they can. If the accompaniment is a distraction, play only the melody.
 2. Sing through all three stanzas, playing either the melody alone or the accompaniment for stanza one each time.
 3. Have the children tell how many phrases there are (4) and which ones sound more like one another and which are different.
 - Phrases 1 and 3 are the most alike, except that 3 goes higher and leads up into 4;
 - Phrase 2 is similar to 1 and 3 but starts lower;
 - Phrase 4 sounds a bit like two shorter phrases, and is very different from the others.
 4. As each phrase is discussed, play only the tune and have the children try to sing it on a neutral syllable.
- C. Guide the children to see the important ideas of each stanza, the key words. Don't dwell on this, but emphasize only the main ideas. In the next three weeks you can successively review important words in each stanza.
- Stanza 1: Sing of *joy* — simple song of delight — gladness, cheer — God's gift.
Stanza 2: Song of *hope* — darkness into light—cast away fear — God's peace.
Stanza 3: Sing of *love* — angels — recreate the bright scene — God's love in child Jesus — alleluia.

- D. Sing through the entire piece once again with the accompaniment to stanza 1. Strive right from the beginning for a smooth line and avoid the choppiness often caused by dotted rhythms. Emphasize the full length of each phrase over swinging rhythm.
1. Avoid closing on the "ng" of "sing."
 2. To which words in the line does the melody move for phrase 1? "Joy" and "year."
 3. Help the children to find the related places in the other phrases: "pure — cheer" "celebrate — love" "birth — Son."

Week 2

- A. Begin by singing the melody as smoothly as possible using "loo." Use the accompaniment to the first stanza only as long as the children seem insecure with the melody.
- B. Next, do the same thing with "lo," and then with "la." Ask the children if they sense a difference in mood with these different sounds and if they can tell which stanzas of the song correspond to these different moods. Discuss various points of view.
- C. Notice that the first three phrases use a dotted rhythm but the last does not.
- D. This would be a good time to discuss thoughts in stanza 1 such as "this holy time of year," "pure delight," and so on.
- E. Strive for an easy, open sound on the high E flat. Avoid the burred "r" sound in "birth" as much as possible.
- F. By now, the tune should be very familiar, and the singers can try the entire piece with the appropriate accompaniment to each stanza.

Week 3

- A. Review the entire piece by singing it from start to finish with piano accompaniment using the mixed choir parts of stanzas 2 and 3.
- B. If children are singing a dotted rhythm throughout, point out the even eighths in phrase 4 (measures 17 and 19, etc.) of each stanza. Perhaps this was one of the differences between the phrases pointed out in week 1.
- C. Ask the children if they can sing the two most commonly used pitches for you (tonic and dominant.) If necessary, have them look through the piece and count how many times in the melody

each pitch is used. B flat and F are used 12 times each (also C 12 times! Why does this not strike the ear as importantly as F and B flat?)

- D. Refine the performance. Check that the dotted quarter and quarter tied at the end of each phrase are adequately long and not "clipped."
- E. This would be a good time to discuss thoughts in stanzas 2 and 3 such as "a song of hope . . . that turns sin's darkness into light," "recreate the scene so bright," and so on.
- F. Sing the entire piece. Keep the accompaniment for stanzas 2 and 3 very light. Do not dominate the tune.

Week 4

- A. Begin by singing the piece from start to finish with piano accompaniment using the mixed choir parts of stanzas 2 and 3.
- B. Children will need to sing the piece with the mixed choir. Scheduling can sometimes be problematic. You will have to be creative in solving this for your own situation. Sometimes parents will bring their children to the beginning of a senior choir rehearsal, but generally the only time to "put it all together" is immediately before the piece is to be sung in the pre-service warm up. Allow plenty of time for this and create a festive mood which anticipates success.
- C. Some of the items suggested in the previous weeks should have been used with the mixed choir in preparation, also. Not only children need to look at the text for meaning, the phrase structure, rhythmic values, and the like.
- D. Make certain that the mixed choir sings stanza 2 with a good *legato* and softly. If necessary, only use several members of each section on this part so that the tune remains prominent.
- E. Point out that the mixed choir part goes above the children's melody in measures 46-47. Keep the balance between parts here and let the melody come out.
- F. Be sure to thank all the participants for working together so well, especially if any schedules had to be adjusted or extra rehearsals planned. Capitalize on the natural good will created in this cooperative venture.

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