

How Can I Keep From Singing?

Text: Quaker Hymn, Robert Lowry (1826-1899)

Music: *How Can I Keep From Singing?*, Robert Lowry (1826-1899), arr. Michael Burkhardt

EXPERIENCE ONE

1. Before distributing the choral scores for *How Can I Keep From Singing?* hand out to your choristers the text page for their use (see below).

2. Have the choir accompanist play measures 10-16 of the octavo while the singers read the text of *1a* silently. Ask the singers to suggest a word or words from *1a* that the music of the piano might be suggesting. Place the word(s) on a chart or on the blackboard. ["flow," "endless," etc.]

3. Have the choir accompanist play measures 17-26 of the octavo while the singers read the text of *1b* silently. Ask the singers to suggest a word or words

from *1b* that the music of the piano might be suggesting. Place this (these) word(s) on a chart or on the blackboard. ["ringing," "echo," etc.]

4. Continue this process for the texts of *2a* (measures 27-34) and *2b* (measures 35-42).

5. Conclude this introduction to the anthem by sharing the fact that composers and arrangers often like to paint musical pictures of the texts that we read and sing. Save the singers' responses for the next rehearsal when octavos will be distributed and the melody learned by reading or by rote (as appropriate for the singers). Their responses will be reflected in the vocal as well as the expressive approach to each section of the anthem.

1a. *My life flows on in endless song,
Above earth's lamentation,
I hear the real though far-off hymn
That hails a new creation.*

2a. *What if my joys and comforts die,
I know that truth is living,
What though the darkness 'round me close
Since truth its light is giving.*

3a. *I lift my eyes, the cloud grows thin,
I see the blue above it
And day by day this pathway smooths,
Since first I learned to love it.*

1b. *Through all the tumult and the strife,
I hear the music ringing,
It sounds an echo in my soul;
How can I keep from singing?*

2b. *No storm can shake my inmost calm,
While to the rock I'm clinging.
Since Love is the Lord of heav'n and earth,
How can I keep from singing?*

3b. *The peace from Love makes fresh my heart
A song of hope is springing,
All things are mine since truth I've found.
How can I keep from singing?*

EXPERIENCE TWO

1. The major triad is the basis of many of the melodic patterns used in the melody of the anthem. Warm-ups may include the following patterns based on the major triad:

sol,	do	mi	sol
do	sol,	do	sol
do	sol,	do	mi
sol,	sol,	do	mi
mi	sol	sol	sol
sol,	do	(re)	mi

2. Have the singers echo the patterns of No.1 above using solfege. Notate the patterns of the blackboard.

sol, do mi sol

do sol do sol

A - bove earth's lam -

Have the singers sing the notated patterns using solfege.

Have the singers locate the patterns in stanza one (measures 9-25).

Have the singers sing the anthem words associated with each pattern.

3. Sight-sing stanza one of the anthem.

EXPERIENCE THREE

1. This experience may be used in addition to Experience Two for assisting musical literacy. The melodic rhythm of the melody is based on one rhythm pattern that ends in two different ways.

2. Have the singers practice the above patterns using “rhythm talk” (any preferred counting system by the director).

3. Have the singers read the rhythm of stanza one using “rhythm talk.” When reading longer note values (i.e., dotted-quarters), have the singers energize the sustained rhythm syllable(s) with a slight crescendo.

4. Have the singers lean bodily on those syllables marked with a tenuto. This will prepare the singers to take the weight off the concluding text syllables of those phrases that end with an unaccented syllable.

EXPERIENCE FOUR

1. Teach the optional harmony of stanza three as a second melody.

2. Note that measures 48-59 are comprised of three melodic variants of measures 44-47.

Experience Five is on page 32.

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EXPERIENCE FIVE

1. Teach the optional harmony of stanza two as a second melody.

2. Measures 27-34 require a floating, focused head tone. The “oo” vowel may be preceded by the consonant “n” to assist in focusing and placing the tone. In addition, the lips should be rounded and puckered. Pay careful attention to the “c-sharps” which highlight the haunting quality of this section and text and music.

The image displays two staves of musical notation. Both staves are in the treble clef and have a key signature of one sharp (F#). The top staff contains a melodic line with a slur over measures 27-34. Below the first and last notes of this slurred section, the text "Oo" is written. The bottom staff contains a harmonic line with a slur over measures 27-34. Below the first note of this slurred section, the text "(Oo)" is written. A thick black horizontal line is drawn below the bottom staff.