

# "Savior Child"

by Eugenie Rocherolle

## A Teaching Plan by Helen Kemp

It has been said that effective choir rehearsals consist of one third vocal techniques, one third musicianship training, and one third drama. In teaching SAVIOR CHILD, I suggest a slightly altered division: one fourth vocal techniques, one fourth musicianship, and one half DRAMA. This is why.

The text is a dialogue, a question and answer conversation, between two characters or chorally between Part I and Part II. The text is interrupted by vocal and visionary alleluias, when both characters imagine being in the awesome presence of the Savior Child.

The casual folk-language idiom is part of the textual charm. If the text of the dialogue is first SPOKEN by the two characters (or choir groups), the melody even with its syncopation will easily be caught and naturally sung.

I have chosen to present this plan for an elementary choir singing in unison since I have performed the piece in that way. If a middle school choir is singing the three-part version, more time will have to be spent on the "musicianship training" portion of rehearsal in order to secure independent vocal lines. The "drama" element, however, remains the same.

*Enter:* Characters 1 and 2

*Speak:*

1. Say, brother, where you goin', where you goin' with a look of joy?
2. Why friend, now haven't you heard, I'm a-goin' to see the Little Savior Boy.
1. Say, brother, what you carryin', what you carryin' in your hand?
2. Why, friend, now can't you see, I'm a-bringin' gifts to give the Little Man.

*Sing:*

Al - le - lu - ia, Al - le - lu - ia,  
Al - le - lu - ia, Al - le - lu - ia.

*Speak:*

1. Say, brother, how you knowin', how you knowin' just where you are?

2. Why friend, I got the word, All I got to do is follow yonder star.

1. Say, brother, what will happen, what will happen if I come along?

2. Why, friend, I think you'll see, all your days and nights will be a happy song.

*Sing:*

Al - le - lu - ia, Al - le - lu - ia,  
Al - le - lu - ia, Al - le - lu - ia.

*Speak:*

1. Then brother, I'm a-goin', I don't care if it takes a while;
2. Sure friend, you come along. We will look upon the Little Savior Child!
- 1 and 2. Yes, Lord, we're all a-comin', We'll be there in a little while; O sing a happy song; We will look upon the little Savior Child.

Al - le - lu - ia, Al - le - lu - ia,  
Al - le - lu - ia, Al - le - lu - ia.

- 1 and 2. Yes Lord, we're all a-comin', We'll be there in a little while; O sing a happy song, We will look upon the Little Savior Child.

### Vocal Techniques

Now that the scene is set, the characters have spoken their parts, it's time for encouraging beautiful singing on the ALLELUIAS. Use these measures as vocalises, with pure vowels, loose, quiet, relaxed jaw. On these phrases, the upper and lower teeth never have to meet! Only the tongue has to move to sound the "l's." Facial expression on the Alleluias should communicate awesome reverence and joyful surprise.



## "Savior Child" CGA 922 – Eugenie Rocherolle

Composer, lyricist, pianist, and teacher, Eugenie Rocherolle began an early publishing career after graduating from Newcomb College of Tulane University. She spent a year in Paris where she had a class with the late Nadia Boulanger. Her creative output includes works for chorus and orchestra, musical theater, chamber music, vocal solos, and over seventy-five collections of music for piano, both solo and ensemble. She has produced three CD's of her piano music, recorded by concert artist and Texas native, Julie Moberg Rivers.

Mrs. Rocherolle spends her days composing and teaching piano and composition. She enjoys reading, walking, and time with her family. Her travels giving workshops to teachers take her all over the country. Her summers are spent either in France or Louisiana, visiting family, or at the Connecticut shore.

Keep the phrases flowing even through the syncopated measures. The word stress is written into the melody and does not need to be over-accented. The story needs to be understood by the listeners, so good articulation is essential. A securely memorized performance will work wonders to lend authenticity to the folk-idiom text.

### Musicianship Training

Children are used to hearing syncopated rhythms, and although they catch the "feel" very easily, singing the written melody accurately is more difficult. To help our choristers grasp the "mathematics" as well as the "feel," choose a few measures to practice the rhythmic patterns used throughout the piece.

Write the rhythm and words of measures 6-8 on the chalkboard . . . all in eighth note divisions: TAP eighth notes slowly while chanting the words.



When this can be done accurately, chant the words in rhythm, feeling a quarter note pulse in quadruple meter.



After chanting, go to the score and put the words, rhythm,

and melody together, first a cappella then with accompaniment. This practice exercise will be the foundation for the whole song. Finally, the piece should swing in two, as indicated by the composer.

As the written-out text indicates, there is a definite FORM to this piece, which helps add to the enjoyment of learning one of the ways a song is created. When choristers are made aware of the organization and form of the song, memorization can be an enjoyable task.

Another opportunity to develop musicianship is to call attention to the markings in the score: time signatures, key signatures (and key changes), tempo markings, dynamics, and of course, reading melodic intervals.

### Teaching Tips

My choristers were hesitant to sing confidently on the Alleluia entrances in measures 13, 17, 29, 31, 45 and 47. I found that having the piano bass note played lightly on beat one before the full chord and vocal entrance on beat two, both tone and confidence were improved. This is especially appropriate where the sudden key changes occur. After several repetitions you may find that the assistance is no longer necessary. Children often "get it" very quickly.

So there you have it! Enjoy the challenges and the rewards of teaching a charming new song to your choristers!

*Helen Kemp is a children's choir clinician and composer.*