

A Teaching Plan for MAGNIFICAT (CGA954)

TEXT: Luke 1:46-47 provides the prelude for this setting. To continue, I chose the versification of Mary's canticle by Miriam Therese Winters. Her words are understandable, singable, and true to the biblical source. To begin and end the anthem I repeat the word MAGNIFICAT, sort of like book-ends holding the thoughts of the text together.

SCENE: Young Mary traveled by foot into the hill country to visit her older cousin, Elizabeth. There Mary confided that she was to become the mother of Jesus, the Christ. Then with a heart full of joy and anticipation, she magnifies God with the inspired words which we call the Magnificat.

ART: Many great artists have painted this scene, calling it "The Visitation." Find a copy of one of these paintings. Have it copied, enlarged, and mounted for the children to see. The visual connection will stimulate interest and appreciation of the text.

PRONUNCIATION: Since this setting includes two short motifs from German composer J. S. Bach, I suggest the German-Latin pronunciation: mahg-nee-fee-caht. Children will form a connection to the word magnify. If you have a CD of Bach's "Magnificat," have children listen to the first four or five minutes, long enough to have them hear the two motifs quoted in this piece (C instrument part and first sung measures six through eight).

FORM: Since children learn more quickly when there is an orderly form, I suggest using the following chart to be READ aloud, before singing the musical setting. There is a reason for the capitalized words. They have to do with inflection, stress, or pronunciation.

MAGNIFICAT! MAGNIFICAT!

- A. My soul magnifies, magnifies the Lord,
my SOUL magnifies.
magnifies the Lord,
And my spirit rejoices, my spirit rejoices,
my spirit rejoices in the Lord!
- B. My soul gives glory to my God, my HEART pours
out its praise.
GOD lifted up my lowliness in many, many, many
marv'lous ways.

C. MY GOD has done great things for me; yes,
holy is God's name.

All people will declare me blessed, and blessings they
shall claim.

B1. From age to age to all who fear, such MUH-cy
love imparts,
dispensing justice far and near, dismissing
selfish hearts.

C1. LOVE casts the mighty from their thrones,
promotes the insecure,
leaves hungry spirits satisfied, the rich seem
suddenly poor.

B2. Praise God whose loving covenant supports
those in distress,
remembering PAST promises with present faithfulness.

MAGNIFICAT! MAGNIFICAT!

(Magnificat! Magnificat!)

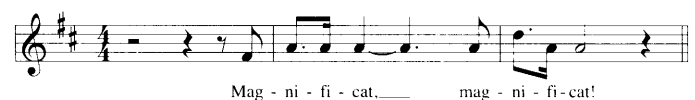
Singing the Song

"A tune is not a tune until the tune is sung" was the theme of a long-ago children's recording that encouraged active participation in singing. That little phrase still makes musical sense when asking, "How do I get my choir children to really SING this song?"—after they look at the pictures, pronounce the special words, and talk about the text.

The following ideas worked for me as I taught the anthem in four rehearsal sessions. Have your score ready as you consider these teaching suggestions.

Session One

Present the "book-end" tunes, the beginning (pages three and four, measures 6-8) and the ending (page eleven, measures 75-79)



Choose a group to sing the "stems down" notes to add the harmony. Some choristers love being the harmony singers. Practice with the "stems up" choristers to help them sustain

the eleven counts of the last syllable of the word, Magnificat, helping them sing a pure “ah” vowel to the very end, before adding a gentle “t.”

Use these book-end measures as enjoyable warm-ups to encourage vocal confidence and a beautiful sound.

Now begin the A section of the melody (measures 9-17) which repeats the word, “magnifies” four times. Attempt to let the Latin pronunciation of “Magnificat” influence the sung sound of the English word, “magnifies” just a bit! (North-South versus East-West)

Play the melodic line on the piano (still no accompaniment) to let the children hear the first two phrases as they follow the notation of measures 9-13. Two vowels are dominant: the “oh” of “soul” and the “a” (as in hat) of “magnifies.” Make a flashcard or copy on the chalkboard the following:

Don't over-emphasize the syllable “mag” on the “d” pitch. Sing through the phrase several times until the upper pitches flow freely.

“And my spirit rejoices” is repeated three times in sequence; each time one step higher to reinforce the spirit of the text. Sing it lightly and clearly with a cheerful bounce, taking a breath before the final eighth note of measure 15.

Sing from the beginning of the anthem through measure 17 with the accompaniment. Note: Concerning the accompaniment during rehearsals, the piano can play the C instrument part (the Back motif) and fill in portions of the hand-chime part.

Session Two

Learn section B (page six, measures 23-30). Read the words in rhythm. With melodic help from the piano, sing these measures being mindful of the duration of the dotted quarter notes, dotted half notes, and whole notes. Sing pairs of eighth notes clearly on the words “many, many, many mar’lous

ways,” and sing with a light bounce. Sing all of the B section.

Detective work: Find two other places in your score that have a very similar melody to the one we just learned. Check them out (page eight, measures 44-51 and page nine, measures 65-72).

A very important observation on page ten in measures 69-70.

BIG Challenge: Sing the entire anthem from the very beginning. Raise your hand when you sing a section that we have not learned (section C, page seven, measures 33-40 and page nine, measures 54-61). Make a good attempt at sight-reading those sections. Section C is our challenge for the next rehearsal.

Session Three

Learning the C section (page seven, measures 33-40) begins with presenting the following phrases either on the chalkboard or on flash cards.

Have the choristers read the words in rhythm, then sing. How are the phrases alike? (descending scale patterns) How are they different? (rhythm and ending) Have your choristers find these phrases in their scores. Sing, watching the notation carefully. This section can be learned in five minutes. Challenge them.

Now sing the entire anthem with piano accompaniment. Have the children identify which sections need more work. They are good at finding those places. Review and rehearse those weak sections.

Accompaniment: This is a good time to have the instrumentalists, who have prepared in advance, come into your rehearsal. Remember that if flute is used, it should be played one octave higher than scored. Be aware of the volume level of the bells and chimes. The children’s voices should not be overpowered.



Sessoion Four

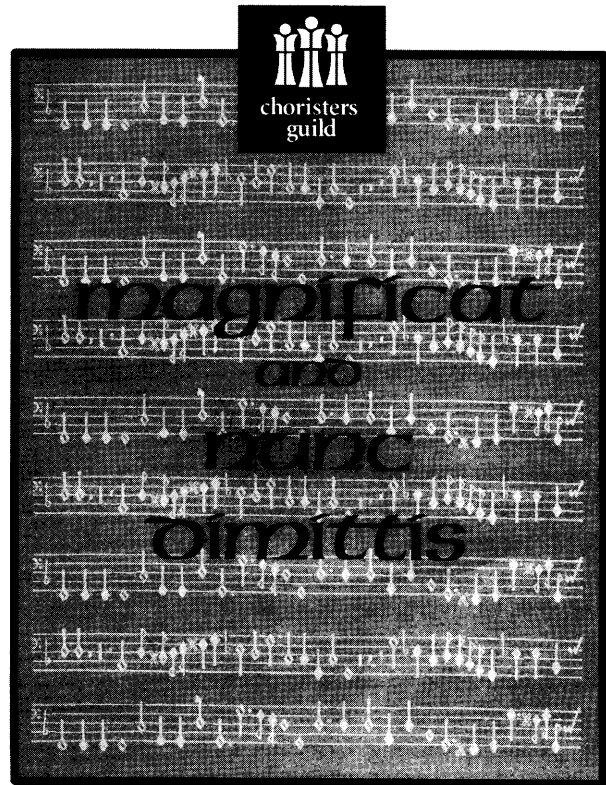
This is the rehearsal before the presentation of the anthem in worship or on a program. Although memorization is not absolutely necessary, it is recommended for the most effective singing. Try singing the entire anthem from the word chart without looking at music notation. Repetition is necessary. Next, have only the first two words of each line visible, then only the first words of each section, etc. If singing from memory, be sure YOU and the choristers are thoroughly secure and that your instrumentalists are well prepared.

The last rehearsal should be in the place where your choir will sing and with the instrumentalists and keyboard accompanist in their assigned places.

Now we look forward to sharing our gift of song ... Soli Deo Gloria. Alleluia!

Helen Kemp is a noted children's choir clinician and composer. She is a recognized authority on the child's voice and is in demand for festivals and workshops. Helen has a long and significant history with Choristers Guild.

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis Helen Kemp CGA954 \$1.70
 Unison with piano, C instrument, handchimes (2 octaves) and handbells (3 octaves)



www.choristersguild.org
 Published by CHORISTERS GUILD, 2834 W. Kingsley Rd., Garland, Texas 75041
 Distributed by THE LORENZ CORPORATION, 501 E. Third St., Box 802, Dayton, Ohio

Teaching Plan for NUNC DIMITTIS

TEXT: The biblical text for this piece is found in the Gospel of Luke 2: 9-31. It quotes the words of devout, aged Simeon.

SCENE: Mary and Joseph had taken the Infant Jesus to the temple to present their first-born son to God, as was the custom of Hebrew families. Old Simeon had been promised by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen the longed-for Messiah. Simeon was in the temple when the Holy Family entered. As Simeon held the infant in his arms, he knew the promise had been fulfilled. Then he spoke this beautiful prayer which is offered in worship services, Evensongs and Vespers, to this day.

ART: The temple scene, known as The Presentation in the Temple, has also been painted by great artists. The imaginations of children are stimulated by the visual and the dramatic. Find a great print of this scene to mount on a poster or show from a book.

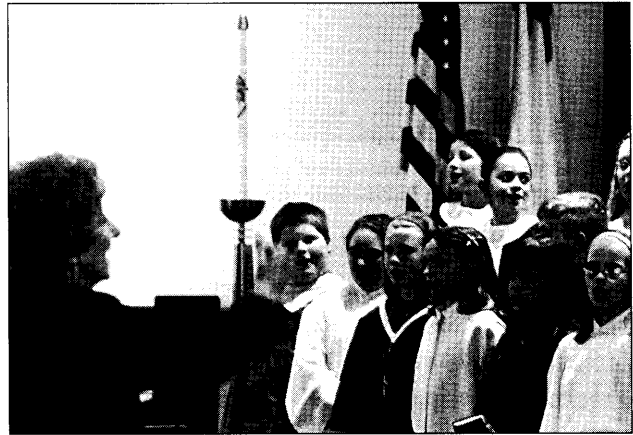
TEACHING SUGGESTIONS: Consider making a chart indicating phrases. It helps to be specific and consistent about where to take a breath.

Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace'
according to thy Word.
For my eyes have seen'
have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared'
in the presence of all peoples.

A light to lighten'
to lighten the Gentiles'
and for GLO-ry to thy people,'
thy people Israel.

Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace,'
according to thy Word.'
Now lettest thy servant depart in //'
-peace-----.

I like to have children READ the text aloud, breathing at designated places, as they become aware of words, thoughts and the nuance of phrase endings. Children who have difficulty reading words and musical notation at the same time will begin to feel more confident and more prepared to con-



Helen Kemp conducts children's choir during her recent birthday celebration.

centrate on intonation and rhythm.

ACCOMPANIMENT: It is possible to play this accompaniment entirely on piano, if suggested instruments are not available. Read the score from C instrument, handchimes and handbell parts, switching to piano notation when unison voices enter. The instruments, however, do add another dimension of sound, a halo effect over the text.

Singing the Song

Session One

Begin with page twelve (measures 5-7 and 22-24); Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, according to thy Word. Notice the "R" words that need to be considered. Practice these pronunciations.

Lord = lawd
Servant = suhvant
Depart = depaht
According = accawding
Word = wuhd

Sing these words of Simeon's prayer until the melody and the words are memorized. It won't take long!

For the next melodic section, use the "backwards" approach. Start with page 13 (measure 11, beat 4). Sing several times ... "in the presence of all people."

Go backward and add measure 11 ... "which thou hast prepared" + "in the presence of all people."



When you and your children's choirs are well prepared and ready to offer your gift of song, it is certainly a WIN-WIN-WIN situation.

Go backward and add measures 9-10 ... "have seen thy salvation" + "which thou hast prepared in the presence of all people."

Time to vocalize to prepare for the next phrase (measures 8-10). See example 1 below.

Go backward and sing from the beginning (measures 5-13).

Session Two

Begin with a review of the "R" words and where to breathe.

Learn the ending on page 15 (measures 25-28). Speak in rhythm: "Now lettest thy servant depart in // peace" Sing the phrase quietly but clearly, a cappella several times and then with the accompaniment. The last word, "peace," is very important. Although it is an "e" sound, try to think of the word inside a ROUND space rather than a narrow, east/west space.

Go backward to measure 22. Sing to the end. Look through the score: What part of the anthem is left to learn? (pages 13-14, measures 14-18). See example 2 below.

Get ready for a challenge! Vocalize first on "ah," then with words.

Sing the whole song. Discover the places where we have work to do at the next rehearsal.

Session Three

Let's roll! Sing the whole song from the beginning. Be sure to count the beats carefully on measures in which we do NOT sing. Remember the breathing places.

Find these words in the score: "with devotion," "with intensity," "delay." What do they mean when they occur on the music page? Are we ready to try singing "Nunc Dimittis" without looking at the music?

At this point, the instruments (previously rehearsed) can be added without confusing the young singers. Tempo, rhythm, volume level, and balance are important when using instruments with treble choristers.

ADVICE: Enjoy the adventure of teaching these great texts, which have enhanced worship for many centuries. When you and your children's choirs are well prepared and ready to offer your gift of song, it is certainly a WIN-WIN-WIN situation. Blessings on all of you who gather and teach children.

Helen Kemp is a noted composer of music for children and popular children's choir clinician.

Example 1

La la la la la la la la la la
 For my eyes have seen, have seen thy sal - va - tion

Example 2

La la la la la la la la la la
 A light to light - en, to light - en the Gen - tiles