



COME MY WAY, MY TRUTH, MY LIFE

COMPOSER

Ralph (pronounced “Rafe”) Vaughan Williams (1872-1958), one of the greatest British composers, wrote dreamy and floating melodies that display the influence of the techniques of the French Impressionist composers (he studied with the French musician, Maurice Ravel) and also of English folk songs and 16th century English church musicians. Mr. Vaughan Williams, son of a clergyman, came from a line of famous families, among them, the Wedgwoods (the famous china) and Charles Darwin. His advanced training in music took place at the Royal College of Music and at Trinity College, Cambridge, after which he served in the Medical Corps in World War I.

It is curious that despite being the son of a clergyman, Vaughan Williams was an atheist but also admired the devotional poetry of George Herbert on which he set music for *Five Mystical Songs* for baritone solo, chorus and orchestra. The five songs, written in 1911, are titled *Easter, I Got Me Flowers, Love Bade Me Welcome, The Call* and *Antiphon. Come My Way, My Truth, My Light* is the hymn setting based on song #4, *The Call*.

AUTHOR

George Herbert (1593-1632), an Anglican priest and poet, wrote a set of poems called *The Temple* for personal devotional use which was published in 1633, shortly after his death. Ralph Vaughan Williams loved the poetry and used it for his *Five Mystical Songs*. The text for *The Call* is based on John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me.” Note that the text contains three stanzas, each focusing on three names or metaphors for Jesus.

INTRODUCING THE HYMN

Ask the children if their family and friends call them by a nickname. Do they remember reading stories, singing songs or praying when they have used other names for Jesus? (Savior, Lord, Friend, King, Shepherd, etc.)

- Sing the first verse of the hymn and ask the choir to identify 3 names for Jesus. (way, truth, life)
- For older choristers, invite them to discover how each name is explained after the first phrase
- Continue the above process for each verse
- Explain that Jesus “calls us” to do His work. We

believe in Him and ask Him to be all the names that we sing in this hymn.

- Read John 14:1-14; Do the choristers discover the basis for the hymn text in these passages?

RHYTHM

- Ask the choristers to close their eyes as they gently sway in time with the music of the hymn. The music moves in a gentle feeling of 3 — the choir will sway on beat one, the heavy beat. (swaying or gentle swinging is best for this exercise, instead of clapping, in order to teach more legato phrasing)
- Ask the choir to swing their arms instead of swaying their whole body.
- It would be great fun to add a lightweight scarf in their hand as they swing their arms.
- Choristers will also enjoy working in pairs, facing each other seated on the floor, rolling a beach ball back and forth to each other in time with the music.
- To illustrate the “Trinitarian” structure of this hymn, divide the choir into three sections. The choir sings verse one while group one chooses a movement to show the gentle feeling of 3. The choir sings verse two while group two demonstrates a different movement that moves with the music. Finally the choir sings verse three while group three moves to the feeling of three with a new movement. The choir may have discovered by now that each verse contains three names for Jesus. Truly a hymn of Trinity!

TONALITY

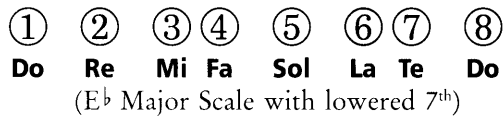
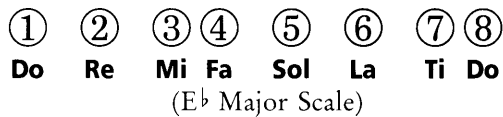
Lowered Seventh Tone:

Come My Way is based on the E^b Major scale with a lowered 7th tone. Sometimes referred to as Mixolydian Mode, the consistently lowered 7th throughout the music suggests a mystical, dreamy-like feeling.

- Write the E^b Major scale on chalkboard or chart.
- Point to each note as the choir sings the scale with tone syllables or numbers.
- Inform the choir that *Come My Way* uses notes from the E^b Major scale, except for one note. Can they discover which note is not in the scale?
- When they find the D^b, explain that the flat sign next to the D makes it a half step lower.
- Ask for 8 volunteers to represent the notes of the E^b Major scale. *Mi* and *fa* (3 and 4) are close together, as

are *ti* and *do* (7 and 8) in order to represent half-step intervals.

- In the hymn *Come My Way* the D^b lowers the 7th step, or *ti*, a half-step and its name becomes *te* (tay). Direct the child who is *ti* (7) to move closer to *la* (6). Now the 7th tone has been lowered and is now called *te*.
- Sing the scale using *ti* and then using *te*.
- The child who is the 7th step can change between *ti* and *te*; the choir sings the correct tone on the 7th step, according to where the child is standing.
- Sing *Come My Way* with syllables or numbers as you point to the child representing the note to be sung. (The 7th step must be in *te* position.)



For a very small choir, just draw the diagram above instead of using choir members for scale tones.

Ascending Major Triad

- Use the same arrangement of choir members to form an E^b Major scale as described in the previous activity. Guide the choir in singing the scale using tone syllables or numbers.
- Now direct the choir to sing only *do* (1), *mi* (3) and *sol* (5) aloud and other steps inside their heads as you point to each step. Eventually, point to only 1-3-5. Tell them that they have just sung a Major triad, formed by the first, third and fifth degree of a Major scale.
- Ask them to search for any ascending triads in *Come My Way* (first three notes of phrases one and two).
- Sing *Kum Ba Ya*. Does the choir hear the Major triad? (first three notes)

FORM

- Sing the hymn and ask the choir to raise their hand at the end of each phrase (musical sentence).
- How many phrases did the children find? (4)
- Do any of the phrases have the same melody? (first and second)
- Determine that the melodic form for this hymn is A-A-B-C

MELISMA (MUH-LIZ-MAH)

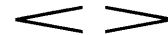
...means a group of three or more notes sung on one syllable.

- Find the melisma in *Come My Way* (first syllable of 'conquers')
- Ask the choir to make an imaginary drawing of the melodic contour of the melisma as you sing it for them.



- Work for a pure 'ah' vowel with relaxed, dropped jaw on the melisma in verse one, a relaxed tongue and jaw on 'ay' in verse two and a round 'o' vowel in 'joys' in verse three.

- Use the following dynamics on the melisma:



- To help the children achieve the crescendo and decrescendo, invite them to begin with palms together and gradually move back together at the end of the decrescendo, as in "accordion action." A slight leaning forward on one leg for the crescendo and then slightly backward for decrescendo will help achieve the same effect.
- For an extra activity, challenge the choristers to find the melisma in *Angels We Have Heard On High* (first syllable of 'Gloria')

BE "HYMN CODE" DETECTIVES

Put on your detective hats and break the "hymn code" while "snooping" through the index in the back of your hymnbooks. You can find the hymn codes for all the hymns in your hymnbook in the index listed under 'metrical tunes'.

- Direct the children's attention to the source of the words of a hymn. It will be in either the upper or lower left hand corner of the page.
- Find the name of the hymn tune in either the upper or lower right hand corner of the page.
- The metric pattern is found with the hymn tune name. The metric pattern for *Come My Way* is 7777 which indicates that the hymn contains 4 lines, each with 7 syllables.
- After the children know the hymn well; invite them to search the metric tune index for other hymns with the same metric pattern. Let them try other texts of the same metric pattern to the tune, *The Call*.

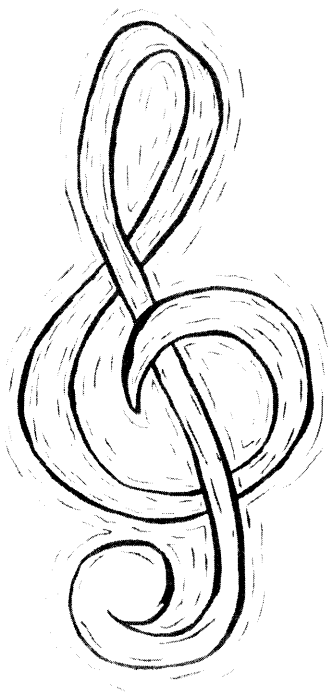
SUGGESTED USES

It is a hymn of promise for those who believe in God and have been called to do His work. It's a hymn of trust, faithfulness and commitment.

- Confirmation/Affirmation of Baptism
- 22 Pentecost (Proper 25) Cycle A, Revised Common Lectionary, relates to Gospel (Matthew 22:34-46)
- 5 Easter, Cycle A, Revised Common Lectionary, relates to Gospel (John 14:1-14)
- Commissioning service and lay ministry theme
- Lesser Festival-St. Thomas, apostle, Dec. 21, relates to Gospel (John 14:1-7)

SOURCES

- *The Hymnal 1982*, New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1982 (#487)
- *Lutheran Book of Worship*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing 1978 (#513)
- *Rejoice in the Lord*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1985 (#277)
- *The United Methodist Hymnal*, Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989, (#164)
- *Worship* (Third Edition) Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 1986 (#569)
- *Gather/Comprehensive*, Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 1994 (#577)



RELATED MATERIALS

Recordings

- *Five Mystical Songs*, John Shirley-Quirk, baritone; Choir of King's College, Cambridge; English Chamber Orchestra; David Willcocks, EMI CDM 5655882
- *Five Mystical Songs*, Corydon Singers; English Chamber Orchestra conducted by Matthew Best; Hyperion CDA 66420 (recommended by Scott Cantrell, music critic for *The Kansas City Star Newspaper*)

Scores

- *The Call*, SATB and organ; arranged by Paul Hamill; Gemini Press Int., 1998; (392 01028)
- *The Call*, descant for verse 3 from *High Praise! 45 Descants on Familiar Hymns*, Shirley W. McRae; Abingdon Press; ISBN 0-687-01148-5
- *Five Mystical Songs*, baritone solo, Chorus and Orchestra; Stainer & Bell Ltd., London
- *A Lenten Prayer*, Unison with flute, organ; Powell; Choristers Guild, CGA159 (based on John 14:6)

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is a member of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Kansas City, Missouri where she directs the *Alleluia Music and Arts* program. This is a weekly worship education program designed to teach children the themes, hymns, liturgy and correlating art and symbolism for the week's worship. Mrs. Martin has over 20 years of experience teaching classroom music and voice. Before moving to Kansas City, Linda directed 4 youth choirs at Bethesda Lutheran Church, Ames, Iowa. She holds a degree in music education from Bethany College, Lindsborg, Kansas. Currently she is Director of Community Programs for State Ballet of Missouri in Kansas City and teaches private voice lessons.