The Development of Part Singing
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Fairfield Public Schools
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Fairfield, CT

"While singing in itself is good, the real reward comes to those who sing, and feel, and think, with others. That is what harmony means. We must look forward to the time when all people in all lands are brought together through singing, and when there is universal harmony."

Zoltan Kodaly
Bicinia Hungarica, 1941

Introduction – Part Singing

Singing in harmony is interesting, motivating and rewarding for children (and adults!). It is a skill which should be sequentially developed by means of appropriate activities and materials. This session presents one possible sequence, with examples, for the development of part singing.

As music is a multifaceted phenomenon, it is necessary, to varying degrees, to 'separate the parts from the whole' in the process of teaching and learning. A comprehensive choral curriculum includes not only the performance of great repertoire and vocal/choral techniques; it must also address all aspects of musicianship (i.e. CPR: create, perform & respond via the national standards). It is self-evident that teaching our choristers to read music will greatly assist them to sing independently in parts. The main focus of this portion of the workshop, however, will be the development of aural and kinesthetic skills relating to melody, rhythm and harmony. (Music literacy will be left for another workshop!)

From the first grade student who sings independently in a round to the adult who sings in close, dissonant harmony in many parts, the principles and techniques presented here may be adapted to any level to help our singers foster the skills necessary to put the musical 'parts' together into a wonderful whole – that phenomenon we refer to as "the choral art."

Harmony

"The history of musical style can be regarded from one point of view as a continual contest between the contrapuntal and the melodic principles, that is, between independence of melodic lines on the one hand and unity of harmonic effect on the other."

Donald Jay Grout
A History of Western Music, 1980
A thorough understanding of the relationship between the history of musical style and the elements of music will guide the choral director in 'seeing the forest for the trees' not only in developing part singing skills but in every aspect of music education. One way to view the "contest between the contrapuntal and melodic principles" would be to consider these as elements on a spectrum or continuum, with polyphony at one end and homophony the other.

**Harmony – One View**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homophony</th>
<th>Polyphony</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>chordal/harmonic organization</td>
<td>linear/melodic organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>vertical texture</td>
<td>horizontal texture</td>
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<tr>
<td>hymns/chorales/organum</td>
<td>motets/madrigals</td>
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<tr>
<td>chords/tone clusters</td>
<td>counterpoint, countermelodies, descants</td>
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<tr>
<td>parallel 3rds/6ths</td>
<td>partner songs, quodlibets</td>
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<tr>
<td>intonation is important</td>
<td>rhythmic accuracy is important</td>
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The homophonic style, by definition, involves all parts in equal rhythm (with minor variations leading away from the very end of the spectrum) while the polyphonic style involves each part in complete tonal and rhythmic independence. The rhythmic properties of polyphony often lead us to the assumption that music at this end of the spectrum is inherently more difficult to perform than homophony. While this may be true, for example, in the case of a Bach motet performed by a choir when sight-reading, it does not apply in the same manner to simpler forms of polyphony which can be learned by rote. For the inexperienced singer, performing homophony is actually more difficult than performing independent melodic lines. We must be aware of this distinction, and be sure to develop both tonal and rhythmic skills leading to mastery and independence in the area of harmonic aptitude and achievement.

**Prerequisite skills and principles**

- the ability to sing in tune, alone and unaccompanied (with correct vocal placement)
- the ability to keep a steady beat and perform rhythmic patterns
- the ability to audiate - tonally and rhythmically\(^3\) (a.k.a. inner hearing)
- use movable 'do' solfege for melody and a rhythmic syllable system
- sing at a soft dynamic
- provide models (recordings, videos, live performances)
- develop the skill of "listening in while singing out" to oneself and others – the 'feedback loop.'
- audiation and attention to intonation must take place at every level
- the goal is to build independence!!
Sequential Activities to Develop Part Singing

1. Sing/chant familiar songs/rhymes with basic beat & ostinati
   - keep the beat in various locations by rote (patschen, clap, snap, head, shoulders, palms up/down, etc.)
   - see Feierabend - *First Steps in Classical Music: Keeping the Beat*
   - non-locomotor & locomotor; marching
   - varied meters – students tap division of beat & identify duple and triple meter
   - chanting rhymes (One, Two Buckle My Shoe; Humpty Dumpty; Engine #9; Eeny Meeny Miny Mo)

2. Perform dialogue, call & response, question & answer, echo and responsorial songs
   (This establishes the concept that individuals may perform independent parts!)
   - Who's That Tapping?; Skin & Bones; Cuckoo; Swing Low, Sweet Chariot; Michael, Row the Boat; Hey Lolly; Charlie Over the Ocean; John the Rabbit Whoo Killed Cock Robin?; Sail Away, Ladies; Hole in the Bucket;
   - "circle singing" a.k.a. "relay game" a.k.a. "chain phrases"

3. Differentiate beat (macro/micro) and rhythm (from rhythm content sequence)
   - "the beat is always steady"
   - "the rhythm is the sound of the words and syllables, (and rests)"
   - "a rest is a beat of silence"
   - Clap Your Hands - I say: "sing and clap anything", then I show them what they've done.
   - all songs: class/teacher; class ½ & ½; two small groups; individuals
   - add beat divisions (microbeats in duple & triple) to the above
   - step beat while clapping rhythm
   - switch between beat and rhythm at a signal
   - tap beat with one hand, rhythm with the other

4. Hand clapping games with ostinati – Mary Mack; My Landlord; Long Legged Sailor
   Clap Your Hands; Four White Horses; Miss Lucy; Dutch Girl
   - also singing, ball bouncing and jump rope games (see Kenney, M.)

5. Perform rhythmic ostinati patterns to familiar songs (extension of beat ostinati)
   - perform songs while clapping: | | | | or | | | | | | | (ex. Skip to My Lou, etc.)
   - perform many songs and patterns, including rests
   - use rhythms that occur in the songs, or that contrast with the song
   - sing and conduct beat patterns in 2, 3 & 4 beats/measure
   - play ostinati on instruments (unpitched rhythmic patterns)
   - *America* from West Side Story
   - Ravel's Bolero – sing in solfa, tap ostinato
6. Perform melodic ostinati patterns to familiar songs
   - drones (pedal points) ex. Sally Go Round the Sun; Bow, Wow, Wow.
   - easy 2/3 note melodic patterns (ex. Bicinia Hungarica)
   - chord roots - Frere Jacques with do so, do (also Mahler Sym. #1, mvmt. 3)
   - choral music consisting of ostinati, ex. Hanerot Hallelu
   - play ostinati on instruments (pitched melodic patterns, bordun)
   - Summer Is a Coming In
   - most Orff arrangements

7. Sing a familiar song while reading a rhythm from notation, or:
   - read a melody while tapping another part
   - tap a two part score, one hand each
   - see Hindemith, *Elementary Training for Musicians*

8. Partner songs – songs that have the same chord progressions
   - sing in groups and individually
   - Skip Lou, Bow Belinda, Paw Paw Patch
   - Swing Low, Sweet Chariot & All Night, All Day
   - How Can I Keep From Singing, arr. Hugh (with Amazing Grace)

9. Descants/Countermelodies
   - Drunken Sailor; Go Tell It on the Mountain; Hand Me Down My Silver Trumpet
   - America the Beautiful; Yonder Come Day; Sing Alleluia, Allelu; Silent Night
   - Blow Ye Winds; Ca the Yowes; Gesu Bambino; Do Di Li; A Zing a Za;
   - Al Shloshla; Shine On Me
   - compose descants to familiar songs

10. Rounds/Canons - simple to difficult
    - group/teacher; group in halves, thirds, etc.; small groups; individuals
    - to develop independence have students count off, by the number of parts, in each
      row. Have all the ones start the canon, two’s enter next, etc.
    - all simple pentatonic songs may be performed in canon
      - ex. Rain Rain; Lucy Locket; Texas Cowboy; Wayfaring Stranger
    - see *Ride With Me, A Journey from Unison to Part-Singing* by John Barron
    - easy composed melodic canons – Make New Friends; Row, Row; Frere (Eng.)
    - contrasting sections (polyphony) are the easiest: ex. Frere Jacques
    - Body canon; lead to rhythmic canons
    - Ram Sam Sam, Haida & Kookaburra develop 3rds
    - scale exercises in canon – 3rds, 2nds, etc.
    - canon with different coda – Panis Angelicus – C. Franck
    - for a challenge: sing melody and tap in canon; part 2 with one hand; 3 parts – both
    - canon at the fifth/fourth: Non Nobis Domine-Byrd; Da Pacem Domine-M. Frank
    - augmentation/diminution – Old Abram Brown – Britten
    - canons where the entrances change each time: Hotaru Koi; Old Abram Brown
Rounds/Canons (cont.)
- there are four basic ways to end a round: simply let each part finish in turn; have each part hold its last note until all parts have caught up to finish in a unison; each part stops at the same time at a cadence point (point of convergence); repeat the final phrase until all groups have caught up.
- choral repertoire: I’m Goin’ Up A Yonder; The Water is Wide

11. Singing from hand signs
   - follow simultaneously
   - echo patterns (great for audiation!)
   - from two hand signs, begin with one part as a drone
   - focus on intervals and **intonation**
   - parallel 3rds
   - dissonances
   - sing a round and sign the second/third parts
   - **bi- and tri-tonality exercises – songs in parallel keys**

12. Understanding harmonic functions - root singing
   - informally by rote on neutral syllable or part of text; or in solfege
   - children sing melody, teacher sings bass line; class ½ & ½; individuals
   - define/discuss "melody & harmony"; "chord"
   - define and analyze chord changes
     begin with tonic/dominant songs: Skip to My Lou; Go Tell Aunt Rhody; Long, Long Ago; London Bridge; Frere Jacques; Joshua; Haida; Ram Sam Sam; Hush Little Baby
tonic/dominant/sub-dominant: Oh Susanna; The Saints; Swing Low; blues
   - define "roots" & "bass lines"
   - sing bass lines to familiar songs; Pachelbel Canon
   - sing melody while hand signing bass line
   - partner songs or rounds & bass line
   - add chordal background to songs
   - add a bass line and descant to a familiar song
   - Heart & Soul; 50’s songs with I VI IV V chord patterns; The Lion Sleeps Tonight
   - Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy

13. Two part singing
   - imitative, partner style or contrary motion
   - parallel 3rds & 6ths: Schubert – Maying Song; Arruru; Niska Banja; Hine Ma Tov
   - independent polyphony
   - homophony
   - Angels We Have Heard; The Water is Wide (Zanninelli); La Paloma Se Fue
   - Kodaly, Let Us Sing Correctly; other composed exercises
   - see Newlin in Choral Journal
14. Three/four part singing
- imitative, partner style or contrary motion;
- parallel 3rds & 6ths: Siyahamba; Freedom Is Coming
- independent polyphony
- homophony: The Lion Sleeps Tonight; Feel Good; While By My Sheep
- Kodaly – Ladybird; Carol of the Bells; With A Voice Of Singing; I'm Goin' Up A Yonder

15. Improvisation – harmonizing by ear
- voice leading/chordal singing to two chord songs
- Amazing Grace; This Is the Day; Kum Ba Yah; The Rose

Suggested list of rounds/canons (also see bibliography and repertoire list)
Frere Jacques;
Ah Poor Bird;
Scotland's Burning;
White Sand & Gray Sand;
Make New Friends;
The Canoe Song (My Paddles);
The Ghost of Tom;
Oh How Lovely;
Joan Glover;
Charlottetown;
Hashivenu;
O Music Sweet Music;
Rise Up O Flame;
Ah Ri Rang;
Viva La Musica;
Music & Joy Shall Live;
Moja Numba;
The Duchess;
The Greenwood Tree;
Sing & Rejoice;
The Friendship Song;
White Coral Bells;
Early As I Was Walking;
Haida; Shalom Chaverim;
This Pretty Planet;
A Ram Sam Sam;
Kookaburra;
Dona Nobis Pacem;
Jubilate Deo;
Boyce - Alleluia;
The Tallis Canon;
Summer Is A Coming In;
Non Nobis Domine;
Old Abram Brown.
Bibliography – Part Singing


Feierabend, J. *First Steps in Classical Music: Keeping the Beat!* Chicago, IL: GIA Publications


Rounds/Canons


Footnotes


3. Audiation, a word coined by Edwin Gordon, is the ability to perceive music internally when the sound is not physically present. In the Kodaly approach it is referred to as inner hearing. Others refer to it as tonal memory.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choral Repertoire</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hine Ma Tov</strong></td>
<td>Allan Naplan</td>
<td>Boosey &amp; Hawkes OCTB6782</td>
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<td><strong>Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel</strong></td>
<td>arr. Roger Emerson</td>
<td>Jenson 40326209</td>
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<td><strong>Maying Song</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy</strong></td>
<td>Raye/Prince arr. Frank Metis</td>
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<td><strong>The Turtle Dove</strong></td>
<td>arr. Spevacek</td>
<td>Jenson 437-20070</td>
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<td><strong>Gesu Bambino</strong></td>
<td>Pietro Yon</td>
<td>J. Fischer &amp; Bro. 4656-8</td>
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<td><strong>I Wonder As I Wander</strong></td>
<td>arr. J.J. Niles/Horton</td>
<td>G. Schirmer 9498</td>
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<td>Two part w/ solo</td>
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<td><strong>Jesu, Joy Of Man's Desiring</strong></td>
<td>Bach arr. Lefebvre</td>
<td>Galaxy Mus Corp 1.1223</td>
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<td><strong>A New Year Carol</strong></td>
<td>B. Britten</td>
<td>Boosey &amp; Hawkes OCTB5615</td>
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<td>Unison</td>
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<td><strong>Bring A Torch, Jeanette, Isabella</strong></td>
<td>arr. Schultz</td>
<td>Boosey &amp; Hawkes OCTB6565</td>
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<td>Two part treble</td>
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<td><strong>With A Voice Of Singing</strong></td>
<td>Martin Shaw</td>
<td>G. Schirmer, Inc. 10227</td>
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<td><strong>How Can I Keep From Singing</strong></td>
<td>Lowry arr. Hugh</td>
<td>Boosey &amp; Hawkes OCTB6859</td>
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<td>3 part treble</td>
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<td><strong>God Bless America</strong></td>
<td>Irving Berlin</td>
<td>Jenson 402-07012</td>
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<td>2 part treble</td>
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<td><strong>It Don't Mean A Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing</strong></td>
<td>Ellington arr. Huff</td>
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<td><strong>Have You Seen But A White Lily Grow</strong></td>
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<td>Unison</td>
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<td><strong>The Water Is Wide</strong></td>
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<td><strong>The Raggle Taggle Gypsies</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Feel Good</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>To The Ploughboy</td>
<td>R. Vaughn Williams</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Zing-A Za</td>
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<td>arr. Goetze</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long, Long Ago</td>
<td>Carlisle Floyd</td>
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<tr>
<td>Velvet Shoes</td>
<td>Randall Thompson</td>
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<td>Al Shlosha D'varim</td>
<td>Allan Naplan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yonder Come Day</td>
<td>arr. Tucker</td>
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<td>Carol of the Bells</td>
<td>Leontovich arr. Wilhousky</td>
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<td>Freedom Is Coming</td>
<td>ed. Nyberg/Leck</td>
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<td>Haida</td>
<td>arr. Leck</td>
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<td>Arruru</td>
<td>arr. Dwyer/Gerber</td>
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<td>Go Tell It On The Mountain</td>
<td>arr. Dwyer/Waller</td>
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<td>Mayim, Mayim</td>
<td>E. Amiran arr. Shields</td>
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<td>Go Where I Send Thee!</td>
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<td>arr. Shields</td>
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<td>Hanerot Halalu</td>
<td>Baruch J. Cohon arr. Chass</td>
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<td>Angels' Carol</td>
<td>John Rutter</td>
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<td>For The Beauty of the Earth</td>
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<td>Carol of the Children</td>
<td>John Rutter</td>
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All Things Bright And Beautiful  
John Rutter  
Two-part choir  
Hinshaw Music  HMC-663  

Appalachian Suite II  
arr. Jordanoff  
SSAA  
Boosey & Hawkes  OC4B 6523  

Sing Alleluia, Allelu  
Mary Goetze  
3 part  
Boosey & Hawkes  OCTB6126  

At The River  
arr. Copland  
SA  
Boosey OCTB511  

Sleep My Baby  
arr. Rowley  
unison  
Boosey OCUB5449  

The Drunken Sailor  
arr. Crocker  
2 part  
Jenson 42304012  

Linden Lea  
Vaughan Williams  
unison  
Boosey OCTB6635  

Five Songs by Charles Ives  
Charles E. Ives, ed. Tagg (Circus Band)  
choral part  
Peer International Corp. 02-093576-101  

This Little Light Of Mine  
arr. Harris  
2 part  
Boosey OCTB6921  

Bed In Summer  
Larry Alan Smith  
unison  
Plymouth HL-513  

Evening Song  
Zoltan Kodaly  
SSA  
Boosey 5771  

Dodi Li  
Nira Chen arr. Rao  
two-part treble  
Boosey & Hawkes OCTB6679  

O Sifuni Mungu  
Maddux, et. al.  
Hal Leonard 40326303  
SAB  

Bist Du Bei Mir  
J.S. Bach  
Boosey & Hawkes OCTB6716  
unison  

Longing For Spring  
W.A. Mozart, arr. Snyder  
Hal Leonard 08551384  
2-part  

La Paloma Se Fue  
arr. Alejandro Jimenez  
World Music Press 11  
unison or two-part  

Shine On Me  
arr. Rollo Dilworth  
Plymouth Music  
2-part