

# **The Development of Part Singing**

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"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<sup>1</sup>

## **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<sup>2</sup>

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

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<u>Homophony</u>	<u>Polyphony</u>
chordal/harmonic organization	linear/melodic organization
vertical texture	horizontal texture
hymns/chorales/organum	motets/madrigals
chords/tone clusters	counterpoint, countermelodies, descants
parallel 3rds/6ths	partner songs, quodlibets
intonation is important	rhythmic accuracy is important

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<sup>3</sup> (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 Who 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  $\frac{1}{2}$  &  $\frac{1}{2}$ ; 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 □| 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/Counter melodies
  - 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**

Choksy, L. (1981) *The Kodaly Context* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc.

Eilers, J. and Crocker, E. *Sight-Singing for SSA* Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard.

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

Grout, D. J. (1980) *A History of Western Music* New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.

Kodaly, Z. (1941) *Bicinia Hungarica* New York, NY: Boosey & Hawkes.

Kodaly, Z. (1952) *Let Us Sing Correctly* New York, NY: Boosey & Hawkes.

Kenney, M. (1975) *Circle Round the Zero* St. Louis, MO: Magnamusic-Baton, Inc.

Hindemith, P. (1946) *Elementary Training for Musicians* New York, NY: Belwin-Mills

Barron, J. (2004) *Ride With Me* Kitchener, Ontario, Canada: Kelman Hall Publishing  
(call Music Plus Corp. 1-800-608-5205)

Junda, M.E. "Part Singing Revisited," *Music Educators Journal* Vol. 83 #6, May 1997

Newlin, G. A. "Sequencing Part-work for Beginning Singers," *Choral Journal* Vol. 46 no. 10,  
April 2006

## **Rounds/Canons**

Nelson, E. (1985) *The Great Rounds Songbook* New York, NY: Sterling Publishing.

Blood-Patterson, P. (1988) *Rise Up Singing* Bethlehem, PA: Sing Out Corp.

Feierabend, J. (1996) *The Book of Canons* Simsbury, CT: First Steps in Music, Inc.

- *101 Rounds for Singing* Burnsville, NC: World Around Songs, Inc.

## **Footnotes**

1. Kodaly, Z. (1941) *Bicinia Hungarica* New York, NY: Boosey & Hawkes (introduction)

2. Grout, D. J. (1980) *A History of Western Music* New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company  
(pp. 153-154)

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.

## Choral Repertoire

Hine Ma Tov SA	Allan Naplan Boosey & Hawkes OCTB6782
Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel SA	arr. Roger Emerson Jenson 40326209
Maying Song SA	Schubert Boosey & Hawkes OCTB6578
Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy SSA	Raye/Prince arr. Frank Metis Hal Leonard 00120657
The Turtle Dove SAB	arr. Spevacek Jenson 437-20070
Gesu Bambino SA	Pietro Yon J. Fischer & Bro. 4656-8
I Wonder As I Wander Two part w/ solo	arr. J.J. Niles/Horton G. Schirmer 9498
Jesu, Joy Of Man's Desiring SA	Bach arr. Lefebvre Galaxy Mus Corp 1.1223
A New Year Carol Unison	B. Britten Boosey & Hawkes OCTB5615
Bring A Torch, Jeanette, Isabella Two part treble	arr.Schultz Boosey & Hawkes OCTB6565
With A Voice Of Singing SA	Martin Shaw G. Schirmer, Inc. 10227
How Can I Keep From Singing 3 part treble	Lowry arr. Hugh Boosey & Hawkes OCTB6859
God Bless America 2 part treble	Irving Berlin Jenson 402-07012
It Don't Mean A Thing If It Ain't Got That SSA	Swing Ellington arr. Huff Mills Music 66841C2X
Have You Seen But A White Lily Grow Unison	anon. Plymouth Music HL-508
The Water Is Wide two-part	arr. Zaninelli Shawnee Press E-83
The Raggle Taggle Gypsies two-part	arr. Hugh Boosey & Hawkes OCTB6747
Feel Good three-part	Tyson/Scott Boosey & Hawkes OCTB6711
I'm Goin' Up A Yonder SSAA	Hawkins/arr. Sirvatka Boosey & Hawkes OCTB6451



To The Ploughboy Unison with 2 part	R. Vaughn Williams Oxford University Press No. 54.264
A Zing-A Za SSAA	arr. Goetze Boosey & Hawkes OC4B6276
Long, Long Ago SA	Carlisle Floyd Boosey & Hawkes OC2B5648
Velvet Shoes Unison	Randall Thompson E.C. Schirmer 2526
Art Thou Troubled? Unison	G.F. Handel ed. Bartle Hinshaw Music HMC1431
Al Shlosa D'varim 2 part treble	Allan Naplan Boosey & Hawkes OCTB6783
Yonder Come Day 3 part	arr. Tucker World Music Press (10)
Carol of the Bells SSA	Leontovich arr. Wilhousky Carl Fischer C.M. 5276
Freedom Is Coming 3 part treble	ed. Nyberg/Leck Walton Music Corp. WW 1149
Haida Unison/Two-part	arr. Leck Plymouth Music Co. HL-516
Arruru Two-part Treble	arr. Dwyer/Gerber Plymouth Music Co. HL-519
Go Tell It On The Mountain Two-part Treble	arr. Dwyer/Waller Plymouth Music Co. HL
Mayim, Mayim Two-part Treble	E. Amiran arr. Shields Earthsongs W-25
Go Where I Send Thee! SSA	arr. Caldwell/Ivory Earthsongs
S'vivon Two-part Treble	arr. Shields Earthsongs W-16
Hanerot Halalu Two-part	Baruch J. Cohon arr. Chass Mark Foster Music MF 877
Angels' Carol Two-part choir	John Rutter Hinshaw Music HMC-986
For The Beauty of the Earth Two-part choir	John Rutter Hinshaw Music HMC-469
Carol of the Children Unison	John Rutter Hinshaw Music HMC-605

All Things Bright And Beautiful Two-part choir	John Rutter Hinshaw Music HMC-663
Appalachian Suite II SSAA	arr. Jordanoff Boosey & Hawkes OC4B 6523
Sing Alleluia, Allelu 3 part	Mary Goetze Boosey & Hawkes OCTB6126
At The River SA	arr. Copland Boosey OCTB5511
Sleep My Baby unison	arr. Rowley Boosey OCUB5449
The Drunken Sailor 2 part	arr. Crocker Jenson 42304012
Linden Lea unison	Vaughan Williams Boosey OCTB6635
Five Songs by Charles Ives choral part	Charles E. Ives, ed. Tagg (Circus Band) Peer International Corp. 02-093576-101
This Little Light Of Mine 2 part	arr. Harris Boosey OCTB6921
Bed In Summer unison	Larry Alan Smith Plymouth HL-513
Evening Song SSA	Zoltan Kodaly Boosey 5771
Dodi Li two-part treble	Nira Chen arr. Rao Boosey & Hawkes OCTB6679
O Sifuni Mungu Hal Leonard 40326303	Maddux, et. al. SAB
Bist Du Bei Mir Boosey & Hawkes OCTB6716	J.S. Bach unison
Longing For Spring Hal Leonard 08551384	W.A. Mozart, arr. Snyder 2-part
La Paloma Se Fue World Music Press 11	arr. Alejandro Jimenez unison or two-part
Shine On Me Plymouth Music	arr. Rollo Dilworth 2-part