

# Canon in D Johann Pachelbel arr Owain Gethin Davies



## Grading

Difficult

## About this song

This piece was composed in the Baroque era and is one of the most famous instrumental pieces of all time, this is a vocal arrangement of the piece in a Swingle style.

## Vocal range

A 12th



## Vocal format

Independent parts

## Themes/subjects

Baroque music/Swingle style

## Musical elements

Texture and pitch

## Musical characteristics

Different vocal textures, layers and four part harmony.

## Exercises

♪ Yawn – this lifts the soft palate and relaxes the throat muscles around the larynx. Imagine that you are drinking your favourite drink and as you pour the drink into your mouth feel the throat muscles widening.

♪ Balance on one leg and rotate the other leg in a circular motion, starting with the ankles, then the knees and finally the hip. Do this clockwise then anticlockwise. Repeat with the other leg.

♪ Ask learners to 'hum' as a siren, moving up and down in pitch, following your hand signal from high up in the air to very low by your knees.

♪ Demonstrate the characteristic rhythm of the song:



## Recommended CânSing exercises

♪ Vocal exercise 8 (Would you care)

♪ Breathing exercise 4 (Siren sounds)

♪ Vocal exercise 7 (Answer)

♪ Body exercise 5 (Aerobic exercise)

## Teaching and learning

- 1 Play the recording or sing the first melody that's introduced in Part 1 (bar 9–16). While listening, learners should focus on the descending and ascending step movement in the melody, and that all notes are semibreves (four beats).
- 2 When learners are familiar with the melody encourage them all to sing Part 1 in unison and repeat four times. Make sure that learners follow the part accurately and focus on developing a legato (smooth) phrase.
- 3 When learners are familiar with the first melody return to the beginning and split learners into two groups (Purple Group & Orange Group).
- 4 Introduce the melody heard in Part 2 (bar 17–24), elicit that the notes are half the value (minims) of the notes used in Part 1.
- 5 Following this, the Purple Group should start with Part 1 and repeat this melody four times while the Orange Group join in with Part 2 (after listening to Purple Group performing their sequence once) and repeat three times. Be ready to give plenty of support to the Orange Group.
- 6 When they are confident with these two parts divide into three groups (Purple, Orange and Green).
- 7 Start introducing Part 3 to the Green Group (bar 25–32), elicit that this part has the same rhythm as part 1 but the pitch of notes are 5 notes higher (6th).
- 8 Perform from the beginning to build their confidence, the Green Group join in with Part 3 (after listening to the Orange Group performing their sequence once) and repeat twice. Be ready to give plenty of support to the Green Group.
- 9 Vary the groups and give opportunity for all learners to sing all parts and perform from the beginning.
- 10 Due to the repetitiveness of the piece, learners will need to listen very carefully and concentrate on the quality and aim to develop an even sound.

# Canon in D



## Next steps

- ♪ Introduce the other sections to everyone – Section B, C and D. In the C section Parts 1 and 3 repeat exactly the same rhythm and pitch as in Section A, but a new melody is introduced in Part 2 which is much more challenging. There is also a further part (Part 4) that appears only in Section C – aim for individuals to sing this part as a solo and to try to improvise their own unique vocal part.
- ♪ This song includes a beat boxing part, this is added in Section B and C. Practice with the recording, give all learners an opportunity to perform the beat boxing part. You may find the video tutorials that are available on the website useful.
- ♪ When all learners are confident with their parts perform from the beginning with the backing track or unaccompanied. Having numerous parts sung across each other can result in poor quality of intonation, give plenty of vocal support and opportunities for learners to hear their parts again during the teaching process.

## Performing, composing and appraising

- ♪ Encourage learners to improvise their own melodies and sounds using their voices or classroom instruments. Start with three notes of the D Major scale (DEF#) and increase the notes when the learners build in confidence. The full D Major scale could be used as an extended activity.
- ♪ A recording of this song was released in 1962 'Canon in D (Swingle Style)' by The Swingle Singers. Listen to and appraise the recordings and discuss its main characteristics and features. Learners could also compare the recording with their own performance of the song, you may also consider listening to the original version of the piece from the Baroque era.
- ♪ Ask learners to perform the melodies on an instrument, and to identify the step and leap movements. Try to perform with half the group singing and the other half playing, and then vice versa.

## Assessment for learning and developing thinking

### Questioning

#### Tool: Setting ground rules

- ♪ Which part do you enjoy singing the most? Why?
- ♪ Which parts are similar to each other?
- ♪ Which part is the hardest to sing? Why?

### Feedback

#### Tool: Instant feedback

Give learners instant feedback during the teaching and learning process; the feedback could be on their ability to maintain their part when singing in parts. Following the learning process, give feedback on their ability to respond to your hand directions when changing the dynamic levels.

### Self/peer assessment

#### Tool: Talk partners

Learners share with a partner three new things they have learned:

- ♪ What they found easy or difficult
- ♪ What they need to improve