

# Christmas Medley Arr. Osian Rowlands



## Grading

Difficult

## About this song

This medley has been arranged by Osian Rowlands one of the CânSing animateurs. The medley combines four well known Christmas carols.

## Vocal range

An 9th



## Vocal format

Unison/independent parts

## Themes/subjects

Christmas/carols/nativity

## Musical elements

Texture and structure

## Musical characteristics

Unison and two-part harmony with added descant part, strophic structure.

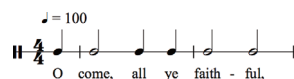
## Exercises

♪ Ask learners to stand with their back straight, and their feet slightly apart, facing 'five minutes to one'. They should blow out for four beats, then slowly breathe in to a silent count of four, and out to a count of eight, concentrating on producing an even flow of air. Repeat the exercise, this time asking learners to blow out and breathe back in through their nose.

♪ Make extreme faces: first a scream face, then a scary face, a sad face and an extremely happy face. Move your lips from a very big 'ah' to a very forward 'ohh' - whistling shape of the mouth. Finish this exercise by massaging your face and neck.

♪ Move your stomach muscles in and out without breathing. This makes learners very aware of the movement required when they breathe. Follow this by breathing in for four beats, feeling the ribs expanding outwards, and out for four beats, keeping the ribs engaged for as long as possible.

♪ Demonstrate the characteristic rhythm of the song:



## Recommended CânSing exercises

- ♪ Vocal Exercise 9 (Sneeze)
- ♪ Breathing Exercise 2 (Mirror image)
- ♪ Vocal Exercise 1 (It's so cool)
- ♪ Body Exercise 6 (Posture standing and sitting)

## Teaching and learning

- 1 Begin with the first carol (O come, all ye faithful) and ask all learners to listen to a recording. Ask learners to clap the rhythm while they listen. After listening once, ask learners to listen again, this time concentrating on following the lyrics.
- 2 Divide the class into two equal groups. Give one group the melody (Part 1 - Red) and the other group the melody with lower harmony notes (Part 2 - Purple). Attempt to work through the carol and introduce both parts simultaneously.
- 3 If using the interactive screen or mp3 files, you can listen to Parts 1 and 2 separately. Learners should join in, making sure that they follow the melodic line accurately and concentrate on the up beat entry point.
- 4 If one group struggles with a specific phrase, ask learners to listen to you or the track and then join in. When learners are familiar and confident with their part, show them suitable moments to breathe and practice both parts together.
- 5 If learners are able to maintain their parts, move on to the second carol (Away in a manger). Ask all learners to listen to a recording and focus on the melodic movement. Ask learners to clap the rhythm while they listen.
- 6 Make sure that the quality of the sound and diction doesn't deteriorate when focusing on the melodic and rhythmic movement.
- 7 Move on to Part 2, which includes long held notes without words. Give plenty of support to the learners singing the second part as it will be challenging to maintain this part when rehearsing with the melody.
- 8 After practising both parts thoroughly, try to perform in two parts with the recording.
- 9 When learners are familiar and confident with both parts in the first two carols rehearse from the start of the medley. Encourage them to sing whole phrases in one breath and to sustain the long notes at the end of every phrase.

# Christmas Medley



## Next steps

- There are four carols in the medley. Use the same method as stated in the teaching and learning for introducing the last two carols (Once in royal David's city and Hark! the herald angels sing). Perform each carol separately in two parts and unaccompanied. Learners should concentrate on their accuracy of rhythm and intonation.
- This song has a third descant part, this should be introduced to a small group of learners (this part is high in pitch). Listen to the recording of the descant part and then practice with the recording with the two-part harmony. Try to perform the whole song without any accompaniment so that learners listen very carefully to the sound of the descant part. The words and vowel sounds need to be very clear and round with a great deal of focus on the accuracy of pitch.
- Try to perform with piano accompaniment to add more rubato in each verse, the pauses, use of rests between phrases and use of dynamics can be made much more dramatic and extreme. Perform to an audience.

## Performing, composing and appraising

- Learners could listen to a recording of two Christmas carols sung in different/contrasting styles. They could listen to and appraise these recordings and discuss the main characteristics and features of each carol. They could make simple comparisons between each carol. Learners could comment on what the different instruments are doing, what is the pace of each carol and to discuss what are the qualities of a good Christmas carol.
- Learners could attempt to compose their own Christmas carol in a simple verse-strophic structure. They could use familiar words or compose their own lyrics and use a limited range of notes (CDEFG) using (C) as the home note (start and finish). Learners could perform their carol to the rest of the group.
- Teach another contrasting Christmas carol, for instance, 'The Shepherd's Song' - Gareth Glyn/Eleri Cwyfan. When learners are familiar with this, they could compare both and comment on the structure, pace and rhythm.

## Assessment for learning and developing thinking

### Questioning

#### Tool: Big Question

- Was this song easy or hard to learn in your opinion? What are your reasons?  
Is there a different point of view within the group?  
How would we improve or overcome this in the future?

### Feedback

#### Tool: How to improve

Show learners through target setting how to improve. A suitable target for some learners might be to come in quickly and confidently on the upbeats in certain verses and for others, it might be focus on achieving crisp diction, you could demonstrate yourself or by playing a recording. After giving time to improve check that targets have been reached.

### Self- and peer assessment

#### Tool: Post-it challenge

In pairs, learners should discuss the following two questions and evaluate their learning.

- What have I learned through singing this song?
- What do I need to do next to improve my singing / performing skills?

They should write their comments on post-it notes and then share with the rest of the group