

Secondary Celebration of Singing 2024

Notes on the songs

General notes

There are 3 songs to learn before the day. These are fully resourced with sheet music, lyrics and audio learning tracks which you can use in rehearsal or share with your students.

Each of these songs is arranged for SSA with an optional part for Changed Voices. Please learn the songs in harmony and be ready to allocate your students to 1st Soprano, 2nd Soprano, Alto and Changed Voices groups on the day.¹

On the day we will rehearse and perform these songs together. The day will also include a gospel workshop led by a specialist guest conductor, which will require no prior preparation.

Another Day of Sun

This is the opening number of the musical film *La La Land*. It is sung in a memorable sequence in which drivers in a Los Angeles traffic jam dance and sing about their dreams of becoming Hollywood stars. Although apparently the sequence was filmed in 3 shots, it is cleverly edited to give the illusion of one 6 minute take with a single moving camera.

The song mirrors perfectly the energy and immediacy of the visual sequence, and has a sense of excitement that connects with singers of all ages. It somehow conveys both aspiration and the possibility of failure, with the chorus lyrics describing the perpetual California sunshine regardless of how you might be feeling.

It's not surprising that this is a well-written song when you consider the writing team involved, with music by award-winning film composer Justin Hurwitz and lyrics by duo Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, who also have a clutch of awards for their film and musical theatre work and whose song writing credits include *The Greatest Showman* and *Dear Evan Hansen*.

Pesak & Paul in 2009



The song is tricky in places, with multiple of words and rhythms that need to be accurate – but it is also catchy and fun to sing. The opening riff should be taught carefully. Initial “b” and “d” sounds alternate, apart from once a phrase where you have two “da” sounds together. This is important as, once you have it, it stops you from tripping over the syncopated rhythm. Notice also the A flat at the beginning of the 2nd bar of this riff – it's tempting to sing a B flat instead. Use the tracks for careful listening; you can also listen to the original, on which the arrangement is closely modelled.

The first verse has been arranged to showcase the different parts in turn. In school, you might also give these to soloists, with the rest of the choir coming in in bar 29.

After the key change, there are a few different versions of the line “it's another day of sun” including some different words. Watch out in particular for the different rhythms, especially noticing when “sun” is delayed and when it is on the beat. Again, listening to the original will do no harm.

¹ We will seat students with changed voices by the Alto section. In much of the repertoire the part is the same to facilitate this, and we have found that this works well for boys whose voices are changing and who may switch register.

Shosholoza

This song is from South Africa, where it emerged as a work song for manual labour, sung by mixed groups of gold miners. The words are a mixture of the Zulu and Ndebele languages.

The nearest I have found to a translation is as follows:

Shosholoza	<i>go forward, or make way for the next man</i>
Kulezo ntaba	<i>those faraway mountains</i>
Stimela siphuma South Africa	<i>the steam train is coming from South Africa</i>
Wenuya baleka	<i>you're running</i>

It is a very popular song, well known in South African culture and used as a message of hope and solidarity, sung at sporting events or in times of hardship and distress.

It is popular with choirs because it is so effective; its relatively straightforward layers really deliver musically when you put it together.

The arrangement starts with everyone singing the call and then, as the song repeats, peeling off part by part until we have 4-part harmony. Then the basses drop out, for an effective change in texture, coming back in for a final repeat.

The bass line would normally be sung in the bass register, but it works very well with everything sung in the treble register, so if you have an upper voices group you can still get it into 4 parts in school.

It works very well *a cappella* or with drumming. A stunning concert opener.

Music for Life



B E Boykin

This is a piece of contemporary classical choral music, written in 2022 by American composer and conductor Brittney Boykin, known professionally as B E Boykin.

The text is by 19th century American poet George Parsons Lathrop, about the music of the natural world. This simple and appealing setting is a relatively quick learn whilst exemplifying a contemporary choral style.

The song's structure itself presents a plan for learning the song. The initial unison teaches the main melody, with straightforward but expressive harmony then being introduced.

The layered section is an exposition of each of the 3 parts separately before singing them together. Following the dynamics throughout will support the expressiveness of the text.

The most attention is probably required for the ending – especially the final words “living things”. The interval each part sings on “living” will reward work, and accuracy here will help with the tuning of the final chord, which needs to retain energy and a single vowel sound through to the end.

Much of the piano part uses a repeated semiquaver riff in the right hand which might intrigue intermediate/advanced pianists.