

29 Child of tomorrow

RESOURCES ▶ CD1 track 29 (performance); CD2 track 29 (backing)
▶ Warm ups: Nos. 10–12, 20

Information

Sadly, the lyrics for ‘Child of tomorrow’ are as relevant now as when they were written 15 years ago. Since then, the world has witnessed countless wars, conflicts, and injustices to humanity. Today’s children are still suffering and a peaceful tomorrow seems no nearer. Poignant lyrics and a beautiful tune combine here to create a really moving song that will stimulate and engage children. The three-part harmony of the chorus will challenge most choirs, but don’t let this deter you, because any difficulties can be overcome: the questions the song poses are too important to ignore.

Starting

- Display the following four rhythmic cells, which are drawn from the song:



For each cell, gently slap thighs with both hands on the first beat, and then clap the rhythm that follows. Teach each rhythm in question and answer style. Explain that the rhythms of cells 2 and 3 and cells 3 and 4 help to create the lilting feel that pervades the song.

- Sing verse 1 to the group, and ask them to listen out for rhythms 3 and 4 in the melody.

Teaching and rehearsing

- Now teach verse 1 to the group, in four four-bar phrases. Avoid singing in short two-bar phrases, as this will sound too breathy and will be less musical. The rhythms fit the words quite naturally, but make sure that ‘wasteland’ and ‘growing’ sound relaxed and not too snappy. Bar 16 is tricky: the best approach is to float over the word ‘future’, aiming for ‘dream’ in the next bar.

- Move on to the chorus and teach the tune, again in four-bar phrases. Bars 23–6 may need repeating a few times. If possible, play the supporting harmonies on the piano, as this is a quick and effective way of attuning children’s ears to the B♭s in the melody; alternatively, use CD1 to help with these bars. Children will find the rest of the chorus very singable, but take care with the octave jump between ‘you’ and ‘cherish’.
- Now try the other two verses; the rhythmic underlay of the words doesn’t change and singers will benefit from singing through without interruption—although bar 16 may need to be revisited later on. The ‘rise and fall’ of each phrase will help to bring dynamic shape to the singing. Follow each verse by singing the chorus more softly, to create a sense of poignancy.
- Your singers are now in a position to perform a unison version of the whole song, so try it with the piano or CD backing. Encourage children to enjoy the beauty of the harmony in the chorus, which they will hear as they sing, and point out that singing the three-part harmony will be their next challenge.
- Ideally, the chorus bars 19–26 should be sung unaccompanied. Decide on the best approach, depending on your singers’ capabilities:
 - Sing the tune only;
 - Teach the second or third part, but not both;
 - Distribute your strongest singers equally, and teach the lower parts separately before putting the three parts together.
- If you are singing in three-part harmony, note that in bars 21–2, 27, and 32–3 the third part follows the second part.
- It may help children to hear the main tune gently in the background while you sing the chosen lower part (loudly!). In practice, a light accompaniment may be needed, one chord per bar: D, F, C, G, E♭, B♭, Am, and D. Listen to how it is done on the backing CD. Even in performance, it may be necessary to ‘shadow’ the harmony.

■ Ideas

- Consider encouraging the children to sing a line or two, or even a whole verse, as a small group or solo.
- Experiment with the dynamics, e.g. singing more loudly from the beginning of the chorus. Do the children prefer this?

■ Listen out

- Singing with passion can be done softly! Remind the children that clear diction will help them to communicate the song's message.
- Listen out for calm and controlled singing throughout the verses, as reflected by the stillness of the static bass-line. Smooth out anything that upsets the mood.

- Are the words in bar 16 clear for each verse? Practise this bar separately—it mustn't sound fussy or muddled.
- The chorus must be delicate and expressive. If it isn't working, review the decision you made earlier regarding the harmony singing.
- Make sure children sing A, not Bb, in the tune on the second beat of bar 25—this is a common error.

■ Performing

- Get the audience on your side by explaining how this song presents a serious challenge to your choir. Can they remember singing in harmony at such a tender age?
- This would make for an excellent assembly song, which could be sung by large numbers of children.

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Words and music: Lin Marsh

Andantino ♩ = 75

G *mp*

1. Here in the waste-land a
 2. Lost mid the ru - ins, two
 3. Still now and si - lent, a

p *mp*

5 Em/G Am/G D7/G G Am/G

small flower is grow-ing. Its life seems so fra - gile, its beau - ty so
 child - ren are hid - ing. Be - neath bro - ken win - dows they play with a
 ba - by is ly - ing. Too weak now for cry - ing, too hun - gry to

10 D7/G *mf* G Em/G

rare. A lone - ly sur - vi - vor_ a - mid man's des -
 gun. Sur - round - ed by sol - diers, their ci - ty is
 care. Be - side him his mo - ther_ is watch - ing and

mf