

12 Sans Day carol

RESOURCES ▶ CD track 13 ▶ Warm ups: Nos. 12a, 13a, 14a, 17, 18c, 25

Information

This melody and the first three verses were transcribed in the early twentieth century by the Revd Doble in St Day, Cornwall, as sung by W. Daniel Watson. The melody is quite repetitious, and each phrase begins with the same rising arpeggio figure. As with all folksongs transcribed and passed down to later generations, subtle variations in rhythm can appear in different versions, and musical notation often fails to do justice to what was actually sung. The first two dotted figures are original and have been kept throughout the carol; they should be sung with a swing (listen to the CD). The words are unusual in that they equate holly with the Virgin. In pagan times holly and ivy were powerful symbols of male and female (also of good and evil), an association retained in many folksongs particularly in the Christmas season, when the winter solstice custom of decorating houses with evergreens was kept up. This is a very effective arrangement particularly suited to young changing voices; the baritone part has a range of only a 5th in a comfortable register.

Starting

- Warm up voices with major scales and rising/falling arpeggios.
- Sing the following exercise, raising the pitch to stretch vocal range, working up to the written key (or beyond!). Accompany it with chords I and V—extract the chords from accompaniment 2 in *Voiceworks 2*, page xxx, if necessary:

Na na na na na na nee

- Extend this exercise by singing the whole of the first phrase of the melody, with words. Use chords I and V to accompany it, and again change key to keep stretching the voices.

Teaching and rehearsing

- Sing the melody in unison and ensure that it is accurate and strong, with a good swing.
- Tackle verse 3 next. This will engage all the voices fairly quickly, and baritones can hum their part as the altos learn verse 2. Leave the coda (bar 28 to the end) for now. Notice that bars 5c–8c repeat at bars 9c–12c. There are repeated patterns between bars 16c and 26c too, but

the phrase endings differ slightly in alto and baritone.

- In verse 2 (bar 4b onwards) the alto mixes the roles of imitating the melody (e.g. bars 6b–8b), backing it with sustained notes (e.g. bars 5b–6b), and being a counter-melody (bars 13b–16b). Make sure these roles are clear and the dynamics are balanced, while maintaining one flowing line.
- Once the parts are confident, the coda should be no problem. Divide the voices as resources allow; the melody is in the soprano line, tails down, and should be clearly heard. If altos are not dividing then the upper notes (tails up) are more important; baritones should take the upper notes too. Ideally all parts should be covered to produce a rich chordal texture.
- The piano accompaniment supports the voices rhythmically in the 'stretched' rhythm of bars 33c–34c (known as a hemiola). The cross-rhythms produced by the syncopated accents in the last three bars, however, may throw the voices unless they are very strict about their straight dotted minims. Practise the voices a cappella first, then add the piano.

Ideas

- To get the bounce of the dotted rhythms consistent, experiment with singing them 'straight' (two equal quavers) and snapped (a long first note and very quick second note like a Scottish dance); then relax into a bluesy swing. Decide which suits everyone best and rehearse until everyone is together.
- As every phrase starts with a pick-up or upbeat, try preparing in different ways—breathe in just before singing, then breathe in slowly over a whole bar. Which produces a better and cleaner entry?

Listen out

- Tuning can be a problem with rising arpeggios (opening pattern) and rising scales (e.g. bars 12a–13a). Check that singers' posture is good—straight, with chins tucked slightly in and a long neck at the back—and that vowel sounds are bright—lift the cheeks into a slight smile.
- Listen for upbeats—are they together and attacked firmly? If not try the exercise suggested above for preparing the breath.
- The word 'holly' is set in a way that throws emphasis onto the second syllable. Encourage singers to think 'holly' as they sing.

- In the chorus check there is no artificial elision between the words 'tree' and 'in' to produce 'treeyin'. Young singers are prone to this habit!

■ Performing

- The performance layout is straightforward as set out here. The lower parts may be introduced more gradually to build the texture as follows:
 - ~ verse 1: all voices, or just sopranos/upper voices
 - ~ verse 2: soprano and alto as written
 - ~ verse 3: repeat verse 2 (sopranos sing verse 3 words); baritones hum their part
 - ~ verse 4: everyone as written with coda.

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Trad. Cornish
arr. Peter Hunt

With a swing and a bounce ♩ = 110

Voices *mf*

1. Now the hol - ly bears a ber - ry as white as the

8a

milk, And__ Ma - ry bore__ Je - sus, who was wrapped up in

12a *cresc.* *f* *mf*

silk: And__ Ma - ry bore__ Je - sus Christ our Sa - viour for to be, And the

17a

first tree in the green-wood, it was the hol - ly, hol - ly, hol -

22a ✓

- ly! And the first tree in the green-wood, it was the hol - ly!

mf

S. 2. Now the hol - ly bears a ber - ry as green as the grass, And_

mp *mf*

A. 2. la la, Now the hol - ly bears a ber - ry,

9b

cresc.

Ma - ry bore Je - sus, who died on the cross: And_ Ma - ry bore_ Je - sus Christ our

mp *mf* *cresc.*

la la, And_ Ma - ry bore Je - sus, Ma - ry bore Je - sus Christ our

15b

f *mf*

sa - viour for to be, And the first tree in the green-wood, it was the hol -

f *mp* *mf*

Sa-viour for to be, la la, And the first tree in the

20b

-ly, hol - ly, hol - ly! And the first tree in the green-wood, it

mp *mf*

green-wood, it was the hol - ly! la la, And the

25b

S. *f*
 was the hol - ly! 3. Now the hol - ly bears a ber - ry as
 hol - ly bears a ber - ry as

A. *mf*
 first tree was the hol - ly! 3. Hol - ly bears ber - ries as
 4. Hol - ly bears ber - ries as

T./B. *mf*

7c

black as the coal, And_ Ma - ry bore_ Je - sus, who died for us all: And_
 red as the blood, And_ Ma - ry bore_ Je - sus, who died on the rood:

black as the coal, Ma - ry bore Je - sus who died for us all:
 red as the blood, Ma - ry bore Je - sus, who died on the rood:

13c

mf
 Ma - ry bore_ Je - sus Christ our Sa - viour for to be, And the first tree in the

mf
 Hol - ly, hol - ly, And the first tree in the

mf