

Canon corner



by Tossi Aaron

A particular one-octave canon appears in school music books both here and in Europe. Originally called "Lachen," German for *laughing*, it usually includes a gleeful "ha ha ha" that is quite droll when heard in parts. In English, the lyric personifies the joy of the sun as it rises over the hill. Here are new words written for the winter season.

Preparation

Teach by rote and sing in unison. Then show the score and ask students to locate the octave scale. "Do you see another 'step-wise' pattern in the notation? Can you find some measures with matching rhythm patterns? Are there identical pairs anywhere else? Are some measures different than the rest? Which note is held the longest?" This type of basic analysis can introduce an awareness of music's structure. Finally, entering at

the third measure, sing in four parts, requesting an unaccented, quiet "ha ha ha."

Suggestions

Write only the abstracted rhythm pattern on the board as a framework for new lyrics. These may follow the original structure with related subjects, or describe a topic that relates to laughing. Try to retain the simplicity and directness of the original form. To initiate choreography for the canon, sing in unison as all move lightly, freely and imaginatively on the beat. Four small groups then develop their ideas of how dancing snowflakes might move as they fall. Would weather or wind affect their direction and style? Each group shows its creation, then enters in turn, singing and moving to form a visible four part canon. At a later time, try eight parts, entering at the second measure.

Extensions:

Excite students with the fact that no two snowflakes, like people, are ever the same. Project photos from a

Snowflakes

book on snowflakes and note their perfectly six-sided, ice crystal framework. Drawing snowflakes on black paper with chalk may well delight children that rarely see snow! An art class project of folding and cutting tissue paper squares into six-sided snowflake shapes can present a real challenge. Hang cut examples over head, using long and shorter threads, and watch them dance with the breath of the singers.

Note: One German version translates into English as:

Laughing, laughing, laughing, laughing, comes Aurora, over the hill,

Over the hill comes Aurora, ha ha ha, laughing over the hill.

(Aurora is the Roman name for the dawn. Customize the lyric by changing this to "the summer," "the spring-time" or someone's name with the same rhythm pattern.

Snowflakes

New words: TA

Traditional

The musical score is written on two staves in 4/4 time. The first staff contains the melody for the new words, and the second staff contains the melody for the traditional words. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Dan-cing, danc-ing, danc-ing, danc-ing, Snow comes danc-ing out of the sky.

Ev'-ry lit-tle snow-flake is laugh-ing, ha, ha, ha, laugh-ing as it goes by.