

Christchurch Schools' Music Festival 2025 Massed Choir Programme - Teaching Notes

God Defend New Zealand

Sing our national anthem with pride and at a fairly brisk pace! In our Festival we sing a straight choral version with no riffs or melismas (“tiddley bits”!). “God” is pronounced as it is written with a short “o”, rather than the “Gard” often heard at sports fixtures. Keep the mouth shape north-and-south especially on the “a” vowels e.g. “God”, “na -tions” [nay-shones]. Ensure that the final consonants are produced, especially on words ending in “d” e.g. New Zealand. It is important that students sing the version we have created, not one that may be sung at their school or in their assemblies. This version has been specifically arranged for the Music Festival and is in the correct key that it should be sung in. Make sure students sing in their head voice rather than chest voice throughout the anthem.

Together Wherever We Go

Together Wherever We Go is a song from Act II of the stage musical ‘Gypsy’. In the musical, the song is performed by the characters Rose (an overbearing stage mother), Louise (Rose’s daughter and the target of Rose’s overbearing), and Herbie (Louise’s love interest, and their manager). At this point in the story of the musical, all of their efforts to make Rose a big star are in full swing. The song is light-hearted and comedic and tells the story of their comradeship and perseverance. The song is very much in the vaudeville style - lighthearted, comedic and playful, and catchy.

When singing this one, keep it light and bouncy, use crisp text, and (as always) keep the vowels tall (north-south) and rounded. Listen to Bernadette Peters’ rendition of the song and hear how her vowels on a word like “far” (“We may not go far,...”) - even though she is an American (critically acclaimed) Broadway actor, she still uses tall vowels as it makes the text clearer and in a theatre situation, they would project better.

After we have sung it through once, we go back to the beginning and sing it again - when we reach the second time ending (bar 55), the last note is held for much longer than the first time.

Please note, Letter G is missing from the Song Book - it should not be an issue for rehearsal but it does show in the Accompaniment Book so it may create confusion if you are rehearsing using both books.

Letter G should be at bar 51 (start of the second line of music on the second page of *Together...*).

The Concert Band will accompany us for this song.

Be Kind to Your Parents

Be Kind to Your Parents from the Musical Comedy ‘FANNY’, is a delightfully cheeky musical number celebrating parenting in line with the ‘Whānua – Friends and Family’ theme. It would be great to work on telling the story with a twinkle-in-the-eye approach. A key to achieving this will be to work on consonant articulation, e.g. phrases like “...difficult stage of life.” and “Just keep in mind tho’ it sounds odd...” At the beginning of the piece in the recitative part, make sure students sing through the minims on “advice” and “twice” and put the end of the word onto the end of the bar. Story telling will also be aided by observing all the crotchet rests and then for contrast singing through the minim phrases on words like “confused from...”

From Letter F, there is the mood change to half time feel, swung, which will add to the fun and character of the song; half time and twice the fun! The word “incredible” should be spoken with a delightful energised whisper at the end.

Slumber Song (Wiegenlied)

This beautiful partner song lullaby will hopefully be a tear jerker! Please listen carefully to the German pronunciation track provided to help you with the German text. We have also written a phonetic guide under the words to help students with the pronunciation. Do not panic - it is only at the start of the song. The next time this melody is sung in the two part split, it is the same melody as the German opening but with English words.

This is a gorgeous lyrical lullaby composed in the Romantic period so it needs to be sung with plenty of line and legato phrasing. This would be a great learning tool for students to discuss the style and music of the Romantic period and Schubert's life and other compositions.

Students need to learn both parts of the song from letter E and once known, we would encourage you to split your choir in two and practice the feel of singing the two parts together. We will email you later in the year to let you know what part your school will be singing during the performance.

Slumber Song is mostly sung in a moderately soft legato until letter G when there is decrescendo to softer still - as we hope the baby is now asleep and we can creep out of the room! The breath marks are clearly notated throughout the song to help with the phrasing.

You'll Be in My Heart

You'll Be in My Heart is a heartfelt song from Disney's 'Tarzan', written and performed by Phil Collins. In the film, it is sung by Tarzan's adoptive gorilla mother, Kala, as she comforts baby Tarzan after rescuing him. The song expresses unconditional love and protection, reassuring Tarzan that no matter what challenges they face or how different they may seem, he will always be loved and safe in her heart. It captures the deep emotional bond between a parent and child, transcending species and differences. The theme of love overcoming obstacles runs throughout the song. The general mood we are aiming to convey is tender, warm, and heartfelt. Use soft dynamics to start, gradually building in volume and intensity as the song progresses, especially during the bridge and final chorus. However, this is still a lullaby in spirit so ensure children maintain their 'north and south' mouth shapes and don't push their chest voice for these louder moments. In the chorus, there may be a tendency to accentuate the diphthong on words 'my' and 'they', due to the descending melisma. We would love to keep the "mah" vowel of "mah-y" (my) for as long as possible.

Si Manu La 'iti 'iti

Si Manu La'iti'iti (translated as Little Bird) is a Samoan children's song that has become a beloved part of Pacific choral repertoires. This song is a Samoan adaptation of the American Sunday school hymn *Little Birdie in the Tree*, written by P.P. Bliss and published in 1871. This song was arranged by Steven Rapana and this version was passed down from his grandmother and has been widely sung within his own family.

The Samoan vowels are bright and pure, similar to Italian vowels. We need to hear all of them. The 't' consonant should always be 'wet' (aspirate). The use of the apostrophe indicates a glottal stroke on the vowel (it isn't joined to the sound before it).

Ensure to keep the main sections light in feel so that the words can be heard clearly.

At Letter D, the song will be joined with some percussion which will give the song a new sense of energy and vigour.

This piece does repeat a lot so the dynamics need to be strongly adhered to in order to achieve contrast. Section I is more legato in feel sung with a clear head voice tone.

Consider speaking the song in rhythm first with your choirs to ensure they are getting all the syllables in the right timing before adding in the melody notes. This piece is very repetitive so students should pick up the text and rhythm quickly.

Make sure students are watching clearly at the end to maintain the long note before they sing "Shoo!". The "Shoo" at the end is pitched very high in the head voice and spoken with a very round Italianate 'u' vowel.

Thank You for Being a Friend

This song was written and recorded by American singer Andrew Gold and made famous as the title song of the sitcom 'The Golden Girls' filmed in the 1980s and sung by Cynthia Fee. This is an upbeat piece which needs to be sung with energy and crisp diction. Adhere to the syncopated rhythms throughout the piece, making sure that the end of the phrase comes before the first beat of the bar. Eg. "My hat is off, won't you stand up and take a bow" - the bow comes before the beat in the next bar. At letter B be aware of that beginning note that it doesn't become an octave leap so pitch the G note carefully and at Bar 22, the beginning note in this phrase is again different. Make sure that the 'k' is clear on the word "thank you" - this appears often so needs to be clearly pronounced throughout. At letter F, make sure students sing through the phrase on "friend" when the Representative Choirs come in - they need to complete that minim note. At letter G, it goes into three parts with the Junior Rep. Choir taking a higher part while the Massed Choir stay on the tune. The 'd' on "friend" needs to always come off on the minim rest so it is clearly cut off each time and is consistent.

At letter H, the Junior Rep. Choir comes in first and here the Massed Choir sings a different part - speak the rhythm through first before learning the notes so students are aware of the rhythmic change here. This piece will conclude the first half of the programme and will be enhanced by a band so it will be a lively way to finish before interval.

You Raise Me Up

There have been many versions of this song recorded and the original version was not a major hit. But the song has since been recorded by more than a hundred other artists, most notably American singer Josh Grobin in 2003 whose version we are using for the Music Festival. The song will start with an instrumental solo before the orchestra enters at Letter A. The Learning Track comes in at Letter A for rehearsal purposes. This year the Festival is celebrating the Pasifika culture by including a Samoan piece so we have decided to include a Maori verse in the opening few bars of this song instead of performing a full Te Reo piece this year. It translates loosely around the first English verse of the song - "When I am down and oh my soul so weary" Thank you to Helen Moran from St Margaret's College for providing us with this translation.

The dynamic markings are important in this song to create an atmosphere throughout as the song builds particularly at Letter G. The opening Te Reo phrase is lower in the children's register and they will need to support the lower notes so it cuts through the orchestral accompaniment. Please make sure students sing with a supported head tone when singing the chorus and do not 'shout' the louder phrases - this song needs a lot of line and legato phrasing. Students need to sing the chorus line of "You raise me up so I can stand on mountains." all in one breath - do not breathe after the word "up". "Mountains" needs to be sung with a rounded vowel so it doesn't sound too wide. At letter E there is another instrumental interlude but this is included in the Learning Track - imagine the full orchestra playing in this section and practise staying in performance mode during the instrumental.

At bar 39 be aware of the rhythmic difference here on the semi quaver note of "you" as it is different from the opening phrase. Same thing happens at bar 47. The semibreve note at bar 49 needs to be sung to the end of the bar and then it goes into a 2/4 bar so the timing changes here - students will need to watch conductor here as there is a pause before they come to 'milk' the ending a little.

This is bound to be a tear jerker and leave the audience with goosebumps!

The Living Years

The Living Years was recorded and released in 1988 by the rock band Mike + The Mechanics, headed by Mike Rutherford (one of the composers of this song). The lyrics are especially poignant and it is worth studying and discussing them on their own. One verse has been omitted in our version but the lyrics of this verse may be worth discussing with your older students.

Familiarise yourself, and the students, with the song by listening to the original record and looking up live performances on YouTube, but please make sure that we all learn the notes and rhythms of the Festival version so that when we sing it together as a Massed Choir, we sound unified. The provided learning track is note and rhythm-perfect so please follow this (and the score) closely.

During the choruses, work on making sure the vowels for words like “loud” on long notes stay tall (north-south). During the third verse (Letter I), the vowel on “past” and “last” can be slightly more American-sounding (more like “paast” than “parsed”).

We loop the chorus a few times at the end of the song so get used to counting how many times this happens and when it changes!

There are 12 bars (8 + 4) of instrumental introduction to this song - we suggest you start at Letter A for rehearsal purposes as this is where the Learning Track will begin from too.

The Orchestra will be accompanying us for this song.

Journey to the Past

Journey to the Past is a song written by lyricist Lynn Ahrens and composer Stephen Flaherty for the animated musical film *Anastasia* (1997). This will be a great rousing piece to finish our concert accompanied by a full orchestral arrangement.

The piece is in unison except for a few bars in the middle where the Senior Rep. Choir adds some harmony, and then Junior Rep. Choir adds some at the very end.

Again, similar to You Raise Me Up, it starts in the lower part of the children's voice register so will need some support and the diction needs to be clear and strong. If the students really tell the story through the words and sing it with passion and energy this will help the dynamics and bring the song to life! Listen to the recording carefully and the singer sings the words such as ‘vast’ and ‘past’ with a slight American accent - not too much but subtle. At letter H - ideally we would love the students to sing through until the end of bar 68 but we will let students ‘stagger’ their breath in these longer phrases if necessary.

At letter I, make sure students place this beautiful part carefully so they don’t swoop up to the note. They need to use the word “H” and place it first to avoid this. At bar 87, make sure the word “you” is round and not too pinched. Again the long note at the end at letter O can be ‘staggered’ as long as students don’t make it too obvious they are breathing when they need to.

This will be a great song to finish our concert with and I am sure it will be a crowd pleaser! Hope the students enjoy learning this song.