

Songs and Vocal Activities from around the World



A collection of echo songs, partner songs, rounds and part songs
from around the world for use as warm ups, class work or
concert items

Edited by Rob Jones

Hints and Tips for leading singing sessions

Layout & posture

Avoid singing sitting down. Sitting generally compresses the diaphragm and doesn't encourage good singing. Arrange the singers in front of you. If there are tables and chairs in the way, then you will need to get them out of the way. With some practice, the class/choir can be trained to do this quickly. There are some songs where sitting in a circle is acceptable for authenticity or to add atmosphere. Other songs require different groups to face each other.

When the song has been learned, it is often a good idea to use a mixed layout, so that pupils singing different parts are stood next to each other. This encourages attentive listening and awareness of harmony.

Pupils should ideally have enough space and shouldn't have anything to lean against, such as tables, walls etc. Arms should be loose, heads up and both feet on the ground!

Introductory games

It is important to establish who is boss! Do some copying games where the pupils must follow you exactly. Initially just do actions, such as hand on head, tongue out, arms out etc. Be as silly as you like! Gradually introduce sounds, loud and quiet.

Play echo games and sing some echo songs but keep the pace up to keep them interested.

Planning lessons and learning songs

Planning singing lessons is often overlooked. **Don't !!** You must plan exactly what you are going to do meticulously. The activities must be pacy and upbeat using lots of humour but plenty of firmness. Don't overdo the activities, since it is much better to leave them wanting more.

You must know the songs you are going to teach very well, and by memory. Don't rely on the printed music. Develop non verbal signals such as pointing to your ear meaning 'listen', palm down = quieter etc. The less spoken instructions you give, the better. Generally, follow this procedure when teaching songs.

1. Sing the song yourself, repeating it 4 times or more. At this stage, nobody else sings. More experienced singers will want to join in after one hearing, but stop them!
2. They sing along with you. Gradually, fade yourself out so that you are not singing
3. Play with the dynamics using your hands so they get used to your non verbal signals.
4. Teach each part like this. In most cases, all the parts can be taught to all sections of singers so they have an awareness of everyone's part.

General hints

- Use movement wherever possible. Move feet and bodies from side to side, hand claps etc.
- Don't be a slave to the dots! If they are singing the rhythm slightly syncopated, then go with it!
- Breathe with your choir. You breathe when you want them to breathe. Don't count them into a song.
- Do echo singing at every opportunity, such as taking the register!

Che Che Kwoley

Teacher Notes

A common song, much used in classrooms around the world. Nobody seems to know what it means or where the song comes from but it is probably a children's song from Ghana.

Good for vocal warm up and for 'finding their singing voice'

Che Che Kooley

Call Response Call

Che che koo ley Che che koo ley Che che ko fi sa

4 Response Call Response

Che che ko fi sa Ko fi sa lan ga Ko fi sa lan ga

7 Call Response

ka ka shi lan ga ka ka shi lan ga

9 Call Response together

Khum a den de Khum a den de HEY

Ow a lay lay

Teacher Notes

This is a simple echo song and is good for younger pupils to find their singing voice.

Oo a lay lay

Call Response Call Response

Oo a lay_ lay Oo a lay_ lay Oo a lay_ lay Oo a lay_ lay

5 Call Response Call

Ma la tik ka tum ba Ma la tik ka tum ba Oo a lay ma lu

8 Response

wa ma lu way Oo a lay ma lu wa ma lu way

Yalele

A great echo song from Ghana. This can be accompanied with hand claps or assorted percussion playing different rhythms.

This works well with pupils of ages 8–18! The more noisy and animated the performance, the better!

It is a good idea for the leader to call the class to attention using a shout and response, like this : (no pitch)

CALL

To song...

Ya le le Ya le le Ya le le le le Ya le le

RESPONSE

Huh huh huh huh

Yalele

Origin Unknown (West African)

Transcribed by Rob Jones



Ya le le ya le le he lo he lo ya le le Ya le le ya

7



le le he lo he lo ya le le Ya le le ya le le he

12



lo he lo ya le le Ya le le ya le le he lo he lo ya

17



le le He lo he lo ya le le He lo he lo ya le le He

22



lo he lo ya le le He lo he lo ya le le Ya le le ya

27



le le he lo he lo ya le le Ya le le ya

31



le le he lo he lo ya le le HEY

The Princess Pat

The leader sings, then everybody repeats. Good fun song with actions.

The Princess Pat (*egyptian pose*)

Light infantry (*salute*)

They sailed across (*wave motion in front of body with one hand*)

The seven seas (*number 7 with your finger, then make a "C" with one hand*)

They sailed across (*wave motion*)

The channel two (*two hands tracing a channel, then number 2 on one hand*)

And they took with them (*throw a sack over your shoulder*)

A rick-a-bamboo! (*trace a wavy figure in front of you going down, bend knees as you go*)

A rick-a-bamboo (*same as before*)

Now what is that? (*shrug shoulders, hold out hands*)

It's something made (*bang one fist on top of the other*)

For the Princess Pat (*egyptian pose*)

It's red and gold (*"twirl" one arm down by your hip*)

And purple too (*flip hands as if you were saying "Oh my gosh!"*)

That's why it's called (*cup hands in front of mouth, shout*)

A rick-a-bamboo! (*same as before*)

Now Captain Dan (*salute*)

And his loyal crew (*salute several times*)

They sailed across (*wave action*)

The channel two (*same as before*)

But their ship sank (*plug nose, one hand over head and waving as you bend knees*)

And yours will too (*point to others in the circle*)

Unless you take (*throw an invisible bag over your shoulder*)

A rick-a-bamboo! (*same as before*)

A rick-a-bamboo (*same as before*)

Now what is that? (*shrug shoulders, hold out hands*)

It's something made (*bang one fist on top of the other*)

For the Princess Pat (*egyptian pose*)

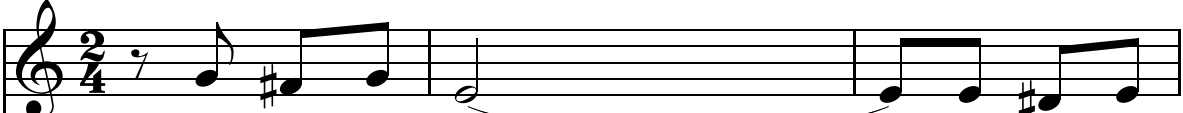
It's red and gold (*"twirl" one arm down by your hip*)


And purple too (*flip hands as if you were saying "Oh my gosh!"*)

That's why it's called (*cup hands in front of mouth, shout*)

(everyone together) A rick-a-bamboo! (*same as before*)

The Princess Pat

Call 
The prin cess Pat Light in - fan -

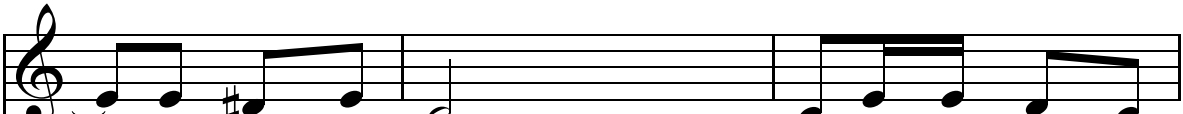
Response 
The prin cess Pat


4
Call 
try They sailed ac cross


Response 
Light in - fan - try They sailed a

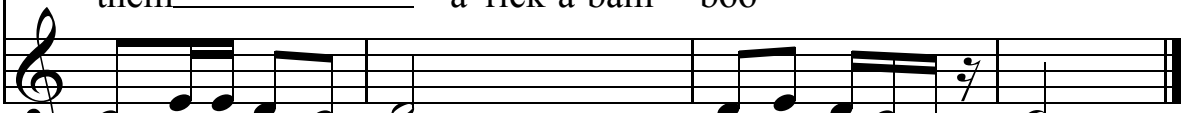
7
Call 
the se - ven seas They sailed ac - cross

Response 
cross the seven seas They sailed ac

11
Call 
the chan - nel two and they took with

Response 
cross the chan - nel two

14
Call 
them a rick a bam boo

Response 
an they took with them a rick a bam boo

TONGA

An echo song from Polynesia that has a very relaxing and almost hypnotic feel to it. It isn't the easiest echo song, but can be done very successfully with Upper Juniors (9-11 year olds) and with lower upper school pupils (11-13 year olds)

Be careful about the gap between the call and echo, since this is not always at one bar intervals.

Accompaniments can be very varied, from piano or guitar only to ostinato patterns played on tuned and untuned percussion. The only chord in this is D, so ostinato patterns can be made up by the pupils using the notes D F# and A.

Tongo

Traditional Polynesian

Voice 1

Ton go_____ Chim ne ba e ba e o_____

Voice 2

Ton go_____ Chim ne ba e ba e o

4

Voice 1

Ton go_____ M ba le kim ba yo_____

Voice 2

Ton go_____ M ba le kim ba yo

7

Voice 1

Oo a way_____ ba le ka low a way_

Voice 2

Oo a way_____ ba le ka low a way_

Epanay

Teacher Notes


This is a traditional Sioux song. Pupils should sit in a circle with the teacher part of the circle. Tap knees to keep a regular pulse. Teach the words of the song first. The first phrase is repeated four times. The last phrase is a little tricky but will come with practice. The last two beats should be clapped.

Repeat the song over and over again, speeding up gradually every time it is repeated.

Epanay

Traditional Sioux

Voice



E pa E pa nay_ nay E pa E pa nay_ nay E pa E pa nay_ nay

Voice

4



E pa E pa nay_ nay E pa nay ya na hin ny yo way (clap) (clap)

Duck Dance

Teacher Notes

This song has a lot of possibilities for development. First teach the song keeping a simple rhythm going such as :



Next, try adding other percussion.

This song uses the pentatonic scale on D



Ostinatos using any of these notes work well with this song. Here are some examples of suitable ostinati



Also, try singing the song as a round, either at half a bar interval or a whole bar.

Duck Dance


American Indian



4

Wee ya hay ya Wee hee ya hay ya Wee hee ya way hey ya

The first line of music is written on a single staff in 4/4 time. It begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of quarter notes and eighth notes. The lyrics are: "Wee ya hay ya Wee hee ya hay ya Wee hee ya way hey ya".



4

Wee hee ya hay ya Wee hee ya wa hay ya Wee hee ya hay ya Ho ke lay ho

The second line of music is written on a single staff in 4/4 time. It begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of quarter notes and eighth notes. The lyrics are: "Wee hee ya hay ya Wee hee ya wa hay ya Wee hee ya hay ya Ho ke lay ho".

ZUM GALI

This is a traditional Israeli song which was once used by scouts and guides. It is in two parts, an ostinato and a main tune. Repeat the song as many times as needed.

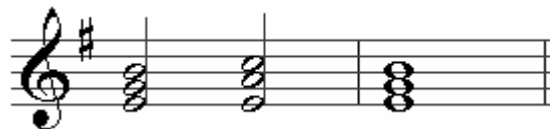
It is easy to add instrumental parts to this song. Some ostinato parts are suggested below.

2nd verse

Hechalutz le maan avoda
Avoda le maan hechalutz
Ha shalom le maan ha amin
Ha amin le maan ha shalom

Pioneers all work as one
Work as one all pioneers
Peace shall be for all the world
All the world shall be for peace

From the dawn till setting sun
Every one finds work to be done.
From the dawn till night does come
There's a task for everyone



B C B
G A G
E E E



E A E B E



G C B B B A G F#

Zum Gali Gali

Israeli traditional
Transcribed by Rob Jones

Ostinato

Em Am⁷ Em Em Am⁷

Zum ga li ga li ga li zum ga li ga li Zum ga li ga li ga li

Verse

Eh cha lutz leh mon avo

4

Em Em Am⁷ Em

zum ga li ga li Zum ga li ga li ga li zum ga li ga li

dah Av o dah lah mon eh cha lutz Eh cha

7

Em Am Em Em Am Em

Zum ga li ga li ga li zum ga li ga li Zum ga li ga li ga li zum ga li ga li

lutz leh mon avo dah Av o dah lah mon eh cha lutz

Seal Song

This works well on its own or in a 2 part or 4 part round. Try it with the 2nd set of voices starting at a 2 bar interval then a 3rd set of voices starting at 4 bar interval.

This is a traditional Icelandic work song associated with the seal culling industry (perhaps it's best not to mention this to sensitive pupils!). It has a strong beat at the beginning of each bar that could be emphasised with a drum beat or hand claps.

Seal Song

Traditional Icelandic

Voice

The musical score is written in 6/8 time and consists of four staves. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a 6/8 time signature. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff starts with a whole note on G4, followed by quarter notes on A4, B4, and C5. The second staff continues with quarter notes on B4, A4, and G4, followed by quarter notes on F4, E4, and D4. The third staff continues with quarter notes on D4, C4, and B3, followed by quarter notes on A3, G3, and F3. The fourth staff continues with quarter notes on F3, E3, and D3, followed by quarter notes on C3, B2, and A2. The final note is a whole note on A2.

Hyon da hyon do hyon da o da da

5

Hyon da hyon do hyon da o da da

9

Yo dn do Yo dn do Yo dn do o da da

13

Yo dn do Yo dn do Yo dn do o da da

Abiyu Abeyu

Teacher Notes

This is a traditional Aboriginal greeting song. It is always useful to talk to the children a little about the sociological aspects of songs. In this song, the Aboriginal people would greet each other, singing the phrases loudly from long distances. This arrangement has the two parts singing in canon.

Start by arranging the pupils in two rows, facing each other. Teach the phrases using call and response.

When the song has been learned, one set of pupils should do the call while the other group sing the response. If practical, try it in the school playground with the two groups at each edge of the playground.

Try to get each group to hold on to the long notes.

Encourage movement in this song, such as moving from left leg to right leg on the beat. Also, since it is a greeting song, each group can wave at each other!

Abiyo Abeyo

Aboriginal

Group 1

A bi o _____ A be yo _____ A

Group 2

A bi o _____ A be yo _____

Group 1

6

bi o bi o bi ma ma _____ A

Group 2

A bi o bi o bi ma ma _____

Group 1

8

bi o bi o bi ma _____ A

Group 2

A bi o bi o bi ma ma _____

Hey Dumba

Here is a 2 part chant from Brazil that works well with a steady drum beat.

Teach part 1 to everyone first, then once it is going on its own, sing the 2nd part to demonstrate how it goes together.

Then teach the 2nd part on its own and finally, with fingers crossed, get them going together.

Hey dumba

Brazilian
transcribed by Rob Jones

Part 1

Hey dumba di ay dumba di ay ya ba dum ay ya ba dum

Part 2

Hey ya hey ya hey _____ ya la la la

Detailed description: The image shows two parts of a musical score for the song 'Hey dumba'. Part 1 is a single melodic line in treble clef with lyrics: 'Hey dumba di ay dumba di ay ya ba dum ay ya ba dum'. Part 2 is also in treble clef with lyrics: 'Hey ya hey ya hey _____ ya la la la'. The second part of the second line features a long horizontal line under the word 'hey', indicating a sustained note or a breath mark.

Good News/Don't you leave me

Chords (optional)

4	C	C	G	C	C	C	G	C
4								

Teacher Notes

A good choir warm up which also works well with 11-16 year olds in classes.

Teach part 1 first. The single beat rest can cause problems, so a hand clap on this first beat overcomes this problem.

Again, you sing the line 4 or 5 times so that the pupils internalise the song, then get them to sing it. When it has been learned, repeat the process with the 2nd part

Lyrics to 'Good News'

Good News chariot's comin' (x3) Don't leave me behind

Good News Peter's waitin' (x3) Don't leave me behind

Good News, Goin' to heaven (x3) Don't leave me behind

Good News/Don't you leave me

1
Good news Cha riot's com in' Good news cha riot's com in'

2
Don't you leave me_ Don't you leave_ me

5

1
Good news cha riot's com in' Don't leave me be hind

2
Don't you leave me_ Don't leave me be hind

Detailed description: The image shows a musical score for two voices, labeled 1 and 2. The title is 'Good News/Don't you leave me'. The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains two staves. Staff 1 has the lyrics 'Good news Cha riot's com in' Good news cha riot's com in'. Staff 2 has the lyrics 'Don't you leave me_ Don't you leave_ me'. The second system also contains two staves. Staff 1 has the lyrics 'Good news cha riot's com in' Don't leave me be hind'. Staff 2 has the lyrics 'Don't you leave me_ Don't leave me be hind'. A measure number '5' is written above the first staff of the second system. The music is written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a 7/8 time signature. The notes are mostly quarter and eighth notes, with some rests and a fermata over the final note of the second system.

Wade in the Water

Teacher Notes

A lovely Spiritual that works well as a warm up for a choir or with a little re-arranging as a concert item.

Start by teaching everyone the first line. You sing it 4 times with the singers just listening. This gives them time to internalise the song. They then sing it 6 or 7 times until they've got it.

Hand claps on the beat work well and help the rhythm. Watch that they don't rush the beat!

Now teach part 2 repeating the sequence above.

Wade in the Water

1
Wade_____ in the wa ter_____ Wade_____ in the

2
Some times I feel like a mo ther less child Some times I feel like a

4
1
wa ter chil_ dren Wade_____ in the

2
mo ther less child_ Some time I feel like a

6
1
wa ter_ God's gon na trou ble the wa ter_ I'm sin gin

2
mo ther less child_ A long way_ from home

Tra la la

Chords (optional)

4	F	C	C	F	F	C	C	F
4								

Teacher Notes

This is a traditional Swiss song in two parts. Teach each part to everyone, since it is useful if everyone knows what is going on in all the parts.

Ta la la

1

2

Tra la la la la la la tra la la la la la la

Tra la la la la la la Tra la la la la la la

Detailed description: This system contains the first two staves of the musical score. The top staff (labeled '1') is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 4/4 time signature. It contains 16 measures of music with lyrics 'Tra la la la la la la tra la la la la la la'. The bottom staff (labeled '2') is in treble clef with the same key signature and time signature. It contains 16 measures of music with lyrics 'Tra la la la la la la Tra la la la la la la'. The melody in the top staff consists of quarter and eighth notes, while the accompaniment in the bottom staff uses a mix of quarter, eighth, and half notes.

5

1

2

Tra la la la la la la tra la la la la la la

Tra la la la la la la Tra la la la la la la

Detailed description: This system contains the next two staves of the musical score, starting at measure 5. The top staff (labeled '1') continues the melody from the first system, with lyrics 'Tra la la la la la la tra la la la la la la'. The bottom staff (labeled '2') continues the accompaniment, with lyrics 'Tra la la la la la la Tra la la la la la la'. The notation and structure are identical to the first system, maintaining the 4/4 time signature and one-flat key signature.

Wimoweh

Chords (optional)

4	E	A	E	B
4				

Lyrics for verses

In the jungle, the mighty jungle
The lion sleeps tonight
In the jungle the quiet jungle
The lion sleeps tonight

Near the village the peaceful village
The lion sleeps tonight
Near the village the quiet village
The lion sleeps tonight

Hush my darling don't fear my darling
The lion sleeps tonight
Hush my darling don't fear my darling
The lion sleeps tonight

Teacher Notes

This is a traditional Zulu folk song, originally called *Mbube* or 'The Lion'.

Begin teaching part 6 then add part 5 which are both important. With intermediate groups or choirs, build each part up 4, 3, 2 then 1. Some boys will enjoy singing part 3.

Wimoweh (Mbende)

1 Ooh_____ ooh_ ee_ ooh_ ooh_ wim_ wim_ o weh

2 In the jun_ gle the migh ty jun_ gle the li on sleeps_ to night

3 Wim o weh Wim o weh (etc.)

4 Wim o weh Wim o weh (etc.)

5 Wim o weh Wim o weh (etc.)

6 Wim o weh Wim o weh (etc.)

5

1 Ooh_____ ooh_ ee_ ooh_ ooh_ wim_ wim_ o weh

2 In the jun_ gle the qui et jun_ gle the li on sleeps_ to night

3 Wim o weh Wim o weh (etc.)

4 Wim o weh Wim o weh (etc.)

5 Wim o weh Wim o weh (etc.)

6 Wim o weh Wim o weh (etc.)

Banuwā

Chords (optional)

4	C F	CCGC
4		

Teacher Notes

This lovely song from Liberia can be sung by these 4 parts. More can be added by improvising other parts.

Start by teaching Part 1, then add the other parts one at a time. Build up a crescendo then drop the parts out so that only Part 1 is left at the end.

Banuwa

Liberian

1 Ba nu wa ba nu wa ba nu we o

2 Ba nu wa ba nu wa ba nu we o

3 Ba nu wa ba nu wa ba nu we o

4 A la no e___ neo la no Hmm A

The musical score consists of four staves, each with a different clef (1: Treble, 2: Treble, 3: Bass, 4: Treble). Each staff begins with a rest followed by a repeat sign. The lyrics are written below the notes. Staff 4 includes a long note on 'e' and a final 'A' with a fermata.

Sing/Swing Low/Saints

Chords (optional)

4	G	G	G	D	G	C	GC	G
4								

Teacher Notes

Teach each song separately. There are many possibilities with this, but an interesting way to approach it is to start with I'm gonna Sing, then let each person decide which song they will sing next!

Sing/Swing low/Saints

1
I'm gon na sing sing sing I'm gon na dance dance dance I'm gon na

2
Swing low sweet cha ri ot__

3
Oh when the saints go mar ching in oh when the

4

1
sing I'm gon na dance al lell u When the gates are o pen wide I'll be

2
Com ing for to car ry me home Swing low sweet

3
saints go mar ching in I wan na be in that

7

1
stan ding at your side I'm gon na sing I'm gon na dance Al lel lu

2
cha ri ot__ Com ing for to car ry me home

3
num ber When the saints go mar ching in

Janie Mama

Chords (optional)

4	F	Gm	C	F
4				

Teacher Notes

Teach each part at a time before you divide up the choir. Some singers may want to improvise a part.

Janie Mama

Calypso

1
Ja nie ma ma_ ja nie ma ma_ Ja nie ma ma_ Ja nie ma ma

2
Ja nie ma ma_ Ja nie ma ma_ Ja nie ma ma_ Ja nie ma ma_ Ya

3
Tu su zi ka_ i ya_ turn mi na_ ya

4
Tu ya va_ na hey ya va_ na turn mi na_ su zi ka

Good News the Chariot's Coming

Teacher Notes

A fairly straightforward spiritual, arranged here in three parts.
Experiment with dynamics and dropping sections of the choir for the verses, e.g. boys sing verses 2 and 4.

Lyrics for verses

1. There's a long white robe in Heaven I know
2. There's a pair of wings in Heaven I know
3. There's a pair of shoes in Heaven I know
4. There's a starry crown in Heaven I know
5. There's a golden harp in Heaven I know

Good News the Chariot's Coming

Spiritual

1

Good news the Chariot's coming Good news the charriot's coming

2

Good news the Chariot's coming Good news the charriot's coming

3

Good news the Charriot's coming Good news the charriot's coming

5

Good news the chariot's coming and I don't want it to leave me behind There's a

2

Good news the chariot's coming and I don't want it to leave me behind There's a

3

Good news the chariot's coming and I don't want it to leave me behind There's a

9

longwhite robe in heaven I know_ There's a longwhite robe in heaven I know_ There's a

2

longwhite robe in heaven I know_ There's a longwhite robe in heaven I know_ There's a

3

longwhite robe in heaven I know_ There's a longwhite robe in heaven I know_ There's a

13

longwhite robe in heaven I know_ And I don't want it to leave me behind

2

longwhite robe in heaven I know_ and I don't want it to leave me behind

3

longwhite robe in heaven I know_ and I don't want it to leave me behind