



Once Upon a Christmas

Performance Notes for Teachers

Welcome to another year of Christmas magic! This year's concert features a collection of songs from Christmas stories, from books to films. There are lots of fun pieces the children will recognise as well as some new repertoire which I hope you will all enjoy learning.

In this pack you'll find some useful teaching notes along with the lyrics. Sheet music (for anyone wishing to use it) has already been given out to you, but **please remember** that these are **study copies only** and cannot be distributed further. Please take care to follow the instructions on how to sing the music so that we all end up singing in the same way in the concert.

There are plenty of opportunities to have a go at singing in harmony, and we'll talk more about this in the teacher meeting.

There are accompanying learning tracks for each song, with individual tracks for any harmony parts. Please listen to each song before teaching it so you get an idea of how long the phrases are, where singers should (and shouldn't) breathe and where to put words endings. It would be great if we could have a really tight and uniform sound in the performance. Take care particularly with the well-known songs as the versions we are singing might have slightly different rhythms to the original tunes.

Have fun learning these songs, I'm sure the concert will be as memorable as ever!

Good luck,

Ula Weber



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SHEET MUSIC (separate pack)

Programme Notes

Eatnemen Vuelie

Pupils will recognise this song as it features in the opening scene of Disney's hugely popular film, Frozen! It is actually a Silesian folk melody, inspired by an old Scandinavian vocal traditional called 'Yoik'. The words used in this song have no meaning, they are simply syllables inspired by Yoik singing.

The concert opens with this piece. Pupils will move from the back of the hall to the stage, singing as they walk. The first phrase of the song will be our 'processional' phrase which will be repeated lots and lots of times as children move. I'll be conducting from the stage and once most of the massed choir is on stage, I'll signal when it's time to stop singing the processional phrase and move on to the rest of the song.

Notes

- Most of the words are 'na' but not all, so watch out!
- The processional phrase is right at the start of the piece and it's all in unison.
- If you want to stick to the tune, please sing part 1. If you'd like to have a go at singing the harmony part, it's part 2.
- Some of the phrases have long notes at the end. Please listen to the learning tracks and copy the length of the notes.
- If your singers need to take a breath in those long notes, encourage them to do some 'cheeky sneaky breathing', so they take a short (silent) breathe at a different time to their neighbour, and in an unobvious place.
- Halfway through the song there is a high phrase in part 1. Encourage singers to float over the top of that note (relax the bottom jaw) rather than 'hitting' it. You'll find children can sing far higher than you expect so even if you can't get those notes, the children should!
- We don't want to sound 'posh' in this piece. It's a folk song and it needs to sound a bit earthy. Enjoy experimenting with what that might be!

NB. We did this song in 2022.

Do you wanna build a snowman?

As we're already in a Frozen mood, let's continue with this instantly recognisable song from the same film.

Lots of children will know this one, but with that comes the challenge of making sure they sing it as per our version. It's a little quirky, so please pay attention to the recording so that there are no unintentional solo moments in the concert!

Notes

- For those who read music: I will probably conduct this in two beats rather than four as it's quite quick.
- It's important not to oversing this (ie. no 'shouty voices'). Focus on diction and energy instead.
- We will all sing the whole song together. On the concert day, I will ask one child to be Elsa (and say her phrases) and another child to be Anna. If you've got someone with a loud, projecting voice, let me know!
- When you get to the tick tock bit, please work on this so that we all click our tongues in time to each other! These two bars are unaccompanied so it's very easy to rush the tick tocks.
- The trickiest thing with this song is knowing when to come in after the instrumental bits which are rather long. We might cut the really long instrumental after the tick tock. For now, just keep listening so the children know when to come in again.

- Just before the final phrase ‘Do you wanna build a snowman?’, there is a pause. The children will need to watch me carefully so that we all come in together.

Once upon a December

This is one of my favourite songs from an animated film. It’s a wonderful tune from the film *Anastasia* (not Disney!) and is set in the style of a waltz. It’s the bit in the film where Anastasia is in the grand palace and starts to recall fragments of memories from her past.

This is a short, but very sweet song, and I think it will be lovely with lots of children singing it!

Notes

- The beginning of this song is like a music box, cute and twinkly. Let’s start singing quietly and build up the volume as we go through the song.
- Please sing four bars in one breath (eg. sing ‘Dancing bears, painted wings’ then breathe). This will apply across the whole song.
- At the end of the first verse there is a long note and a key change. Please encourage children to sing the note full length and also get louder on it. There will be a slight slowing down before we sing the next section in the new key.
- The last phrase of the song is a little tricky in that the interval leap in the word ‘December’ is quite a large one and the last note is long. Please spend a bit of time ensure that this phrase is accurate. It also needs to be fairly quiet at the end.

Walking in the air

Children will probably recognise this tune as it’s the theme from the film *The Snowman*. Whilst it’s a fairly simple tune, it’s got a few challenges along the way, particularly when it comes to breathing.

NB. We did this in 2022.

Notes

- This song requires children to use their ‘floaty’ voices. Ask them to imagine that they are flying through the air with the snowman whilst singing.
- Most of the phrases have long notes at the end. These must be observed for the song to be effective. If your singers can’t sing the whole phrases in one breath, encourage them to take ‘cheeky sneaky’ breaths (breathing at a different time to each other). Ask singers to sing any word as long as your hand (palm facing upwards) is moving sideways. When you close your fist, the sound stops. Have a few goes at this, each time making the sound carry on a little bit longer. If you’re unsure how long the note is, please listen to the learning tracks and copy what you hear. In the concert, I’ll be really clear with the word ending and ends of phrases so encourage your singers to watch.
- There is a little bit of harmony in a couple of places. It would be lovely to have this harmony but it’s not essential. It’s more important to get a good quality sound for this song.

You're a mean one, Mr Grinch

This is a wonderfully silly song from the 2000 film version (*The Grinch*) of the famous Dr Seuss book. Whilst we all remember Jim Carey singing it, it was actually written for the 1966 animated special Dr. Seuss' *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*

Notes

- Please note we're NOT doing all the verses. We're doing Verse 1, 2, 4 and 6
- It's very wordy and the words are very important, so please work on diction and have fun spitting out the key words in each phrase, especially the horrible ones!
- As we progress through the verses, they get a little harder to get the rhythms of the words right. Please listen to the audio track a few times so that we all say the spoken phrases tightly.
- Enjoy putting on a slightly mean voice in this song!

Somewhere in my memory

This beautiful song seems slightly at odds with the silly film it comes from (*Home Alone*), but it's a masterpiece from composer John Williams. It needs to be sung gently and with long breaths.

Notes

- Please make sure children sing two bars in one breath (ie. don't breathe in the middle of the word 'window', 'childhood', etc...!). This will apply to the whole song, apart from the bits where there are rests, eg. 'precious moments'.
- It's going to be tempting for the children to slide from the high notes to the low notes (eg. 'window', 'memory', etc...). Please encourage children to sing that interval accurately and cleanly.
- In verse 2, the second phrase needs to be shortened to 'I'd make' in order to fit all the words in.
- At the end of the song is a very long phrase. Let's all take a breath after 'family', but NOT after 'here'. Use a cheeky sneaky breath if necessary.

Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer

Rudolph first appeared in a 1939 booklet written by Robert L. May and published by Montgomery Ward, the department store. The story is owned by The Rudolph Company, LP and has been adapted into numerous forms including the famous song by Johnny Marks.

It's actually quite tricky to sing it well as the tune jumps about all over the place.

It would be great to have a small group of children sing the opening to this song. Please choose THREE children from your school.

Notes

- The opening will be a small group (see above). This section is sung in straight rhythms, not swung.
- The main song is everyone and it's got a bouncy, swung rhythm.
- As fun as it would be to add the silly words to the ends of each phrase, let's not do that!
- Please take one beat off at the end of each phrase to allow for a breath.
- The main song is sung twice. BUT be careful at the end of the second time as the rhythms are different. Please work on this so we don't need to fix it on concert day.

Silent night

I'm so pleased to be including this lovely carol in our concert. It was composed in 1818 by Franz Xaver Gruber to lyrics by Joseph Mohr in Austria. It was declared an *intangible cultural heritage* by UNESCO in 2011. The song was first recorded in 1905 and is one of the most recorded Christmas songs, with more than 137,000 known recordings.

I've recorded the song in English, but I can also sing it in Polish, German and Swedish! If you have any children in your group who also know it (really well) in another language, please let me know. It might be that we sing verse 1 in different languages. Please learn all three verses in English in case we don't have any solo groups.

Notes

- This is a gentle carol, so please encourage a warm sound, without shouty voices.
- Feel free to breathe after each comma in the first four bars. The remaining phrases need to be sung in one breath (two bars in one breath).
- The interval on 'peace', 'born' and 'birth' (penultimate phrase) needs to be placed carefully. Don't swoop up the high note!

Sparkle and shine

This is a new song to me, having never watched the film *Nativity!* It's the most pop-y song in our concert and I'm sure the children will have fun singing it.

Notes

- In b.13, the words need to be spoken in a tight rhythm so the audience can understand what's being said.
- The verses are heavily syncopated. This shouldn't be a problem for children, but the risk is that they start to rush. Encourage them to practice speaking the words whilst they tap a pulse.
- The two verses have slightly different rhythms so take care over these.
- There are a couple of two-part moments. The harmony part is very easy, so please try and teach both parts.
- The chorus has some high notes in it, but it shouldn't be a problem for children at all (it's us that might struggle!). Encourage children to use their 'wow' faces to access those higher notes. Again, don't force the sound (no shouty voices) as it can be damaging to children's voices.

A Muppet Christmas Carol Medley

This medley brings together some cracking tunes from this classic movie. If your children haven't seen the movie, do encourage them to watch it!

Apologies for the quality of the recording. I'm not a Soprano so getting those higher notes took some doing...!

NB. We did this medley last year and it went down a storm!

Notes

- This is written for 2 parts, but I've simplified it so that Part 1 always sings the tune (Tune Schools) and Part 2 is for Harmony Schools. If it's too much to learn the harmonies all the way through, just choose a few moments where you sing harmonies and sing the tune for the rest.
- There are some high notes in Part 1. They are all accessible, you just need to allow children to sing them naturally, and not force the sound or shout.

- *One More Sleep 'Til Christmas*: This is sung as written.
- *It Feels Like Christmas*:
 - Diction is really important in this section as it's wordy and quick.
 - Unlike the written music, everyone will sing the tune from b.21 to b.30. At b.30, Part 2 takes the harmony.
- *Thankful Heart*:
 - Another one with quick words in places.
 - Everyone sings the tune at b.40, but only Part 2 will sing the echo bit in b.43 and b.45.
 - In b.47, Part 1 has a very high note written. I've transposed it down the octave to make it easier for everyone to sing. The same applies every time this phrase comes along.
 - At b.50 (verse 2), I've swapped the written parts round and given the tune to Part 1. It means that if you're only teaching the tune, it's easier for you to manage this section.
 - In b.53, Part 2 does the echo again, but I've sung it an octave lower to make it the same as in verse 1.
 - In the last phrase, I've sung some slightly different notes for both parts to make it more accessible and hopefully less squeaky!

Feliz Navidad

We can't end our Christmas concert without this song! It's the wonderfully uplifting, Spanish song, *Feliz Navidad*. Written by Jose Feliciano in 1970, it's gone on to be a hugely popular song all over the world, performed by the likes of Michael Bublé and Boney M, and featured in the TV cartoon, *Dora the Explorer*. The words in the chorus are Spanish and translate as 'merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year'.

Notes

- NB. If you are using the sheet music, please note there are a few changes to what is written. In bar 14, we anticipate the word '*año*' and place it as an upbeat to bar 14. Please also note that we are singing the **1st verse words both times** (ie. We're not singing 'with lots of presents').
- The first 'Feliz Navidad' chorus is sung in unison. The second chorus has a countermelody which is really important. Both parts get to sing the tune and the countermelody so teach everyone everything and then play around with groups singing different parts.
- There is a small amount of harmony at the start of each verse ('I wanna wish you...') which should be easy enough for Harmony Schools.
- Watch out for the key change towards the end. The countermelody comes back here but only part of it so encourage singers to pay attention and watch.
- The song finishes with everyone shouting 'Feliz Navidad'. This time, they really can use their 'shouty' voices!
- Keep the feel of this piece light and funky and feel free to encourage children to move when singing it!

Encore

NB. We will walk out to the chorus of ***Sparkle and Shine***, and I'll encourage children to sing whilst they walk.

Lyrics

Eatnemen Vuelie

Most of the lyrics here are just variations of na, ha and heya!

Do you wanna build a snowman

VERSE 1

Do you wanna build a snowman?
Come on let's go and play.
I never see you anymore,
Come out the door;
It's like you've gone away.
We used to be best buddies,
And now we're not
I wish you would tell me why.
Do you wanna build a snowman?
It doesn't have to be a snowman.

(ELSA: Go away, Anna)

Okay, bye.

VERSE 2

Do you wanna build a snowman?
Or ride our bike around the halls?
I think some company is overdue.
I've started talking to the pictures on the walls.
(ANNA: Hang in there, Joan!)
It gets a little lonely,
All these empty rooms,
Just watching the hours tick by...
Tick, tock, tick, tock, tick, tock, tick, tock,

VERSE 3

(ANNA: Elsa?)

Please, I know you're in there.
People are asking where you've been.
They say, "Have courage", and I'm trying to
I'm right out here for you,
Just let me in.
We only have each other,
It's just you and me.
What are we gonna do?

Do you wanna build a snowman?

Once upon a December

Dancing bears, painted wings,
Things I almost remember.
And a song someone sings
Once upon a December.
Someone holds me safe and warm.
Horses prance through a silver storm.
Figures dancing gracefully
Across my memory.

Far away, long ago,
Glowing dim as an ember.
Things my heart used to know,
Things it yearns to remember.
And a song someone sings
Once upon a December.

Walking in the air

We're walking in the air
We're floating in the moonlit sky
The people far below are sleeping as we fly.

I'm holding very tight
I'm riding in the midnight blue
I'm finding I can fly so high above with you.

On across the world
The villages go by like dreams
The rivers and the hills
The forests and the streams.

Children gaze open mouthed
Taken by surprise
Nobody down below believes their eyes.

We're surfing in the air
We're swimming in the frozen sky
We're drifting over icy mountains floating by.

Suddenly swooping low on an ocean deep
Rousing of a mighty monster from his sleep.

We're walking in the air
We're dancing in the midnight sky
And everyone who sees us greets us as we fly.

You're a mean one, Mr Grinch

VERSE 1

You're a mean one, Mr. Grinch,
You really are a heel!
You're as cuddly as a cactus,
You're as charming as an eel, Mr. Grinch.
You're a bad banana with a greasy black peel!

VERSE 2

You're a monster, Mr. Grinch.
Your heart's an empty hole!
Your brain is full of spiders,
You've got garlic in your soul, Mr. Grinch.
I wouldn't touch you with a thirty-nine-and-a-half foot
pole!

VERSE 4

You're a vile one, Mr. Grinch.
You have termites in your smile!
You have all the tender sweetness
Of a seasick crocodile, Mr. Grinch.
*Given the choice between the two of you
I'd take the seasick crocodile!*

VERSE 6

You nauseate me, Mr. Grinch,
With a nauseous super "naus!"
You're a crooked dirty jockey,
And you drive a crooked horse, Mr. Grinch.
*You're a three-decker sauerkraut and toadstool
sandwich
With arsenic sauce!*

Somewhere in my memory

Candles in the window,
Shadows painting the ceiling,
Gazing at the fire glow,
Feeling that gingerbread feeling.

Precious moments, special people
Happy faces, I can see.

Somewhere in my mem'ry,
Christmas joys all around me,
Living in my mem'ry,
All of the music, all of the magic,
All of the fam'ly, home here with me.

Memories of my childhood,
I'd make five, six or seven.
I would wake when dawn would,
Living in Christmas Day Heaven.

Precious moments, special people,
Happy faces, I can see.

Somewhere in my mem'ry,
Christmas joys all around me,
Living in my mem'ry,
All of the music, all of the magic,
All of the fam'ly, home here with me.

Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer

SOLO GROUP:

You know Dasher, and Dancer, and Prancer, and Vixen,
Comet, and Cupid, and Donner, and Blitzen,
But do you recall
The most famous reindeer of all?

EVERYONE:

Rudolph, the red-nosed reindeer
Had a very shiny nose.
And if you ever saw it
You would even say it glows.
All of the other reindeer
Used to laugh and call him names.
They never let poor Rudolph
Join in any reindeer games.

Then one foggy Christmas Eve
Santa came to say
"Rudolph with your nose so bright,
Won't you guide my sleigh tonight?"
Then how the reindeer loved him
As they shouted out with glee
Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer
You'll go down in history

Silent Night

VERSE 1

Silent night, holy night,
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy Infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

VERSE 2

Silent night, holy night,
Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia.
Christ the Savior is born,
Christ the Savior is born.

VERSE 3

Silent night, holy night,
Son of God, love's pure light.
Radiance beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace.
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth,
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth.

Sparkle and Shine

Ooh, ooh, ooh

Aah,

Ooh, ooh, ooh

OK everybody clap your hands

I'm a superstar and I'm coming out tonight

VERSE 1

I've had a little make over

And I'm all dressed up tonight.

A cheeky drink, a naughty wink,

We'll loosen up alright.

Stand back and put your shades on,

Cause I'm about to shine,

My blinding light will thrill you,

Cause there's no starlight like mine.

Ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh!

Sparkle and shine!

Planets gather round.

Sparkle and shine!

Let's all make a dazzling sound.

Here's something you won't believe

It's the first time ever Christmas Eve.

VERSE 2

I've got my light within me,

And it's coming out for you.

I'm dizzy with self confidence

Hope you can feel it too.

I'm lighting up the sky tonight,

So come on, join the party,

Make the moment last all night,

And keep the stars all starry.

Ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh!

Sparkle and shine!

Planets gather round.

Sparkle and shine!

Let's all make a dazzling sound.

Here's something you won't believe

It's the first time ever Christmas Eve.

Muppets Christmas Carol Medley

One more sleep 'til Christmas

There's magic in the air this evening, magic in the air.
The world is at her best, you know, when people love and care.
The promise of excitement is one the night will keep.
After all, there's only one more sleep 'til Christmas.

'Tis the season to be jolly and joyous.
With a burst of the pleasure, we feel it arrive.
Oh. It's the season when the saints can employ us
To spread the news about peace and to keep love alive.

It feels like Christmas

It's in the singing of a street corner choir,
It's going home and getting warm by the fire.
It's true whatever you find love it feels like Christmas.
A cup of kindness that we share with another,
a sweet reunion with a friend or brother
In all the places you find love it feels like Christmas.

It is the season of the heart, a special time of caring,
The ways of love made clear.
It is the season of the spirit, the message if we hear it,
Is make it last all year!

Thankful Heart

With a thankful heart, with an endless joy,
With a growing family, every girl and boy
Will be nephew and niece to me.
Will bring love, hope and peace to me.
Yes, and every night will end
And every night will start
With a grateful prayer and a grateful heart.

With an open heart that is wide awake,
I do make this promise; Every breath I take
Will be used now to sing your praise.
And to beg you to share my days
With a loving guarantee that even if we part,
I will hold you close with a thankful heart.
I will hold you close with a thankful heart.
Thankful heart!

Feliz Navidad

Words and music by Jose Feliciano, arranged by Mac Huff

Feliz Navidad

Feliz Navidad

Feliz Navidad

Prospero año y Felicidad *[repeat]*

I wanna wish you a merry Christmas

I wanna wish you a merry Christmas

I wanna wish you a merry Christmas

From the bottom of my heart. *[repeat]*

Feliz Navidad

Merry Christmas

Feliz Navidad

Merry Christmas

Feliz Navidad

Merry Christmas

Prospero año y Felicidad

To you

I wanna wish you a merry Christmas

I wanna wish you a merry Christmas

I wanna wish you a merry Christmas

From the bottom of my heart. *[repeat]*

From my heart

I wanna wish you a merry Christmas

Merry Christmas

I wanna wish you a merry Christmas

Merry Christmas

I wanna wish you a merry Christmas

Merry Christmas

From the bottom of my heart.

From the bottom of my heart *[repeat]*

FELIZ NAVIDAD!