Explore a practical and physical approach to vocal arranging

A KS3 & 4 Music Project by Dave Camlin

VOCAL ARRANGING ACTIVITY:

THE PILLARS OF GROOVE

Spring Term 2016

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The Pillars of Groove is a practical and physical approach to vocal arranging. It is a KS3 & 4 Music Project by Dave Camlin.

**Approaches to Developing Skills, Knowledge and Understanding**

There's a focus on collaboration in the main activities. The project builds down into component parts, and the activities are designed to help students develop a clear understanding of what it means to create cohesive arrangements. The teacher's role is to act as facilitator, reining in group work and setting clear boundaries.

Students will:

- Understand the roles of each pillar (e.g., bass, melody, or groove) and how they contribute to creating a cohesive arrangement.
- Practice improvising and responding to the emerging music and supporting its development in a different direction.
- Engage in group work activities that involve a high degree of call-and-response, both within and across groups, to build up a cohesive arrangement.
- Experiment with different instrumental sounds and textures to support the melodic and harmonic content of the arrangement.
- Develop an understanding of how different components of a musical arrangement, such as melody, harmony, and rhythm, interact to create a cohesive whole.
- Reflect on their own work and the work of others to assess the effectiveness of their arrangements.

**Suggested Materials**

- Warm-ups and games:
  - Beats of the bar
  - Riff and Repeat

- Other:
  - Instruments – chord-based, bass, percussion (optional)
  - Warm-up activities that involve clapping patterns, body percussion, or vocal riffs.
  - Vocal improvisation activities that focus on developing vocal skills.

**Desired Skills, Knowledge and Understanding**

- Students will:
  - Learn and accurately reproduce musical motifs using the voice, body percussion, and/or instruments.
  - Manipulate vocal sounds to produce desired percussive and/or tonal effects.
  - Contribute to the making of a musical arrangement by listening and responding to the emerging music, both within and across groups.

**Main Activities: The Pillars of Groove**

Students will choose a song that can easily be divided into three different parts (e.g., a cappella, or with clapping or vocal riffs). They will then take a turn to contribute different parts (e.g., melody, bass, or groove) to the arrangement.

- Warm-up activities:
  - Do your dooty
  - We will rise

- Game activities:
  - 'The Yes' game
  - Clap games
  - Movement and space activities

- Group activities:
  - Warm-ups
  - Learning and improvising

- Group work:
  - Group discussions
  - Improvisation and collaboration

- Reflection:
  - Evaluating and discussing the process of creating a cohesive arrangement.

**Assessment Criteria**

The statements below can be qualified using the following words, or similar, to arrive at descriptive, analytical, or evaluative judgements about those students:

- Students who are able to perform with confidence and accuracy.
- Students who are able to perform with some confidence and accuracy.
- Students who are not able to perform with confidence or accuracy.

**More Online**

You can watch a video of The Pillars of Groove featuring We will rise by Beccy Owen here bit.ly [URL not created yet]


*Visit www.im.org.uk/nationalcurriculum to download these documents.*
GROUP SINGING IS NOT JUST ABOUT PERFORMANCE; IT'S A WAY OF BUILDING AND REINFORCING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

SINGING IN DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES

It may be harder for those of us immersed in the heavily commercialised world of western culture – and the social isolation that comes with the amazing technological achievements that define our existence – to understand the fundamental power of singing together as a form of social life. However, anyone who has had the good fortune to experience other cultures where singing and music-making are an everyday form of social activity will attest to the power of singing as a way of uniting people in a spirit of cooperation and collective creativity.

One of the things that has struck me from my limited time in South Africa has been the way in which singing is a form of communication always just below the surface, prone to bursting out in spontaneous moments of joy and unity – just look at the amazing spontaneous outpourings of song and dance that erupted during Nelson Mandela’s funeral.

The kind of communicative musicality that unites mother and infant during this period of enormous vulnerability has other benefits. Evolutionary biologists like Robin Dunbar suggest that singing facilitates cooperation precisely because it enables us to maintain cooperative relations with much larger groups: the so-called ‘vocal grooming’ hypothesis. Our nearest primate relatives can only maintain harmonious relations with much smaller groups, limited by the number of individuals one can have an intimate physical ‘grooming’ relationship with. Singing at communicative musically enables the same kind of trust among groups, but in much larger numbers.

The emerging scientific field of Interpersonal Neurobiology may reveal still more potent arguments for the importance of singing. The limbic parts of the brain – which all mammals possess as part of the neural chemistry which enables the same kind of trust among groups, but in much larger numbers – are for example, areas where singing and music-making are an everyday form of social activity. For example, it is believed that singing and music-making act as a kind of ‘open-loop’ system, in which we feel loved, and something that everyone can do. Singing together is also therefore a means of manifesting your school’s principles and values of cooperation, trust and mutual respect. Because singing facilitates cooperation – and it has done for tens of thousands of years! – it’s a timeless approach to saying, ‘I’m not a threat to you’ – I’m willing to cooperate with you,’ but in a much more powerful way.

We feel loved, and something that everyone therefore deserves.

THE MAGIC OF SINGING

So what is it about singing that is so powerfully unifying? In his excellent book on how we may have glimpses of this kind of ‘social cooperation through singing’ in western culture (for example, if we attend large public concerts or football matches and other sporting events), ethnomusicologists document the phenomena of music and singing as a form of social life the whole world over, from the Cornish region of Peru to the Shona tribes of Zimbabwe to the ancient vocal traditions of Georgian song, and all points in between. Singing together appears to be something that our whole species benefits from participating in, and it’s little wonder that we turn to singing for its therapeutic benefits and its ability to lift our spirits.

However we may feel about singing, it’s our birthright as human beings. When we sing together, we’re not just making music; we’re also participating in one of the oldest traditions known to our species that helps to us cooperate with our fellow beings. So we promote group singing for our students, and also for community groups, and we are not just helping them to have fun and learn together, we are facilitating their full participation in what it means to be human.

Words by Dave Camlin

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So what is it about singing that is so powerfully unifying? In his excellent book ‘The Magic of Singing’, Steven A. Whiteman argues that music is a communication system, just like language is, but serving a subtly different function. While language is an excellent way of communicating information, music – and singing – is a way of communicating emotion. At its most basic, the

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