

1. 2.

s s m l s s f m f l s f s f m

9

s d ta l t d r d t s l t d s d ta l r d

14 3.

t s d _____ t d m m d f m

19

r t d r d d f f m r r m

choir



CANON IN E - BEETHOVEN

USING THIS CANON

Compiled for the Presto project
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FOR DEVELOPING YOUR POLYPHONIC SKILLS

This canon features effective use of suspensions, as well as instances of movement in parallel 3rds and of contrary motion, creating a beautiful, balanced composition to explore as you develop your polyphonic abilities.

While this canon is in 2/2 time, with a feeling of two minim beats per bar, take care not to begin at too fast a tempo, as phrase 2 is much busier and needs enough space for the crotchets to fit comfortably. Notice the different ways that the three phrases begin, and work on combining these details accurately as you sing and play in two parts.

After you have mastered the sing-and-play task in two parts, increase the challenge using some or all of the following steps: play one part with your right hand and another part with your left; sing one part and play the other two parts; change the key; increase the tempo.

WITH YOUR CHOIR OR SINGING GROUP

To enhance intonation, shape important long notes such as the dotted minim, so, in bar 3, the fa in bar 7, and the tied minim in bars 14–15. Take care in phrase 2 to ensure that the lower la is felt as a minor 3rd below the do, not sung too low, especially after the flattened 7th, ta.

Take care to choose a suitable tempo for performing this piece, so that when the more rhythmically active second phrase is reached, it may be sung at a comfortable and natural speed for singing.

Encourage the singers to observe the relationship between phrases 1 and 3: at times these move in parallel 3rds, elsewhere they create balance through contrary motion, and in the sixth bar, a suspension and resolution. On the whole, phrases 1 and 3 are closely related in character, often moving in tandem, but at the third bar of the three-part version, phrases 2 and 3 momentarily move in parallel 3rds. Awareness of these relationships can enhance the stylistic performance of the phrases and strengthen the coherence of the canon's overall structure. Where suspensions occur, experiment with emphasising and de-emphasising the dissonant suspended note, and discuss which approach works best.

Improvise a piano accompaniment in the musical style of the early 19th century and accompany a performance of the canon first in unison and then moving into the three parts. Compose a suitable text for use in a concert performance.

IN THE MUSIC LESSON

Use this melody for a guided dictation exercise. After learning the full melody by ear and singing it securely, show the notation for phrases 1 and 2 and ask the students to figure out the notation of phrase 3, working in pairs or small groups, by using their experience of singing it as well as their knowledge of the relationships between the phrases as outlined above.