

## Warm-Ups & Gathering Songs

It's important to make sure the voice is well prepared for the singing ahead but warm-ups can sometimes get a bit repetitive so, I like to mix things up a bit in my choir rehearsals. Here are my favourite ways of doing just that.

### Engaging the Brain

If ever I stand in front of a new group of singers, regardless of age, I will most likely do an 8-beat pattern warm-up before I even say hello to anyone.

Why is it such a good warm up?

- ✓ It's a simple copycat exercise where the leader does a pattern that lasts for 8 beats and then invites everyone to copy them using standard My Turn, Your Turn technique.
- ✓ In a few short minutes, you will encompass everything you need to get ready to sing (focusing, posture, breathing and voice work)
- ✓ You've focussed the attention of your singers and engaged their brains!
- ✓ It's great for singers and reluctant singers of all ages.

If you don't have an accompanist but you want to do this activity, either do it a cappella use a backing track. The best one is the *Glen Miller Medley* by the Frank Barber Orchestra. It's 8 minutes long so plenty of time to go through all the various elements of warming up the voice and body and it's a good, steady tempo all the way through. You can find it easily on You Tube:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lzgy\\_ZrCx8A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lzgy_ZrCx8A)



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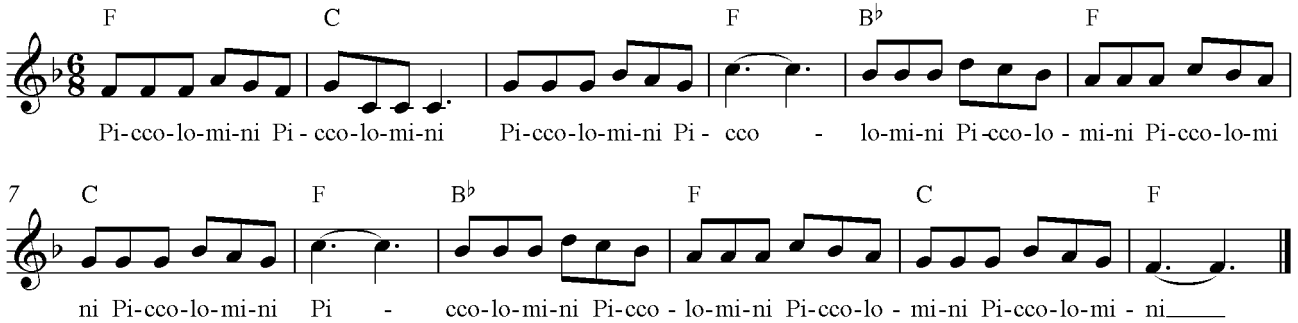


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Another great brain gym song is this one (take heed... it's an ear worm!):

## Piccolomini



Musical notation for the song 'Piccolomini'. The notation is in 6/8 time and features a melody with lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: Pi-cco-lo-mi-ni Pi - cco-lo-mi-ni Pi-cco-lo-mi-ni Pi - cco - lo-mi-ni Pi-cco-lo - mi-ni Pi-cco-lo-mi ni Pi-cco-lo-mi-ni Pi - cco-lo-mi-ni Pi-cco - lo-mi-ni Pi-cco-lo - mi-ni Pi-cco-lo - mi - ni

Teach the tune to 'la' first then add the word. Finally, add some actions:

1. Place both hands out to the sides with the right palm facing down and the left palm facing up. Ideally, everyone is in a circle.
2. Use your right hand to clap your neighbour's palm
3. Tap your right knee
4. Tap your left knee
5. Tap underneath your left hand
6. Twice tap on top of your left hand

That's 6 beats of actions, one action per beat.

So, why is this one so good?

- ✓ The basic tune is easy and catchy.
- ✓ For a music lesson, you can use it to talk about music elements, such as sequencing, phrase endings, structure, etc...
- ✓ It's a great brain work out once you put a 5-syllable word into the mix!
- ✓ Adding actions actually stops you thinking about what you're singing!

## Warm-Ups

It's a good idea to start a rehearsal or workshop with a brain gym activity and then move on to some more 'formal' warm-ups. Here are some of my 'go-to' voice training exercises:

- ✓ Bubbling (best way to warm up your voice). Push air through closed lips, like a motorbike sound.
- ✓ Say 'you hoo!' in a high voice and 'it's me' in a low voice.
- This is good for kids to hear and feel the difference between their head and chest voices
- ✓ *Hello there* scales (pitches = 121          131    141    151)
- you can mould and shape the sound as you're doing this warm-up
- ✓ *I love to sing today* (arpeggio octave)
- Use a 'hoodie moment' to access the highest notes
- Change to different voices, eg. opera, witch, astronaut, etc...

With children, you might take a simple song like Twinkle Twinkle and play around with using different voices.

## A Word About Rounds

We all know a round or two and they are such a good way of testing your singers' independence and developing their listening skills, which is important for any age.

Rounds are not particularly satisfying to do over Zoom, however they can be done. Teach the song then sing it in a 2-part round with you going first. As the leader, you can't hear the result but the singers can.

Rounds don't just have to stay in the warm-ups category. Take a round like *Bele Mama* (readily available on the internet). It's a very simple song but by the time you've sung it in unison, then as a 4-part round, then an 8-part round, then added 3-part harmonies and sung it again in an 8-part round in 3-part harmonies (therefore now singing in 24 parts), you've got yourself a concert opener!

So, don't underestimate the power of a round. SfP has lots of rounds books in its publications catalogue so do go along to the shop and check them out.



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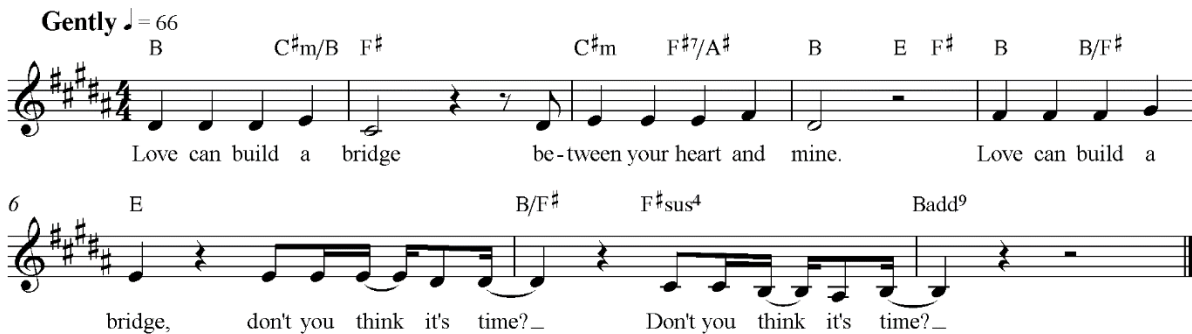
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## Choir Improvisation

I often find that, given the chance, choirs can harmonise without realising it. Here's a song that I use to develop harmony singing with all types of choirs, including children. It's the chorus from a longer song called **Love Can Build a Bridge** which was the official Comic Relief song in 1995.

### Love Can Build a Bridge (chorus)

Gently ♩ = 66



Chords: B, C#m/B, F#, C#m, F#7/A#, B, E, F#, B, B/F#

Love can build a bridge be-tween your heart and mine. Love can build a

6 E, B/F#, F#sus4, Badd9

bridge, don't you think it's time?\_ Don't you think it's time?\_

Teach it in unison (perhaps with eyes closed) then hum it and listen to the chords. Try humming it in harmony (not everyone will which is fine as someone has to sing the tune!) then try again with the words. Perhaps do a key change.

This can be a very powerful activity with a group of singers as it gives an immense sense of achievement from what is essentially a simple song.

Thanks everyone!

Ula Weber June 2020



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