

1. s s s l s r m f r m d t d f s l t d t l f s

2.

7 3. d d r m f m r d d t d m r d d r m f s l s

4.

choir



CANON IN F - VULPIUS

USING THIS CANON

Compiled for the Presto project
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FOR DEVELOPING YOUR POLYPHONIC SKILLS

The principal rhythmic challenges in this canon lie in the suspensions in bars 8 and 9 and in managing these as part of the sing-and-play task. Practise phrase 3 with extra care, singing and playing separately until mastered, with a keen awareness of the rhythmic placement of each note, before combining with other phrases step by step.

To enhance tuning, sing the re at the end of phrase 1 (bar 3) with good-quality intonation that is informed by the knowledge that this note is the 5th of chord V. Create a resonant and secure 5th interval between this note and the lower so, the root of the chord. At the start of bar 5, place the low B flat carefully, drawing on the knowledge that this is the root of chord IV at this point. Notice the effective use of contrary motion that is a striking feature of this very balanced canon, and work to tune the intervals carefully as the parts arrive from opposite directions.

WITH YOUR CHOIR OR SINGING GROUP

Embrace the three-bar phrase structure that is a distinctive feature of this piece. A unified breath before each of the four phrases can help with this and also bring clarity of articulation and a sense of the overall structure to the performance of the canon.

Encourage your singers to shape longer notes, particularly those occurring on strong beats, such as the C in bar 1, the D in bar 2, and the B flat in bar 8, as well as the suspensions: the G leading into bar 9 and the F in the middle of bar 9, to enhance the harmonic effects of these moments, as well as to maintain energy and drive.

IN THE MUSIC LESSON

Use this canon to explore suspensions as a melodic feature, as well as their roles in relation to their harmonic contexts. The suspension at bar 8–9 is obvious in the score because the note G (part of chord V, C major) is held across the barline before resolving down to the note F that is the 3rd of chord vi (D minor) at that point. The suspension immediately following, in the middle of bar 9, is less visually obvious, but we can hear it clearly as the note F is held on after the aforementioned D minor chord to become a suspended 4th above the bass note C. It then resolves downwards to the 3rd, E, thus forming a 4-3 suspension on the dominant.

The canon also serves as an example of unusual phrase lengths. The three-bar phrases here form a contrast to the 2- and 4-bar phrase structures that are much more common in the canon repertoire and in music more broadly. This piece can therefore serve as a gateway to unusual phrase structures in a range of musical contexts.

