

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

5. d m r d l t d m r d l r l r d l d d t l t l m

9. m si l m m si l l l f l l d m m m l

choir



CANON IN E MINOR - SCHUBERT

USING THIS CANON

Compiled for the Presto project
by Dr Róisín Blunnie

Dublin City University, 2023

FOR DEVELOPING YOUR POLYPHONIC SKILLS

Schubert's Canon in E minor offers an opportunity to experience the 6/8 time signature in a canon context. The melody uses the full harmonic minor scale, including the raised 7th, si, which we encounter at bars 9 and 10. Use the tonic triad la-do-mi as a strong point of reference throughout, and pitch the other notes carefully in relation to those of the triad to enhance immediate and overall tuning. Observe the chord progression iv-i-ic-V⁷-i that occurs in the second half of the piece, and bring this harmonic awareness to bear on the accurate placement of each melodic pitch.

This canon features the cadential ic-V⁷-i in the minor key, with the 3rd of the chord implied rather than explicit in this three-part texture. Support this progression with secure, harmonically informed singing of the bass notes mi-mi-la at the end of phrase 3.

WITH YOUR CHOIR OR SINGING GROUP

In 6/8 time, when performing at a moderate to fast tempo, feel the two distinct beats in each bar, each beat having the duration of a dotted crotchet, and conduct using a 2 pattern to allow fluency and momentum in the phrases.

Use tailored warm-up exercises and draw on the singers' theoretical knowledge and previous experience to forge a strong feeling for the first and fifth degrees of the minor key (la and mi). Upon this foundation, practise challenging intervals in isolation, such as the ascending minor 6th la-fa in bar 11; and place the corresponding descending major 3rd la-fa carefully at bar 3, so that the fa is sufficiently higher than the fifth degree, mi, which is reached later in the same bar in both cases.

IN THE MUSIC LESSON

Use this canon to explore the musical characteristics of the 6/8 time signature: its structure, beats, and typical rhythmic patterns. Observe that in this context, one beat is equal to a dotted crotchet, or the value of three quavers, and discuss how this differs from other time signatures that are based on beat values of a crotchet or minim, et cetera. Find a variety of examples of music in 6/8 time, and practise conducting these, normally with 2 beats per bar.

Compare the upbeat of this canon with upbeats encountered in other time signatures. Discuss the impact of the upbeat on the final bar of each phrase.

Use this canon to build on the students' knowledge of the parallel major and minor (explored in the Presto Level 1 canon 'Ah, Poor Bird'). Sing the canon with a major tonality (for example E major), beginning s-s-m-r-d. Figure out suitable solfa, and enjoy the contrasting mood of the three-part version in the major key.