

1. 2. 3. 4.

Good - night, stars our light, dark-ness guard us through the night.

choir



GOODNIGHT, STARS OUR LIGHT

USING THIS CANON

Compiled for the Presto project
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FOR DEVELOPING YOUR POLYPHONIC SKILLS

In this pentatonic melody, take particular care when singing the descending l-s-m in bar 2, and the concluding motif d-s-l in bar 4, as these pentatonic melodic ideas can easily drop in pitch, and ensure long notes are well-shaped to maintain momentum through the phrases. To help build good intonation, sing the melody while playing the first and/or the fifth degree (la and mi) on an instrument. Pitch the sung intervals carefully against the sustained notes, which act as an anchor to the overall tonality.

WITH YOUR CHOIR OR SINGING GROUP

Teach the song phrase by phrase, taking time to look after the many details that enhance the musical quality. In particular, draw the singers' attention to the importance of taking care with the placement and energy of repeated notes and of descending pentatonic motifs, as these have a tendency to drop in pitch, and ensure you demonstrate these well, drawing on your own musicianship and vocal technique. When singing with text, optimise the blend by encouraging unified vowels, especially the 'ah' vowel in the words 'night', 'stars', 'light', 'darkness' and 'guard'.

To help pave the way towards good tuning, incorporate short pentatonic motifs (such as l-m-l; l-d-m-d-l; l-r-l; l,-l'-s-m-l'; l,-m-r-d-l,) into the warm-up, encouraging accurate intervals through good-quality demonstration and call-and-response exercises.

When the melody is secure and musical in unison, introduce one or more additional parts step by step. This canon works well in two, three or four parts, but because it uses a pentatonic tone set, even more parts may be added successfully, by shortening the distance between the entries, to create a sort of pentatonic cloud.

IN THE MUSIC LESSON

Use *Goodnight, Stars Our Light* as a gateway into the world of pentatonic music. Analyse the structure of the pentatonic scale, and explore this common and distinctive tone set in folk songs, popular songs and compositions in many musical genres.

Use the 'Stop-Go' activity to develop singers' inner hearing: raise your hand to make a 'stop' sign for some of the phrases. Singers should sing these phrases 'in silence', resuming audible singing when you remove the stop sign. For the 'silent' phrases, singers imagine the sound, thus nurturing their inner hearing or audiation skills.

Creative activity: Sing a free-rhythm version of this canon, where each singer begins independently and sings the melody using the rhythm and tempo of their choice. This builds confidence in independent singing, encourages individual rhythmic creativity, and serves as a stepping stone towards contemporary compositional techniques.

LEARN MORE

To learn more about challenges and solutions for tuning in this canon, see the 'Intonation Awareness' section of the Presto Choral Resources.

