



1. Ah, poor bird, 2. take thy flight, 3. far a-bove the sor - rows of 4. this sad night.

choir



AH, POOR BIRD

USING THIS CANON

Compiled for the Presto project
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Dublin City University, 2023

FOR DEVELOPING YOUR POLYPHONIC SKILLS

In this canon we can gain experience in the use of relative solfa for the minor key, helping us to improve our awareness of each note's function in the tonality. Note the raised seventh, si. To help achieve good tuning, maintain a strong feeling for the first and the fifth degrees (la and mi) of the key, playing these on an instrument if helpful, and maintain momentum and strong tonal feeling on the descending line towards the end of the melody.

WITH YOUR CHOIR OR SINGING GROUP

This canon is a useful resource for singers to gain experience with the minor key. Notice that bars 1, 2, and 4 have identical rhythm and similar stepwise movement, but bar 3 is rhythmically and melodically busier, and will need more emphasis in the teaching process. As part of the initial learning steps, you could ask the singers to sing bars 1 and 2, then you sing the more active bar 3, and they rejoin for bar 4. Then isolate bar 3 for careful teaching, before putting the full melody together.

When the melody is securely known and confidently sung in unison, proceed to adding a second and later further parts using a step-by-step process, ensuring each step is mastered before moving to the next. Cue each part clearly at the appropriate point.

IN THE MUSIC LESSON

Develop music reading and writing skills through a guided dictation exercise. When the melody has been learned successfully by ear, provide the notation of bars 1 and 3 only. Then fill in the gaps: work together using singing and discussion to discover the rhythm and melodic pitches of bars 2 and 4 and notate these.

When singing in four parts, each phrase begins with the notes of the tonic triad (l-d-m) sounding together. Draw attention to this using singing and notation. Explore the tonic triad in this context as a foundation for further experience of music in the minor key.

Use this canon to explore the concept of the parallel major and minor, also known as the tonic major and minor, in this case C major and C minor. After learning the original melody securely in C minor, sing it with a major tonality, beginning on the same pitch. Use a neutral syllable first, and then sing the new melody using suitable solfa for the major key (starting on do). Guide your students in discovering the concept of parallel major and minor. Notate the major version in C major and discuss the differences. Later, compare the concept of parallel major and minor with the concept of relative major and minor.

LEARN MORE

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