

Preparing to Sing

Warm-ups are an essential means of getting your voice working well, but they also do so much more. They're crucial in building a group that works well together and where no one feels left out. They bridge the gap between life outside the rehearsal room and inside, and start the process of working creatively together. So whether your group is a long-standing choir that has been going for years or made up of strangers meeting together for an hour or two to sing, start your session with warm-ups.

In a good warm-up session singers can:

- unwind from their day outside the rehearsal room;
- connect with the other singers in the room;
- animate their whole body in preparation to sing;
- learn about their own voice—how to use it safely and make it work differently or better;
- reinforce habits that make for safe singing;
- be given tools to aid the learning of songs they're going to be working on later in the session;
- build stamina, flexibility, resonance, and colour into their singing;
- learn to listen to each other and improve their harmony singing, blending, and pitching skills;
- learn to follow and respond intuitively as a group.

For the group leader it's also a place where you can safely take some space to be creative and intuitive, and push your leadership skills out of your comfort zone.

In this section there are ideas for six different areas of warm-up. Not all areas will be necessary in every session for every choir, but as a basic minimum always include some kind of social warm-up (even if that's as simple as making name badges or sharing tea and coffee with each other), a body stretch, and a siren. Approach them in that order. If you're looking to do a longer warm-up, then choose an exercise or two from each section.

There are also three 'framework' exercises that can be adapted to cover a multitude of warm-up ideas and group improvisation in a fun and creative way.

Finally, an important part of community singing is about having a warm, big-hearted approach towards group work, and part of that is to acknowledge that not everyone may be comfortable vocalizing sounds or moving in a group. Some of these exercises will work more easily with some age groups than others. So after choosing an exercise, think carefully whether it will suit your group. Will it work as it is, or does it need to be adapted and built up over several sessions? Are there easier steps you could put in place to support your singers? Think of these warm-ups as springboards for your own creativity and tailor them to suit your group. Remember that it's your job as leader to set up your group to succeed and feel good, not to make them squirm and feel uncomfortable. Incremental steps towards building trust are the way to go.

Social

Social warm-ups are about becoming a team. Singers break down barriers, learn names, and find out about each other. They recognize that people arrive at rehearsals from busy lives with all sorts of other things going on in their heads, and help build a community, even if

5 A Twist in the Air

RESOURCES ▶ CD tracks 9–10 (learning tracks); website track 5 (performance);
▶ CD track 157 (backing)

Alison Burns

♩ = 100

A

Voices

Piano (optional)

mf *mp*

D Gmaj7

There's a

3 (*) *

twist in the air and the scent of sum - mer on the

D F#m/C#

5

rain, _____ there's a twist in the air and the

Bm Asus4 D

mf *mp*

13 Down in the River to Pray

RESOURCES ► CD tracks 33–6 (learning tracks); website track 14 (performance);
► CD track 164 (backing)

■ You need to know

This song comes out of the African-American slave experience, and while there are printed versions of it dating from the mid 1800s, it is probably much older. More recently it has become well known through its inclusion in the sound-track to the film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, where it's sung by Alison Krauss. With the compelling simplicity of its tune and words, it makes a wonderful song for gatherings and performances.

■ Starting

- Expression, not flawless technique, is what matters here, so start with a call-and-response warm-up that has lots of vocal expression built into it. Sing the lines of the chorus melody and get the group to echo back, matching the colour and style of your singing.
- Pick one of the expressive chord sequences on p. xxix and sing it with the group, getting them to choose the style and timbre of the chords.

■ Learning

- Teach the tune (soprano part) of verse 1, taking care to make sure everyone is singing the same version.
- Teach the alto part next (chorus and verse), but let the other singers hum the tune very quietly as the altos learn. This sets up the harmonic landscape of the piece and makes it easier to sing the right notes—it also keeps everyone involved in the learning process.
- Next teach the bass, and finally the tenor part. Again, encourage the whole group to hum their parts quietly.

■ Listen out

- There is a danger with well-known songs that people know slightly different versions, so emphasize the importance of re-learning the tune and sticking to the same version.
- The second line of verse 4 has more words in it. Check out the music for this line on p. 40 and practise it so everyone is singing together.
- Remember that—especially with *a cappella* singing—the words and silences are everything you have to make rhythm. To focus on the importance of the words, sing through a verse pronouncing just the consonants, making them as short, clipped, and explosive as you can. Then reverse the exercise and sing it just using vowels; let the group exaggerate the vowel sounds and become aware of how much you can move your face. Follow this by singing a verse through normally and

listen out for what differences the exercise has made. Lean into the words and make the consonants and the vowels really work hard for you.

■ Creating a performance

- A drone on the note D works as a backing for the chorus, so you could begin the song with a solo voice over a drone, with everyone joining in for verse 1.
- The song needs a natural, unforced sound, and while it's the simplest thing to sing for fun in an informal setting, its simplicity is exactly what's challenging in performance. Then, it has to have an emotional intensity that will keep an audience gripped through five verses and choruses. Aim to renew focus with each new verse, and make sure the singers follow your every gesture and lean into the words, articulating the text very clearly. Try for silences between phrases and verses where you can hear a pin drop.
- Omit one or more verses to make a shorter song. You might also like to try this version sung by the Fisk Jubilee Singers as they toured the world in 1865. Verse and chorus are reversed here. Follow the natural stresses of the words to fit the words of the verses to the tune.

1. As I went down in the valley to pray,
studying about that good old way,
you shall wear the starry crown,
good Lord, show me the way.

Chorus

By and by we'll all go down,
all go down, all go down,
by and by we'll all go down,
down in the valley to pray.

2. I think I hear the sinner* say,
come, let's go to the valley to pray,
you shall wear the starry crown,
good Lord, show me the way.
3. I think I hear the mourner say,
come, let's go to the valley to pray,
you shall wear the starry crown,
good Lord, show me the way.

*Or you could substitute 'sister', 'brother', 'mother', or 'father'.

To simplify:

- The song also works well as a two-part version with tenors joining the sopranos on their part an octave lower, and basses joining the altos an octave lower.

13 Down in the River to Pray

$\text{♩} = 54$ Chorus Trad. American

S. A.

T. B.

Piano (optional)

As I went down in the ri-ver to pray,

$\text{♩} = 54$ G

4

stu - dy - ing a - bout that good old way, and who shall wear the

D G G/F#

23 Give me wings

RESOURCES ► CD tracks 71–5 (learning tracks); website track 24 (performance);
► CD track 167 (backing)

■ You need to know

This song was inspired by accounts of NATO bombings on Lebanon that caused the deaths and injury of many children and adult civilians. It is a prayer, a plea to be raised above the troubles of the world. Although written in a gospel blues style and with a gentle swing and minor key, it can feel empowering and uplifting, and needs to be sung in a way that gives it such strength. It can be sung by mixed voices as written or by equal voices (men or women). The song works well either *a cappella* or with a gospel-style syncopated piano accompaniment. A simple piano part covering the basic chords is included here, which can help with learning the harmony and can provide the basis for an improvised stylish accompaniment as required.

■ Starting

- Explore the minor triad this song is based on (the first three notes of the tune). Ask everyone to choose one note and hum it, making a sung chord. Do this on the five vowel sounds—‘air’, ‘eeh’, ‘aah’, ‘ohh’, and ‘ooh’.
- Develop this into a listening game. Give the group a vowel sound and ask them to sing it on their chosen note from the triad. Set them walking around the room; when they meet someone singing the same note they continue as a pair until meeting others, and so on until the whole group has formed three clusters, each one singing the same note.
- Repeat, but this time ask singers to choose a vowel sound as well, then seek out other people singing the same note *and* the same vowel. They may not find anyone!
- Establish a slow three-beat pulse with a thigh slap on beat 1 and claps on beats 2 and 3. Once this is set up, teach the first phrase of the tune (the first four bars), sung in one breath if possible to give it a musical line and expression.

■ Learning

- Link with the warm-up game. Get everyone to find their own personal space, well spread out, and then sing the opening phrase. Over 12 silent beats, walk to another space, then sing it again. Do this several times. In the silences, suggest ways they could vary their singing—loud, quiet, smooth, like an opera singer, like a young child—exploring different vocal timbres and volumes.

- When this phrase is confident, teach the fourth phrase (bars 12–16)—this is simply the first complete bar of the tune looped as if stuck in a groove, giving a nice feeling of tension towards the end. Sing the first phrase and join it with the fourth.
- Start again, but this time you sing the second and third phrases to the group while they listen before adding the final phrase; this helps set out the structure.
- Teach the second phrase (bars 5–8), repeating often until secure, then repeat the above step with the leader adding in phrase 3 (bars 8–12).
- Finally teach phrase 3 and put the whole tune together; after this ‘scaffolding’ of the learning it should be very secure.
- Look at the tenor part next. This is a very gentle line which covers fewer notes than the tune. Sing it quietly so as not to dominate, making sure it maintains the pulse.
- Try the two parts together, then work on the bass line, teaching it in the same way. Once this is covered, the group has a solid three-part version of the song suitable for performing.
- The clearest part to add next is the descant, which sits above everything else and suits the higher voices. Take care with the second phrase, particularly moving from bar 6 to bar 7.
- The alto part should be added last, because it is very similar to the tune but bumps along close to the tenor line and will require more confident singers who can hold their nerve! Keep the vocal sound gentle, yet committed, and then these ‘clashes’ will give the piece its rich texture.

■ Listen out

- Listen carefully to the tuning in bar 7 where two voices have a G $\sharp$; this must be in tune. Support with lots of breath and a strong diaphragm, so it doesn’t sit under the note.
- Make sure the basses move accurately in bar 11; get them to sing ‘this poor sorry world’ with each of the other parts in turn to check they are stepping up the intervals correctly in bars 11–12 (two semitones, then a whole tone—tricky intervals to tune well).
- Check that you keep a lazy, relaxed, bluesy style going throughout this song, but don’t let the tone sag or the tempo speed up.
- Slightly slow down and ‘stroke’ the words ‘poor sorry world’ to emphasize them.

23 Give me wings

Alison Burns

Swing ♩ = 94

Descant

Tune

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Am

Give me wings in the morn-ing — so

Give me wings in the morn - ing so that

Give me wings in the morn - ing so that

Give me wings, oh give me wings, oh give me

Give me wings in the morn - ing so

5 Am/E G/E Dm Am Dm Am

I — can fly, wings in the morn-ing so that

I — can fly, — give me wings in the morn-ing so that

I — can fly, — give me wings in the morn-ing so that

wings so I can fly a - way, wings, oh give me wings, oh give me

I can fly, wings in the morn-ing so

24 Shona malanga

RESOURCES ► CD tracks 76–80 (learning tracks); website track 25 (performance)

■ You need to know

This Zulu song grew out of the apartheid era in South Africa. Thursday was traditionally the day off for black people working in the cities and they would use the day to meet up with each other to activate and motivate, and to talk and sing about the fight against apartheid and for better working conditions and salaries. The words mean: ‘Shorten the days until we meet again, the struggle for freedom continues.’ ‘A luta continua’ is a Portuguese phrase and was the rallying cry of the FRELIMO movement from neighbouring Mozambique, where there was a strong Portuguese colonial presence, during its own war for independence. This song can be adapted to make many versions for beginner groups or experienced performers. Eventually it needs to be sung with huge gusto and physicalized rhythm to help everyone ‘get inside’ the song and give it some passion.

■ Starting

- Get the feel and energy of the piece by walking on the spot to a pulse of about 149 bpm. Everyone can sing the chorus soprano line in bars 12b–20; aim for a strong and sustained sound which moves with the steps on the beat, except at the syncopated moments in bars 15 and 19.
- Add the other voices a line at a time to build up the chord backing; try with different dynamics—joyous and robust down to quiet but still with energy. Invite one part (e.g. tenors) to sing strongly while the others are quiet, and keep changing—this gives scope for playing with balance later.
- Add offbeat hand-claps to give more of a rhythmic feel; perhaps attempt the above at a faster tempo, but don’t let it get untidy.
- Keep marching and speak the words in bars 4–5 (‘shona malanga, shona’) in a loop until everyone has the very syncopated rhythms together and feeling natural.

■ Learning

- This song can be learnt by the chorus without the lead part, which can be added later. Make sure the Starting work has been covered thoroughly, then tackle the first 11 bars, a line at a time: soprano, bass, then the inner voices. Loop this until secure; the lead singer could join at this point.
- Add the middle section (bars 12–28).

- Bars 29–38 are exactly the same as the first section, so string all three together with the chorus, and when secure add the lead solo—this is virtually the whole piece.
- This is a good time to focus on the language and pronunciation. There are no diphthongs in the Zulu language, so each vowel sound should be correctly pronounced to make the song sound both energetic and authentic: ‘a’ as in ‘ant’, ‘e’ as in ‘egg’, ‘i’ as in ‘igloo’, ‘o’ as in ‘odd’, and ‘u’ as in ‘July’. The word ‘shona’ should sound as in ‘shone’ and not become anglicized into ‘showna’.
- The next stage, and possibly at another rehearsal, is to explore bars 39–45, which can also be used as a warm-up exercise. Invite the sopranos and tenors to sing together first, then altos and basses, then put them all together. Walk around the room singing this section: it should sound very percussive and energized.
- Make sure the singers are really physical about the pick-up notes throughout the piece, as they are a recurring feature and give the song its distinctive groove. Lean into the sound; show this in your leading.
- Put the last three bars together, then link with the previous section.
- To keep the piece well together, practise and clarify the signals you as the leader/conductor are going to give the group to help and guide them from one section to the next. Practise your gestures with clear eye contact.

■ Listen out

- Encourage the group to listen always to the lead singer’s call, as it will guide them into the next section. Check they are coming in accurately and without too much fuss in the sound—the leader and group must sound as one.
- Listen carefully to the vowel sounds to be sure they are as authentic as possible; try some simple exercises focusing on one at a time to reinforce this and as a brain break in rehearsal.
- The syncopated and quick entries may not be absolutely together; many singers do not always feel such rhythms easily, so keep working on them. When confident, attempt to make the rhythms effortless without accenting or bumping them too much, but don’t lose energy!
- Check that the ending is together, particularly if the tempo slows a little.

■ Creating a performance

- This piece works well as a two-part song for a smaller group or any group still in its learning journey that is not quite ready to share the whole thing. Divide the group equally (mix the men and women) and use just the lead voice and soprano part.
- Your performance could begin with the lead as written, or with bars 12b–28 (the less rhythmic middle section) without the call; this could also be used as an outro to the whole piece.
- Add interest to the performance with dynamic contrast. The slower, longer notes of the middle section could be quieter and much smoother, before bursting back into life in bar 28.
- This makes a good song for outdoor performances. Sing it with a strong, clear (but not forced) tone.
- In the South African tradition of choral singing the choir is still for the first and last times the song is sung, but moves the rest of the time. The signal for the last time through is when the conductor stops moving and stands still. Encourage your group to move either together or as individuals in their own way.
- Consider the ending—strong and grand, or gentle and reflective? The struggle continues.

24 Shona malanga

Light swing ♩ = 149

Zulu song

C

Lead
Soprano

Sho-na ma-lan-ga, —

sho-na ma-lan-ga, —

S.

Sho - - na, —

sho-

A.

Sho - - na, —

sho-

T.

Sho - - na, —

sho-

B.

Sho - - na, —

sho-

4

F

G

C

sho-na ma-lan-ga, —

sho-na ma-lan-ga, —

- na ma-lan-ga, sho - na, —

sho - - na, —

sho-

- na ma-lan-ga, sho - na, —

sho - - na, —

sho-

- na ma-lan-ga, sho - na, —

sho - - na, —

sho-

- na ma-lan-ga, sho - na, —

sho - - na, —

sho-

8 F G C

he si - zo,

- na ma-lan-ga, sho - na, di - ba - na, di - ba -

- na ma-lan-ga, sho - na, di - ba - na, di - ba -

- na ma-lan-ga, sho - na, di - ba - na, di - ba -

- na ma-lan-ga, sho - na, di - ba - na, di - ba -

11 1. 2. C7

Sho-na ma-lan-ga, he si-zo di-ba - na,

- na, di-ba - na, Sho - - na, di-ba - na, oh

- na, di-ba - na, Sho - - na, di-ba - na, oh

- na, di-ba - na, Sho - - na, di-ba - na, oh

- na, di-ba - na, Sho - - na, di-ba - na, oh

31 Love Call Me Home

RESOURCES ► CD tracks 105–8 (learning tracks); website track 32 (performance)

You need to know

This beautiful affirmation of community and friendship was written in 2001 by the great American songwriter Peggy Seeger. Like lots of Peggy's songs, it has a big-hearted feel and makes a wonderful performance piece for lots of singers, but is equally good for informal singing sessions. This version is harmonized by Peter Amidon, one of America's outstanding community choir arrangers. The style should be loose and informal.

Starting

- Establish a buoyant 6/8 feel by swaying from side to side to a pulse of about one beat per second.
- Whisper the words 'love call me home' in the rhythm of bars 7–8; add clapping to the rhythm. Speak the words right at the front of the mouth. Aim for lightness and that lovely 'rolling along' feel that 6/8 has by leaning a little into the words that fall on the pulse.
- To develop this further, divide into four groups and, using these rhythmic patterns from the song, have each group speak and clap a different pattern.

Love call me home.

Time fer - ry me down the ri - ver, -

Safe - ly ov - er, on my jour - ney,

Life tend me, friends car - ry me

- Fade the speaking out so that the groups are just clapping. Then make the clapping quieter by using four fingers, then three, two, and lastly just one finger against the other palm. This means everyone has to listen carefully and work harder at keeping the rhythm together—then bring the speech back in and stop the clapping altogether.

Learning

- Develop the Starting exercises into singing by teaching the soprano part for the first verse, a phrase at a time.
- Next add the bass, alto, and lastly tenor. While you teach each part, get the rest of the choir to gently tap the main pulse established at the start; in fact, aim to

keep this pulse in play from the first moment until the tune is learnt by everyone. This constantly reinforces how to keep the rhythm moving along.

- At this point it is probably best to sing all the verses, rather like a hymn, and the singers could have a copy of the words. This will work well without the chorus for the moment and will help consolidate the music and produce a confident sound. Note the slight rhythmic differences in the later verses to fit the words; make sure all singers are together on these.
- Teach the soprano melody of the chorus to everyone to sing in unison; as the words are the same each time, it is now possible to sing or even perform the whole song.
- Finally, when the group is ready to move on, add the alto, tenor, and bass of the chorus. Note the pause in the fourth bar of the chorus each time.

Listen out

- Keep the rhythm light and moving along. Don't be pedantic about pronouncing every word, as it will slow the song down and you'll lose the rolling feel. Identify the important words in a line and head for them. For instance, in the first line of verse 1 'When', 'waters', and 'deep' need to be clearly heard, but 'the' and 'are' can be skimmed over.
- The altos and tenors might enjoy 'scooping' in the last bar of each verse; it's completely in the style of the song, so make a feature of it.
- 'Ferry' is an unusual song-word, so make sure it's clear and the audience can hear it.
- Make sure that the soprano phrase at the start of the chorus doesn't sound lazy. If you find singers aren't quite reaching the top note, stop and focus on it using this exercise and working from at least a tone below pitch to a couple of tones above.

Time fer - ry me down the ri - ver,

Time fer - ry me down the ri - ver,

Time fer - ry me down the ri - ver, etc.

Time fer - ry me down the ri - ver, -

■ Creating a performance

- In performance settings this is a lovely song to 'gather' voices. Begin with a solo voice and randomly add voices throughout the song until the whole choir is singing. This reinforces the ethos of the text by bringing together the 'community', and is especially effective if a stage is big enough for singers to walk into the gathering choir. Singers could enter singing.
- The phrases 'friends carry me over' and 'love call me home' appear in each verse, and these could be a 'collective call', sung by the group, with solos or small groups singing the phrases in between in unison or harmony. These small group interventions could be just two parts together, possibly varying the pair in each verse.
- As the music is so repetitive, introduce variety by asking the lower three parts to hum occasionally (to the 'ng' syllable), perhaps in verses 2 and 4.
- There is so much that can be done with this song. Ask the group what they think would be most effective and what they would enjoy. The ending should be quite emphatic and bold.

31 Love Call Me Home

Words and music: Peggy Seeger
arr. Peter Amidon

♩ = 60

F Dm7 Bb Gm9 C

S. A.

1. When the wa-ters are deep friends car - ry me o - ver, —
2. When the wa-ters are cold friends car - ry me o - ver, —
o - ver, —
o - ver, —

T. B.

o - ver, —
o - ver, —

5 F Dm7 Bb Gm7 Gm/C C

when I cry in my sleep love call me home. —
when I'm los - ing my hold love call me home. —

Chorus

9 F/A Gm7 F7 Bb F/A Gm9 C7/G

Time fer - ry me down the ri - ver, — friends car - ry me safe - ly o - ver,

13 F/A Gm7 F F/C Bb Gm/C C

life tend me on my jour - ney, love call me home. —

38 Zidele amathambo

RESOURCES ► CD tracks 133–6 (learning tracks); website track 39 (performance)

■ You need to know

‘Zidele amathambo’ is a Zulu phrase meaning ‘Give yourself up, bones as well’, which is a way of saying ‘Put your heart and soul into it’ or ‘Take a chance’. Bruce Knight heard this phrase and used the words to write this mesmeric and catchy cyclical song. The simple repeated riff lines make it easy to learn and hard to forget, and it works well as an upbeat celebration song. It is also very effective sung slowly, suggesting a gentler and more reflective kind of chance-taking. This is a great song for putting different rhythms together and building singers’ confidence in being able to hold their own part in the ensemble. It is also valuable for first experiences of simple chord changes when singing in harmony.

■ Starting

- Begin working on the piece by stepping from side to side on the pulse and speaking the words in time together.
- Vary the vocal sounds, perhaps in response to a signal from the leader—experiment with loud/quiet, hard/soft, etc. Invite members of the group to lead the signals.
- Speak the bass rhythm first, then the tenor; divide the group in half and put the parts together and loop until the rhythm is secure. Swap around, giving everyone the chance to try out the parts.

■ Learning

- Build on the spoken work by singing the bass line, then the alto line, then putting them together. Rhythmically they are almost the same, so this will enable the singers to listen to their tuning, moving up a whole tone carefully in bar 3. For the altos, the chromatic step from F# to F♮ bars 4–5 is a challenge, but don’t draw attention to it as such! Get the two parts to listen carefully so they land on a unison note F in bar 5, and all will be well.
- Teach the soprano call part, holding the long notes confidently to contrast with the rhythmic riffs below. To keep the pitching confident, encourage singers to imagine taking a big step when singing up the scale and a tiny step on the way down. To make harmonic sense of this part, it may be helpful to have the rest of the group hum the bass part while you teach it.
- The tenor line is much more of a rhythmic riff part using only two notes. It should be sung relatively quietly and the singers should not be tempted to move in bar 3 when the other parts do.
- The bass and tenor parts can also be made into a round. The entry point is halfway through (start of bar 5). This extension activity is a good way to reintroduce the song in the warm-up to a follow-up session.

■ Listen out

- Make sure the rhythms are really relaxed and fitting together with the pulse—side-stepping will help.
- Each riff pattern (two bars) is on just one chord; the tuning challenge is the change from one riff to another. Listen carefully to the change from bar 2 to bar 3—every part except tenor moves up a whole tone. Not only is this a notoriously difficult interval to tune accurately (it is often flat), but here three voices all do it at the same time! Practise this change by asking the singers to hold the notes of bar 2 on a long sound (singing ‘ah’), then move to their note in bar 3. Move back again, then repeat. Listen to the tuning and check that each part makes a large enough step.
- Bar 4 into 5 is a similar challenge, as soprano and bass both move up by the same interval (a minor third) but the alto drops by the smallest interval (semitone); the tenor should not move! Repeat the slow exercise suggested above, moving back and forth across the two chords to check that everyone moves correctly to keep the harmony in tune.
- The soprano long notes might fade away a little; make sure the energy lasts until the end, getting slightly louder if necessary.

■ Creating a performance

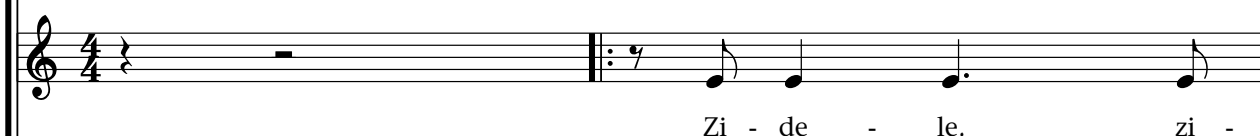
- This song can be put together in any order of entry and it sounds really effective building it up. The soprano and bass parts make a great duet, so you could begin with this. The group can decide which part to bring in next—take a vote!
- Build the texture until there is a good strong sound, full of energy, putting over the encouraging message of the song.
- To add visual interest, ask the alto, tenor, and bass parts to make a physical movement when they change notes: they should change position in some way, but stand still. This could be turning to one side, raising arms, or creating some other shape. If each singer is doing something individual it could look very effective to the audience. Experiment with some ideas.
- Consider how to end the song, thinking about what impact you want to create. This could be with a single part or solo voice—for example the soprano melody, ending with a long note as shown in the last-time bars—or it could be in full harmony.

38 Zidele amathambo

Swing ♩ = 110

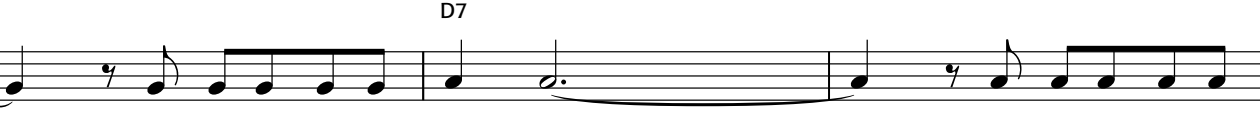
Bruce Knight

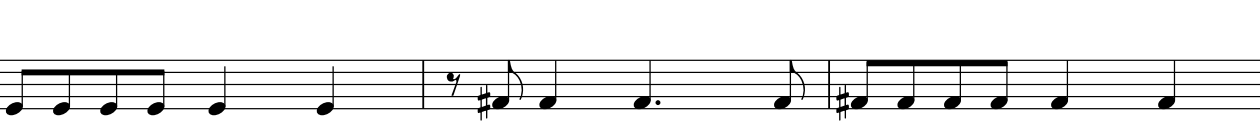
S.  Zi - de - le a - ma - tham - bo,

A.  Zi - de - le, zi -

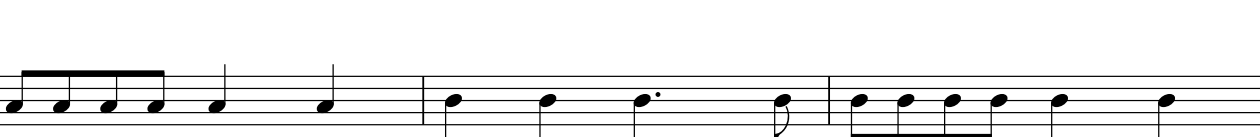
T.  Zi - de - le, zi - de - le,

B.  Zi - de - le, zi -

2  zi - de - le a - ma - tham - bo, zi - de - le a - ma -

 - de - le a - ma - tham - bo, zi - de - le, zi - de - le a - ma - tham - bo,

 zi - de - le a - ma - tham - bo, zi - de - le, zi - de - le, zi - de - le a - ma - tham - bo, -

 - de - le a - ma - tham - bo, zi - de - le, zi - de - le a - ma - tham - bo,

41 Old Woman

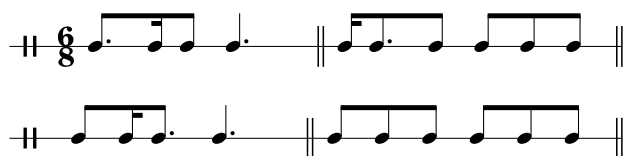
RESOURCES ► CD tracks 145–7 (learning tracks); website track 42 (performance)

 You need to know

This celebratory affirmation of old age makes a wonderful song for singers of all ages and is written by Pauline Down, one of Britain's leading Natural Voice singing facilitators. It has a dancing feel with lovely contrasts between the unison and minimal harmony of the verses and the rolling three-part chorus. The simple harmony lends itself to accompaniments of drones and drumming while the song's dramatic narrative presents possibilities for simple gestures, movement, and imaginative placement of singers in performance.

 Starting

- Begin with some breathing exercises that make a deep breath last a long time. Breathe in slowly, hold it for a few seconds, then hiss slowly until empty, without collapsing the body—keep standing tall.
- Repeat this, but on the out breath count numbers as quickly as possible with clear diction. What's the highest number anyone can achieve? Set the target of going five higher! This not only controls the airflow but demands active tongue and lips—essential for this song.
- Do some exercises and massages that warm up the face and tongue (see pp. xx–xxi). Follow this with some work on crisp diction by singing 'The wind blew through the whiskers' on p. xxv.
- Next set up a 6/8 pulse with a feeling of two beats in a bar where the group is stepping on beats 1 and 2. Over this pulse do a call-and-response clapping and chanting game using some of the rhythms from the song:



Learning

- Teach everybody the tune of the first verse—part 1. Break it into small sections and make sure it's rhythmically precise so that the group gets used to the dancing feel of the song. Sing all four verses in unison so that the whole group is confident. Take care where the rhythms differ between verses and make sure these are always accurate.

- Return to verse 2 and add part 2. Make sure it still dances along like the tune, even though it has only three different pitches.
- Do the same with verse 3, adding in parts 2 and 3 (the music for part 2 is the same as in verse 2). The challenge at all times is to articulate the words clearly, so slow down the pulse for rehearsal purposes.
- Now look at verse 4: this has the same music as verse 3 but with different words.
- Finally, look at the chorus (section C, upbeat to bar 25). The tune is still in part 1, but here the other two parts are much more lyrical and feel like the tune rather than accompanying lines. Tackle these parts by doing some separate sectional work. When each part is confident, get back together and enjoy singing at each other, like a vocal combat. The effect can be quite theatrical!

 Listen out

- Is there a good strong pulse? To help keep the rhythm buoyant, lean a little into the pronunciation of the words that fall on the main beats.
- Are the words crisp and clear? Practise by saying them slowly, then chanting them in tempo to a whisper, keeping the tongue energized.
- Check the balance in the verses when all three parts are singing; singers need to be aware of who has the tune. If necessary, a few more singers could be assigned to part 1.

■ Creating a performance

- Remind singers that they are telling a story when they sing this song. They must try and communicate with the audience as well as keeping an eye on the conductor.
- Sing verse 1 again at the very end as a way of coming back down and ending in a calm place.
- The song works well with a small drum or bodhrán, and it can be helpful to include this while the singers are getting used to the rhythm.
- Sing the chorus in unison the first time. Then add harmony parts the second time.

41 Old Woman

Dancing ♩ = 76
Gm

Pauline Down

1. There was an old wo-man who lived in a wood, she

tend - ed her fire and she did all she could to keep warm and a - live eat - ing

2. Her

hot bread and soup; old wo-man a - lone in the wood. 2. Her

A

bo-dy now bo - ny, her skin hang-ing slack, her teeth cracked and yel-low, bent

bo-dy now bo - ny, her skin hang-ing slack, her teeth cracked and yel-low, bent

crook - ed her back, not much hair left to comb, were her

crook - ed her back, not much hair left to comb, were her

14 Dm D7b9 Gm

3. But

lips ev - er red? Old wo-man a - lone in her bed. 3. But

lips ev - er red? Old wo-man a - lone in her bed. 3. But

B

17 Gm F

wait, have I told you the sto - ry quite right, her se - cret that hap-pened each

wait, have I told you the sto - ry quite right, her se - cret that hap-pened each

wait, have I told you the sto - ry quite right, her se - cret that hap-pened each

20 D7b9 Gm

thir - ti - eth night that sent blood skip-ping soft - ly with

thir - ti - eth night that sent blood skip-ping soft - ly with

thir - ti - eth night that sent blood skip-ping soft - ly with

22 Dm D7b13 Gm

smiles from her heart; old wo-man was rea-dy to start?

smiles from her heart; old wo-man was rea-dy to start? When the

smiles from her heart; old wo-man was rea-dy to start? When the