

Rhythm Teaching Notes

Starting out

This song requires a focused and energetic delivery and a strong sense of rhythm throughout, so it is worth instilling these from the beginning.

- Plan ahead; look at the song and how many sections it has. *Rhythm* has four verses and four choruses, and the final chorus has a small tweak to make it feel more exciting.
- Decide how many rehearsals you will have before your performance, and then make sure you will cover each section of the song in your rehearsals to come, leaving a bit of time to repeat and practise the whole song.
- Consider playing the recording of the whole song at the start of the first rehearsal so that your singers can hear what they are aiming for. You can also return to it throughout your rehearsal period.
- Arrange your singers into a circle or semicircle so that they can hear each other well when practising and learning.

Warmup idea 1: Basic stretches

It is a really good idea to get your singers to physically warm up before rehearsal. Your group can do these warmups either standing up or sitting down.

- Ask your singers to reach up their hands to the ceiling, alternating between their left and right hands.
- Then, reaching up with both hands at the same time, get them to stretch as far as they can.
- While they slowly bring their arms down to their sides, ask them to stretch their left arm to the left and right arm to the right. This will give a great stretch across the chest.
- Finally, with their arms by their sides, ask your singers to slowly roll their shoulders forwards a few times. Repeat this with rolling shoulders backwards.

Warmup idea 2: Diction

Warming up the mouth and lips will help with your singers' diction later.

- Ask your singers to stick their tongues out and try to write their names using the tip of their tongues.
- You can even ask them to give you a big yawn, as this will help them to relax and prepare them to sing well later!

Warmup idea 3: Breath control

This isn't a breath holding exercise—it's about breath control, and this is really important for singing.

- Have your singers imagine that their index finger is a candle, and they are going to blow it out with a short, strong breath.
- Ask them to blow it out with four pulses of breath, without breathing in between blows.
- You can then ask them to do this with six, or even eight, short, strong blows.

Warmup idea 4: Finding the pulse (or 'heartbeat')

Because this song is all about rhythm, it is useful to choose a warmup that will make the group think about how they can work together to produce a unified sound.

- Ask your singers to stamp (or clap) once together. This can be done standing or sitting. You want everyone's foot to hit the floor at *exactly* the same time, so it sounds like one loud stamp. This takes more practice than you think! It is likely that the first few attempts will be a bit messy, but it will improve as your singers start to focus on each other. This will take some focused listening and concentration, but both are good foundations for group singing.
- Once they've achieved this, ask them to stamp twice together, looking for the same sense of togetherness. Next ask them to do it with three steps, and then four steps. Now you've found the metre of the song. Get your choir to stamp or clap along with the recording to feel the pulse, or heartbeat, of the song.

Teaching the lyrics and melody

- Begin with the chorus, teaching it by speaking the lyrics one line at a time.
- The quaver (eighth-note) and semiquaver (sixteenth-note) rhythms in this song help to create the energy evoked by the words, but without attention they will speed up easily. When practising the lyrics aim to keep those rhythms even. Once they are comfortable at a slower speed, increase the speed of each attempt gradually until you reach your desired pace. Repetition of a couple of lines, or one section at a time, is a great way to do this.
- Now you can teach the melody in the same way, one line at a time, and be prepared to sing at a slower pace until everyone sings it accurately. There are some lines that may need a little more work to feel comfortable, but this will come with confidence and repetition.
- Although the song is repetitive, there are some crucial melodic differences between each line of the verses. It is worth taking time for the singers to learn the melody accurately when you introduce a new section. If particular lines need a little more attention, consider practising the melody without using lyrics (e.g. use a simple sound like 'la' or 'da'). Then go back to singing the lyrics once the melody is more accurate.
- There are some handclaps to be included in the performance too. Once your singers have learnt a section, show them where to clap. It is easier to do this as you learn each section rather than waiting until you've learnt the whole song.

More ideas

- To help your singers feel the energy needed to perform, ask them to walk around the room, ensuring their feet keep the pulse as they did in the warmup. Make sure the group pulse is secure, neither speeding up nor slowing down. Now ask them to sing the song while keeping this pulse and see if they can keep the pace of the song steady! Once they've tried this a few times, ask them to go back to standing still (or sitting still) and see if they can keep the same feeling of energy when they sing the song.
- You could ask different sections (or even soloists) to sing different verses in turn, with everyone joining back in for the chorus. This is a nice way for everyone to have a moment to shine and to reduce the number of words each singer has to perform.
- There is a very interesting (and fun!) optional second part that a small group of your more experienced singers may relish. Take time to learn and practise this separately so that your singers feel comfortable. Then try singing it against the main melody at a slower pace.
- If you decide to perform this song with the optional second part, ask those singers to stand together. They could be positioned at one end of the group, or they could stand in the middle so they can be heard more easily by both sides of the group.