

As the students study dynamics, they can add contrasts in dynamics to their performances. Also, when they understand phrases, they can focus on singing through each phrase and breathing between the phrases. Along the way, you can give students opportunities to sing solos or in duets, trios, or quartets.

Students in both primary and intermediate elementary grades are capable of producing a pleasant singing tone and singing in tune. They can sing together as a group, beginning and ending the song together on your cue. They can produce clear diction, change dynamics and sing through phrases. In other words, under your guidance, bringing the students to this point in developing singing skill is a realistic objective. They are not “too little.” They are capable of doing this. Lead them on their way.

PRE-HARMONIC EXPERIENCES: SPOKEN OSTINATOS AND SPEECH ENSEMBLES

Prior to a class’ singing in harmony, the students will benefit from some pre-harmonic experiences. These are performances in which two or more parts are performed simultaneously with voices, but not necessarily singing voices. For an initial pre-harmonic experience, you could lead the students in performing a spoken ostinato while a song is being sung. You could take a few words from the song or make up a short phrase related to the topic of the song to form the speech ostinato. For instance, if the song is “Are You Sleeping?” the ostinato could be:

/ / / /
Ding, ding, dong - - - which is drawn from the song,
OR
/ / / /
Get up, sleepy head which is related to the topic.

Select a small group of students to perform the spoken ostinato and group them together. The ostinato functions as an accompaniment, so fewer students should be performing the ostinato than singing the song. Have the small group begin the ostinato usually performing it two or four times as an introduction, then lead the class in singing the song following the usual song-leading procedures described later in this portion of the chapter. Either end the ostinato with the song, or use it as a coda, again performing it two or four times. If that goes well, you could have two ostinatos. You could alternate them or layer them. The ability of your class will be the determining factor.

Next, move on to a speech ensemble. This is several short spoken patterns that are layered. For instance, a speech ensemble for the topic of “bells” could go like this:

/ / / /
Ding – dong, ding – dong
Jingle, jangle, jingle, jangle
Bong-----, Bong-----

The central idea is that the children get used to having several parts performed simultaneously. They must concentrate on performing their part accurately while being aware of the other parts. In no case should you ever allow the children to cover their ears. Not hearing the other parts will defeat the purpose of the ensemble performance.

For the performance, divide the class into as many equal parts as there are layers. First, lead the children in speaking the part that falls on the beat. When that has been established, bring in another part, usually one that moves faster than the beat. After those two are going steadily, add the one with the long tones. Look from group to group in an encouraging manner. To end, either cut everyone off simultaneously, or part by part, often in reverse order. In most cases, students throughout the intermediate grades enjoy speech ensembles.

HARMONIC EXPERIENCES: SUNG OSTINATOS AND ROUNDS

Singing in harmony can be beautiful and children typically enjoying singing a song that has an ostinato or that can be sung in a round. The foundations of pleasant harmonic singing are found in solid, confident unison singing. If children cannot comfortably sing songs without your help, they are not ready for harmonic experiences.

A sung ostinato is the simplest form of creating harmony. It's like a spoken ostinato except that the ostinato will be sung. The procedure for leading a song with a sung ostinato is the same as that for the spoken ostinato. Remember to use only songs that your resources indicate are appropriate for adding an ostinato. Do not make up an ostinato to a song not indicated to have one. Simply follow directions. Most likely, the ostinato will be a short portion of the song itself and that portion will be clearly identified. In a music book, an ostinato with directions might look like the one in Figure 21.1.

Have some children sing this ostinato while the others sing the song.

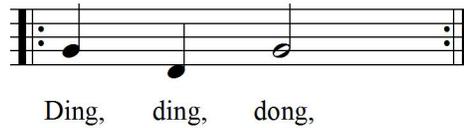


Figure 12.1

When the children have been successful with pre-harmonic experiences and performances with a sung ostinato, they are ready to sing a round. Rounds in music books and other resources are marked “Round,” and numbers or Roman numerals over the staff to indicate the number of parts and points of entrance. A round can be sung in fewer parts than specified, but not in more. When the first group gets to the “2” or “II,” the second group starts at the beginning of the song. As the “3” or “III,” the third group enters by starting at the beginning of the song. Figure 12.2 is a score of “Are You Sleeping?” as it might appear in a music book.

Notice the word “Round” above the staff on the right and see the numbers that indicate when the groups are to enter. If these indications are not present, do not attempt to sing the song in a round! Not every song can be sung as a round. If you need proof, try singing “Bingo” in a round. The result will be disastrous! Rely on your resources to find a song that your students can sing as a round and to determine the appropriate number of parts for the performance.

Are You Sleeping? Round

Ding, ding, dong, Ding, ding, dong,

Figure. 12.2

Several steps are essential for a successful performance of a round.

1. First, teach the song.
2. Next, be sure that the class can sing it independently. Because it is physically impossible for you to sing two or more parts simultaneously, they must be capable of singing the song confidently without your help. Students will be anxious to sing the round, so it might be difficult for you to deny their request. However, the result will be unpleasant and disappointing if you rush the process. In order for the performance to be successful, be sure that they are absolutely independent and confident as one whole group before dividing the class.