A collection of echo songs, partner songs, rounds and part songs from around the world for use as warm ups, class work or concert items

Edited by Rob Jones
Hints and Tips for leading singing sessions

Layout & posture
Avoid singing sitting down. Sitting generally compresses the diaphragm and doesn’t encourage good singing. Arrange the singers in front of you. If there are tables and chairs in the way, then you will need to get them out of the way. With some practice, the class/choir can be trained to do this quickly. There are some songs where sitting in a circle is acceptable for authenticity or to add atmosphere. Other songs require different groups to face each other.

When the song has been learned, it is often a good idea to use a mixed layout, so that pupils singing different parts are stood next to each other. This encourages attentive listening and awareness of harmony.

Pupils should ideally have enough space and shouldn’t have anything to lean against, such as tables, walls etc. Arms should be loose, heads up and both feet on the ground!

Introductory games
It is important to establish who is boss! Do some copying games where the pupils must follow you exactly. Initially just do actions, such as hand on head, tongue out, arms out etc. Be as silly as you like! Gradually introduce sounds, loud and quiet.

Play echo games and sing some echo songs but keep the pace up to keep them interested.

Planning lessons and learning songs
Planning singing lessons is often overlooked. Don’t !! You must plan exactly what you are going to do meticulously. The activities must be pacy and upbeat using lots of humour but plenty of firmness. Don’t overdo the activities, since it is much better to leave them wanting more.

You must know the songs you are going to teach very well, and by memory. Don’t rely on the printed music. Develop non verbal signals such as pointing to your ear meaning ‘listen’, palm down = quieter etc. The less spoken instructions you give, the better. Generally, follow this procedure when teaching songs.

1. Sing the song yourself, repeating it 4 times or more. At this stage, nobody else sings. More experienced singers will want to join in after one hearing, but stop them!
2. They sing along with you. Gradually, fade yourself out so that you are not singing
3. Play with the dynamics using your hands so they get used to your non verbal signals.
4. Teach each part like this. In most cases, all the parts can be taught to all sections of singers so they have an awareness of everyone’s part.

General hints
• Use movement wherever possible. Move feet and bodies from side to side, hand claps etc.
• Don’t be a slave to the dots! If they are singing the rhythm slightly syncopated, then go with it!
• Breathe with your choir. You breathe when you want them to breathe. Don’t count them into a song.
• Do echo singing at every opportunity, such as taking the register!
Teacher Notes

A common song, much used in classrooms around the world. Nobody seems to know what it means or where the song comes from but it is probably a children’s song from Ghana.

Good for vocal warm up and for ‘finding their singing voice’
Che Che Kooley

Call

Response

Call

Che che koo ley Che che koo ley Che che ko fi sa

Response

Call

Response

Che che ko fi sa Ko fi sa lan ga Ko fi sa lan ga

Call

Response

ka ka shi lan ga ka ka shi lan ga

Call

Response
together

Khum a den de Khum a den de HEY
Teacher Notes

This is a simple echo song and is good for younger pupils to find their singing voice.
Oo a lay lay

Call

Ma la tik ka tum ba

wa ma lu way

Response

a lay lay

Oo a lay lay

Ma la tik ka tum ba

Oo a lay ma lu

Call

ma lu wa

Oo a lay ma lu wa

Response

ma lu way

Oo a lay ma lu wa ma lu way
Yalele

A great echo song from Ghana. This can be accompanied with hand claps or assorted percussion playing different rhythms.

This works well with pupils of ages 8—18! The more noisy and animated the performance, the better!

It is a good idea for the leader to call the class to attention using a shout and response, like this: (no pitch)
The Princess Pat

The leader sings, then everybody repeats. Good fun song with actions.

The Princess Pat (Egyptian pose)
Light infantry (salute)
They sailed across (wave motion in front of body with one hand)
The seven seas (number 7 with your finger, then make a "C" with one hand)
They sailed across (wave motion)
The channel two (two hands tracing a channel, then number 2 on one hand)
And they took with them (throw a sack over your shoulder)
A rick-a-bamboo! (trace a wavy figure in front of you going down, bend knees as you go)

A rick-a-bamboo (same as before)
Now what is that? (shrug shoulders, hold out hands)
It's something made (bang one fist on top of the other)
For the Princess Pat (Egyptian pose)
It's red and gold ("twirl" one arm down by your hip)
And purple too (flip hands as if you were saying "Oh my gosh!")
That's why it's called (cup hands in front of mouth, shout)
A rick-a-bamboo! (same as before)

Now Captain Dan (salute)
And his loyal crew (salute several times)
They sailed across (wave action)
The channel two (same as before)
But their ship sank (plug nose, one hand over head and waving as you bend knees)
And yours will too (point to others in the circle)
Unless you take (throw an invisible bag over your shoulder)
A rick-a-bamboo! (same as before)

A rick-a-bamboo (same as before)
Now what is that? (shrug shoulders, hold out hands)
It's something made (bang one fist on top of the other)
For the Princess Pat (Egyptian pose)
It's red and gold ("twirl" one arm down by your hip)
And purple too (flip hands as if you were saying "Oh my gosh!")
That's why it's called (cup hands in front of mouth, shout)
(everyone together) A rick-a-bamboo! (same as before)
The Princess Pat

Call

Response

4

Call

Response

7

Call

Response

11

Call

Response

14

Call

Response
An echo song from Polynesia that has a very relaxing and almost hypnotic feel to it. It isn’t the easiest echo song, but can be done very successfully with Upper Juniors (9-11 year olds) and with lower upper school pupils (11-13 year olds).

Be careful about the gap between the call and echo, since this is not always at one bar intervals.

Accompaniments can be very varied, from piano or guitar only to ostinato patterns played on tuned and untuned percussion. The only chord in this is D, so ostinato patterns can be made up by the pupils using the notes D F# and A.
Traditional Polynesian

Voice 1

Ton go___ Chim ne ba e ba e o___

Voice 2

Ton go___ Chim ne ba e ba e o

Voice 1

Ton go___ M ba le kim ba yo___

Voice 2

Ton go___ M ba le kim ba yo

Voice 1

Oo a way___ ba le ka low a way___

Voice 2

Oo a way___ ba le ka low a way___
Teacher Notes

This is a traditional Sioux song. Pupils should sit in a circle with the teacher part of the circle. Tap knees to keep a regular pulse. Teach the words of the song first. The first phrase is repeated four times. The last phrase is a little tricky but will come with practice. The last two beats should be clapped.

Repeat the song over and over again, speeding up gradually every time it is repeated.
Epanay

Traditional Sioux

Voice

E pa E pa nay_ nay E pa E pa nay_ nay E pa E pa nay_ nay

Voice

E pa E pa nay_ nay E pa nay ya na hin ny yo way (clap) (clap)
Duck Dance

Teacher Notes

This song has a lot of possibilities for development. First teach the song keeping a simple rhythm going such as:

\[\frac{4}{4} m\ |
\frac{4}{4} m\ |
\frac{4}{4} m\ |
\frac{4}{4} m\ |
\]

Next, try adding other percussion.

This song uses the pentatonic scale on D:

\[\frac{4}{4} D\ |
\frac{4}{4} D\ |
\frac{4}{4} D\ |
\frac{4}{4} D\ |
\]

Ostinatos using any of these notes work well with this song. Here are some examples of suitable ostinati:

\[\frac{4}{4} D\ |
\frac{4}{4} D\ |
\frac{4}{4} D\ |
\frac{4}{4} D\ |
\]

\[\frac{4}{4} D\ |
\frac{4}{4} D\ |
\frac{4}{4} D\ |
\frac{4}{4} D\ |
\]

Also, try singing the song as a round, either at half a bar interval or a whole bar.
This is a traditional Israeli song which was once used by scouts and guides. It is in two parts, an ostinato and a main tune. Repeat the song as many times as needed.

It is easy to add instrumental parts to this song. Some ostinato parts are suggested below.

**2nd verse**

Hechalutz le maan avoda  
Avoda le maan hechalutz  
Ha shalom le maan ha amin  
Ha amin le maan ha shalom

Pioneers all work as one  
Work as one all pioneers  
Peace shall be for all the world  
All the world shall be for peace

From the dawn till setting sun  
Every one finds work to be done.  
From the dawn till night does come  
There's a task for everyone
Zum Gali Gali

Ostinato

Verse

Eh cha lutz leh mon avo

dah Av o dah lah mon eh cha lutz

Zum ga li ga li Zum ga li ga li ga li Zum ga li ga li ga li

Zum leh mon avo dah Av o dah lah mon eh cha lutz
Seal Song

This works well on its own or in a 2 part or 4 part round. Try it with the 2nd set of voices starting at a 2 bar interval then a 3rd set of voices starting at 4 bar interval.

This is a traditional Icelandic work song associated with the seal culling industry (perhaps it’s best not to mention this to sensitive pupils!). It has a strong beat at the beginning of each bar that could be emphasised with a drum beat or hand claps.
Traditional Icelandic Seal Song

Hyon da hyon do hyon da o da da

Hyon da hyon do hyon da o da da

Yo dn do Yo dn do Yo dn do o da da

Yo dn do Yo dn do Yo dn do o da da
Teacher Notes

This is a traditional Aboriginal greeting song. It is always useful to talk to the children a little about the sociological aspects of songs. In this song, the Aboriginal people would greet each other, singing the phrases loudly from long distances. This arrangement has the two parts singing in canon.

Start by arranging the pupils in two rows, facing each other. Teach the phrases using call and response.

When the song has been learned, one set of pupils should do the call while the other group sing the response. If practical, try it in the school playground with the two groups at each edge of the playground.

Try to get each group to hold on to the long notes.

Encourage movement in this song, such as moving from left leg to right leg on the beat. Also, since it is a greeting song, each group can wave at each other!
Here is a 2 part chant from Brazil that works well with a steady drum beat.

Teach part 1 to everyone first, then once it is going on its own, sing the 2nd part to demonstrate how it goes together.

Then teach the 2nd part on its own and finally, with fingers crossed, get them going together.
Hey dumba

Part 1
Hey dumba di ay dumba di ay ya ba dum

Part 2
Hey ya hey ya hey ya la la la ya ya
Good News/Don’t you leave me

Chords (optional)

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Teacher Notes

A good choir warm up which also works well with 11-16 year olds in classes.

Teach part 1 first. The single beat rest can cause problems, so a hand clap on this first beat overcomes this problem.

Again, you sing the line 4 or 5 times so that the pupils internalise the song, then get them to sing it. When it has been learned, repeat the process with the 2nd part

Lyrics to ‘Good News’

Good News chariot’s comin’ (x3) Don’t leave me behind
Good News Peter’s waitin’ (x3) Don’t leave me behind
Good News, Goin’ to heaven (x3) Don’t leave me behind
Good News/Don't you leave me

Good news Cha riot's com in' Good news cha riot's com in'

Don't you leave me_ Don't you leave_ me

Good news cha riot's com in' Don't leave me be hind

Don't you leave me_ Don't leave me be hind
Wade in the Water

Teacher Notes

A lovely Spiritual that works well as a warm up for a choir or with a little re-arranging as a concert item.

Start by teaching everyone the first line. You sing it 4 times with the singers just listening. This gives them time to internalise the song. They then sing it 6 or 7 times until they’ve got it.

Hand claps on the beat work well and help the rhythm. Watch that they don’t rush the beat!

Now teach part 2 repeating the sequence above.
Wade in the Water

Sometimes I feel like a motherless child
Sometimes I feel like a

Water children

Motherless child

Some times I feel like a motherless child
Sometimes I feel like a

Water God's gonna trouble the water
I'm sinning

Motherless child A long way from home
Tra la la

Chords (optional)

| 4 4 | F | C | C | F | F | C | C | F |

Teacher Notes

This is a traditional Swiss song in two parts. Teach each part to everyone, since it is useful if everyone knows what is going on in all the parts.
Ta la la

Tra la la la la la la la tra la la la la la la la

Tra la la la la la la la Tra la la la la la la la

Tra la la la la la la la tra la la la la la la la

Tra la la la la la la la Tra la la la la la la la
**Wimoweh**

**Chords (optional)**

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**Lyrics for verses**

In the jungle, the mighty jungle  
The lion sleeps tonight  
In the jungle the quiet jungle  
The lion sleeps tonight  

Near the village the peaceful village  
The lion sleeps tonight  
Near the village the quiet village  
The lion sleeps tonight  

Hush my darling don't fear my darling  
The lion sleeps tonight  
Hush my darling don't fear my darling  
The lion sleeps tonight  

**Teacher Notes**

This is a traditional Zulu folk song, originally called *Mbube* or ‘The Lion’.

Begin teaching part 6 then add part 5 which are both important. With intermediate groups or choirs, build each part up 4, 3, 2 then 1. Some boys will enjoy singing part 3.
Wimoweh (Mbende)

In the jungle the mighty jungle the lion sleeps to night

Wim oweh Wim oweh (etc.)
Chords (optional)

4 4
C F
C C G C

Teacher Notes

This lovely song from Liberia can be sung by these 4 parts. More can be added by improvising other parts.

Start by teaching Part 1, then add the other parts one at a time. Build up a crescendo then drop the parts out so that only Part 1 is left at the end.
Sing/Swing Low/Saints

Chords (optional)

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Teacher Notes

Teach each song separately. There are many possibilities with this, but an interesting way to approach it is to start with I’m gonna Sing, then let each person decide which song they will sing next!
Sing/Swing low/Saints

I'm gonna sing sing sing
I'm gonna dance dance dance
I'm gonna swing low
Swing low sweet chariot
Oh when the saints go marching in

I'm gonna dance
Allegro
When the gates are open wide
I'll be coming for to carry me home
Swing low sweet

Com ing for to carry me home
Saints go marching in
I wanna be in that

Standing at your side
I'm gonna sing
I'm gonna dance
Alleluia

I'm gonna dance
Cha ri ot
Com ing for to carry me home
Number
When the saints go marching in
Janie Mama

Chords (optional)

| 4 | 4 | F | Gm | C | F |

Teacher Notes

Teach each part at a time before you divide up the choir. Some singers may want to improvise a part.
Janie Mama
Teacher Notes

A fairly straightforward spiritual, arranged here in three parts. Experiment with dynamics and dropping sections of the choir for the verses, e.g. boys sing verses 2 and 4.

Lyrics for verses

1. There’s a long white robe in Heaven I know
2. There’s a pair of wings in Heaven I know
3. There’s a pair of shoes in Heaven I know
4. There’s a starry crown in Heaven I know
5. There’s a golden harp in Heaven I know
Good News the Chariot's Coming

1. Good news the Chariot's coming
   Good news the Chariot's coming
   Good news the Chariot's coming

2. Good news the Chariot's coming
   Good news the Chariot's coming
   Good news the Chariot's coming

3. Good news the Chariot's coming
   Good news the Chariot's coming
   Good news the Chariot's coming

4. Good news the Chariot's coming and I don't want it to leave me behind
   There's a long white robe in heaven I know.
   There's a long white robe in heaven I know.
   There's a long white robe in heaven I know.

5. Good news the Chariot's coming and I don't want it to leave me behind
   There's a long white robe in heaven I know.
   There's a long white robe in heaven I know.
   There's a long white robe in heaven I know.

6. Good news the Chariot's coming and I don't want it to leave me behind
   There's a long white robe in heaven I know.
   There's a long white robe in heaven I know.
   There's a long white robe in heaven I know.

7. Good news the Chariot's coming and I don't want it to leave me behind
   There's a long white robe in heaven I know.
   There's a long white robe in heaven I know.
   There's a long white robe in heaven I know.

8. Good news the Chariot's coming and I don't want it to leave me behind
   There's a long white robe in heaven I know.
   There's a long white robe in heaven I know.
   There's a long white robe in heaven I know.

9. Good news the Chariot's coming and I don't want it to leave me behind
   There's a long white robe in heaven I know.
   There's a long white robe in heaven I know.
   There's a long white robe in heaven I know.

10. Good news the Chariot's coming and I don't want it to leave me behind
    There's a long white robe in heaven I know.
    There's a long white robe in heaven I know.
    There's a long white robe in heaven I know.

11. Good news the Chariot's coming and I don't want it to leave me behind
    There's a long white robe in heaven I know.
    There's a long white robe in heaven I know.
    There's a long white robe in heaven I know.

12. Good news the Chariot's coming and I don't want it to leave me behind
    There's a long white robe in heaven I know.
    There's a long white robe in heaven I know.
    There's a long white robe in heaven I know.

13. Good news the Chariot's coming and I don't want it to leave me behind
    There's a long white robe in heaven I know.
    There's a long white robe in heaven I know.
    There's a long white robe in heaven I know.