

51 Cum decore

RESOURCES ▶ CD2 track 17 ▶ Warm ups: Nos. 11a–13a, 14, 15, 18, 26, 27

Information

The composer of this melody, Tylman Susato, lived and worked in Antwerp in the first half of the sixteenth century. He not only composed many dances and chansons, but was an early pioneer of printing and publishing. This arrangement was made for SATB voices, and words added, but any performance will benefit from the addition of instruments too. The words mean: 'Sing with beauty, with love, with splendour, with ardour, with vigour, with warmth, in a melodious voice. Magnify marvellous joys in music.' This would be a good piece to use for simple harmony work, exploring the use of primary and root-position triads.

Starting

- After warming up with exercises based on major scales, particularly rhythmic and lively ones, establish a good steady pulse and play an echo game.
- Sing some one-bar snatches of the melody and invite singers to repeat them. Use any syllabic sound, such as 'da' or 'ne' (suggested bars: 1, 2, 4, 9, 10, 12). Keep this going continuously, repeating them at random. This is a good aural exercise which keeps singers on their toes, and gives familiarity to some of the phrases they are to sing later.
- Develop this to two-bar patterns, such as bars: 1–2, 3–4, 7–8, 9–10, 11–12.

Teaching and rehearsing

- If the starting games are done sufficiently well the melody will be almost learned! Note that the melody of bars 5 and 6 is the same as bars 1 and 2; 11 is a variation of 6, 7 is a variation of 4, and 12 is the same as 8. Add the words, slow down the tempo if necessary. The words could be treated as an exercise or game, just like the melody patterns.
- The bass-line should come next, it will help to underpin the harmony. There are only five chords harmonizing the melody: mainly chords I, II, IV, and V, with one appearance of chord III in bar 6. They are all in root position, except chord II in bars 7 and 11. This explains why the bass jumps around, particularly in the second section. Try to keep it smooth, as if it were the melody.
- Add the alto line next; this is in rhythmic unison with the bass part almost all the time.
- Lastly put in the tenor line. It moves quite smoothly, but has one awkward jump, in bar 10, which you should check.

- Put all four parts together at a slower speed, checking the words, particularly the movement in bars 2 and 6 (the 'cum a-' and 'cum cal-' phrases need to move). Sing two bars per breath; aim for four if possible.

Ideas

- If the tenors find the top F in bar 10 a leap too far, they could sing the D instead. This will also help if the piece is sung in a higher key, which could suit all voices.
- Try the soprano and tenor lines together; they make a convincing duet.
- The basses should divide for the last chord if possible. If the bottom note is too low, they should all sing the upper note (in brackets) and leave out both lower notes.

Listen out

- Check all tuning carefully. Pieces that change position around a few chords can go out of tune unless singers pay attention to the contribution they make to the chord. The 3rd and 5th of chords (A and C in the chord of F; E and G in the chord of C) are most likely to be flat. Check bars 1, 5, 9, and 11 where the same chord changes position across beats.
- Check that sopranos and basses, where they have unison notes, are in tune. Rehearse them together and make them aware of these places, which are generally the beginning or end of phrases.
- Although the parts all move together, the piece should retain vitality and not be too like a hymn. Keep the sound and pace very light and bouncy, giving expression and weight as appropriate to the words.

Performing

- Experiment with different ways of presenting this strong and joyful melody, for example:
 - ~ the unison melody alone
 - ~ as a soprano and tenor duet
 - ~ the melody with words, the harmony hummed.
- As it is so short, it can be sung several times, with contrasts as suggested above, and also some dynamic variation.
- It would make a good opening piece to a performance programme; it is direct, strong, and welcoming.

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OXFORD

51 Cum decore

Music: Tylman Susato
Words: Jos Van den Borre

♩ = 130

The musical score is written for Soprano (S.) and Alto (A.) voices, with a piano accompaniment. It consists of four systems of music. The first system (measures 1-3) has lyrics: 'Cum de - co - re, cum a - mo - re, cum splen - do - re,'. The second system (measures 4-6) has lyrics: 'cum ar - do - re, cum vi - go - re, cum ca - lo - re,'. The third system (measures 7-9) has lyrics: 'vo - ce can - ta - te me - lo - di - ca. Gau - di - a mi -'. The fourth system (measures 10-12) has lyrics: '- ri - fi - ca mag - ni - fi - ca - te in mu - si - ca.' The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand.

Pronunciation:

Coom dair-cor-air, coom ar-mor-air, coom splen-dor-air, coom ar-dor-air, coom vee-gor-air, coom car-lor-air,
voh-chair carn-tar-tair meh-loh-dee-car.

Gah-oo-dee-ar mee-ree-fee-car mar-nee-fee-car-tair een moo-zee-car.