

Legend for classroom ensemble – teaching notes

Introduction

The words for this song are probably drawn from the Arthurian legend of the sword Excalibur and the Lady of the Lake. It is worth reading the words aloud and referring back to the original legend (there are numerous online sources) so that students can get a sense of what the piece is 'about'. This may well help them to capture the mood and atmosphere of the piece more effectively in their music making.

The Parts

Parts 1 and 2

These are quite straightforward and will work with any combination of melody instruments. Both parts play in harmony, doubling the vocal melodies. If the players listen to the song recording, they will find that they can learn to play the music by ear, if their reading skills are limited.

Students who find these parts easy can be 'stretched' by asking them to work out some of the phrases an octave higher or lower. Students who find these parts hard could play just the first note of each bar.

Parts 3 and 4

These work together often playing in a call/response way. Allocate the notes in each chord to different players. Allow octave transpositions if the notes fall out of range.

Part 5

This can be played on a keyboard or a guitar. Bass players could play the roots of these chords with the given rhythm. Playing these chords on guitar is straightforward if the 6th string is tuned down to D.

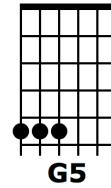
A single chord shape can be moved up and down the neck as follows:

D5 = lowest three strings open

G5 = press down bass strings at fret 5 [as shown in this diagram]

A5 = press down bass strings at fret 7

Bb5 = press down bass strings at fret 8



Adding extra parts

A low **drum** part, which follows the rhythm of part 5 can be effective.

Using an **electronic keyboard**, 'synth pad' parts playing low clusters of chord notes [ominous, foreboding] or high clusters of chord notes [ethereal] can add to the prevailing atmosphere. Sustained parts like this can help 'glue' an ensemble performance together. Use sparingly and make sure the parts do not dominate. Choose notes from a D minor chord or scale.

Experiment with adding **further percussion**. For example, triangles or finger cymbals playing along with the notated Part 3 rhythm.

Technology - to add further colour and in classrooms where instruments might be in short supply, consider using tablets with apps designed to play virtual instruments. For example GarageBand and Thumbjam would be good choices, for playing swirling synth sounds which might further help to evoke the atmosphere.

General ensemble teaching notes

These arrangements are for the accompaniment only to the song. You will still need singers or some melody instruments playing the vocal parts. You can download these from the *Friday Afternoons* website.

They are designed to be used flexibly, making them suitable for adapting to a range of classroom and extra curricular contexts. If you are working with a class, I would suggest that you have half of the class working as a choir singing the vocal parts and the rest taking on the accompaniment parts. Allocate several players to each part, aiming for a good overall balance in the resulting ensemble. Download vocal parts for the singers from the Friday Afternoons website.

The reading skills required are not onerous since there is lots of repetition and some parts can be learnt by ear. For students who might struggle, suggest they play just the first note of each bar. For those who need stretching, suggest they work some of the phrases in different octave transpositions.

Some expressive dynamic marks are given. Make sure that the instrumental parts balance well (for example louder instruments may need to play more quietly). Generally speaking, the instruments play softer during the vocal sections and more strongly during the interludes between vocal lines.

To add some variety, consider varying the texture, with more instruments playing during the louder, stronger sections.

Consider complementing the ensemble sounds with judicious use of classroom percussion and music technology for devised synthesiser layers.

Make sure the students have had ample time to assimilate the pieces by listening to the song recordings in advance.

David Ashworth, December 2016