

Snow – classroom ensemble teaching notes

Introduction

This is a highly poetic and musical settings of a lyric that successfully captures the tender and magical qualities of falling snow.

The challenge for the ensemble playing this piece is to keep playing gently throughout. Reading the words aloud (as a poem) will help to give the group a good indication of the prevailing mood. This will hopefully reflect in their playing....

The parts

Part 1

This would sound good using instruments which play sustained notes, such as glockenspiels. The only instrumental challenge comes in bars 12 and 14, where the notes span three octaves. This descending figure is easy enough to play, but will require instruments which have the required range.

Parts 2 and 3

Straightforward enough, imitating the vocal melody in harmony. Again, players will find it helpful to listen to the vocal parts on the recording available from the Friday Afternoons website.

Part 4

Bass - either bass guitar, keyboard or cello. Since this is a simple ostinato pattern, non readers should have no problems in learning this part. There are just a couple of phrases students might need help with (6-8, 15-16). If these prove too demanding, players could just keep the original ostinato going through these sections.

The other consideration is that notes must be sustained – instruct players to play as legato as possible.

Adding extra parts

Guitar chords have been added to the score. Guitarists can either use the rhythm from part 5 or gently play one chord per bar.

Percussion could be added sparingly. Gentle metallic sounds, such as cymbals bells and triangles would be sensible choices.

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 and the rest taking on the accompaniment parts. Allocate several players to each part aiming for a good overall balance in the resulting ensemble.

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.

David Ashworth, December 2016