

Using Children's Books as Fun and Effective Choral Warm-Ups

Can Work for Adult TOO!

Children's books capture attention, imagination, and encourage creativity. While children's choir directors know their value, they often feel they must sacrifice precious rehearsal time to incorporate books into children's choir rehearsals. That sacrifice is not necessary when the content can be used to teach melodic or rhythmic concepts or a wide range of choral technique.

Below is a list of children's books that can be effective choral warm-ups for the listed concepts. The potential list is endless. AND, just for fun, you may be surprised how many of these can translate to adult choral concepts for adult choirs.

MENTAL/PHYSICAL WARM-UP

1. *Ploof*
 - a. Written by Ben Clanton & Andy Chou Musser, and published by Tundra Books.
 - b. This book explores feelings and encouragement through interactive physical gestures.
2. *Music Class Today!*
 - a. Written by David Weinstone, Illustrated by Vin Vogel, and published by Farrar Straus Giroux.
 - b. This book incorporates physical movement, egg shakers, rhythm sticks, scarves, and the freedom to choose to be involved at any comfort level.
3. *How Do You Wokka-Wokka?*
 - a. Written by Elizabeth Bluemle, Illustrated by Randy Cecil, and published by Candlewick Press.
 - b. This book encourages creative and individual movement exploration.
4. *If You Laugh I'm Starting This Book Over*
 - a. Written by Chris Harris, Illustrated by Serge Bloch, and published by Little, Brown and Company.
 - b. This is a fun, silly book to encourage various voices and physical movement.
5. *Breathe Like a Bear*
 - a. Written by Kira Willey, Illustrated by Anni Betts, and published by Rodale Kids
 - b. This book has excellent, simple exercises for breathing, focus, energizers, and stretching.

BREATHING TECHNIQUE

1. *Alphabreaths*
 - a. Written by Christopher Willard & Daniel Rechtschaffen, Illustrated by Holly Clifton-Brown, and published by Sounds True.
 - b. This book includes mindful breathing techniques, many of which can be used to teach effective breathing for singers.
2. *Alphabreths Too*
 - a. Written by Christopher Willard & Daniel Rechtschaffen, Illustrated by Holly Clifton-Brown, and published by Sounds True.
 - b. This book includes more mindful breathing techniques, many of which can be used to teach effective breathing for singers.
3. *My Magic Breath*
 - a. Written by Nick Ortner and Alison Taylor, Illustrated by Michelle Polizzi, and published by Harper Collins Children's Books.
 - b. This book encourages mindfulness practices and the breathing techniques can be used for proper singers' breaths.

VOCAL EXPLORATION

1. *Wendell the Narwhal*
 - a. Written by Emily Dove and published by Simply Read Books.
 - b. This book allows for multiple types of vocal exploration as well as reinforcing the idea that everyone can find their unique place through music.
2. *My Voice is a Trumpet*
 - a. Written by Jimmie Allen, Illustrated by Cathy Ann Johnson and published by Flamingo Books.
 - b. This book identifies different types of voices, celebrates them all and encourages us to use our voices for good. It is also a great opportunity to explore and create the different voices
3. *Love, Lah Lah*
 - a. Written by Nailah Blackman, Illustrated by Jade Orlando, and published by Alfred A. Knopf.
 - b. This book allows the opportunity for creation of different sounds and introduces concepts related to soca music which originated in Trinidad and Tobago.
4. *Listen*
 - a. Written by Shannon Stocker, Illustrated by Davon Holzwarth, and published by Dial Books for Young Readers.
 - b. This book encourages vocal exploration of rhythms and also includes instrument recognition and DEIB concepts.

DICTION

1. *Buffalo Fluffalo*
 - a. Written by Bess Kalb, Illustrated by Erin Kraan, and published by Random House Children's Books.

- b. The repeated chorus “I’m the Buffalo Fluffalo – I heave and I huffalo. Leave me alone because I’ve had enuffalo!” is a great passage to practice efficient diction. It also serves as a fun reminder of diction issues.
- 2. *The Butter Battle Book*
 - a. Written by Dr. Seuss and published by Random House Inc.
 - b. The Yooks and the Zooks along with other names that rhyme are excellent diction practice. This is also a social awareness book on the escalation of disagreements and the point that no one wins when everyone refuses to negotiate.

VOWEL FORMATION

- 1. *The Wide-Mouthed Frog*
 - a. Written by Keith Faulkner, Illustrated by Jonathan Lambert and published by Dial Books for Young Readers.
 - b. This book helps with identifying and practicing different mouth shapes that can be used for diction and proper vowel formation.

MELODIC AUDIATION/FORM

- 1. *Over in the Meadow/Over in the Hollow*
 - a. Adapted by John Feierabend, Illustrated by Marissa Napoletano, and published by GIA Publications, Inc. / Written by Rebecca Dickenson, Illustrated by S. Britt and published by Chronicle Books, LLC.
 - b. The numbers and ending phrases both end on *do*. The kids can audiate *do* and/or play boomwhackers of other musical instruments to reinforce tonal memory. There are also question and answer phrases which allow the teacher to sing the question phrase and the children to sing the answer phrase.
- 2. *The First Notes: The Story of Do, Re, Mi*
 - a. Written by Julie Andrews and Emma Walton Hamilton, Illustrated by Chiara Fedele, and published by Little, Brown and Company.
 - b. This book is a great way to gain a deeper understanding of Solfege as well as the history of the monk who created the musical language.
- 3. *The Other Day I Met a Bear*
 - a. Adapted by John M. Feierabend, Illustrated by Julia Love Miller and published by GIA Publications, Inc.
 - b. This book incorporates echo singing, question and answer phrases, vocal warm-up and songtale.
- 4. *The Friendly Beasts*
 - a. Narrated by Rebecca St. James, Illustrated by Anna Vojtech, and published by Zonderkidz.
 - b. This book can be used for melodic line tracing, reinforcement of Low Ti and Ta-Tu-Te with an emphasis on Ta-Te.

RHYTHMIC ELEMENTS

1. *Click Clack Moo Cows That Type*
 - a. Written by Doreen Cronin, Illustrated by Betsy Lewin and published by Atheneum Books for Young Readers.
 - b. This book can be used to teach/reinforce Ta-Ti/Ta and Ta-Ti/Ta-Ti/Ta rhythmic elements.
2. *Kitty Alone*
 - a. Adapted by John M. Feierabend, Illustrated by Mina Echevarria, and published by GIA Publications, Inc.
 - b. This book can be used to teach Ta-Tu-Te
3. *There's a Bear on My Chair*
 - a. Written by Ross Collins, and published by Candlewick Press.
 - b. This book can easily be read while the kids tap, stomp, or play a steady beat.

DYNAMICS

1. *Who Ate Steve?*
 - a. Written by Susannah Lloyd, Illustrated by Kate Hindley, and published by Nosy Crow, Inc.
 - b. This book can be read with different volume and/or pitches to teach high/low, piano/forte or legato/staccato.
2. *Short Dog, Long Dog*
 - a. Written by Anna Hrachovec, published by Feiwel and Friends
 - b. This book of opposites is perfect for high/low, piano/forte, legato/staccato, etc.
3. *This Book Is Dangerous!*
 - a. Written by Ben Clanton. And published by Tundra Books.
 - b. This book is great for teaching forte/piano because the jellyfish alternates between quietly hiding and running/exclaiming.

INSTRUMENT RECOGNITION

1. *Eloísa's Musical Window*
 - a. Written by Margarita Engle, Illustrated by John Parra and published by Atheneum Books for Young Readers.
 - b. This book helps kids Identify multiple musical instruments, especially those associated with Cuban musical traditions.
2. *Never Play Music Right Next to the Zoo*
 - a. Written by John Lithgow, Illustrated by Leeza Hernandez and published by Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.
 - b. This book helps kids identify traditional orchestral instruments.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

1. *One Thursday Afternoon*
 - a. Written by Barbara DiLorenzo and published by Flyaway Books.

- b. [This book](#) is about the feelings and emotions that accompany a lockdown drill at school and coping strategies for managing those feelings and fears.
- 2. *Today I Feel Silly*
 - a. Written by Jamie Lee Curtis, Illustrated by Laura Cornell and published by Joanna Cotler Books.
 - b. This book helps Identify and understand different moods and accept that all feelings/moods are valid. Can also be used as a physical warm-up by creating postures for each mood and discussing proper singing posture.
- 3. *My Mouth is a Volcano*
 - a. Written by Julia Cook, Illustrated by Carrie Hartman, and published by National Center for Youth Issues.
 - b. This book discusses a common problem of students interrupting teachers and other students; and managing impulse control when kids have thoughts they just have to share.
- 4. *We Don't Eat Our Classmates*
 - a. Written by Ryan T. Higgins, and published by Disney Books.
 - b. This book is a really fun account of the inappropriate behavior of Penelope Rex who keeps eating her classmates and then spits them back out. The classmates, understandably, get very upset with Penelope and help her understand the needs of others and how to develop empathy.
- 5. *Personal Space Camp*
 - a. Written by Julia Cook, Illustrated by Carrie Hartman, and published by National Center for Youth Issues.
 - b. This book teaches the concept of personal space and respecting others' space bubbles
- 6. *And to Think That We Thought That We'd Never Be Friends*
 - a. Written by Mary Ann Hoberman, Illustrated by Kevin Hawkes, and published by Dragonfly Books.
 - b. The book is about turning fights into friendships and how that can lead to worldwide peace
- 7. *The Peace Book*
 - a. Written by Todd Parr and published by Little, Brown and Company.
 - b. This book is about feeling good about yourself, accepting your differences, and caring for others and the earth.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION & BELONGING

- 1. *White Flour*
 - a. Written by David LaMotte, Illustrated by Jenn Hales and published by Lower Dryad Music.
 - b. [This book](#) is based on a true story of meeting hatred with humor.
- 2. *I Am Enough*
 - a. Written by: Grace Byers, Illustrated by Keturah A. Bobo and published by Balzer + Bray.
 - b. This book honors our differences while validating that we are all "enough" just the way we are.
- 3. *The Family Book*
 - a. Written by Todd Parr and published by Little, Brown and Company.

- b. This book emphasizes that families exist in many different forms, but that all families are special
- 4. *Change Sings*
 - a. Written by Amanda Gorman, Illustrated by Loren Long, and published by Viking.
 - b. This is the Amanda Gorman text that reminds us we can change the world with our voices and encourages kids to make changes in their communities to make the world a better place.
- 5. *The Invisible Web*
 - a. Witten by Patrice Karst, Illustrated by Joanne Lew-Vriethoff, and published by Little, Brown and Company.
 - b. This book helps kids understand the way all humans are connected and how our actions affect many more people than just those we can see.

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