

PEACE HAS COME

A MUSICAL FOR CHRISTMAS

REHEARSAL GUIDE

by Dennis Allen

“Peace Has Come” with “O Come, All Ye Faithful”

This musical opens with a beautiful new song that includes the chorus of “O Come, All Ye Faithful.” The rhythms of the verse look more difficult than they are. Listen to the demo, and you will notice the relaxed style in which this syncopated rhythm is sung. Practice singing along with the demo. At the end of the chorus, there is a large melodic leap in meas. 19 and similar spots. Rehearse this carefully to ensure accuracy. However, once you get it, you will have no problems. You can invite your congregation to sing on the “O Come, All Ye Faithful” middle section beginning in meas. 33.

“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus” with “You Have Come”

This beautiful Advent hymn has been in our hymnals for many years. This arrangement sets the melody in 6/8 instead of the usual 3/4 meter. The feeling of the melody is basically the same, just at a quicker tempo, so rehearsal should present no problems. Beginning in meas. 27, a new chorus has been added. It is constructed in such a way that it will be easily learned and remembered. Add a little more volume and energy as you reach this chorus.

“Breath of Heaven (Mary’s Song)”

This song about the experience of Mary, the mother of Jesus, has been around for a long time. It is still beautiful and thought-provoking. In addition to learning the notes, the soloist needs to practice conveying the emotion of this song’s strong message. Notice that the solo and full ladies section pass the melody back and forth a few times. When the SATB choir joins on the chorus, work on a solid blend of all voice parts. Also, don’t let the mixed meter be a problem. As you listen to the demo, you will hear the singers simply use the meter as a location for breaths.

“I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day”

This beloved Christmas text is given a new tune by Casting Crowns leader Mark Hall. Mark’s haunting new melody gives fresh life to the message. The men’s section takes the lead throughout much of the arrangement, so rehearse singing expressively through the long phrases. When the ladies enter with the “peace on earth” phrases, work on a rise and fall in dynamics to make it more emotional. In the final SATB light chorus, rehearse to achieve a well-balanced blend of all parts, keeping *vibrato* to a minimum.

“Heavenly Peace” (Carol Medley)

What can make a Christmas program better? Of course it is the congregational singing of favorite carols. This arrangement follows the hymn versions of these carols rather closely, with occasional sections for ladies only or men only singing. You might choose to put the hymn lyrics in your program with indications of which group sings on the specific sections.

“Peace in the Midst of the Storm”

Scripture refers to our Lord as the Prince of peace. However, sometimes our lives are anything but peaceful, so this classic song by Steve Adams reminds us that HE is our peace. So, take extra rehearsal time to discuss the meaning of this song, and then work on clear enunciation of these powerful lyrics. The soulful gospel feel will be fun to sing, but some of the phrases are rather long. So, work on deep breaths and carrying your singing to the end of each phrase.

“What a Beautiful Name”

This newer contemporary worship song has become quite popular. The simple message is carried on a beautiful, simple melody. Work to “relax” into these contemporary rhythms. Listen to the demo for a pattern to follow. The middle section builds toward a climax, so control your volume along the way. If your congregation knows this song, you might invite them to sing along. Note the word change in each chorus: “What a beautiful name it is,” “What a wonderful name it is,” and “What a powerful name it is.”