

22 WAYS TO TEACH A SONG

by Jo Ann Butler

Do you want your rehearsals to be interesting – to keep a moving pace? Do you want your children to be involved in the material you're presenting? Do you want the children to learn their music more quickly – and more accurately?

I have good news for you! The key to the realization of all these goals is to teach your music in an interesting way.

As you use these methods, you will become so excited about the way your rehearsals are going that you will think of many more methods. And they will be *better*. Because they will be *yours*.

Of course, step one is to know your music. You can not teach that which you do not know. So spend some time at the record player or the piano and become familiar with the song you're planning to teach. As you learn it, analyze it. Describe it to yourself *in words*. Consider the construction of the song, parts that are alike and parts that are different, musical concepts you'll want to teach, and be sure to decide on your main objective for using that song, because the children should realize the purpose in the things we do. They might help us accomplish our goals, if we tell them what they are.

An essential step in deciding on a method for teaching any song is to write off the words in poem form. Just sit down at the trusty old typewriter and write the words in verse. Then look at it. You will discover how you want to teach it. You do know, don't you, that it is always the words that give us problems? The children have a remarkable ability to remember melodies, but we really have to work at helping them to learn the words. So you will notice that all 22 of these methods deal with the teaching of the words, rather than the music.

If you direct a choir of older children where your anthems are longer and probably in sections, you will want to decide on a method for each section. You may not want to teach all the sections in one rehearsal. Remember that a mark of good teaching is to break the material into "bite-sized pieces."

These methods may be used when teaching a song by rote or when teaching with the music either. Most of them involve some kind of visual aid. If you are teaching the song with the

use of music in the hands of the children, you will eventually want to put away the music and use your visual aid as an in-between step to memory.

1 The Echo Method

The children will echo the teacher who sings the song one phrase at a time. At the end of the song, the teacher (without a pause) sings the song two phrases at a time and the children echo. Then he sings four phrases at a time. The children echo.

This method is especially effective in teaching rounds, since the chord structure is simple and children can easily hear the progressions. Here is an illustration of the echo method, using Jane Marshall's "Ready Round" from the book, *We Sing to Learn* published by Carl Fischer:

Teacher: Backbone up and chest held high

Children: Backbone up and chest held high

Teacher: Chinny chin down here's the reason why

Children: Chinny chin down here's the reason why

Teacher: Organ pipes and singers too

Children: Organ pipes and singers too

Teacher: Must be straight so the tone comes through

Children: Must be straight so the tone comes through

Teacher: Backbone up and chest held high

Chinny chin down here's the reason why

Children: Backbone up and chest held high

Chinny chin down here's the reason why

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