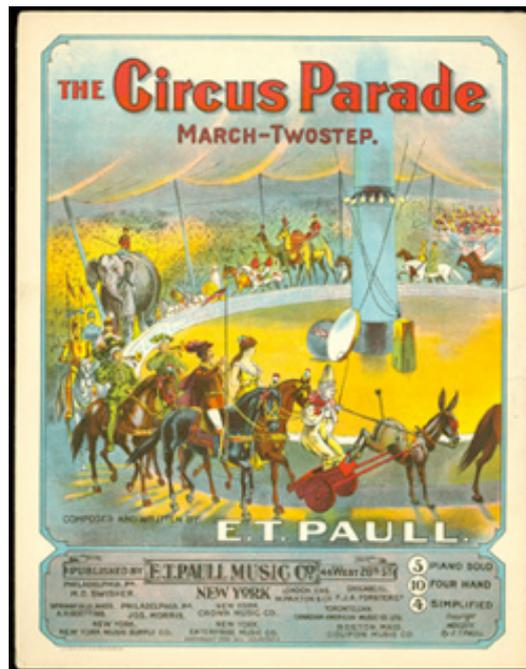


The Circus Song *Trevor Davies*

Music Works



Teaching Notes

This is a fun song which many pupils have enjoyed. It tells a story and is full of characters. It is a reminder of the days when the circus parade was a kind of ‘trailer’ to the main event and when people had very little other entertainment.

But circus skills are far from dead and we still have circuses and street entertainers today.

There are two ways of ending the song. First, as shown in the music, an adapted version of the chorus which brings everything to a bright close: second, repeat the chorus getting quieter and quieter as the parade goes off down the street and round the corner! A good exercise in dynamic control.

Key words/learning points

Fanfare

One of the main features of the song is the fanfare opening (on one note) and the fanfare like character of the chorus, which only uses the notes E G C’.

Pupils could compose their own fanfares and listen to examples from classical music.

The fanfare is an easily recognisable music gesture and has its roots in the need for signals to be sent in battle. Even if played on the piano, most pupils will recognise that it is trumper-like.

Examples: The Last Post. Copland ‘Fanfare for the common man’

March

A march often goes with a fanfare. Note the 2 in a bar metre and clear melodic lines.
(see picture)

Pitch

The introduction and chorus demonstrate very simple pitch relationships that can easily be signed:

Moving on one note

Alternating between two notes

Verse/Chorus

This is a commonly used structure for a song, in which the verses tell the story and the chorus is always the same. A common device in folk music where people join in for the repeated sections. Again, a hark back to the good old days when not everyone could read!

Group

A term used in a variety of ways in music. In this context it refers to the division of the whole group into 2 smaller groups.

Vocal effects and expression

There is much scope for varying the vocal tone in this song and pupils should be encouraged to do so.

Singing on one note: “dan da da da” etc.

Make the voice trumpet like by cupping the hands round the mouth and slightly pinching the nose.

Direct the sound in different directions (eg. left, right and centre).

Similarly, in the chorus Group 1 should imitate trumpets and group 2 make a more rounded sound like a trombone. (By all means vary the vocal sound; eg “pom pom pom pom pom)

Each verse has a spoken word/line before the chorus which can be used to great dramatic effect.

Instrumental work

Tuned percussion (see diagram)

Group 1 alternates on C’ and G

Group 2 alternates on E and G

Both groups play the repeated G together

A good opportunity to develop two handed playing

Simplify the rhythm if the semi-quavers prove too difficult. For example, just play a G on the first beat of each group.

You could even use kazoos or comb and paper for the chorus!

Recorder and cello.

Parts provided for these instruments if available.

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a whole opera with your pupils!