

Why Partner Songs

When I was a beginning music teacher there were virtually no materials available other than the music textbook I had in class and two collections I found in the closet. One was called Partner Songs and the other More Partner Songs.

Never having heard of partner songs before and having no other resources to use, I tried them out on my students and it opened up a new window to one of the best ways to introduce new singers to 2 part harmony!

The premise is having two songs each sung independently that then form harmony when sung together the third time through.

There are definite criteria for selecting partner songs that will work well and easily. First is that each melody should be a strong melody unto itself. You will be able to tell right away as each group will be able to sing and remember their melody part easily. Next when sung together the two parts should form a pleasant and easily sung harmony. Last and certainly not least, the piano part must never clash with any of the melody parts.

I wrote my very first partner song, "Winter Fantasy" using the familiar Jingle Bells, with an original counter melody and the above guidelines are the ones I used and have been using after composing over 50 partner songs and many partner song collections!

There are also a multitude of ways to successfully use them.

They work perfectly in any combination of two parts voices. [Several of my holiday partners are featured on the Turtle Creek Chorale's Comfort and Joy CD with the men singing one part and Women's Chorus of Dallas the other].

They work if you are using a familiar song or carol to have the audience or congregation sing the familiar song and your choir sing the counter melody. If you want to feature two of your talented singers, they work beautifully as duets!

Lastly, if you bring your beginning singers to competitions, adjudicators love to hear quality partner songs as they like to compare their intonation and phrasing when singing the song in unison and then while sung in harmony.

In any combination, at any age or singing ability, good, quality partner songs are musical winners in every way!