

Composed for and with the Rising Stars Community Choir...

SUPERNOVA

for choir and audience



Rising Stars Community Choir

&

Martin Humphries

- 2017 -

Programme note:

Supernova was composed for and with the Rising Stars Community Choir, a group made up of mainly adults with a connection with the youth theatre company, Rising Stars Productions. The idea behind this collaboration was to offer the choir a new experience, as well as to create a piece that connected the choir with the community in which they are based. Because of this, each movement requires the audience to become honorary members of the choir and participate in the performance.

The subject of each movement and all of the text used has come from the choir members themselves; the title, however, is my own invention. In our first workshop one member jokingly described the Rising Stars Community Choir as the 'fallen stars'. While intended as a joke, this stimulated something in my brain and inspired me to do a little research. I found that during the later stages of its lifecycle, a *Supernova* star can transform itself through an exciting explosion of energy. Far from 'fallen stars', these more senior figures are in fact reborn as the brightest stars in the sky.

Performance note:

Each of the three movements requires audience participation. In order to achieve this practically, it is advised that a second conductor or a designated member of the choir is assigned to lead the audience through their material. There is no need to rehearse the audience ahead of performance; the act of coming together in communal music making is the purpose of the piece. Similarly, do not strive to perform each movement back to back if this is not practical. Stopping to teach audience roles between movements is perfectly acceptable. I hope those participating will find themselves invited into the work through rehearsing it live in concert.

The choir are provided with all the music they are required to sing, however, a conductor is essential to make decisions, shape the material, and lead the singers effectively through the work. Some movements have flexible structures and the likelihood of unexpected surprises from the audience (in areas such as dynamic or timing) mean that the conductor is vital to realising a performance of *Supernova*.

The piece was composed with the intention that it be simple enough to learn by ear, thus opening it up to any enthusiastic singers, rather than just those fluent in musical notation. To increase confidence, the choir is never divided up and all three movements feature the entire ensemble at all times.

All material can be sung at a comfortable octave for each individual singer.

Supernova may be easier to realise with an accompanist supporting the performance. Their main role should be in assisting the audience, particularly to help keep them in the same key. In 'Roscoe's Friday Night', the accompanist is free to vamp a 12-bar blues in F.

Duration:
c. 6 minutes

I – Springtime

Instructions:

- The aim of *Springtime* is to create exciting textures with new sounds emerging from a fertile background;
- The audience will be singing a constant drone on the note B-flat, with changing vowel sounds;
- Sing at a comfortable volume and in a joyous manner to convey the happiness of Spring.

- Perform numbered fragment when instructed by the conductor;
- The amount of space between entries should vary to create a sense of freedom;
- Don't be afraid of silences;
- You may be asked to sing just one, or a chain of numbers consecutively;
- These may start in any place, but must always run in sequence (i.e. 4-5-6, not 4-7-2);
- The movement concludes when instructed to perform the entire chain from start to finish.

Joyous (♩=c.148)

Musical notation for fragments 1 through 4. The notation is on a single staff in 3/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). Fragment 1 consists of four quarter notes: B-flat, D, F, and B-flat. Fragment 2 consists of four quarter notes: D, F, B-flat, and D. Fragment 3 consists of four quarter notes: B-flat, D, F, and B-flat. Fragment 4 consists of four quarter notes: D, F, B-flat, and D.

Spring-time means: Daff - o - dils, Sun - shine, Long-er days, fields of hay,

Musical notation for fragments 5 through 7. The notation is on a single staff in 3/4 time with a key signature of two flats. Fragment 5 consists of four quarter notes: B-flat, D, F, and B-flat. Fragment 6 consists of four quarter notes: D, F, B-flat, and D. Fragment 7 consists of four quarter notes: B-flat, D, F, and B-flat.

Lea - ping lambs, Happ-i - ness_ Grass cut fresh, Love_____

Musical notation for fragments 8 and 9. The notation is on a single staff in 3/4 time with a key signature of two flats. Fragment 8 consists of four quarter notes: B-flat, D, F, and B-flat. Fragment 9 consists of four quarter notes: D, F, B-flat, and D.

Trees, Breeze, Growth, Hope.

II – My Family

Instructions:

- The aim of *My Family* is to create beautiful and interesting harmonies between the choir and audience;
- The audience will be singing their own melody based on the Westminster Chimes;
- The music should be sung with passion throughout, even when the words are less serious.

- Begin with one or two repetitions of the audience singing their part;
- This movement has four versus which are sung one after another in the conventional way;
- Versus one and two are at a comfortable volume, verse three is quiet and delicate, and the final verse is loud and bold;
- The final line “don’t like me to sing” should be short, punchy and detached.

Impassioned ($\text{♩}=\text{c.40}$)

1 *mf* (comfortable volume)

My fa - mi - ly make me hap - py, My fa - mi - ly keep me sane,

My fa - mi - ly ne - ver text me back.

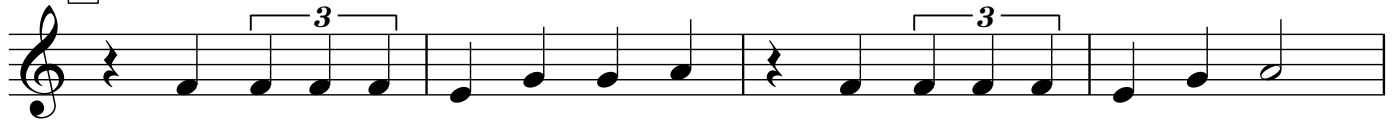
2 *mf* (comfortable volume)

My fa - mi - ly's large and lov - ing, My fa - mi - ly make me smile,

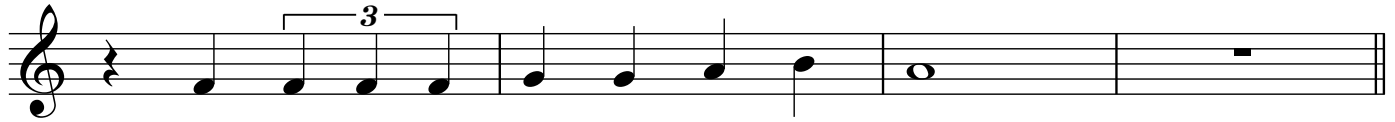
My fa - mi - ly don't put out the bins.

3

p (quiet and delicate)



My fa - mi - ly's most - ly furr - y, My fa - mi - ly drive me mad,



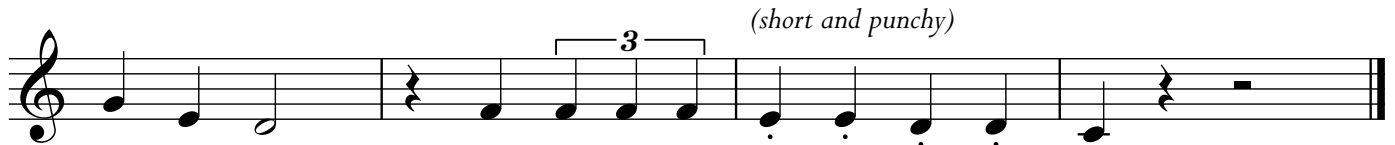
My fa - mi - ly mean the world to me.

4

f (loud and bold)



My fa - mi - ly are my sol - ace, My fa - mi - ly



make me laugh, My fa - mi - ly don't like me to sing.

III – Roscoe’s Friday Night

Instructions:

- The aim of *Roscoe’s Friday Night* is to end this set of pieces with a fun and grooving finale;
- The audience will be providing a percussive backing through slapping and clapping;
- The music should be sung with lots of energy, enthusiasm and fun.

- There are two parts to this movement: a blues, and some spoken text;
- Sing the blues through once, being sure to exaggerate the glissandi;
- Watch out for the line “bounds to greet you” as this is the only one which isn’t on the beat;
- When you reach the spoken text section these should be read rhythmically at a whisper, from top to bottom, and with a new line on every minim beat (four per bar);
- The fourth and final list should build from a whisper to a celebratory shout and segue immediately into a reprise of the blues to bring the whole of *Supernova* to a close.

Swinging Celebration (♩=c.72)

Ros-coe's Fri-day night, ___ Ros-coe's Fri-day night, ___

Ros-coe's Fri-day night, ___ Ros-coe's Fri-day night, ___

Bounds to greet you, Loves to sniff_ you, Ros-coe's Fri-day night._

Whispered Text:

1

Gorgeous
Cute
Soft
Happy
Lively
Furry
Friendly
Soft

2

Busy
Cuddly
Small
Loyal
Trusting
Funny
Loving
Woof!

3

Four
Legged
Choir
Member
Loves
Every
Body
Here

4

(building to celebratory shout)

Faithful
Friend
Biggest
Distraction
Bounces
Along
To Greet
Everyone

[Audience Instructions]

I - Springtime

- Sing the note B-flat at a comfortable volume and octave;
- Breathe when needed and maintain this note throughout the movement, being careful not to rise or fall in pitch;
- While singing, individually and slowly change between the vowel sounds 'A' and 'E' in a random and unsynchronised sequence to create an energetic texture on one note.

II - My Family

- Sing the following 'cantus firmus' until instructed to stop;
- The final two repetitions should be quiet and then loud respectively, but this will be made clear by whoever is leading the audience;
- The melody is a shortened version of the Westminster Chimes with a slightly different ending.

Impassioned ($\text{♩}=\text{c.40}$)

My _____ fa - mily, my _____ fa - mily,

my _____ fa - mi - ly.

III - Roscoe's Friday Night

- Split the audience in half;
- Group One performs Queen's *We Will Rock You* rhythm by slapping their thighs and clapping;
- Group Two performs a *swung* version of Queen's *Radio Ga Ga* rhythm by clapping.

Swinging Celebration ($\text{♩}=\text{c.72}$)

swung *swung*

