

Stef Conner
Weeping Willow



2024

Words and music by
Stef Conner (b. 1983)

Echo Song for Choir, SABar. (tenor and/or bass)
Flexible Duration

Weeping Willow

Words and melody: Stef Conner, 2024

Full score with teaching and learning sequence (without piano reduction)

Duration: open

For choir: Soprano
Alto
Baritone (suitable for all lower voices, inc. tenors and/or basses)

Words: *Weeping willow,
Wordless whisper,
Weaving mellow
Mists in silver.*

Composer's note: in echo songs, the leader(s) demonstrates phrases, which are echoed by singers, usually a bar behind the leader(s), to create overlapping sustained notes and chords. This echo song may be learnt either in unison or in 3-part harmony, and could work in both performance and workshop contexts, e.g., as part of a concert programme or as a warm-up/ear-training exercise.

These performance materials are designed to assist choir directors and workshop leaders in teaching the piece orally. The score is for reference, and not intended to be read by choir members during rehearsals.

When taught as a unison echo song, the piece is effective as a short warm-up or singing game. To assist unison teaching, the melody is written in a key to suit all vocal ranges at the start of the score. It may be freely transposed.

The individual harmony parts are simple enough that they may be memorized after only a few repetitions, and the echo-song structure enables a learning process with minimal verbal explanation and without note-bashing. In the 3-part harmony version of the piece, the recommended teaching and learning sequence (presented in this score) is integral to the structure, since the order in which harmonies are introduced produces a sense of melodic coherence and developing energy.

Teaching the piece in unison before moving onto the SABar. version may add interest and continuity, by extending the learning process over multiple rehearsals.

As a choir becomes familiar with the piece, the need for repetitions of each harmony part will be reduced. Once the choir can sing the piece from memory, new members can be easily integrated by joining the group that echoes phrases, while those who are already familiar with the piece may divide themselves between both 'Lead' and 'Echo' groups.

The idea behind this way of structuring a piece is to create interesting, memorable harmonies that can be memorized without any note-bashing.

Weeping Willow

Echo song for SATB Voices *a cappella*

STEF CONNER

Main melody

In an echo song, the leader(s) demonstrate(s) a melody and/or harmonies and singers learn by echoing phrases, usually a bar behind the leader(s), to create overlapping sustained notes and chords. This song may be learned in unison and/or 3-part harmony. The melody is presented first in a suitable key for a whole mixed-voice choir to learn in unison; this unison version may also be freely transposed. It is recommended that the full harmony arrangement be sung in the written key, or up to 1 tone (whole step) lower.

Lilting, ♩ = c.90

mp singers echo *sim.*

8) Weep-ing wil - low,___ Word-less whis - per,___

8) Weav - ing mel - low___ Mists in___ sil - ver. ___

The main melody is written on a single treble clef staff in 4/4 time. It begins with a repeat sign and a first ending bracket. The tempo is marked 'Lilting, ♩ = c.90'. The dynamics are *mp* and *sim.*. The lyrics are: 'Weep-ing wil - low,___ Word-less whis - per,___ Weav - ing mel - low___ Mists in___ sil - ver. ___'. There are two measures of rest in each line.

Full harmony

Harmonies should be introduced in the following order: (1) Alto, (2) Baritone, (3) Soprano (as outlined in the following pages), in the written key. They are shown in short score here, or use as a reference. The fully written-out teaching and learning sequence that follows is for explanation only, and not intended for singers or leader to score-read during rehearsals, as the piece is designed for aural learning.

1 *mp* echo *sim.*

S. A. Weep-ing wil - low,___ Word-less whis - per,___

Bar. *mp*

5 S. A. Weav - ing mel - low___ Mists in___ sil - ver. ___

Bar.

The full harmony section shows the first five measures of the piece. It is written in short score for Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), and Baritone (Bar.). The first system (measures 1-4) shows the Soprano and Alto parts with lyrics 'Weep-ing wil - low,___ Word-less whis - per,___'. The Baritone part is shown below. The second system (measures 5-8) shows the Soprano and Alto parts with lyrics 'Weav - ing mel - low___ Mists in___ sil - ver. ___'. The Baritone part is shown below. The dynamics are *mp* and *sim.*. The tempo is 'Lilting, ♩ = c.90'.

Teaching and learning sequence

This is a sample teaching and learning sequence, given to demonstrate one effective way in which the piece could be experienced. There are of course many possible approaches!

In this 3-part arrangement, piano doubling may assist the memorization of parts, especially if the leader(s) demonstrate(s) an octave above or below written parts. It may be necessary to help singers whose vocal ranges are an octave apart from the leader(s) to find the correct octave, before beginning the teaching and learning sequence, which works best when the singing is continuous.

A more fluid experience can be created by communicating as much as possible through gestures and call-and-response techniques, rather than verbal explanation, without interrupting the singing.

Since there are no consonants at phrase endings, echo durations need not be prescribed or coordinated. Each individual singer may sustain their note for as long as is comfortable.

Step 1: Prepare the session by dividing each part (S, A, and Bar.) into two evenly sized groups: Lead and Echo. Explain that everyone in each part will begin by echoing the leader(s) in order to learn their harmonies, before each group splits in half, with those in the Lead group joining the leader(s) and those in the Echo group continuing to sing a bar behind.

Step 2: Demonstrate the alto melody, which all the altos echo, and repeat until memorised. Then, indicate to altos in the Lead group to join the leader, on a repeat, while the other group continues to echo. Once Lead and Echo group are secure (i.e., can sing without the leader(s)), move onto the baritone harmony. Depending on the confidence of the choir, leader(s) may either layer up new harmonies while those already singing continue, or stop in between parts to assist note-learning.

mp

A. Lead

Weep-ing wil - low, ___ Word-less whis - per, ___

A. Echo

___ Weep-ing wil - low, ___ Word-less whis - per, ___

12 Repeat as needed

A. Lead

Weav - ing_ mel-low ___ Mists_ in_ sil - ver. ___

A. Echo

___ Weav - ing_ mel - low ___ Mists_ in_ sil - ver.

Step 3: Demonstrate the baritone harmony, which all the baritones echo, and repeat until memorised. Then, indicate to baritones in the Lead group to join the leader(s), on a repeat, while those in the Echo group continue to echo. Once Lead and Echo group are secure, move onto the soprano harmony. Depending on the confidence of the choir, leader(s) may either layer up new harmonies while those already singing continue, or stop in between parts to assist note-learning.

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Lead

A. Weep-ing wil - low,___ Word-less whis - per,___

Bar. *mp*
Weep-ing wil - low,___ Word-less whis - per,___

Echo

A. — Weep - ing wil - low,___ Word - less whis - per,___

Bar. *mp*

20

Repeat as needed

Lead

A. Weav - ing_ mel - low___ Mists_ in sil - ver. ___

Bar. Weav - ing mel - low___ Mists in sil - ver. ___

Echo

A. — Weav - ing_ mel - low___ Mists_ in___ sil - ver. ___

Bar.

Step 4: Demonstrate the soprano harmony, which all the sopranos echo, and repeat until memorised. Then, indicate to sopranos in the Lead group to join the leader(s), on a repeat, while those in the Echo group continue to echo. Once Lead and Echo group are secure, bring in the remaining parts (if they are not already singing) and repeat ad lib., until ready to end, optionally varying dynamics and/or tempo.

24 *mp*

S. Weep - ing wil - low, ___ Word - less whis - per, ___

A. Weep - ing wil - low, ___ Word - less whis - per, ___

Bar. Weep - ing wil - low, ___ Word - less whis - per, ___

A. *mp*

Echo ___ Weep - ing wil - low, ___ Word - less whis - per, ___

Bar. Weep - ing wil - low, ___ Word - less whis - per, ___

28 **Repeat ad lib.**

S. Weav - ing mel - low ___ Mists in sil - ver. ___

A. Weav - ing mel - low ___ Mists in sil - ver. ___

Bar. Weav - ing mel - low ___ Mists in sil - ver. ___

A.

Echo ___ Weav - ing mel - low ___ Mists in sil - ver. ___

Bar. Weav - ing mel - low ___ Mists in sil - ver. ___