

Music IQ Songs

A new dimension in music for young people

presents

We Give Our Thanks Today

**an easy and fun
song/round for young people**

**includes
easy piano accompaniment
and
chord and fretboard symbols for guitar**

**by
Brent Hugh**

We Give Our Thanks Today

a song by Brent Hugh
dorian mode, triple rhythm with triple subdivision

Moderately, ♩ = 82-96

Piano

1. We give our thanks to-day for
give our thanks to-day for
give our thanks to-day for
give our thanks to-day for
give our thanks to-day for

We give our thanks to-day, We give our thanks to-day, We give our

all that's giv-en us, We give our thanks to-day for
moun-tain, tree, and stream, We give our thanks to-day for
sun-shine, cloud, and rain, We give our thanks to-day for
fun we had with friends, We give our thanks to-day for
food we have to eat, We give our thanks to-day for

thanks to-day, We give our thanks to-day,

give our thanks to-day for all that's giv-en us. 2.We
give our thanks to-day for moun-tain, tree, and stream. 3.We
give our thanks to-day for sun-shine, cloud, and rain. 4.We
give our thanks to-day for fun we had with friends. 5.We
give our thanks to-day for food we have to eat.

We give our thanks to-day, We give our thanks to-day,

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Dmin Emin Dmin Emin Dmin E

Upper part: We give our thanks to - day, We give our thanks to - day, We give our thanks to - day.

Middle part: We give our thanks to - day, We give our thanks to - day.

Lower part: We give our thanks to - day.

rit.

The ground (written on the lower staff, "We give our thanks today, We give our thanks today . . .") will, of course, be sung (or doubled) an octave higher than written if children's or women's voices are used.

The ground actually consists of three voices, and is meant to be performed like

Upper Part: We give our thanks to - day.

Middle Part: We give our thanks to - day.

Lower Part: We give our thanks to - day.

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If this proves difficult, or if your group does not have enough voices to cover all three parts, the Upper Part can be sung alone, and the Middle and Lower Parts omitted.

The main melody ("We give our thanks today for all that's given us, . . .") can be sung as a two-, three- or four- part round. The first, second, third, and/or fourth parts enter at the points marked **1, 2, 3** and/or **4** in the score.

At the conclusion of each verse, the song can be performed two ways:

#1. Group 1 can immediately proceed to the next verse, before Groups 2, 3, and 4 have finished their verses. (Group 1 follows the notes and rests exactly as written in measures 11 and 12 of the score.)

#2. Group 1 can wait until Groups 2, 3 and 4 have completed their verse, then begin the next verse. It works out rather well if the end of Group 4's verse and the beginning of Group 1's following verse dovetail as shown in the figure below. (It works out that Group 1 must rest two extra measures, beyond the the rests marked in the score, after finishing their verse in measure 11.)

As with all the Music IQ Songs, the verses given are only samples. Feel free to make your own verses that fit your situation and inclinations.

Here are some possible additional verses;

We give our thanks today for friends and family. (3x)

We give our thanks today for friendship that we've shared. (3x)

We give our thanks today for beauty, love, and grace. (3x)

Dovetailing the end of Group 4's verse with the beginning of Group 1's verse:

(Group 1) We give our thanks to - day for...

(Group 4) giv - en us.

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For more ambitious performing groups, the words of the ground (ostinato) can be given at different speeds by upper, middle, and lower voices in the ground:

Upper: We give our thanks to - day, We give our
Middle: We give our thanks to - day
Lower: We give our

(U) thanks to - day, We give our thanks to - day
(M) We give our thanks to - day
(L) thanks to - day

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The Theory

These camp songs came about as a result of my doctoral research at the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music into music preferences of different age listeners. This research had some very surprising and interesting conclusions about how to help young people become more natural and spontaneous musicians. Briefly, the research showed that:

- Music preferences become more set with age; for the general population of school children, music preferences seem to become quite set by the age of 15 or so. However, students younger than this age are amazingly open to many different kinds of music. In general, the younger the student, the more open the student is to new kinds of music.
- This hardening of musical taste with age is (surprisingly!) an important part of the learning process. Without this development of definite musical preferences, refined taste and discrimination cannot develop.
- In some groups (i.e., trained musicians) the hardening of musical preference happens at a much slower rate. Musicians may be quite open to new musical styles, even into their twenties and thirties.
- There are surprising benefits to developing an interest in a broad range of musical styles. (1) Musical prejudice is strongly associated with social prejudice; breaking down musical prejudices is a powerful way to start breaking down cultural prejudices such as racism and sexism. (2) The musically cultured person in the U.S. (and, apparently, most Western/European countries) is no longer a classical music snob, but a musical omnivore who appreciates quality in any kind of music from bluegrass to bebop to Baroque opera.
- Although hardening of musical taste with age is inevitable, it is advantageous to slow down the hardening of preference as much as possible. This is the way that the broadest, deepest, most profound, and most detailed knowledge develops (in music and in other areas of knowledge, as well).
- The reason for this is rather simple: knowledge is a "play of differences". The person with a broad musical taste has a wide field of differences in which to place any new piece of knowledge; new knowledge is seen in comparison and contrast with many, many previous areas of knowledge. Because of this broad range of similar but contrasting knowledge, the new knowledge is understood both in greater depth and in greater detail.

For instance, first graders in a school were divided into three groups.

Group 1: Trained to sing in major keys

Group 2: Trained to sing in major & minor

Group 3: Trained to sing in major, minor, modal scales.

After a year of this training, students in Group 3 sang songs in major keys better than students in both Groups 1 and 2--despite the fact that Group 3 had spent less total time singing songs in major keys. Group 3 understood major keys better because they had several similar but slightly different things (minor scales, modal scales) as a basis for comparison and understanding.

A similar study involved students learning songs using different rhythms.

Group 1: Sang in 2/4, 4/4

Group 2: Sang in 2/4, 4/4, 3/4, 6/8

Group 3: Sang in 2/4, 4/4, 3/4, 6/8, 5/8, 7/8, changing meters

Again, Group 3 outperformed both Groups 1 and 2, even in singing songs in 2/4 and 4/4. Group 1 was the worst of the three groups at singing songs in 2/4 and 4/4, despite the fact that they had been "specializing" in singing these songs for an entire year.

• Research shows that children learn music exactly as they learn language. That is to say, learning starts with listening--for many hours and years. Learning then progresses during a long stage of listening, imitating, and experimenting, during which skills are progressively refined. In language development, this begins with "baby talk", progresses to simple sentences, more complex sentences, and ends with fluent speech. In musical development, the imitating and experimenting stage of learning is best approached through singing--lots of singing, in many different scales, modes, and meters.

• Unfortunately, our popular and mass media musical culture favors a quite narrow range of music. Over 80% of music on radio, television, and the movies is in major keys and in 2/4 or 4/4 meter. Over 90% of music in elementary school music books surveyed was in major and 2/4 or 4/4. Over 90% of song topics on radio involve romantic love and/or sex (not only is this topic of little interest to young children, but even worse, the fixation on this one area of life--admittedly a very interesting one to older age groups--locks out expression of the dozens of human feelings and emotions that young children should have the opportunity to feel through music).

The Practical Application

What are the practical results of these ideas for parents and teachers?

- Young people need to be exposed to a wide variety of music, first by listening and then by singing. They should listen to and sing music in a wide variety of scales, modes, meters, rhythms, and tempos. They should listen to and sing music expressing a wide variety of feelings and emotions and from a wide variety of musical styles.
- Children should start listening to this variety of music at a very young age; the older the child the more set the preferences.
- Parents and teachers--who determine the listening agenda for young children--are older and, so, almost always set in their musical opinions. Adults should realize that much music their children should be listening to is going to sound strange, bizarre, off-beat, weird, or just not interesting to the adult. (Although adults who keep an open mind can develop new music preferences, too, and doing so is good for the adult for the same reason it is good for the child.)
- World musics, jazz, classical music, musicals, religious music, folk music, popular music from different eras (1940s, 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s) are all quite easily available and can help to round out your child's listening. If you start when your child is young, you will find the child surprisingly open to a variety of musical styles.
- You may find that it is easy to work a variety of music into your daily routine if you make music a functional part of your activities. For instance, whenever you're cleaning up the front room, put on that "Classical Music of India" CD. When you're doing dishes, listen to a Big Band CD and while taking a bath, a Beethoven Symphony. Have certain songs you sing while you're getting ready for bed, combing hair, or getting dressed. "Music to help with an activity" is the way most every culture throughout the ages has used music, and you will find that using music in this way helps your child (and you!) keep on task, regulate emotions, and enjoy routine or boring activities.
- Music in different modes and meters suitable for singing by children is quite difficult to find. Most children's songs are in major keys and 2/4 or 4/4 meters. There is nothing wrong with these songs, but it would be ideal to have children sing and hear a wider spectrum of tonalities and rhythms.

My study on changeability of music preference involved 682 adults and public school students. Edwin Gordon has spearheaded innovative research (some of which is mentioned above) on the language model of music learning and the benefits of teaching young students to sing in a variety of scales, modes, rhythms, and meters. See www.unm.edu/~audiate/home.html. My conclusions, summarized above, rely on the work of many, many researchers--far too many to be cited on this brief page. A complete list of studies cited can be found at oz.sunflower.org/~bhugh/musiciq.spm.

The Songs

With these ideas in mind, I realized that a perfect venue for children to learn to sing songs in a wider variety of scales and rhythms is at camp. Many camps use songs extensively; camps are one of the last holdouts in our culture to have a true oral folk song tradition. Many campers have a repertoire of dozens of complex songs, all learned in a natural, fun, and social way. With this solid base of music-making as a starting point, if camps broaden their musical spectrums even a little by including a few songs in modes and unusual rhythms, the beneficial effect of camp singing will only be multiplied.

Of course, the camp songs can be used at home, church, or school, as well. It can be used as a general song of thanks (especially appropriate around Thanksgiving time, of course!) or to express thankfulness for a particular thing (you may need to write appropriate verses).

Teaching this song

You might sing the melody as a simple song (without ostinato or round) several times over a period of days before trying it as a round and/or adding the ostinato.

You might introduce the "simple" version of the ostinato (Upper Part only) for a few days before complicating matters with the three part ostinato.

Teachers or parents who having difficulty mastering the melody of the song should listen to the recorded version of the song several times daily for a period of days or a few weeks. The music, internalized in this way, will become much easier to grasp and to teach.

Recordings of this and other Music IQ Songs can be found at mp3.com/MusicIQ.

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- mp3.com/brent_d_hugh - classical piano recordings by Brent Hugh
- mp3.com/VictorianChristmas - Victorian-era Christmas Carols
- oz.sunflower.org/~bhugh/pathetic.spm - various sheet music, recordings, and other music-related items--many free for the download--by Brent Hugh

--Brent Hugh

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