

# 3 We shall not be moved

RESOURCES ► CD1 track 3 (performance); CD2 track 2 (backing)

## Information

Probably dating back to the era of American slavery, this song was originally called 'I shall not be moved', referring to the singer's commitment to their faith. The 'I' became 'We' when the words were adapted by activists in the 1930s. Like many protest songs, it urges the listener to stand up for what they believe in, even if it flies in the face of authority. The song has been performed in many contexts, particularly in the 1960s as part of the US civil rights movement, and was recently recorded by veteran gospel singer Mavis Staples. This arrangement is presented in three parts, sung at any octave, and is ideal for those singing in harmony for the first time as it moves mostly by step. The melody line may also be sung in unison.

## Starting

- To establish the groove, march around the room on beats 1 and 3 in time to the opening music.
- Ask the group to sing down an F major scale, starting with the fifth, to the numbers 5 4 3 2 1:



Now try again, but this time ask each singer to stop and hold the note on either 5, 3, or 1. Repeat this twice, each time stopping on a different number, until everyone has found the sound of 5, 3, and 1. Finally, call a number and get the group to sing back the corresponding pitch. Explain that the three notes together form a triad.

## Teaching and rehearsing

- Teach the lead melody in unison first, and then work through the upper harmony part. Finally look at the lower harmony, which is usually hardest to hear.
- If the group has never sung in parts before, or if some singers are struggling, try concentrating on two bars at a time and building up section by section, teaching by rote. Ensure everyone knows where the contours of the lines are the same and where they differ—in bar 14, for example, the melody and upper harmony move by a step, while the lower harmony shifts down a 3rd.
- Assign a part to each individual and mix up the group so that each person stands next to a singer on a different part. This produces a richer sound, ensures everyone knows their part, and creates awareness of other parts.
- Aim for a consistent, rich tone throughout.

## Ideas

- To create a longer arrangement, treat verse 1 ('We shall not. . .') as a chorus and sing it again between each of the other verses. This would work particularly well if verses 2 and 3 were performed by soloists or small groups, with everyone else joining in for the chorus.
- Personalize the song with additional lyrics about local causes in school or home life.

## Improvising toolbox

- The gaps between the phrases have potential for an improvised answer, as on the CD demo. First try asking half the group to sing 'we shall not be moved' in bar 12, starting when the others sing 'moved'. Then repeat this with the same words and rhythm in bar 12, but ask individual soloists to vary the pitch as they see fit. What else could you sing in those gaps?
- Play bars 1–4 round and round on the piano and use this as the basis for a riffing game:
  - Begin by finding notes 1, 3, and 5, as in the warm-up.
  - Ask one member of the group to sing a repeating rhythm to any syllables (try 'hey', 'oh', or 'do') on one of those pitches.
  - Gradually add a variety of rhythms on different pitches (chosen from 1, 3, and 5) to create a set of interlocking patterns on a single chord.
  - Once the group is confident, or when one pitch gets boring, allow flexibility for individuals to sing any pitch they like, keeping the repeating syllables and rhythms the same. Sing all together for a joyous cacophony, or one by one as soloists.

## Listen out

- Pay close attention to the tuning of the chord on 'be' (beat 4 of bar 11)—a half-step down is not as far as some may think. Try singing from bar 9 and stopping on that chord, making sure all pitches are accurate.
- The Eb's in bars 16 and 18, lower harmony part, should be clearly different from the Eb's elsewhere.

## Performing

- The faces and bodies of the singers should convey a firm resolve and a strong belief in the message of the song. A slow walk, 'step-touch' movement, or even march would be appropriate here.
- If you are performing in concert, teach the song to the audience, and invite them to join in towards the end so the performance becomes a collaboration in the mood of a political rally.

# 3 We shall not be moved

Trad. African American  
arr. Steve Milloy

Slow backbeat march; straight 8s ♩ = 66

Piano

*mf*

8va bassa

B♭/C F B♭/C F B♭/C F

6

Melody *f*

(8)

1. We shall not,  
(2.) fight - ing for our free - dom,  
3. Young and old to - ge - ther,

Upper harmony (opt.)

Lower harmony (opt.) *mf*

B♭/C F B♭/C F

11

(8)

we shall not be moved. We're We shall not,  
fight - ing for our free - dom,  
Young and old to - ge - ther,

F/C C7 C°7 C7 F/C C7

15 *cresc.*

(8) we shall not be moved. Like a tree that's plant-ed by the wa -

F Gm/F F F7/A Bb Cm/Bb Bb C7(sus2) F F/E *cresc.*

20 *ff*

(8) - ter, we shall not be moved. *1, 2*

*f*

Dm Bbm/Db F/C C7(sus2) *1, 2* F Bb/C

25a (verse 2 only) *f* *3 rit.*

(8) 2. We're moved. *mf*

*3 rit.*

F Bb/C F Bb/C F *mp*