

PIECE: “Sisi Ni Moja” by Jacob Narverud

VOICES: Middle School SA Choir w/ Optional Descant

FORMAT: Approx. 12 min. asynchronous flipped classroom lesson

GOALS: Students should understand the origin and composer’s intent of “Sisi Ni Moja”
Students should be able to sing the chorus (mm. 22 – 30) of “Sisi Ni Moja”

FC LINK: <https://youtu.be/DpruhrAbyiQ>

- I. Warm – Ups (2 min.)
 - a. Stretching
 - i. Briefly in video
 - ii. Encourage students to pause and stretch a bit more
 - b. Breath Engagement/Vocalization
 - i. “Si-Si-Si-Si-Si” fast and short on S-F-M-R-D
 - ii. Begin in E major, go down to A major
 - c. Resonance
 - i. “Ni-Ni-Ni-Ni-Nah-Nah” like childhood taunt – S-S-M-L-S-M
 - ii. Start in A major, go up to E major
 - d. Vowels/Solfège/Singing
 - i. Repeat after me patterns in the following order – specify parts/all
 1. La-Do-Re-Do (He-ja he-ja)
 2. Do-Do-Do-Mi-Sol (si-si ni mo-ja)
 3. Do-Do-Do-Mi-Do (si-si ni mo-ja)
 4. Do-Do-Do-La-Sol (si-si ni mo-ja)

5. La-Do-Re-Do (He-ja he-ja)

6. Do-Do-Do (We are one)

ii. Use slowed versions of rhythms from chorus

II. Context of “Sisi Ni Moja” (2 min.)

a. Commissioned “to celebrate unity and community through cultures” for a concert with the theme of “We Are One”

i. Reference the presence of this lyric in the chorus

b. “Sisi Ni Moja”

i. Composer’s student from Kenya helped construct this Swahili phrase

ii. “Sisi Ni Moja” – uncommon Swahili phrase translating to “we are one”

iii. “Heja” – no specific meaning, no specific cultural origin

1. “celebratory chant” with rhythmic and percussive influence

c. Compositional influences

i. Goal: popular-style, modern song connected to theme of “oneness”

ii. Popular-music feel for familiarity

1. Listeners should “feel an instant connection to the music,”
allowing them to “focus on the message of the text.”

iii. Text was written to represent “all people and all cultures”

III. Chorus of “Sisi Ni Moja” (8 min.)

a. Breakdown of Swahili Text (1 min.)

i. Go through word by word, teaching pronunciation out of rhythm

ii. Use Call & Response

iii. Pronunciation Guide:

1. He – ja = Hey – ya
2. Si – si = See – see
3. Ni = Nee
4. Mo – ja = Moh – dgah (hard J)

b. Rhythms on Text (3 min.)

- i. Clap a slower pulse (60 bpm) to learn text and rhythms together
- ii. “At Letter B on page 5, we’re going to speak through your rhythms using the syllables we just went over”
- iii. Consistently include cutoffs by chanting “off”
- iv. Use Call and Response style, cueing them in with “your turn” and mouthing the words in rhythms while they chant – keep saying “off” when it’s their turn to chant the rhythms, especially on longer phrases
- v. Teaching Sequence for Rhythms
 1. Main melody “heja heja sisi ni moja”
 2. Repeat “heja heja sisi ni moja” three times – this is the Alto!
 - a. Sightread into m. 28 “heja heja we are one”
 - b. Make sure to include “offs”
 3. Quickly reinforce “we are one” rhythm
 4. Soprano-only rhythms – Everyone chanting!
 - a. “Heja heja heja” in m. 23
 - i. Slightly emphasize slurred 16^{ths} w/o being choppy
 - ii. Include “off” on beat 2
 - b. Look at m. 25 – it’s pretty similar, just longer!

- i. Model full rhythm to m. 27
 - c. Run m. 27 after breath mark to m. 30
 - d. “And of 2” Cutoffs - QUICKLY
 - i. “If you have a pencil nearby, you should mark this in – and if you don’t, then pause the video, get a pencil, and mark this in!”
 - ii. Have students change the tied quarter note in m. 27 to an eighth note, followed by an eighth rest
 - 1. MAKE THE SAME CHANGE IN M. 23
 - 2. “At our meeting, I want to see that you all wrote this down in your music”
 - iii. Explain function – breathing at the breath mark
 - iv. Start in m. 27 – demonstrate cutoff starting from the “sisi ni moja” pickup into the measure
 - 1. Once stopping with the off
 - 2. Once continuing into the next “heja heja”
 - 3. Have students try each of these
 - v. Run from mm. 25 – 30
 - e. Go back to m. 22, have students chant through m. 24
 - i. Remind them of “and of 2” cutoff
 - c. Chanting
 - i. Have students chant full section on their part
 - ii. Run in the following configurations:

1. Chant with Sopranos, Altos chant independently
 2. Chant with Altos, Sopranos chant independently
- d. Teach Individual Parts (3 min.)
- i. “Remember those solfege patterns we did a few minutes ago? They all came from this section!”
 - ii. Students should attempt to sing their part against the part being taught, or can follow and sing along for enrichment purposes
 - iii. Teacher will sing along, play piano, and snap on the rests – students should also snap on the rests!
 - iv. Soprano Part
 1. Model from mm. 22 – 24
 - a. Have them sing it back with piano
 2. Model from mm. 25 – 30
 - a. Have them sing it back with piano
 3. Put full part together
 - v. Alto Part
 1. Model and repeat every two bars
 2. Put full part together
- e. Run Vocal Parts
- i. Play piano of both parts, have students sing along
 - ii. Conduct w/o piano, have students sing along
- f. Final Challenge!
- i. Go back, watch the conducted run-through, and apply the following:

1. Hit accents written into their parts, on the “he” of “heja”
2. Get all of their cutoffs
3. Sing the last crescendo!