

LET'S GET SINGING!

I Bought Me a Cat

Traditional

Bought me a cat, my cat pleased me
I fed my cat by the yonder tree
The cat goes fiddle-i-fee

Bought me a hen...
...chimmy chuck, chimmy chuck

Bought me a duck...
...quack, quack

Bought me a goose...
...quaw, quaw

Bought me a pig...
...oink, oink

Bought me a cow...
...moo, moo

Bought me a horse...
...neigh, neigh

About the song

This traditional song has links to the USA and the British Isles. Known by a variety of names including *The Barnyard Song* and *The Farmyard*, it is a cumulative song in a similar vein to *Old MacDonald Had a Farm*. It has a repeated refrain, adding a new animal, and its associated sound, with each repeat. A well-known version of this song is the arrangement by American composer, Aaron Copland.

The melody presented here may be different to other versions. One of the interesting things about traditional songs is how they change over time and are influenced by people and places.

While the title of the song is *I Bought Me A Cat*, we never actually sing the 'I' at the beginning of the sentence.

About the presenter



Ben Madden is a singer, choir director, and music teacher from Ōtepoti Dunedin. He is the Assistant Music Director and Vocal Consultant for the New Zealand Secondary Students' Choir, a member of Voices New Zealand Chamber Choir, directs four choirs weekly at Otago Boys' High School and Otago Girls' High School, and is a keen contributor to NZCF's Primary Outreach Team.

Warm-ups

Warm-ups help to prepare us physically and vocally for singing. They help to relax our bodies and sharpen our minds.

Physical

1 Big Face, Little Face.

Objective: facial stretches to build expressiveness. These stretches will also help release any excess tension in the facial muscles.

Vocal

2 I'm a ghost.

Objective: access to the whole vocal range; vocal play and expressiveness. This is a great chance to

play around with vocal colour and range in a safe and silly way.

- 3 I can sing. Objective: pitch matching. This little song reminds us that everyone can sing! Ben makes an important note about ensuring that students sing in an appropriate vocal range.

Teaching notes

- Students will pick this song up very quickly. Do take care that they sing the melody accurately.
- The opening note is the highest in the song. Students will need a well-energised, confident approach to the first note.
- The pause before the cat joins each time is a fun opportunity for something – a sound maybe? Or an action?
- Use visual prompts to begin with to support students while learning the song. However, this song is an excellent activity for developing memory skills. Withdraw the prompts as soon as students can sing without them. Perhaps you could create actions or movements as memory aids instead.

What else could you do with this song?

Extension/Curricular links

- Have students create new versions of the song. Ben suggests that the family shopping list might be fun! I wonder what sound milk would make?
- Add new animals to the song. Explore lots of vocal play in creating the sounds that the animals make. Feel free to improvise and be creative. Encourage a variety of pitch ranges – high, low and some in the middle. Students will likely tend towards low sounds because they seem less risky.
- See how many different versions of the melody students can find. Can they figure out what is different?
- Compare and contrast different recordings of this song. Suggestions include – orchestral arrangements with solo singer, piano and singer, choral, folk (fiddle, banjo or the like) accompaniments, children’s albums. Be aware that some versions of the song may present the verse “I bought me a wife” as the final verse of the song. Either contextualise this appropriately or leave it out.
- Create a picture book, either hard copy or digital. Have students illustrate the animal for each verse. For a physical picture book, have students share it

by reading and performing for younger students. A digital version could have the singing recorded over the top of the illustrations.

- Choose an animal as a visual art inspiration. Explore through a variety of media.
- Create a dramatic performance incorporating movement, singing and instrumental accompaniment.

Glossary of musical terms

Beat	The steady heartbeat of the music that continues as long as the music does. It only gets faster or slower if the music requires it. Sometimes the beat is audible and sometimes it is implied. An ensemble stays together by sharing a sense of beat. Keeping the beat means keeping in time.
Melody	A series of notes/pitches that make up a tune.
Phrase	A musical sentence.
Rhythm	The pattern of long and short sounds move the music forward through time. In a song, the rhythm is the pattern of the words.

Important messages

- Singing is fun!
- It is important for the health of children’s voices that they are singing in a pitch range that is not too low.
- Never louder than beautiful. Let the natural beauty of children’s voices shine. Understand that the volume they produce is directly proportional to their age, size and stage of development. Encourage healthy singing, not shouting.
- Singing voice, speaking voice, whispering voice – we can use our vocal mechanism in different ways. Ensure that children are using their voices in a ‘singing’ way. A light and ringing sound will help protect young voices from overuse and possible damage.
- Our body is our instrument. That means that no two voices will sound the same – we are each unique!
- We need our whole body to sing – energy, breath, posture, expression as well as a singing voice.
- Again – Singing is fun! And important! And good for us! Singing every day will energise you and your students.