

LET'S GET SINGING!

Xin Nian Hao (Happy New Year)

Traditional Melody. Chinese lyrics by Du Hongdong

xīn nián hǎo ya, xīn nián hǎo ya
新年好呀 新年好呀
Happy New Year, Happy New Year

zhù fú dà jiā xīn nián hǎo
祝福大家 新年好呀
Happy New Year to you all

wǒ mén chàng gē wǒ mén tiào wǔ
我们唱歌 我们跳舞
We are singing, we are dancing

zhù fú dà jiā xīn nián hǎo
祝福大家 新年好呀
Happy New Year to you all.

About the song

The melody may be familiar from its use in *Oh My Darling Clementine*, an American folk ballad. This traditional melody predates the use of those lyrics though and its origin is unclear. There is some indication that maybe it came from a Spanish folk song. It is not uncommon for folk songs to borrow melodies from other languages and cultural traditions. In this instance, the melody has been developed into a New Year Song with the addition of festive lyrics by Du Hongdong (it is customary in Mandarin to write the surname of the person first followed by the person's name).

This is a well-known song among the Chinese community.

About the presenter

Chinese New Zealander Annabel Yu is an Auckland-based pianist, singer, and percussionist. Annabel expresses her passion for music through her role as a piano teacher, collaborative pianist, an active percussionist in a chamber ensemble and a seasoned



chorister. Currently completing her Master of Music, Annabel remains committed to ongoing learning and aspires to refine her skills to become a great collaborative pianist and conductor.

Warm-ups

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

Vocal/Mental focus

1 121

Objective: warming up the voice; focusing the mind; familiarity with a major scale. This warm-up requires excellent concentration! When the students are confident, have them sing some of the numbers in their minds instead of out loud. You could even swap a number and do an action instead! For an extra challenge, sing the pattern from the top to the bottom. Always take care to ensure the students are singing each note in tune. As you add new challenges, this becomes harder.

Physical/Vocal/Mental focus

2 Hi! Hello!

Objective: this exercise with words by Andrew Davidson (used with permission) is a great one

to warm up the voice, the body AND hone focus and concentration skills. Practice it carefully with Annabel until it is automatic. For an extra challenge, make up your own words! Or sing each note of the scale in solfege (do, do/re, do/re/mi etc.) or with numbers (1, 1/2, 1/2/3 etc.).

Teaching notes

- Take care to learn the pronunciation of the Chinese Mandarin language accurately. Where you have access to expertise, call on students and your school community to help. Repeat the relevant sections of the video as often as you need to feel confident. Draw the children's attention to the repetition.
- The vocal quality is light and flowing. Don't push for a loud sound. Make each musical line smooth and connected. We can use the musical term 'legato' to describe this character.
- Mandarin is a tonal language – the pitch of the spoken syllable is critical to its meaning. The tones in Mandarin are represented by the symbols written above the letters. Listen carefully to how Annabel speaks the text and notice how the pitch changes. This is somewhat obscured once we sing the text to particular notes so it is interesting to listen to the spoken version to hear this.

What else could you do with this song?

Extension/Curricular links

- Find out about Chinese New Year – when and how is it celebrated? How does it compare to the celebration of the new year in other cultural traditions?
- Have a go at writing a New Year song in other languages, borrowing the same melody as this song.
- Listen to the American Ballad, 'Oh my darling Clementine'. What is a ballad? Analyse the melody. The sequence of notes in *Clementine* and this song is the same and both songs are in 3-metre (3 beats in each bar). However, where this song begins on the first beat of the bar, *Clementine* begins on the third beat of the bar. This changes the feel of the melody a little. Listen and compare the two songs. See if you and the students can conduct in three and see how the beat pattern works.
- The lyrics of the song are provided to you in both Pinyin and characters. Find out more about these two language systems.
- Investigate the Chinese characters for this song. Use them as a basis for a piece of art.
- Explore Chinese music and dance traditions at New Year and for other cultural celebrations.

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.
Legato	The playing or singing of a musical line in a smooth, connected way.
Melody	A series of notes/pitches that make up a tune.
Phrase	A musical sentence.
Rhythm	The pattern of long and short sounds that move the music forward through time. In a song, the rhythm is the pattern of the words.
Scale	A sequence of notes/tones that follow a particular pattern or structure. There are lots of different types of scales.

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.