

CELEBRATE with SOUND!

*Creative Holiday Chants with Body Percussion
and Classroom Instruments*

BY RICHARD D. CROSS



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FOREWORD

The idea for this book came about when a colleague of mine asked if I had any music activities that would help her extend her social studies unit on the Constitution. Not being able to find anything, “Constitution Day” was the first chant I composed, specifically to be used in her classroom. When her students performed the chant with body percussion and instruments, they were thoroughly engaged in the learning process.

Realizing that other holiday and seasonal chants were hard to find, I decided to write an entire book of chants for every month of the year. The 25 chants may be used in a variety of ways: as aids to teaching rhythm and notation, as tools for practicing musical concepts such as tempo and dynamics, as prompts for lively classroom discussion using the accompanying “Did You Know?” facts, and as exercises to reinforce cross-curricular concepts that students may be studying with other teachers. Learn and perform them for their own sake in class, or consider programming a set of several chants for your next school performance.

I hope that you and your students have as much fun performing this collection of holiday and seasonal chants as I did composing them. Happy chanting!

Richard D. Cross

TEACHING AND PERFORMANCE SUGGESTIONS

- ◆ Teach the chants using the spoken lyrics before transferring the patterns to body percussion and then performing the rhythms on classroom percussion instruments.
- ◆ Isolate tricky rhythms from the chant and practice them via call and response.
- ◆ Work through one line of the chant at a time before performing it from start to finish.
- ◆ Once each line has been learned, divide the class into groups according to the number of lines in the chant. Layer in the parts one at a time until all of the lines are being chanted simultaneously.
- ◆ Assign one student group to chant the lyrics of the chant while others perform the rhythms with body and/or instrument percussion.
- ◆ Practice slowly and then increase the tempo. Try varying the tempo between repetitions of the chant: slow, fast, etc.
- ◆ Guide students through crescendos and decrescendos for a more musical performance. End the chant by getting softer and softer until there is complete silence.
- ◆ Give individual students the opportunity to lead the chant at the front of the classroom.
- ◆ Use the chant as the basis for a composition activity. Divide the class into small groups, each tasked with creating their own arrangement of the chant using a combination of spoken lyrics, body percussion, and classroom percussion instruments.
- ◆ Make the chant into a game by arranging the class in a circle and having each student perform one measure at a time, slowly passing the chant around the circle, line by line. This activity can also be used as an informal student assessment opportunity.

NEW YEAR'S DAY

HANDCLAPS (Triangle) $\frac{4}{4}$ Count - ing down: ten, nine,

THIGH PATS (Hand Drum) $\frac{4}{4}$ Watch - ing the ball drop in Times Square, New York.

FINGER SNAPS (Shaker) $\frac{4}{4}$ Kiss - ing at mid - night.

STOMPS (Claves) $\frac{4}{4}$ Toast - ing for health in the New Year!

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eight, sev - en, six, five, four, three, two, one.

Hap - py New Year!

Smooch!

Clink!

NEW YEAR'S DAY

Did You Know?

- ◆ It is thought that the first visitors you see after ringing in the New Year will bring you good or bad luck, depending on whether they are friends or enemies.
- ◆ Items and food that are ring-shaped are also thought to bring good luck. They symbolize coming “full circle” (in the same way that a year comes full circle from beginning to end). Some cultures eat ring-shaped food throughout the night. The Dutch often eat donuts.
- ◆ Black-eyed peas are consumed in certain parts of the United States, usually with ham. They are also thought to bring good luck in both the United States and other cultures around the world.
- ◆ Among the other foods that are eaten on New Year’s Eve are cabbage and ham, for prosperity. In Asian cultures, rice is eaten around midnight to signify the coming year of fortune.
- ◆ “Auld Lang Syne” is often sung at midnight to ring in the New Year. The song was composed by Robert Burns sometime in the 1700s. The title means “old long since” or “old times.”
- ◆ December 31, 1907 saw the very first ball lowered in Times Square in New York City. The ball weighed 700 pounds and was five feet in diameter. It was made from wood and iron.
- ◆ The Times Square ball was not lowered in 1942 and 1943, due to wartime restrictions.
- ◆ The current Times Square ball is made from Waterford Crystal and weighs over 1,000 pounds. It is covered in over 9,000 LED lights, which use very little energy. The ball begins to drop at 11:59 and completes the journey exactly at midnight to ring in the New Year.
- ◆ Despite the huge celebrations seen in New York and other cities, about 75% of American parties on New Year’s Eve involve 20 people or less.

