

WWI Performance Pack: Music Resources

2: Stuck in the middle

Nigel: It's 1914. Britain is at war. Hundreds of thousands of troops have been recruited into the army – including soldiers from the British Empire right around the world...and they're fighting alongside France, locked in battle against Germany in the fields of France and Belgium.

'Oh,' they think, 'it'll be over by Christmas.' But no, World War 1 goes on...and on...

Sophie: Imagine being stuck in a network of mud-filled trenches... constantly under fire from guns and bombs, cold and wet in your heavy uniform, sometimes going hungry, sometimes not getting enough sleep. And always anxious that if you so much as lift your head above ground-level from your muddy trench...that could be the end of you!

Nigel: Somehow, the soldiers have to keep their spirits up. So they make jokes about it all...and they sing...and sometimes the joking and the singing come together in the songs they sing! Next is a soldier's song from the time to join in with, about the dangers posed by a 'whizzbang' – a kind of small bomb or 'shell' that made a whizzing sound through the air. Listen to Sophie sing two lines at a time, then see if you can copy them with me, singing the tune really quietly. Ready to listen and copy?

Sophie: *Hush, here comes a whizzbang,
Hush, here comes a whizzbang*



Nigel: *Hush, here comes a whizzbang,
Hush, here comes a whizzbang*

WW1 Performance Pack - Music

Sophie: *Now, you soldiers get down those stairs
Down in your dugouts and say your prayers*

Nigel: *Now, you soldiers get down those stairs
Down in your dugouts and say your prayers*

Sophie: *Hush, here comes a whizzbang
And it's making straight for you,*

Nigel: *Hush, here comes a whizzbang
And it's making straight for you,*

Sophie: *And you'll see all the wonders of no-man's-land
If a whizzbang hits you.*

Nigel: *And you'll see all the wonders of no-man's-land
If a whizzbang hits you.*

Sophie: 'No-man's-land' – that's the name for the area between the two sets of trenches, which were sometimes so close together that the two armies could call to each other across it. No-man's-land was a terrible place of mud, craters, barbed wire...and exploding shells...

Nigel: As well as singing popular songs of the time - like 'It's a long way to Tipperary' - the soldiers also made up their own words to go with hymn tunes or other songs that everyone would know. One of these made-up songs is called 'When this lousy war is over' – and it's sung to the tune of a well-known hymn.

Sophie: Listen to Nigel and copy a line at a time. Ready to listen then sing..?



Nigel: *When this lousy war is over*

- Sophie: *When this lousy war is over*
- Nigel: *No more soldiering for me*
- Sophie: *No more soldiering for me*
- Nigel: *When I get my civvy clothes on*
- Sophie: *When I get my civvy clothes on*
- Nigel: *Oh, how happy I shall be!*
- Sophie: *Oh, how happy I shall be!*
- Nigel: And how about 'Auld Lang Syne' – the famous song which is often sung at New Year. Do you know the tune of that? They used to sing it to three words 'We're here because...', over and over. Ready to join in?
- Both: *We're here because we're here because*
We're here because we're here
We're here because we're here because
We're here because we're here.
- Sophie: To the soldiers of the muddy trenches it must have felt like they were stuck...stuck in the middle...and that's the title of the next song.
- The song has a lilting 'waltz' rhythm...and it's a supposedly 'cheerful' dance-song, so your whole body can sway just a little as you sing. Get ready to copy the first two lines, a line at a time...
- Nigel: *Stuck, stuck in the middle*



Sophie: *Stuck, stuck in the middle*

Nigel: *Stuck, stuck in the mud*

Sophie: *Stuck, stuck in the mud*

Nigel: Did your waltz 'lilt' and sway a bit? When you sing the word 'stuck', make sure it's not too long. The next part starts in a similar way - 'Hard as I try to admire the view...' - but you have to be very careful of the next notes, which are very close together in pitch and they slow down. 'All I do is think of you...' Here's how all that bit sounds...

Nigel: *Hard as I try
To admire the view*

Sophie: *Hard as I try
To admire the view*

Nigel: *All I do
Is think of you*

Sophie: *All I do
Is think of you*

Nigel: There's also a harmony part that some of you could try later.

Both: *Think of you...*

Sophie: But next, you go back to the original speed and sing one line that's just like the beginning, but then you have to be **very** careful with the notes on 'Just can't sleep, not a peep....'. So, let's try all that section. Listen and copy, like before...

Nigel: *Stuck, stuck in the middle*



Sophie: *Stuck, stuck in the middle*

Nigel: *Just can't sleep
Not a peep*

Sophie: *Just can't sleep
Not a peep*

And for the end of this verse, the tune comes 'up' at the end to some high notes for the whizz-bang-thud bit. 'Do-doo-doo-doo'. Ready to copy the words?

Nigel: *All there is for a lullaby*

Sophie: *All there is for a lullaby*

Nigel: *Is whizz, bang, thud.*

Sophie: *Is whizz, bang, thud.*

Sophie: In verse two you whistle for the first half of the tune and then join in humming for the second half. Now, put the whole tune together, for the words of verse 3. Like before, don't forget to slow down half-way through, where the words are 'whizz bang whoosh...'

Nigel: And don't forget to go high at the end of this verse, where you sing about 'old barbed wire'. Ready to sing the words really clearly? A-1, 2...



Both: *Stuck, stuck in the middle*
Stuck, stuck in the mire
Backwards and forwards
We shove and push
Waiting for
The whizz, bang, whoosh
Stuck, stuck in the middle
What a game
Such a shame -
Home, sweet home made of bags of sand
And old, barbed wire.

Sophie: Verse 4, is easy: you sing through the first half to the sound 'la' and the second half to 'doo' again. And sway a little, if you like! So, ready to 'la' first? A-1, 2...

Both: Laa, la la la, la-aaa... etc
 Doo, doo doo doo, do-ooo... etc

Nigel: Before we sing the words of verse 5, you need to know that the last two lines are a bit different. You have to add a 'pause' for an extra bar at 'kingdom come'. 'Waltz our way off to Kingdom come...' Then, at the very end, there are a few bars of instrumental music which speed up, when you'll need to duck for cover from the whizz-bangs coming your way!

Sophie: So, have a go now at the whole of verse 5, plus the instrumental section. See if you can make your singing emphasise the 'irony' of the song, by singing as cheerfully as you can – it's all in stark contrast to the seriousness and danger of the actual situation. Ready to sing verse 5? A-1, 2...



Both: *Stuck, stuck in the middle*
Stuck, stuck here in France
Helmet and shovel
And bayonet -
Mustn't grumble
Mustn't fret
Stuck, stuck in the middle
Feel the beat
Lift those feet
Waltz our way off to Kingdom come...
The whizz-bang dance.

Sophie: Flash back to 1914 again, near the beginning of the First World War. There's one famous day in the middle of winter, when things are a bit different. It's Thursday, December the 25th – it's Christmas Day. And from several detailed accounts in letters and reports we know that soldiers from both sides came out of their trenches into No-man's-land on Christmas morning for a few hours of peace, to share photos of their loved ones, to talk together and to sing Christmas Carols... even play football. It's become known as the 'Christmas truce'.

Nigel: We're going to recreate the scene in music, by singing two carols. First a snippet from 'While shepherds watched' – but instead of the usual words, we'll sing the joke-ones about shepherds 'washing their socks', and a bar of 'coal-tar soap' coming down - that was a type of soap people used a lot at that time. After that, go on to sing the famous 'Silent Night' quietly. So, 'Shepherds' first:

Both: *While Shepherds washed their socks at night*
All seated round the tub
A bar of coal-tar soap came down
And they began to scrub...



*Silent night, holy night
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon Virgin Mother and Child
Holy Infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace
Sleep in heavenly peace*

Nigel:

Time now to put today's songs together, starting with the three in the trenches 'Medley Mix'. First 'Hush, here comes a whizzbang', where you can sing really quietly, in a kind of half-whisper. Then comes 'When this lousy war is over' and next 'We're here because we're here'. So half-whisper first for 'Hush'...

Both:

*Hush, here comes a whizzbang,
Hush, here comes a whizzbang
Now, you soldiers get down those stairs
Down in your dugouts and say your prayers
Hush, here comes a whizzbang
And it's making straight for you,
And you'll see all the wonders of no-man's-land
If a whizzbang hits you.*

*When this lousy war is over
No more soldiering for me
When I get my civvy clothes on
Oh, how happy I shall be!*

*We're here because we're here because
We're here because we're here
We're here because we're here because
We're here because we're here...*



Sophie: Now the lilting waltz 'Stuck, stuck in the middle' all the way through. Next time we'll be hearing about the end of the War.. and we'll be thinking about how to remember the momentous events of one hundred years ago. Until then... good bye.

Both: *Stuck, stuck in the middle*
Stuck, stuck in the mud
Hard as I try
To admire the view
All I do
Is think of you
Stuck, stuck in the middle
Just can't sleep
Not a peep
All there is for a lullaby
Is whizz, bang, thud.

WHISTLES... etc
Mmn, mmn... etc

Stuck, stuck in the middle
Stuck, stuck in the mire
Backwards and forwards
We shove and push
Waiting for
The whizz, bang, whoosh
Stuck, stuck in the middle
What a game
Such a shame -
Home, sweet home made of bags of sand
And old, barbed wire.



Laa, la la la, la-laaa... etc
Doo, do do do, do-ooo... etc

Stuck, stuck in the middle
Stuck, stuck here in France
Helmet and shovel
And bayonet -
Mustn't grumble
Mustn't fret
Stuck, stuck in the middle
Feel the beat
Lift those feet
Waltz our way off to Kingdom come...
The whizz-bang dance.

