

# 34 Auld Lang Syne

RESOURCES ▶ CD tracks 117–20 (learning tracks); website track 35 (performance)

## ■ You need to know

Robert Burns had a genius not only for writing new songs and poems but for re-crafting existing ones. This was the case with 'Auld Lang Syne', which existed as a phrase in more than one song of that era. In a letter of 17 December 1788 Burns wrote, 'Is not the Scotch phrase "Auld Lang Syne" exceedingly expressive? There is an old song and tune which has often thrilled my soul. You know I am an enthusiast in old Scotch songs. . . Light be the turf on the breast of the heaven-inspired poet who composed this glorious fragment.' This version of 'Auld Lang Syne' is set to what is believed to be the original tune. It first came to prominence through the singing of Jean Redpath in the 1960s and then again in 1994 when sung by Mairi Campbell and Dave Francis on their album *The Winnowing*. Later, in 2008, the same recording was used in the film *Sex in the City 1*. The song is included in this section as it is increasingly being used at funerals as a way of celebrating long-standing friendship. However, with its life-affirming words and tune it would be equally at home in the 'Celebrations' section.

## ■ Starting

- Like many old Scots songs, the tune is based on a pentatonic scale with a gentle poignant feel. Begin with a call and response of pentatonic melodic phrases. See Framework 1 'Call and response', p. xxviii, for ideas.

## ■ Learning

- Teach the tune of the first verse and sing it until everyone can remember the words as well as the tune. Remember to include a translation of any unfamiliar words (see below).
- The chorus has the same tune as the verse except for the last bar. Take a moment to sing the verse and the chorus endings through.
- In the following exercise the endings of the verse and chorus have been put together so that singers can alternate them. Use it as an ostinato backing while you sing the whole tune with it.

for auld lang syne, for

auld lang syne, for

- When the tune is secure, teach the other parts for the verse, then the chorus. Try putting different pairs of voices together to give the singers a chance to sing their line and listen to others in turn.

## ■ Listen out

- Make sure that the word 'syne' is pronounced with an 's', not a 'z'.
- The harmony is quite simple but some chords have a strong, rich sound to them (e.g. bars 4 and 7); make sure these are secure.
- Keep the piece moving along, and don't allow the sound to get stodgy.

## ■ Creating a performance

- This is a song about long-standing friendships and about life and time passing; it's important that singers feel and put across the sentiment of the words. Let your group have a moment to think about what the song means to them before they sing.
- Run verses 3 and 4 together without a chorus in between. This slightly shortens the song and gives it more shape.
- To give a lift to the whole song, try changing the voicing. Tenors take on the alto part, altos take on the tune, and sopranos sing the tenor part an octave higher than written so it becomes a descant.
- It's traditional to cross arms and hold the hands of your neighbours on the last verse: 'And here's a hand my trusty fiere'. If you're doing that in a performance then it's a good idea either to make sure you're standing closer than usual or to stand in a curved line and to take one step forward on the word 'here's' as you link arms, so that you become closer. When it's well executed, this gives a beautiful and profound lift to the emotional landscape of the song.

### *Performance suggestion:*

- Verse 1: sopranos only
- Chorus: sopranos and altos
- Verse 2: sopranos, altos, and tenors
- Chorus: sopranos, altos, and tenors
- Verse 3: sopranos, altos, and tenors
- Verse 4: all voices
- Chorus: all voices
- Verse 5: All sing and cross arms
- Chorus: jump up a harmony layer: sopranos sing the tenor line up an octave, altos sing the soprano line, tenors sing the alto line; basses sing bass
- Chorus: repeat

*Translation:*

*auld lang syne* the old times long since gone

*my jo* my love, darling, or sweetheart

*the braes* the hillsides

*an' pu'd the gowens fine* and picked the fine wild flowers/daisies

*wandered mony a weary fit* wearily wandered a great distance (many a weary foot)

*we twa hae paidl'd i' the burn* we two have paddled in the stream

*frae morning sun 'til dine* from the morning sun to the sunset

*but seas between us braid hae roar'd* the wide seas have roared between us

*fiere* friend

*gie's* give us

*we'll tak a richt guid willy waught* we'll take a good-will drink

To help with pronunciation, listen to the recording of the full performance, which includes all verses. This can be downloaded from the Companion Website:

[www.oup.co.uk/companion/cvw](http://www.oup.co.uk/companion/cvw).

# 34 Auld Lang Syne


Words: Robert Burns (1759–96)

Trad. Scottish melody


arr. Alison Burns and Gitika Partington

♩ = 92

Verse

S. A.  **A** **C#m** **F#m** **D** **A/C#**


1. Should auld ac-quain-tance be for-got an' ne - ver brought tae\_\_

T. B. 

**Bm7** **E** **A** **C#m** **Bm** **E**

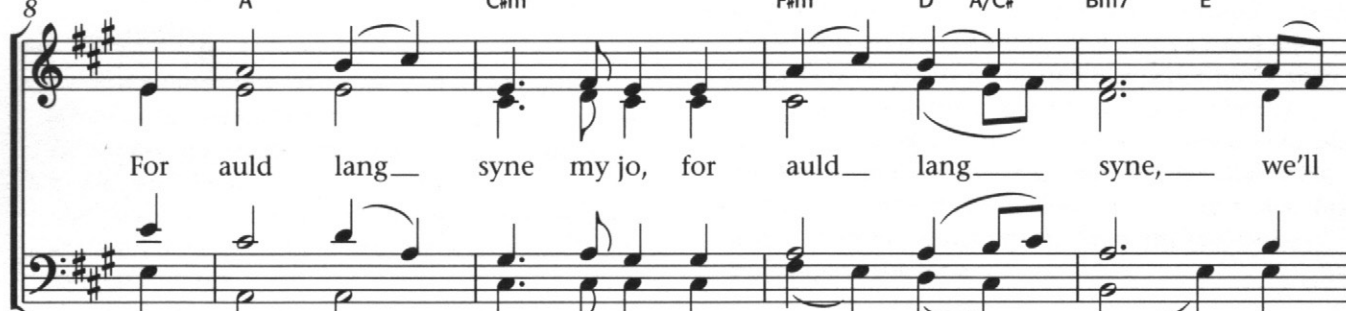
4 for auld lang\_\_ syne?

mind?\_\_ Should auld ac-quain-tance be for-got for auld\_\_ lang syne?



8 Chorus **A** **C#m** **F#m** **D** **A/C#** **Bm7** **E**

For auld lang\_\_ syne my jo, for auld\_\_ lang\_\_ syne, we'll



13 **A** **C#m** **Bm** **D** **A**

tak a cup o' kind - ness yet for auld lang\_\_ syne. \_\_



1. Should auld acquaintance be forgot  
an' never brought tae mind?  
Should auld acquaintance be forgot  
for auld lang syne?

*Chorus*

For auld lang syne my jo,  
for auld lang syne,  
we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet  
for auld lang syne.

2. An' surely you'll be your pint stoup  
an' surely I'll be mine,  
an' we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet  
for auld lang syne.
3. We twa hae rin about the braes  
an' pu'd the gowens fine,  
but we've wandered mony a weary fit  
sin' auld lang syne.
4. We twa hae paidl'd i' the burn  
frae morning sun 'til dine,  
but seas between us braid hae roar'd  
sin' auld lang syne.
5. And here's a hand my trusty fiere  
and gie's a hand o' thine,  
and we'll tak a right guid willy waught  
for auld lang syne!