

just six measures. This is useful as singers learn to sing in their head voice, sing through the voice change, and sing in their newly developing adult voices.

- Singers learn to use breath more efficiently on longer phrases
- There is a descending melodic line (you can see that the notes are moving down for much of the piece). Singers of every age have difficulty learning to sing descending lines in tune, and this gives the opportunity to hone that skill at every age and stage.
- The melody contains steps (notes adjacent to one another), skips (notes that go from line to line or space to space), and leaps (jumps wider than a “skip”), each of which helps teach note-reading, intervallic knowledge, and vocal precision
- The Latin text uses every vowel in its pure form (no diphthongs). Singers learn to shape their mouths and listen for uniformity within the choir on every vowel sound in just six measures.
- The piece works in canon, or as a round, for 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6 parts, thus teaching vocal independence and strengthening aural skills for singing in parts at every developmental stage of singing
- There is a dotted rhythm in measure 3 – while this gives us the opportunity to teach the knowledge of what a dot does, rhythmically, to a note, it also gives us a chance to speculate on the composer’s craft. What would it sound like if that dot weren’t there and the notes were just as the others – straight quarter notes? What affect or emotion does that dot create? Does the piece feel as “joyful” without the dot? Why would that matter, given the text?
- We have historical companionship with generations of singers who have sung this work. Composed in the 17th century, we can speculate as to why this short melody seems to have stood the test of time.

So it is with all of the repertoire chosen for our singers. As the music is, essentially, our “textbook” for a concert cycle or semester of learning, NWGC teacher-conductors feel a deep responsibility to our singers to give them the very best examples of music we can find from a wide range of times, places, and people. In this way, we deepen our singers’ musical skills and knowledge, physical acumen regarding voice and breath use, and understanding of themselves and their place in the world around them.