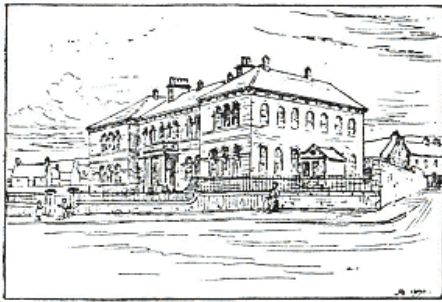


Victorian Child

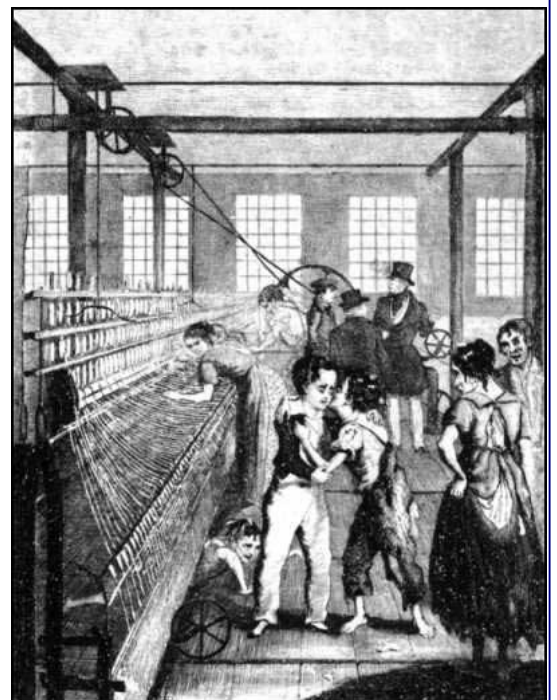
A musical for Primary Schools



by



Jeremy and Helen Rawson



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Introduction	ii
Notes on rehearsing and performing	iii
1. Song - Victorian Child	1
2. Song – Heart Full of Sighs	4
3. Dialogue – The Great Wentworth Estate	9
4. Song – The Rocking Horse	11
5. Dialogue – Factories and Workers	14
6. Song – The Factory Song	17
7. Dialogue – Annie Bassett’s Diary, June 1888	21
8. Song – Match Boy, Match Girl	22
9. Song – Nobody’s Children	26
10. Dialogue – The Farmer	29
11. Dance, Song and Round – Seasons of the Year	30
12. Dialogue – Speech by Benjamin Disraeli	41
13. Song – Time for Change	42
14. Song – School Day	47
15. Song – Paving The Way	54
Appendix – Words Sheets for the songs	Words 1 - 15

Introduction

Victorian Child is a complete musical for performance by 9 to 11 year old children. It consists of ten songs interspersed with dialogue which tell of the lives of children in Victorian Britain, particularly the poor children who were expected to work long hours under strict or appalling conditions for a pitiful wage. The songs depict various aspects of such lives and the dialogue adds further description to their situation.

Towards the end, there is a speech by the Prime Minister of the day, Benjamin Disraeli, in which he describes the Britain of two separate nations and he sets out the need for change. Although this call was taken up by many reformers, it was bitterly opposed by many others with vested interests. Eventually, schools were built and the state education system began and so this musical ends with children in school and at play.

This book includes all the material you need to learn, rehearse and perform *Victorian Child*. The price even includes permission to stage up to two performances. If you want to perform it more than twice, then please go to www.rawson.me.uk and follow the links to purchase additional licences, as required. Please also buy adequate licences if you decide to put on performances in future years.

Victorian Child can be performed simply as a static choral piece with speakers. However, it is much improved if it is dramatised, giving opportunities for singing, acting and dancing. In developing the staging, the children can also be involved in research and art work for costume, props and scenery. If a member of staff is a musician, then other instruments can be added to the performance too.

A full performance of *Victorian Child* can cover these National Curriculum areas in Key Stage 2:

Music	1a	Sing songs in unison and two parts, with clear diction, control of pitch, a sense of phrase and musical expression.
	1c	Practise, rehearse and present performance with an awareness of the audience.
	5c	Breadth of Study working on their own, in groups of different sizes and as a class.
History	11a	Victorian Britain
	2a	Characteristic features of the periods and societies studied, including the ideas, beliefs, attitudes and experiences of men, women and children in the past.
English	EN2/11b	Drama activities: Scripting and performing in plays
Art & Design	5a	Exploring a range of starting points for practical work.
	5b	Working on their own, and collaborating with others, on projects in two and three dimensions different scales.

Notes on rehearsing and performing *Victorian Child*

These notes might seem confusing or daunting if read in isolation. Please read them only in conjunction with the score and the CD/audio tracks – they will then make sense!

The CD contains two sets of recordings:

- Tracks 1 to 10 are for familiarisation and include the vocal lines sung so that you can hear how the words fit to the music. These tracks should not normally be used to teach the songs – it is better if the teacher can sing to, and with, the children using tracks 11 to 20.
- Tracks 11 to 20 are for rehearsal and performance and include the vocal line played on a flute, though the ideal for performance, of course, is to have a “live” pianist !

If your copy of *Victorian Child* was downloaded from the Internet, then the two sets of recordings are in folders called “Familiarisation” and “Rehearsal and Performance”.

Children will sing better if they do not have their heads bent down to read the words from paper. A good solution to this is to display the words sheets, as supplied, on a projected image, such as on an interactive white board or an overhead projector. Indeed, in performance, having the words projected at the back of the hall can act as a memory jogger and keep the singing flowing!

The following notes provide some guidance on each song.

Victorian Child

All the verses follow the same pattern, but verses 3 and 4 have an extra, overlapping line at the end of the verses. The last line of these verses (“How does the world seem to you?”) is echoed on a higher set of notes starting on the word “you”, as follows:

<i>normal verse ends:</i>	How does the world seem to you?
<i>extra overlapping last line:</i>	How does the world seem to you?

To perform this, half of the singers should omit the normal last line and sing the extra overlapping line instead.

This pattern is then repeated in the coda after the 4th verse, but note that the “extra”, higher, line shortens the 3rd repetition to “How does the world seem” (with two notes on the word “seem”, the second note being the one usually sung to the word “to”) and the 4th repetition starts immediately and in time with the normal, lower, line so that both parts sing the words simultaneously, on their different notes, and end together.

Heart Full of Sighs

The first two verses of this song are sung by the boys and the second two verses by the girls. The pattern of choruses and verses are the same for both boys and girls:

Chorus, Verse, Chorus, Verse, Chorus

This means that the boys’ last chorus is followed immediately by the girls’ first chorus.

After the girls’ last chorus, the key changes and the boys and the girls sing their own choruses twice simultaneously – i.e. both sets of words can be heard at the same time.

The Rocking Horse

This song is about the upper class and privileged children. Verse 4 is intended to be sung by girls and verse 5 by boys.

Make sure the last note of each verse is placed correctly; the last two syllables of “nursery” are combined into a single syllable “nur’sry”. “sry” should be sung on the last beat of the bar, not the first beat of the next bar! Listen carefully to the sung or flute line in the audio tracks.

Match Boy, Match Girl

The opening and closing phrases (“Match Boy, Match Girl, Match Boy, Match Girl”) should be sung with the singers divided into four groups. Initially, they should all learn all four pairs of words as a single line. When this is known, the groups can be split with each group singing only their own pair of words:

Group 1	Match boy			
Group 2		Match girl		
Group 3			Match boy	
Group 4				Match girl

Once this has been mastered, the groups should be taught to hold on to their last notes (even though they (deliberately) clash) and all of them should come off together:

Group 1	Match boy	_____		
Group 2		Match girl	_____	
Group 3			Match boy	_____
Group 4				Match girl _____

At the very end of the song, the held-on notes should crescendo *after* group 4 has sung “match girl” to end together with a *sforzando* – a definite “punch” on the ending.

The verses are in two halves; the first half has the same words each time and should always be sung quietly. The second half is a bit louder, but the song should never be loud except for the end of the last notes’ crescendo as described above.

The Factory Song

Before each verse of this song, the singers create a rhythmical sound using their voices, to imitate a machine. On the audio track, each of the four groups is represented by a different percussion sound. Each group enters two bars after the previous group. Two bars after group 4 starts, the piano left hand enters, two bars after that the piano right hand starts and two bars after that, all four groups stop their machine sounds, ready to sing the verse.

For those unfamiliar with music notation, the following might help. Each of the machine sounds takes up one bar (a bar being four beats long). The table below shows how they each fit into the four beats of each bar.

Beat	1	2	3	4
Group 1	shh (<i>cont. through beat 2</i>)		dum-pum	
Group 2		boom		
Group 3	bang		hiss	
Group 4	clatter	clatter	clatter	clatter

It is important for the teacher/conductor to indicate the four beats clearly, so that the children can all keep in time together. At the start of the song there are an introductory two bars (i.e. eight beats) of a drum beat before the machine sounds start.

At the end of each verse, the singers are divided into two groups, one group singing “All day, all night...” and the other group chanting (spoken) “Saw wood, pump water...”. As in the machine-sounds part of the song, the chanting starts two bars after the singing of “All day, all night”. This is followed by all the singers singing “All day, all night...” gradually getting louder and louder until they come to a sudden stop.

Except at the end of the last verse, the group 1 children need to be quick on the uptake with their “shh, dumpum” as there is no break!

Doctor Barnado

This is a straightforward song, but note that some words are in quotation marks and are supposed to be sung by Barnado and “Jim” (the boy). These can be soloists or small groups of singers.

Seasons of the Year

This “rural” song, in the style of English folk songs, starts and ends with dances. The opening dance is a maypole dance with instrumental and sung versions alternating.

The chorus and verses of the main part of the song can be hard for the singers to keep going, so it is best done with different groups singing verses and choruses. You can devise the splitting up of the singing as you like, but try to avoid any one group singing a verse and its following chorus. If breathing is a problem, tell the singers to breathe whenever they need to, but never at the same time as the person next to them!

The final dance, in a three-beat rhythm, starts by alternating singing with instrumental music, but when the singing comes back after the second instrumental, it is in the form of a round in four parts. If the singers know the tune and words well – it is the same as when it is sung between the two instrumental sections – they should be able to keep the round going in their four groups through to the end. Note that group 1 sings the round twice complete, but the other groups sing less so that all end at the same time. Diagrammatically, the four lines of the tune can be called A, B C and D. The groups therefore sing as follows:

Group 1	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
Group 2		A	B	C	D	A	B	C
Group 3			A	B	C	D	A	B
Group 4				A	B	C	D	A

Time For Change

The opening chorus is based on a famous speech by Benjamin Disraeli. If no singer is up to singing this as a solo, then a small group can be used. At the end, this chorus should be sung (twice) by everyone.

The rest of the song has two distinct tunes; the reformers sing in a calm and lyrical way, but the objectors are louder and more staccato. These should be sung by different groups of singers.

School Day

This song is in two parts. The first is set inside the classroom with a chorus and a number of verses. The chorus is sometimes has only the first half of each line sung – watch out for this! The last two times through the chorus (once with half-lines and once complete) should gradually get louder through to the end.

A school bell (an old-fashioned hand-bell if possible) should ring when the chord changes in the piano, after the last note of the chorus.

The second half of the song is set in the playground and is intended to be like Victorian children's games – dancing, skipping, etc.

Paving the Way

This song is a major-key version of the opening song and is really 21st Century children singing about their Victorian forebears. In the last verse only, the last line is repeated, as in the opening song, by an extra overlapping line, but note that the words are those of the "Victorian Child" song, rather than the last line of the "Paving The Way" verses. Unlike the opening song, however, the repetition of the last lines continues through from the verse.