

## **GREAT PLANT HUNT**

### **COMPOSER'S NOTES**

#### **THE SONG IN A SENTENCE** (or two...)

The Introduction and Bridge summarise some of the main aims of Kew/Wellcome Trust's Great Plant project, that is to get children from all parts of the UK out into their locality hunting down and identifying common plants. The verses act as a mnemonic or *aide-memoire* for the nineteen species chosen by Kew for their ubiquity throughout the UK, and the Refrains act as a simple rousing chorus – a call to action.

#### **HISTORY & MAIN POINTS OF THE SONG**

Having had the great fortune of finding my Mister Darwin song chosen to be part of the Royal Botanic Gardens' Great Plant Hunt project, I wanted to write a song that would help children remember the names of the nineteen species chosen to feature in the Identikit. Originally I intended to write a song that would mention some of the characteristics of each species, but this promised to turn into a 3-hour epic, so I stuck with the current offering! I may still have another got at this though – if nobody gets there before me...

#### **STYLISTIC POINTS**

I have a terrible habit of performing songs faster and faster as time goes on and I get more familiar with them (yes, it takes time even for the composer of a song to get familiar with it!), but I'm trying to resist that temptation with The Great Plant Hunt. It should have a certain drive and bounce to it, but I'd also prefer it to remain relaxed and easygoing. It should conjure up images of smiling children strolling from plant to plant, Identikit in hand, not being grimly force-marched across bleak wasteland!

All the same, take care with the semiquavers in the Introduction and Bridge, making sure that they're sung accurately and tightly, not as slightly lazier triplets (though I won't sue you if you decide you prefer that...). Having said all that, I originally started writing the song to be performed in swing time where each pair of quavers comprises a long followed by a short quaver. I decided in the end that I preferred straight 8s, but you are of course at liberty to try it swung if you like. It perhaps adds to the carefree, happy-go-lucky feel of the song done like that. I may even change my own mind about it at some point.

#### **OTHER ACTIVITIES**

- You could adapt the song and write new lyrics to go hunting for other things such as: plants or trees common in your own area (especially if not in the UK), dog or cat breeds, cloud types, buildings, birds, insects.
- The Refrain has a very simple chord structure, so could be a good starting point to experiment with improvising harmonies if you're working with a group of singers. Make sure they know the tune really well and have sung it many times with accompaniment, then encourage them to sing other notes that sound as if they 'fit'. Urge them to be brave and experiment and not worry if they sing some 'duff' notes. They need to persist with it until they've devised a harmony part that works. It's not as difficult as it seems at first and is an awful lot of fun to do once you've gained confidence.