

Black Nativity Musical Overview

Product Code: B72000

To help you find the perfect musical for your next performance, we have provided this overview of the vocal and orchestral demands for this title.

Solo Songs: No

Ensemble/Large Chorus Songs: Yes

Main Character Details:

Soprano (soloists and chorus) (w): G3-C6 vocals, difficult

Alto (soloists and chorus) (w): G3-A5 vocals, difficult

Tenor (soloists and chorus) (m): F2-G5 vocals, difficult

Baritone (chorus) (m): F2-E4 vocals, moderate

Total Number of Songs: 12

Vocal Demands: Difficult

Orchestral Demands: Difficult

Size of Orchestra: Small (piano only)

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The following pages contain copyright information and at least one page from a variety of songs within the show.

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Musical arrangements by AARON ROBINSON

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(BLACK NATIVITY)

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NOTES ON THE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

Black Nativity – In Concert: A Gospel Celebration premiered on Dec. 11, 2004

Immanuel Baptist Church in Portland, Maine

Aaron Robinson, *conductor-pianist*
Paul Havenstein II, *B-3 Hammond organ*
The *Black Nativity* chorus

On Dec. 11, 1961, at the 41st Street Theatre in New York City, six gospel singers made history. Backed up by only a piano and a B-3 Hammond organ, they performed *Black Nativity* by African-American poet and playwright Langston Hughes. He subtitled it “A Gospel Song Play” because it combined traditional gospel spirituals with narration about the birth of Jesus. After only 50 performances on Broadway, *Black Nativity* closed.

But there was a legacy—a rare recording.

Conductor-pianist and music historian Aaron Robinson, having listened to the album for several years, set to the task of creating a score inspired by the legendary performance. Believing that music is both universal and inclusive, encompassing no barriers of race, creed or color, Robinson offered the opportunity to perform in this premiere concert version to all those who were interested in singing a style of music that was not normally a part of their tradition. The response was overwhelming, and *Black Nativity – In Concert* was born.

These original transcriptions do not include the B-3 Hammond organ part.
The cadenza in “Go, Tell It on the Mountain” is attributed to Danielle Vayenas.

Original Soloists:

Gloria Ledoux – Kristen Martin – Jennifer McLeod – Peter Gray
David Goulet – Heather Sylvester – Lynne McGhee – Sheldon Bird
Richard Gammon – Mariann Holden – David Woodward – Danielle Vayenas

The original cast recording is available on CD.

The documentary of its creation is also available on DVD.

The story is documented in the book *Does God Sing? - A Musical Journey*.

INTRODUCTION

The term “gospel spiritual” has taken on many different meanings since its origin. The spirituals of the field, otherwise known as “Negro spirituals,” were born out of a specific ethnic heritage, direct necessity and personal escape, while gospel spirituals served as religious proclamation and spiritual praise. However, the spirituals within this edition are to be performed exclusively at a certain time of year: Christmas. They are, in a sense, “Christmas gospel spirituals”—which separates them from any definitive culture. They are universal in their message and, therefore, encompass any and all who wish to spread the gospel through song.

This being said, the musical style and form of gospel, as we know it today, has also changed dramatically since these Christmas gospel spirituals were first sung. Soloists have since adopted (and adapted) a distinct style of singing that relies heavily on improvisation. A simple melody becomes more a continuous cadenza of constant invention. This is a very individual style of performing that does not transfer correctly to this style of early music or allow for a combined effort with a supporting chorus.

The gospel spirituals found within this collection are “call-and-response” spirituals, meaning, there is no one performer. It is a collective effort between soloist, chorus, accompanist and conductor. No single performer should stand out among the others. If a soloist improvises too far from the original melody—much like a jazz musician might do—it will defeat the authenticity of sound that these spirituals are capable of producing.

In addition, neither chorus, nor soloist, nor pianist should ever tire of repeating phrases. Regardless of whether a performer sings: “Rise up, shepherd, and follow” one time or one hundred times, these call-and-response spirituals serve to employ, elevate and evoke. One must continually supply energy, excitement, belief and commitment to each and every response in order to engage the listener, soloist and chorus.

In order to successfully produce the correct sound found within these pages, an ensemble should be comprised only of the following: a soloist, a chorus, a single accompanying piano, and a B-3 Hammond organ. Rhythmic percussion and instrumental ensembles will only serve to diminish the original sound.

Finally, in all ways, the soloist’s purpose is to “call” the chorus (and audience) to respond with affirmation, and, likewise, the chorus has the job of responding with equal, if not more, declaration and praise. It is this “give-and-take” responsibility of all who perform that will allow the sound to result in a joyous creation of life, faith and song.

Aaron Robinson, arranger
December 2012

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BLACK NATIVITY

1. My Way Is Cloudy

Jubilant ♩ = 127-132

arr. Aaron Robinson

With a riding swing  *f*

Alto Solo

Oh, Breth - ren, my way *f* is

S/A

My way!

T/B

Piano *f*

*opt straight 8ths

4

cloud - y! — My way is cloud - y! — My way is

My way is cloud - y! My way! My way is cloud - y! My way!

1. My Way Is Cloudy

8

cloud - y! — Oh! Breth - ren, Oh! There's

My way is cloud - y! Send those an-gels down! down!

mf

(pronounce as two syllables
fi-re

12 Fire in the east! — Fire in the west! — There's

f Send those an-gels down!

f

2. Mary's On the Road

Most Done Travellin'

arr. Aaron Robinson

Syncopated Driving Rhythm ♩ = 148-152

Soprano Solo

S/A

T/B

Piano

f

4

Mar - y's on the road! Mar -

Most done trav - el - in'

2. Mary's On the Road

7

- y's on the road! Mar - y's on the road! _____

Most done tra - vel - in'

This system contains measures 7, 8, and 9. It features a vocal line with lyrics, a piano accompaniment, and a bass line. Measure 7 has a vocal line with a dash and the lyrics '- y's on the road!'. Measure 8 has a vocal line with a dash and the lyrics 'Mar - y's on the road!'. Measure 9 has a vocal line with the lyrics 'Most done tra - vel - in' and an accent mark (^) over the word 'tra'.

10

(chest voice)

Oh! _____ she's bound! Oh! Can't you see Mar -

Most done trav - el - in' Bound to car-ry my soul to the Lord!

This system contains measures 10, 11, and 12. Measure 10 has a vocal line with the lyrics 'Oh! she's bound!' and a 'chest voice' instruction. Measure 11 has a vocal line with the lyrics 'Oh! Can't you see Mar -'. Measure 12 has a vocal line with the lyrics 'Most done trav - el - in' and an accent mark (^) over the word 'trav'. The piano accompaniment and bass line continue throughout the system.

3. My Poor Mary, What's the Matter?

O Jerusalem in the Morning

arr. Aaron Robinson

With a deep Gospel vocal shake ♩ = 136-138

light riding swing! ♩ = ♩³ ♩

Altos

Piano

mf

Ped.

4

8^{vb} throughout

mp

1. My poor Mar - y, What's the mat - ter? —
2. O poor Jo - seph,

mp

sim. ped throughout

Ped.

3. My Poor Mary, What's the Matter?

7 *mf* *f*

O Je - ru - s'lem in the morn - in' My poor Mar - y,
O poor Jo - seph,

10 *mp*

What's the mat - ter? — O Je - ru - s'lem in the morn - in'

sim. ped throughout

13

Night is chil - ly, what's the mat - ter? — O Je - ru - s'lem in the morn-in'

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It consists of three systems of music. The first system (measures 7-9) features a vocal melody starting on a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5, then a half note D5. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a moving bass line in the left hand. The second system (measures 10-12) continues the vocal melody with a half note D5, followed by quarter notes E5, F5, and G5, then a half note A5. The piano accompaniment continues with similar harmonic support. The third system (measures 13-15) features a vocal melody starting on a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5, then a half note D5. The piano accompaniment continues with similar harmonic support. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf* (mezzo-forte), *f* (forte), and *mp* (mezzo-piano). There are also performance instructions like *sim. ped throughout* (simultaneous pedaling throughout) and *mf* (mezzo-forte).

4. Poor Little Jesus

Wasn't That a Pity and a Shame?

arr. Aaron Robinson

Deep, full heavy blues ♩. = 76-80

Soprano Solo

S/A

T/B

Piano

f *p* *f*

(sung in chest voice throughout)

5

mf

He was born _____ lit - tle Je - sus. _____

ff

Yes! _____

mf *ff*

Ped. * 20 Ped. * sim. ped.

4. Poor Little Jesus

9

He was born on a Christ - mas

Yes, Lord!

mf

13

(no head voice)

and laid in a man - ger.

Yes!

p

5. Mary, What You Gonna Name Your Baby?

Glory Be To The Newborn King

arr. Aaron Robinson

Warm and Rhythmic ♩ = 123-127

Tenor Solo

S/A

T/B

Piano

With an intense drive

ff

8vb

4

5. Mary, What You Gonna Name Your Baby?

7 *mf*

Mar - y, Mar - y, what you gon-na name that pret-ty lit-tle ba-by?

10

Mm - mm? Pret-ty lit-tle ba-by? Mm - mm? —

The musical score is written for voice and piano. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The score is divided into two systems. The first system starts at measure 7 and ends at measure 9. The second system starts at measure 10 and ends at measure 12. The piano accompaniment features a consistent pattern of eighth-note chords in the right hand and a bass line with triplets in the left hand. The lyrics are written below the vocal staff, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across measures. The dynamic marking *mf* (mezzo-forte) is present at the beginning of the first system and in the middle of the piano accompaniment in the first system.

6. Wasn't That a Mighty Day?

arr. Aaron Robinson

With Great Feeling and Glory ♩ = 86-88 ♩ = ♩³

Tenor Solo

S/A

T/B

Piano

With a laid back Gospel swing

5

Was - n't that a might - y day? —

6. Wasn't That a Mighty Day?

8

Was n't that a might - y day? _____

A might-y day!

A might-y day, Lord!

11

Was n't that a might - y day, _____ Lord? _____ When Je - sus Christ was

A might-y day! When Je - sus Christ was

6. Wasn't That a Mighty Day?

14

born. When Je - sus Christ was born. Tell me:

born. When Je - sus Christ was born!

Was-n't that a might - y day? Was n't that a might - y day?

A might-y day! A might-y day!

6. Wasn't That a Mighty Day?

20

Was-n't that a might-y day, _____ Lord? _____ When

A might-y day, Lord! A might-y day! When

23

Je - sus Christ was born. _____ When Je - sus Christ was born. _____

Je - sus Christ was born. _____ When Je - sus Christ was born! _____

7. Joy To The World!

arr. Aaron Robinson

Joyful and with Great Spirit! ♩ = 87-89

Alto Solo

S/A

T/B

Piano

Crisp, clean syncopation

LH

(chest voice throughout)

4

f

Sing - ing — Joy! — So — glad! —

f

Joy — to the World! — So glad the

sim.

93

7. Joy To The World!

8

Let earth re - ceive Her King!

Lord is come Let earth! Re - ceive! Let earth re -

12

Let Ev - 'ry heart pre - pare, 'pare His

ceive Her King! Let ev - 'ry heart! pre - pare His

8. Christ Is Born

arr. Aaron Robinson

Fast "Jump" Tempo ♩ = 118-120

Soprano Solo

S/A

T/B

Piano

RH Gliss

mf

5

8. Christ Is Born

9 *(opt tenor solo)*

Christ is born in the land of Ju - de - a!

(accent upbeats) Christ is born! — Christ is born! —

This musical system covers measures 9 through 12. It features a tenor solo in the first staff, piano accompaniment in the second and third staves, and a grand piano accompaniment in the fourth and fifth staves. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The lyrics 'Christ is born in the land of Ju - de - a!' are under the first staff. The phrase '(accent upbeats)' is written above the piano part in measure 11, followed by 'Christ is born!' and a repeat sign, which appears again in measure 12.

13

Christ is born in the land of Ju - de - a!

Christ is born! — Christ is born! —

This musical system covers measures 13 through 16. It continues the same instrumentation as the previous system. The lyrics 'Christ is born in the land of Ju - de - a!' are under the first staff. The phrase 'Christ is born!' with a repeat sign appears in measure 15 and again in measure 16.

9. Rise Up, Shepherd, and Follow

arr. Aaron Robinson

With a relaxed, Gospel swing ♩ = 100-104 ♩ = ♩³ ♩

Musical score for "Rise Up, Shepherd, and Follow" (arr. Aaron Robinson). The score is written for Tenor Solo, S/A, T/B, and Piano. The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked "With a relaxed, Gospel swing ♩ = 100-104 ♩ = ♩³ ♩".

The score is divided into two systems. The first system shows the initial instrumental introduction for the Piano, marked *mp* (mezzo-piano). The piano part features a rhythmic pattern in the bass line. The vocal parts (Tenor Solo, S/A, T/B) are marked with rests, indicating they enter later.

The second system shows the vocal entry. The Tenor Solo part begins with a triplet of eighth notes (marked with a '3' above the staff) and then continues with a melodic line. The S/A and T/B parts also enter with rests. The piano part continues with the same rhythmic pattern. The dynamic marking *mf* (mezzo-forte) is placed above the Tenor Solo part. The lyrics "There's a" are written below the Tenor Solo part.

82

9. Rise, Up, Shepherd and Follow

7

star in the east on a' Christ - mas morn' — *f*

Rise up, Shep-herd, and

10

8 It will lead — to the place where the Sav - ior is born! —

fol - low! —

83

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The image displays a musical score for the hymn 'Rise, Up, Shepherd and Follow'. It is written for a three-part vocal ensemble (Soprano, Alto, Bass) and piano accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 8/8. The score is divided into two systems. The first system begins at measure 7 and ends at measure 9. The second system begins at measure 10 and ends at measure 12. The vocal parts have lyrics underneath them. The piano part includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings like 'f' (forte). The page number 83 is centered at the bottom, and a copyright notice '©Dramatic Publishing – NOT FOR PERFORMANCE' is at the very bottom.

10. If Anybody Asks You Who I Am?

arr. Aaron Robinson

Heavy Blues ♩ = 118-120 ♩ = ♩³ ♩

Tenor
Solo

S/A

T/B

Piano

The musical score is written for four parts: Tenor Solo, S/A (Soprano/Alto), T/B (Tenor/Bass), and Piano. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked 'Heavy Blues' with a range of 118-120 beats per minute. The score begins with a piano introduction in the first system, featuring a complex piano accompaniment with triplets and a strong bass line. The vocal parts enter in the second system with a rest. The third system contains the first vocal line: 'Well, if anybody asks you:'. The piano accompaniment continues with a steady bass line and chords. The fourth system contains the second vocal line: 'Oh, Lord!'. The piano accompaniment features a triplet in the right hand and a steady bass line. The fifth system contains the third vocal line: 'Who I am?'. The piano accompaniment continues with a steady bass line and chords. The score ends with a final piano accompaniment line.

10. If Anybody Asks You

7

Oh, Lord! If anybody asks you:

Who I am? Who I am?

10

sim. Oh! If

Who I am? Tell 'em I'm the child of God!

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It features a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 7-9) includes vocal lines with lyrics and piano accompaniment. The second system (measures 10-12) continues the vocal and piano parts. The piano accompaniment includes complex chordal textures and triplet patterns in the bass line. The lyrics are: 'Oh, Lord! If anybody asks you: Who I am? Who I am? Tell 'em I'm the child of God!'.

11. Go, Tell It On the Mountain

arr. Aaron Robinson

Proclaim the Joy! ♩ = 118-123 ♩♩ = ♩³

Soprano Solo

S/A

T/B

Piano

f

4

f

Go, tell it on the moun - tain!_____

The musical score is written for Soprano Solo, S/A (Soprano/Alto), T/B (Tenor/Bass), and Piano. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked as 118-123 beats per minute. The piano part begins with a prelude marked *f* (forte). The vocal lines enter with the lyrics 'Go, tell it on the moun - tain!_____'. The piano part continues with accompaniment for the vocal lines.

11. Go, Tell It On the Mountain

7

O - ver the hills and ev' - ry - where! Go, tell it on the

10

moun - tain! That Je - sus Christ is born!

11. Go, Tell It On the Mountain

13 *mf*

When I was a sin - ner, I sinned both night and

Ooh

16

day. I asked the Lord to aid me, and

Ooh

The musical score is written for voice and piano. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into two systems. The first system starts at measure 13 and ends at measure 15. The second system starts at measure 16 and ends at measure 18. The voice part is written on a single staff with lyrics underneath. The piano accompaniment consists of two staves (treble and bass clef). The first system features a vocal melody with lyrics 'When I was a sin - ner, I sinned both night and' and a piano accompaniment with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The second system features a vocal melody with lyrics 'day. I asked the Lord to aid me, and' and a piano accompaniment with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, accidentals, and dynamic markings.

12. Children, Go Where I Send Thee

arr. Aaron Robinson

Hard Drive Gospel (♩ = c. 127)

Alto Solo

S/A

B/A

Piano

f

8vb throughout

5

mf

Chil - dren

mf

12. Children, Go Where I Send Thee

9

go where I send thee: Well,

mf

How shall I send Thee? *mf*

13

I'm gon-na send Thee: one by one; one was the lit-tle, bit-ty: born

Ba-by!

mp

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It consists of two systems. The first system (measures 9-12) features a vocal melody in the treble clef and piano accompaniment in both treble and bass clefs. The vocal line includes lyrics: 'go where I send thee: Well, How shall I send Thee?'. Dynamic markings include *mf* (mezzo-forte). The piano accompaniment features chords and moving lines in both hands. The second system (measures 13-16) continues the vocal melody with lyrics: 'I'm gon-na send Thee: one by one; one was the lit-tle, bit-ty: born Ba-by!'. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and moving lines. A dynamic marking of *mp* (mezzo-piano) is present in the piano part of the second system.