

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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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 $\text{♩} = 127-132$

arr. Aaron Robinson

With a riding swing $\text{♩} = \overbrace{\text{♩} \text{♩}}^3 \text{♩}$

Alto Solo f

S/A Oh, Breth - ren, my way is

T/B My way!

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!

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1. My Way Is Cloudy

8

1. 2.

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

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

(pronounce as two syllables
fi-re)

12

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

Send those an-gels down!

f

f

2. Mary's On the Road

Most Done Travellin'

Syncopated Driving Rhythm $\text{♩} = 148-152$

arr. Aaron Robinson

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 trav - el - in'

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!

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

O Jerusalem in the Morning

arr. Aaron Robinson

With a deep Gospel vocal shake $\text{♩} = 136-138$

light riding swing! $\text{♪} = \text{♩}^3 \text{♪}$

Altos

Piano

mf

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

4

8^{vb} throughout

mp

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

mp

sim. ped throughout

Ped.

8^{vb} throughout

mp

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

mp

sim. ped throughout

Ped.

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

7 *mf*

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'

4. Poor Little Jesus

Wasn't That a Pity and a Shame?

arr. Aaron Robinson

Deep, full heavy blues $\text{♩} = 76-80$

Soprano Solo

S/A

T/B

Piano

(sung in chest voice throughout)

5

mf

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

Yes! _____

mf

Ped. — * 20 Ped. — *

ff

sim. ped.

4. Poor Little Jesus

9

He was born _____ on a Christ - mas _____.
Yes, _____ Lord! _____

(no head voice)
and laid _____ in a man - ger. _____

13

Yes! _____

p _____

5. Mary, What You Gonna Name Your Baby?

Glory Be To The Newborn King

arr. Aaron Robinson

Warm and Rhythmic $\text{♩} = 123-127$

Tenor Solo

S/A

T/B

Piano

With an intense drive

ff

8vb

4

ff

8vb

rocking

loco

29

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?

6. Wasn't That a Mighty Day?

arr. Aaron Robinson

With Great Feeling and Glory $\text{♩} = 86-88$ $\text{♪} = \overline{\text{♩}^3 \text{♩}}$

Music score for the first section of the piece. The score includes parts for Tenor Solo, S/A (Soprano/Alto), T/B (Tenor/Bass), and Piano. The piano part features a 'laid back Gospel swing' style with eighth-note patterns and a dynamic marking of *f*. The vocal parts are mostly silent (represented by dashes) during this section.

Music score for the second section of the piece. The vocal parts (Tenor Solo, S/A, T/B) are silent (represented by dashes). The piano part continues with a 'laid back Gospel swing' style, featuring eighth-note patterns and a dynamic marking of *f*. The vocal line begins with the lyrics 'Was - n't that a might - y day?—' in measure 5.

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?

17

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

Was n't that 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

53

sim.

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 $\text{♩} = 118-120$

Soprano Solo

S/A

T/B

Piano

RH Gliss

mf

5

f

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!___

13

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

Christ is born!___ Christ is born!___

9. Rise Up, Shepherd, and Follow

With a relaxed, Gospel swing $\text{♩} = 100-104$ $\text{♪} = \text{♩}^3$

arr. Aaron Robinson

Tenor Solo

S/A

T/B

Piano *mp*

mf

3

There's a

82

9. Rise, Up, Shepherd and Follow

7

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

Rise up, Shep-herd, and

(F#)

10

It will lead to the place where the Sav - ior is born! *3*

fol - low! *3*

10. If Anybody Asks You Who I Am?

arr. Aaron Robinsnon

Heavy Blues $\text{♩} = 118-120$ $\text{♪} = \text{♩}^3$

Musical score for Tenor Solo, S/A, T/B, and Piano. The score is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp. The piano part features a heavy blues bass line and a treble line with eighth-note chords. The vocal parts are mostly silent in this section.

Musical score for Tenor Solo, S/A, T/B, and Piano. The score is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp. The piano part features a heavy blues bass line and a treble line with eighth-note chords. The vocal parts enter with lyrics: "Well, if an - y-bod-y asks you: Oh, Lord! Who I am?" The piano part continues with a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

10. If Anybody Asks You

7

Oh, Lord!

If an - y - bod - y asks you:

Who I am?

Who I am?

3

10

Oh!

If

sim.

Who I am?

Tell 'em I'm the child of God!

3

3

11. Go, Tell It On the Mountain

arr. Aaron Robinson

Proclaim the Joy! $\text{♩} = 118-123$ $\text{♪} = \text{♩}^3$

Soprano Solo

S/A

T/B

Piano

4

f

Go, tell it on the moun - tain! _____

Piano

11. Go, Tell It On the Mountain

7

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

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

11. Go, Tell It On the Mountain

13 *mf*

When I was a sinner, I sinned both night and

Ooh

16

day. I asked the Lord to aid me, and

Ooh

12. Children, Go Where I Send Thee

arr. Aaron Robinson

Hard Drive Gospel (♩ = c. 127)

Alto Solo

S/A

B/A

Piano

8vb throughout

5

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