

# Spirituals and Gospel Repertoire for Every Level

Presented by NH ACDA  
@NHMEA's Spring  
Conference

2024



# *New Hampshire*

AMERICAN CHORAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION



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# Why perform spirituals? Should I even be performing this music? I'm not a culture-bearer.

Yes!

This is AMERICAN music. It is important to our culture and our history.

YOU have the ability to APPRECIATE rather than APPROPRIATE, and it is a big part of the responsibility of performing this music. Bury yourself in the literature on the topic - learn about performance practice as much (or more!) as you would if you were performing a piece from another language/country/culture.

We owe it to this beautiful music to do it and do it WELL!

There's so much to say on this topic, but here are some great places to start **listening to the experts** on this topic:

André Thomas:

<https://westminsterforum.org/2019/the-meaning-and-impact-of-african-american-spirituals/>

Anton Armstrong:

<https://youtu.be/3LzqmAyPgfg?si=JrUA37F48-zzsKim>

Spirituals Roundtable with André Thomas, Anton Armstrong, Eileen Guenther and Mark Lawson:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0yeiGNRnpMM>

Brainerd Blyden-Taylor (Nathaniel Dett Chorale):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxGr0v7EeE8>

# Some links to resources to help:

Dr. André Thomas's book:

*Way Over in Beulah Lan': Understanding and Performing the Negro Spiritual*

James Wheldon Johnson's Book:

*The Books of the American Negro Spirituals*

Dr. Eileen Guenther's Book:

*In Their Own Words: Slave Life and the Power of Spirituals*

Dr. Felicia Barber's Book:

*A New Perspective for the Use of Dialect in African American Spirituals: History, Context, and Linguistics*

# Access the Reading Session from J.W. Pepper

Access Reading Session pieces at [readingsession.com](https://readingsession.com)

Enter last name, first name, and email address

Enter exactly: Event02458

Agree and Connect!

Reading session will be available online through May 5!

# Our Reading Session Pieces

A YouTube Playlist with lovely recordings of all the pieces we chose:

[https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLGteThy05TwDKQIUKvvgcC6pg\\_PUljso9&si=77nrIM3UHD23pPt1](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLGteThy05TwDKQIUKvvgcC6pg_PUljso9&si=77nrIM3UHD23pPt1)

# Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho - arr. B. E. Boykin

Unison/2-Part

A note from collegiate R&R Chair Amy Kotsonis:

“This is a great mostly unison with some divisi arrangement, and is also accompanied to provide more support. Great for elementary through high school treble chorus. Super accessible.”

A great way to teach syncopation and eighth note rhythm reading, as well!

<https://www.jwpepper.com/Joshua-Fit-the-Battle-of-Jericho/11383527.item>



# Jordan's Angels - Rollo Dilworth

2-Part; also available in SSA

A note from elementary R&R chair, AJ Coppola:

“This is an older arrangement that I just got introduced to, this incorporates the spiritual All Night, All Day. Fun to sing, not too tricky to learn.”

A slow compound meter makes for good pattern recognition practice!

<https://www.jwpepper.com/Jordan%27s-Angels/3297119.item>

# The Drinking Gourd - arr. André Thomas

2-Part; also available in SATB (optional flute part)

A note from collegiate R&R chair, Amy Kotsonis:

“This is a traditional spiritual, and a map song. It's a great piece that uses a lot of canons which makes it a little easier for less experienced singers. A great way to begin to teach about spirituals, their origins, the different types, etc.”

<https://www.jwpepper.com/The-Drinking-Gourd/3254125.item>

# Hush! Somebody's Callin' My Name - arr. Brazeal W. Dennard

SAB; also available in SATB or 2-Part

Here's a note from middle school R&R chair Kevin Fisher:

“Great introduction into the harmonies that one may expect in a spiritual. Mix of unison and homophonic sections, interesting addition to the "sh" of "hush" that helps make it a distinguished arrangement.”

The history/origin of the **Brazeal Dennard Singers** is so interesting and inspiring. You can check it out at <https://www.brazealdennard.com/>

<https://www.jwpepper.com/Hush%21-Somebody%27s-Callin%27-My-Name/1617984.item>

# Shine on Me - arr. Rollo Dilworth

SAB; also available in SSA or 2-Part

Here's a note from children and community youth choirs R&R chair, Esther Rhoades:

“Great for elementary or early middle school treble SA choirs. The piece has two distinct sections which are first sung independently, and then together. Both sections are different enough both rhythmically and melodically for early 2-part choirs to find success.”

<https://www.jwpepper.com/Shine-on-Me/3295343.item>

# Down by the Riverside – arr. Robert T. Gibson

SAB; also available in SATB

Here's a note from commercial and contemporary R&R chair, Becca Crivello:

“I would do the 2-part version with my 6th grade. There is a lot of repetition, which is especially helpful when there are moments of stacked harmonies. Each part gets an opportunity to be the melody and the "bass" part. The shift in mood toward the end of the song adds excitement and there are opportunities for solo features.”

<https://www.jwpepper.com/Down-by-the-Riverside/11393276.item>

# I've Been in the Storm So Long - arr. Jeffrey L. Ames

SATB, divisi (mezzo soprano solo)

Recommended by children and community youth choirs R&R chair, Esther Rhoades

Here's a note from treble choir R&R chair, Brianne Biastoff:

“This spiritual uses a common comparison of life's troubles to a storm. This particular arrangement was written by Dr. Ames in response to 2005's Hurricane Katrina. It's mournful and hopeful at the same time, and can be a valuable learning tool for blend and balance as the choir supports the soloist.”

<https://www.jwpepper.com/I%27ve-Been-in-the-Storm-So-Long/10008765.item>

# Until I Reach My Home - arr. Brandon Boyd

SATB (optional solos, optional rhythm section parts); also available in SSA or TTBB

Here's a note from NHACDA Past President & ACDA East High School R&R Chair, Will Gunn:

“Until I Reach My Home is a great piece to teach part independence and basic gospel articulations! With a repetitive chorus and a few unison soli sections, it makes teaching very manageable to a beginner or more mature ensemble. It also includes drums, bass, and a full orchestration. It also includes two gospel vamps at the end. Accessible ranges throughout, and some great discussions about the meaning of the coded messages in the spiritual texts. I've even used the chord progression at the solo section and asked students, “What other spiritual melodies fit over this progression?””

<https://www.jwpepper.com/Until-I-Reach-My-Home/11202068.item>

# My Lord What a Mourning - William L Dawson

SATB, divisi

Recommended by children and community youth choirs R&R chair, Esther Rhoades

Here's a note from treble choir R&R chair, Brianne Biastoff:

“This piece is so beautifully constructed - the recording of The Aeolians from ACDA National (2019) is one of the most beautiful recordings of any piece I have ever heard. The piece sits so well in all the voice parts, and lends so many opportunities for growth in group sound. It's as moving and satisfying to sing as it is to listen to.”

<https://www.jwpepper.com/My-Lord-What-a-Mourning/1441559.item>



# City Called Heaven - arr. Josephine Poelinitz

SATB; also adaptable for SA, SSA, or SAT

Here's a note from middle school R&R chair, Kevin Fisher:

"City Called Heaven" by Josephine Poelinitz is ideal for junior high choirs, featuring an advanced soloist part, voice leading expertly crafted for SATB choirs at this level and lots of repeating tones. The expressive and authentic piano accompaniment complements the impactful lyrics, creating a rich tapestry of sound. This piece is filled with dynamic contrasts and numerous educational moments, making it a valuable teaching tool."

<https://www.jwpepper.com/City-Called-Heaven/1841709.item>

# Keep Your Lamps! - arr. André Thomas

SATB (conga drums); also available in SSA or TTBB

Here's a note from community choir R&R chair, Jennifer Erdody

“This arrangement has vocal depth and emotion that the singer can channel once they understand the meaning behind the lyrics. This arrangement is easy to learn but challenging to portray.”

<https://www.jwpepper.com/Keep-Your-Lamps%21/1428499.item>

# The Storm is Passing Over – Charles Albert Tindley/arr. Barbara W. Baker

SATB; also available in SSA

Here's a note from treble choir R&R chair, Brianne Biastoff:

“This piece comes together easily in the voice, and offers TONS of opportunity for teaching about articulation, style, and dynamics. It's very flexible, and sections can be repeated as desired. The metaphor again of life's challenges as a storm is so relatable to my students, and they really love singing it!”

<https://www.jwpepper.com/The-Storm-Is-Passing-Over/3093036.item>

# Some more recommendations!

| Title                                       | Composer                              | Voicing                    | Link to purchase  | Recommender      |
|---|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|---|------------------|
| Beautiful City                              | André J. Thomas                       | SATB                       | <a href="https://www.jwpepper.com/Beautiful-City/10006504.item">https://www.jwpepper.com/Beautiful-City/10006504.item</a>                                   | Amy Kotsonis     |
| Better                                      | Clayborn, arr. Frances<br>Fonza Smith | SATB                       | <a href="https://www.gentrypublications.com/product/better-satb/">https://www.gentrypublications.com/product/better-satb/</a>                               | Amy Kotsonis     |
| Death Came A-Knockin'                       | arr. Ruthie Foster, arr.<br>Rardin    | SATB                       | <a href="https://www.jwpepper.com/Death-Came-A-Knockin%27/11316622.item">https://www.jwpepper.com/Death-Came-A-Knockin%27/11316622.item</a>                 | Amy Kotsonis     |
| Everlasting Melody                          | Rollo Dilworth                        | 2 part treble              | <a href="https://www.jwpepper.com/Everlasting-Melody/3212610.item">https://www.jwpepper.com/Everlasting-Melody/3212610.item</a>                             | Amy Kotsonis     |
| Faithful Over a Few<br>Things               | Glenn Burleigh                        | SATB                       | <a href="https://www.jwpepper.com/Faithful-Over-a-Few-Things/11377702.item">https://www.jwpepper.com/Faithful-Over-a-Few-Things/11377702.item</a>           | Brianne Biastoff |
| Hold On                                     | Jester Hairston                       | SATB                       | <a href="https://www.jwpepper.com/Hold-On%21/184861.item">https://www.jwpepper.com/Hold-On%21/184861.item</a>   | Will Gunn        |
| I Wanna Be Ready                            | arr. Rosephanye Powell                | SSA                        | <a href="https://www.jwpepper.com/I-Wanna-Be-Ready/5491675.item">https://www.jwpepper.com/I-Wanna-Be-Ready/5491675.item</a>                                 | Amy Kotsonis     |
| Keep Your Lamps                             | Victor Johnson                        | SATB, SAB,<br>3 Pt Mixed   | <a href="https://www.jwpepper.com/Keep-Your-Lamps%21/10028791.item">https://www.jwpepper.com/Keep-Your-Lamps%21/10028791.item</a>                           | Will Gunn        |
| Let Everything that Hath<br>Breath          | Jeffery Ames                          | SATB                       | <a href="https://www.jwpepper.com/Let-Everything-that-Hath-Breath/10017215.item">https://www.jwpepper.com/Let-Everything-that-Hath-Breath/10017215.item</a> | Amy Kotsonis     |
| Poor Man Lazrus                             | arr. Jester Hairston                  | SATB                       | <a href="https://www.jwpepper.com/Poor-Man-Lazrus/187567.item">https://www.jwpepper.com/Poor-Man-Lazrus/187567.item</a>                                     | Jennifer Erdody  |
| Sometimes I Feel Like a<br>Motherless Child | Shavon Lloyd                          | SATB                       | <a href="https://www.jwpepper.com/Motherless-Child/11425449.item">https://www.jwpepper.com/Motherless-Child/11425449.item</a>                               | Brianne Biastoff |
| Steal Away                                  | Moses Hogan                           | SATB                       | <a href="https://www.jwpepper.com/Steal-Away/3183936.item">https://www.jwpepper.com/Steal-Away/3183936.item</a>   | Will Gunn        |
| Until I Reach-a Mah<br>Home                 | Rollo Dilworth                        | 3-pt mixed,<br>3-pt treble | <a href="https://www.jwpepper.com/Until-I-Reach-A-Mah-Home/10030819.item">https://www.jwpepper.com/Until-I-Reach-A-Mah-Home/10030819.item</a>               | Becca Crivello   |