Go, Tell It On The Mountain Spec Sheet

**Title:** Go, Tell It On The Mountain  
**Composer:** Afro-American Spiritual, words by John Work  
**Arranger:** Schram, Ruth Elaine

**Publisher:** Warner Bros. Publications U.S. INC.  
**Publication Date:** 1997  
**Publication ID #:** SV9810  
**Voicing:** SATB  
**Accompaniment:** Accompanied with optional guitar, bass and drums  
**Solos:** N/A  
**Language:** English  
**Occasion:** Spiritual, General  
**Voice Ranges:**  
- **S:** C4-F5  
- **A:** C4-C5  
- **T:** F3-E4  
- **B:** F2-D4

**Concepts:** syncopation, D.S. al Coda, chromaticism, straight vs. swung rhythms, musical slurs  
**Skills:** musical mapping, crescendo/decrescendo, dynamic contrasts (sub.), part-singing, unison, strong diction  
**Potential Problems:** chromaticism throughout (specifically mm. 58-end), musical mapping, rhythmic unity, dynamic contrasts (crescendo/decrescendo, sub.)
Study Guide for Go, Tell It On The Mountain

Title: Go, Tell It On The Mountain
Composer: Afro-American Spiritual, words by John Work
Arranger: Schram, Ruth Elaine
Voicing: SATB

Background/Historical Context:
This composition is based on an African American spiritual, originating during the late 1860s. This sacred piece is mostly sung around the Christmas season since the lyrics state, “Go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.” The text also includes other sacred terms, such as “shepherds, heavens, and Savior”. This arrangement incorporates swing style and syncopation.

Terms

Chromaticism: chromatic pitches, pitches not included in the diatonic scale, within the music (ex: mm. 3-5, 58-end, etc.)

Coda: a musical extension or tag at the end of a piece; when you see a coda symbol, or To Coda, you jump to the end of a piece where the coda is marked (mm. 20, 52)

Crescendo: to gradually get louder (ex: mm. 32)

Decrescendo: to gradually get softer (ex: mm. 62)

Div.: (divisi) where a single voice part is divided into two parts (ex: mm. 47, mm. 53)

D.S. al Coda: returning to the D.S. (Dal Segno) symbol and playing to the coda marking, and then jumping to the coda section at the end of the piece (mm. 51)

Slur: to sing a note with legato phrasing, while connecting each note, without separation (mm. 5 “tell”)

Straight (eighths): to sing each eighth note as written

Sub. (subito): to suddenly sing at a certain dynamic level (pp, p, mf, f, ff, etc.) (ex: mm. 60)

Swung (eighths): singing eighth notes unevenly, the first note is longer than the second

Syncopation: placing a stress on a weak beat or part of a beat. This piece features many examples of syncopation; ex: starting after an eighth note rest (mm. 3, 13, etc.)

Unison: singing a single melody together at the same pitch or in octaves; can be in all voices, or in selected voices (mm. 24-32, both in TB and SA)
Skills

**Singing of swing style:** performing the piece using uneven eighth notes as shown in the score as well as singing with a laid back singing technique

**Performing slurs:** emphasis a musical slur by singing legato and connecting the notes with a slight slide

**Diction:** singing the words “doot’n doot’n doo” with laid-back diction; applying some accents and staccato singing on the “doot”

**Musical mapping:** accurately able to read all mapping symbols within the score such as Coda and D.S. al Coda; singing up until the D.S. al Coda, repeating the piece from the D.S. al Coda symbol, singing up to the Coda sign and moving to the end of the piece for the final Coda

**Performing strong dynamic contrasts:** proper performance of crescendos and decrescendos; gradually getting loud or soft in order to gain emphasis on the text
**Unit Learning Goals**

At the conclusion of this unit plan, students will be able to:

1. Accurately perform the piece *Go Tell It On The Mountain* with proper vocal and choral technique, expression and appropriate stylistic traits (NS1 singing).

2. Identify and define all musical terms and concepts that are featured in *Go Tell It On The Mountain* and apply the knowledge learned to future literature (NS5 reading music, NS6 listening/analyzing music)

3. Describe the history of an African American Spiritual and cite specific examples from the article “African American spiritual music: A historical perspective” (NS9 Understanding music in relation to history and culture).

4. Accurately evaluate all performances, in class and in a performance setting, using musical terms, reflect on and apply the content learned from the literature and self-evaluate individual performances of the literature (NS7 evaluating music and music performances).
Unit Curriculum Time Frame

Rehearsal Format: 90 minute, alternate days

• If working on 4 pieces, I would roughly work on each piece for 20 minutes per class.

Week 1:

Introduce the piece *Go Tell It On The Mountain*. Discuss the history and basic outline of the piece and begin teaching mm. 3-20, using correct rhythms, and introducing *syncopation* and *straight vs. swung* eighth notes. Introduce the assigned reading assignment and prepare the students for the future assignment.

Week 2:

Review mm. 3-20 and the term *syncopation*. Introduce *slurs* to the section that was already taught, and perform it again, with accompaniment. Work on adding dynamic contrasts and articulation to the text. Review the term *unison* and find examples in mm. 3-20. Teach mm. 20-24 and work on memorizing mm. 3-24. Introduce the term *chromaticism* and show examples in literature.

Week 3:

Review mm. 3-24 and run with accompaniment. Work with TB mm. 24-33, focusing on even rhythmic patterns. Work with SA mm. 29-32, focusing on swung rhythms. Work all parts together mm. 24-33 to solidify the difference in rhythms. Work on strong, clear diction with all parts. Assign reading assignment for the next week.

Week 4:

The assigned reading assignment is due this week. There will also be a 5 minute discussion of the reading each day this week. Review mm. 3-33 and run with accompaniment. Work on memorizing mm. 3-33 and adding *crescendos* and *decrescendos*. Sight-read mm. 34-42 with all voices; focus on correct rhythms and pitches. Review parts as necessary. Run mm. 3-42 with accompaniment, using slurs and dynamics.

Week 5:

Review the assigned reading and make connections with the literature. Learn mm. 43-50, all voices. Introduce the term *div.* and show examples within the literature. Review mm. 3-50, adding in all dynamics and slurs. Introduce *D.S. al Coda* and *Coda* and give lesson on musical mapping. Review the markings and run mm. 3-52, following the correct symbols. Work on memorizing the piece.
Week 6:

Learn the remainder of the piece, mm. 52-end. Discuss *sub. mf* and apply it to the literature where indicated. Run the entire piece, mm. 3-52 with correct pitches and rhythms. Work on memorizing mm. 52-end and begin to polish the piece.

Week 7:

Review the assigned reading and discuss the relationship with the literature. Review all terms and concepts learned from *Go Tell It On The Mountain* and prepare for the upcoming written quiz. Review the piece, memorized and solidify the dynamic contrasts. Review for the singing quiz.

Week 8:

Written quiz and singing quiz occurs this week. Review the piece and fix any problem spots. Polish and shape the piece as necessary to be ready for the performance.

Week 9:

Performance of piece will take place this week. After the performance, discuss the concert in class and assign the concert reflection. The reflection will be due within one week of the performance.
Go Tell It On The Mountain Quiz

Name: ___________________________________________ Total: _____/25

Vocabulary: Define all 10 terms, using correct musical terminology. 2 points each.

1. Chromaticism

2. Crescendo

3. Decrescendo

4. Div.

5. Slur

6. Straight eighths

7. Sub.

8. Swung eighths

9. Syncopation

10. Unison
**Short Answer:** Answer the following questions using complete sentences. 5 points each.

11. Based on the article that we studied in class, “African American spiritual music: A historical perspective”, give a brief history of how, when and why spirituals were developed.

12. Define *D.S. al Coda* and *Coda* and describe how they work.

13. What do you think was the most challenging aspect of this piece? Be specific, using correct music vocabulary and give examples from the literature.

**Extra Credit:** 2 points

*Who wrote the text for this piece?*
*Who arranged this piece?*
Concert Review

In a two-page essay, reflect on the most recent concert. This essay should include the strengths and weaknesses of the performance, things that need improvement, a self-evaluation of your musical contributions, and the overall quality of the literature and the performance. Be sure to cite specific examples from the literature when necessary.

The essay should be typed, size 12-font, and double-spaced. The essay is due within one week of the performance. No late essays will be accepted.

(See attached documents with the “Singing Quiz Rubric” and “Concert Review Rubric”)

Go Tell It On The Mountain Lesson Plan

Basic Information
Claire Lefkowicz
Ball State, Choral Methods Choir
Dr. Ester

Prerequisite Knowledge and Skills for this rehearsal
• Part Singing
• Sight reading rhythm patterns on Takadimi and “pa”

Behavioral Objectives
At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be able to:
• Demonstrate the ability to sing syncopated rhythms within the score (NS1)
• Accurately sight-read rhythm exercises (NS5)
• Accurately sight-read sections of the score (NS5)
• Perform mm. 3-11 of Go, Tell It On the Mountain accurately and expressively, a cappella and with accompaniment (NS1)

Materials
• Copies of Go, Tell It On the Mountain
• Piano
On whiteboard:
Rehearsal Sequence:
VT/CT
ML
Go, Tell It On the Mountain    Focus: syncopation

Procedures

Set:

0:00 Vocal Technique:
1. Model: “Doot, doot, doot, doot, doot’n, doot’n, doo”: 5-5-5-5-5-4-3-2-1
   a. Continue up by half steps
   b. Continue down by half steps for the men
   c. Focus on singing staccato on the repeated 5 and more legato on the 5-4-3-2-1
   d. Focus on singing with strong diction on the “d” of “doot”

0:02 Music Literacy Reading:
1. Rhythm exercises
   a. Read rhythm exercises
      ▪ Read line 1 on Takadimi syllables
      ▪ Read line 2 on Takadimi syllables
      ▪ Read line 3 on Takadimi syllables
• Read line 4 on Takadimi syllables
• Read line 4 on the neutral syllable “pa”
• Notice that the first syllable isn’t starting on the strong beat; introduce syncopation

b. Transition to score
• Students will find measures with the same rhythm pattern as demonstrated in line 4
• Read the rhythms mm. 3-4 on Takadimi syllables
• Read the rhythms mm.3-4 on “pa”
• Review syncopation

0:07 Literature:
• Go Tell It On the Mountain
  o Speak the words “Doot’n doot’n doot’n doo doot’n doo”
    ▪ Repeat the words to reinforce the diction
  o Teach the soprano part by read and correct approach, mm. 3-4
  o Teach the alto part by read and correct approach, mm. 3-4
    ▪ Notice that soprano and alto are both starting on the same pitch (unison)
  o Combine the soprano and alto parts, mm. 3-4
  o Teach the tenor part by read and correct approach, mm. 3-4
  o Teach the bass part by read and correct approach, mm. 3-4
    ▪ Notice the tenor and bass have almost the same part
    ▪ Make sure to accent the “doot’n doot”
    ▪ Notice that the first “doot” doesn’t start on the strong beat; syncopation

0:11
  o Combine all four voices mm. 3-4
  o Teach the soprano and alto parts by read and correct approach, mm. 5-8
  o Combine soprano and alto parts mm. 5-8
  o Teach the tenor and bass parts by read and correct approach, mm. 5-8
  o Combine tenor and bass parts mm. 5-8
    ▪ Point out slur above the work “tell”
    ▪ Have students accent this word and other words with the same mark
  o Review/combine all parts mm. 3-8
    ▪ Rehearse transitions between pitches for each voice

0:14
  o Teach the soprano and alto parts by read and correct approach, mm. 9-11
  o Combine soprano and alto parts mm. 9-11
  o Teach the tenor and bass parts by read and correct approach, mm. 9-11
  o Combine tenor and bass parts mm. 9-11
  o Combine all four parts, mm. 9-11

0:16
o Sing mm. 3-11 with accompaniment
  ▪ Emphasize the slurs, the strong “d” on “doot”, the swing, spiritual feeling of the piece, and the dynamics
o Evaluate run through
  ▪ What needs improvements?

0:18 Closure:

  o Review the term syncopation
  o Perform mm. 1-24 with accompaniment

**SPONGE:** Discuss what techniques are used in this arrangement to make it sound as a spiritual. What are some specific examples? Do these techniques make it sound like a spiritual? How does this type of music make you feel?

**Related Reading:**
“African American spiritual music: A historical perspective” by Monica Gordon Pershey.
  • See attached reading assignment
Go Tell It On The Mountain Reading Assignment

The piece *Go Tell It On The Mountain* is based on an African-American spiritual. Read the article “African American spiritual music: A historical perspective” by Monica Gordon Pershey and highlight important information.

Write two, well written, questions from the reading, and be prepared to discuss the article and the questions in class.

Participation points will be taken for this assignment and it is expected that each student comes prepared for discussion. You will each turn in your two questions for credit.
African American spiritual music: A historical perspective

In that great gettin' up morning
Fare you well, fare you well
When you see the forked lightning
When you hear the rumbling thunder
When you see the moon a bleeding
When you see the well's on fire
Fare you well, fare you well

-Great Gettin' Up Mornin'-

Are you well? Where might you be journeying? Must you leave early in the morning, before first light? And what sights will you watch for: a flaming moon; a bleeding well? What does all this mean for the traveler?

Spiritual music served as a form of communication for slaves in the United States in the pre-civil war era. Having few possessions and even fewer written documents, slaves had songs, stories, and dances that allowed them not only to worship but to communicate in ways other than through written communication. When 250 years of slavery ended, the predominant American culture had influenced and changed the slaves, but, in return, American popular music had taken on certain elements of the music of slaves of African descent.

Authors and illustrators of children's books have revitalized spiritual music for new generations of audiences. In particular Ashley Bryan, with his books *Walk Together Children: Black American Spirituals*, *I'm Going to Sing: Black American Spirituals*, and *All Night, All Day: A Child's First Book of African American Spirituals*, offers richly illustrated songbooks. Spiritual music can be used as the basis for a thematic unit that links literature, the arts, and social studies and can be made applicable to students of all ages.

INTRODUCING CHILDREN TO SPIRITUAL MUSIC

The purpose of this article is to present a compressed history of African American spiritual music to provide educators with an introduction to this topic. Teachers may wish to incorporate the study of spiritual music in literacy education. Connections to interactive activities built upon inquiry and discovery abound. Young children may be engaged in activities involving play songs to learn more about rhyming; they might also experiment with nineteenth century cooking and learn to create simple nineteenth century clothing, or they might craft musical instruments from raw materials similar to those used by slaves. Early elementary students might create an illustrated book of spirituals, begin to discover the concept of freedom, and explore communication without using words (signals, drums, etc.), or probe the double or hidden meanings found in some of the songs. Children might also create dioramas of plantations and study astronomy to learn how a slave might “follow the drinking gourd.”

Upper elementary students might interview descendants of slaves, read historical fiction, study nineteenth century American art, learn about the technology of the era, or create authentic functional crafts (e.g., drinking gourds). Middle schoolers might contrast immigration with the forced migration of slaves or study the economics of the era. High school students might compare various governmental systems that allow slavery (past and present), explore accounts of slavery in works of
African American spiritual music

historical fiction, or may produce a slide show or videotape on slavery, along with music and original narration.

Spiritual music is a topic that can be investigated through texts of many genres. Students can explore nonfiction histories of this musical form and read biographies of notable figures. The lyrics of the music offer opportunities to study poetic imagery, form, and rhythm. Allusions to spiritual music in fiction can also be found. Teaching students about African American spiritual music may help achieve many aims. In part, it may support learning in an integrated curriculum, develop multiple intelligences, emphasize teaching peace, social justice, and diversity, and bring speakers and performers into schools.

IN TIMES OF SLAVERY

Aboard slave ships, some captains would either allow or force Africans to sing and dance to keep them fit and strong. Tribes or clans were kept separate so that they could not plan revolt. But even as they sang and danced in their own languages, the slaves were united by sorrow and fear.

In the United States, persons who were black, slaves or free, were at times denied the right to make music altogether or to make certain kinds of music, such as drumming. Generally, slaves were rigorously converted to Christianity. Slaves were told that it was God's will that they serve in this life and they were instilled with the belief that their salvation would come in heaven. Most of the slaves embraced the new faith that enabled them to incorporate their mystical ideas about the afterlife with their love of song. Ironically, as the slaveholders' inhumanity disgraced Christianity, the spirituals glorified that same religion.

Some white Americans of the era thought the Africans weren't capable of singing and playing white European music. However, as the slave culture mingled with the Protestant culture, many spirituals came to sound similar in melody to Protestant hymns and certainly spoke many of the same ideas—praising the Lord, looking for salvation, etc. However, the tribal rhythms transformed the staid, quiet hymns into new songs with rhythm and depth. The loudness, rhythm, and intonation were something that the whites had never heard before.

At a time when standards of literacy for most of the populace meant recitation (but not necessarily reading) of the Bible, and although slaves were usually denied the right to read and write, their ability to sing about Christianity made them effectively literate in religious recitation. They demonstrated literacy through the accentuation of the musical intelligence (Gardner, 1983). Another unintended outcome of converting Africans to Christianity through teaching them white church music was that some of the spirituals came to serve a dual purpose—to worship and also to communicate or signal information about escape routes, safe houses, and persons to trust. The songs Gospel Train, Get on Board, Little Children, Behold That Star, and This Little Light of Mine are well known examples of songs that gave secret messages about finding the way to freedom.

Folk music, by the strictest definition, stretches continuously from a far distant past. Part of the African tradition meant using drums. It was the drum, particularly, that allowed the slaves to at times send a sort of Morse code from one plantation to the next. They were sending messages that the masters didn't expect, but when the masters came to understand this, often drums were banned. The slaves drummed with their heels on wooden floors to achieve the same loud sounds. Slaves introduced many new instruments to the United States: the drum, the bones, body percussion, and an instrument variously called the banjo, banjor, or banjar, a precursor to the banjo but with no frets.

Sometimes spirituals were called sorrow songs. Slaves played them to express deep suffering, endurance, and yearning for freedom in the peaceful kingdom of heaven. Spirituals offered emotional release, psychic relief, and helped some slaves keep up morale. They sang to lighten their burdens, remind one another of hope, restore their spirits, increase their courage, and enjoy the little free time they had, as in the spiritual Just Keep on Singin'. The ballads mingled sorrow with great joy, faith in God's love, and optimism in other worldly release. Funerals, particularly, were filled with music. Part of the solace of song came in togetherness. Church was, at times, the only place slaves could legitimately congregate, socialize, and safely express feelings. Church was also one place they could sing songs that had dual meanings, such as Deep River, which was used to plan meetings to discuss escape. Wade in the Water meant that a slave's absence had been discovered. Singing the song would spread the word to other plantations in hopes that the runaway would hear it, know the bloodhounds were after his[her] scent, and travel by water to hide any scent and tracks.

Spirituals were often interactive songs using call and response singing. A leader sings a main