

Nebraska All-State Choir Conductor Notes

Prepared by Marques L. A. Garrett, PhD, www.mlagmusic.com

As someone who lived in Nebraska for five years, I understand how exciting it can be to progress through the audition process for the all-state choir. No matter where you land in the process, hopefully, you have learned more about yourself and your musicianship. Know that we never stop learning, even in music; there is always something new.

The goal is to have every song memorized. Solo and small group auditions will happen at all-state. The notes below are in the planned concert order, which is subject to change.

All Night I Could Not Sleep

This song won a competition in Pennsylvania a few years ago. I was struck by the real-world experience of not being able to sleep well because of external factors. The aleatory in the beginning and ending sections mimic nighttime thoughts when sleep doesn't happen immediately.

There's a good chance that this song will be the most challenging, requiring lots of individual attention. Maintain a steady pulse when other voices have aleatory and you don't. Read all the performance notes and listen to the recording for help understanding how this song goes. Measure numbers are at each measure. Write every rehearsal letter above your vocal line.

m. 2 - Only breathe at rests. Ignore punctuation in the whole song.

m. 3 - learn the quarter-note triplets by subdividing the quarter notes as eighth notes

m. 6 - Soprano 1, remain *piano*

m. 7 - Tenor, remain *piano*

m. 15-19 - The box has the same music as the musical phrase before. The aleatory begins on the beat of the first pitch in the box.

m. 21 - Do not sing "sing" again. This is the final word when cued to sustain the end of the aleatory from the box.

m. 22 - $7/8 = 2+2+3$ (until letter D). Dental /n/ for "na" in this section. Learn these measures using do-bee for quarter notes and groupings of two eighth notes. Use do-bah-bee for dotted quarter notes and groupings of three eighth notes.

m. 32 - $6/8 = 3+3$, here and elsewhere in this middle section

m. 50 - $9/8 = 3+3+3$

letter D - $7/8 = 3+2+2$, here and elsewhere in this middle section

m. 80 - Soprano 1, do not sustain last note like everyone else

letter E - begin counting triplets on the downbeat

letter F - The person to start “Yes” in each voice part will be assigned at all-state.

An Earth Song

This song uses the text of Langston Hughes, the noted Harlem Renaissance poet. He was born in 1901, which makes 2026 his quasiquicentennial. Measure numbers are at the bottom of each measure, below the piano part.

m. 9 - Soprano/Alto, strict rhythms with no delay

m. 10 - Soprano/Alto, no breath at the comma

m. 13 - Tenor/Bass, breathe in time

m. 27 - This should sound different than the opening since there’s a new character. No shadow vowel for “song.” This applies everywhere in the song.

m. 36 - Most tenutos mean to emphasize the stressed syllable of a word then decrescendo into the unstressed syllable, singing it more quietly. (Rule of Word Stress)

m. 42 - Do not begin to get louder until m. 45.

m. 58 - Soprano, this tenuto means to emphasize the adjective. Pronounce the word as /nju/ without it being overly nasal.

m. 59 - Alto, same as m. 58 for Soprano

m. 62 - Tenor/Bass, smoothly

m. 70 - Open the vowel inside the mouth for the crescendo while maintaining the same lip shape for /u/.

m. 73 - Always sing “spring” when there’s an alternative word. This is the original text.

m. 104 - Do not slow down! The high B-flat will be assigned during the all-state weekend.

Saturn’s Embrace

This song is atmospheric in an “otherworldly” sense. (As I type this, the Artemis II team recently returned from their trip around the moon.) Make music with each melody and harmonic line so that nothing is static. Use the most closed and purest /u/ possible throughout the song.

The composer has approved of a faster tempo than printed. However, do everything else as printed including final consonant releases on a rest and no breaths where indicated. Especially observe every crescendo, decrescendo, and tenuto. Don’t add them if they’re not in your vocal line. Write every measure number above your vocal line.

Ong-Hye-Ya

This work song was arranged to express the joy of working not for the sake of working but because others will benefit from the necessary work to process barley for people to use.

If Korean is a less familiar language for you, take time to learn and enjoy the beauty of its unique combination of sounds. Use the recorded pronunciation guide provided on Walton's website by searching WJMS1217. Write every measure number and rehearsal letter above your vocal line.

- m. 3 - grace notes as sixteenth notes, here and elsewhere
- m. 15 - keep the crescendo going
- m. 20-24 - Soprano/Tenor, staccato on "e he e he"
- m. 27-28 - Alto/Tenor/Bass, add "rit."
- m. 29-78 - lightly accented
- m. 45 - Soprano, staccato on "e he e he"
- m. 46-48 - extend crescendo
- m. 58 - Soprano/Tenor, staccato on "e he e he"
- m. 63-70 - slight accent on each downbeat
- m. 63, 65, 67, 69, 70 - no breath at the end
- m. 71, 75 - Alto/Bass 1, staccato on "e he e he"
- m. 79-81 - close to the final consonant of each quarter note
- m. 92-93 - Alto/Tenor/Bass, add "rit."
- m. 96 - close to /η/
- m. 98-109 - Alto/Tenor/Bass, add "accel", this is a slow accelerando
- m. 110, 114 - Alto/Bass 1, staccato on "e he e he"
- m. 122 - The grace note will be conducted.

Deep River

While the score says that this is a spiritual arrangement by R. Nathaniel Dett, he did not want the song categorized or labeled as such. According to Dett, this is a motet which uses a Negro spiritual as its theme. This song cannot be sung effectively if the struggle of the enslaved Africans in this country is not at the forefront of our minds. "Jordan" and the "campground" are freedom from enslavement and/or Heaven. While everyone does not have the same lived experience and none of us have the lived experience of the "folk composer" who first sang the folk spiritual "Deep River," everyone can understand what it's like to struggle. In his essay, "Understanding the Negro Spiritual," Dett said, "The love of nature, the desire for companionship, the pain of parting from relatives or friends, the joy of reunion, faith in a Divine Providence, a fervent but never despairing cry for deliverance of soul and body from fetters both concrete and intangible, the ballading of remarkable events, — all this has been the common experience of bards of all races and times." This means that we all have a way of connecting to this music. My highest recommendation for a book to help contextualize this music is *In Their Own Words: Slave Life and the Power of Spirituals* by Eileen Guenther.

The chorus (m. 1-8) should have a seamless flow to imitate a river. Only breathe at rests. Write every measure number above your vocal line.

- m. 8 - add *poco rit.* for the last two beats
- m. 9 - add *a tempo*
- m. 9-16 - add all expressive markings from m. 1-8
- m. 14 - Tenor/Bass, add a tenuto on "I"
- m. 17-25 - lighted accented
- m. 27-34 - add all expressive markings from m. 1-8
- m. 32 - Tenor/Bass, add a tenuto on "I"

Never Let Go

Let's have some fun. Songs of different styles should sound like the different styles. This song should not sound like "Ong-Hye-Ya" or "All Night I Could Not Sleep" since this is contemporary a cappella. Use the recording by A Cappella Academy 2021 and lean into the sound/style. Write every measure number above your vocal line.

- m. 48-54 - Soprano/Alto, slight pulse on each "oo"
- m. 55 - Bass 2, make a big deal of "dm" which is different from the other voices
- m. 56 - Alto 2/Tenor/Bass 1, *mezzo piano*
- m. 57 - Alto 2/Tenor/Bass 1, add breath after "woah"
- m. 59 - Alto 2/Tenor/Bass 1, *legato*
- m. 61 - Alto 2/Tenor/Bass 1, no hard T at the end of "soft"
- m. 64 - Soprano/Alto 1, add breath at the end
- m. 68 - Soprano/Alto 1, add breath at the end
- m. 77 - Alto/Tenor/Bass, no breath after "grace"
- m. 85 - rebeam beats 3 and 4 to make it easier to read the rhythm. "Look at" is beat 3
- m. 86 - Alto/Bass, observe rests as written
- m. 88 - Tenor, remove quarter rest, change the quarter note to a half note like Bass 1 and 2
- m. 99-102 - write in *crescendo* through all four measures
- m. 102 - Alto 1, observe rest as written
- m. 111 - Alto, *mezzo forte*
- m. 115 - Alto 2/Tenor/Bass 1, add syllabic slur for the two notes of the first syllable of "only"
- m. 123 - Soprano/Alto 1, add breath at the end
- m. 127 - Soprano/Alto 1, add breath at the end
- letter F - four-bar phrases
- m. 133 - Soprano/Alto, add breath after "go"; Alto 2/Bass, add breath at the end
- m. 137 - Soprano/Alto/Bass, add breath at the end
- m. 141 - Soprano/Alto/Bass, add breath at the end
- m. 145 - Soprano/Alto/Bass, add breath at the end