The day that I was commissioned to compose music on the theme of freedom by Dr. Jennifer Garrett, Director of Choral Activities at Bakersfield College, I immediately thought of Harriet Tubman. My next thought was to ask my daughter, Hannah Kean, a film maker, to collaborate with me. We knew from the outset that using live film would enhance the story. We spent many weeks developing the dramatic form. Although “The Journey of Harriet Tubman” can be performed without the film, I feel strongly that including the film communicates the story through aural, visual, physical and cognitive senses. The music and film are symbiotic.

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HARRIET TUBMAN BACKGROUND NOTES

Movement 1 – Follow the River (Wounded and Dreaming) 1:18

By Ron Kean

Between the age of 12 and 14, Harriet was struck in the face with an iron weight meant to hit a runaway slave. She purposely stood in the way to protect the runaway from being whipped. The other slaves thought that she would surely die. No one could survive with a great hole in the head like that. She was unconscious for at least a day that produced dreams and visions for the rest of her life. Some of these visions came true and Harriet learned to trust them – and so did the other slaves.

Harriet had visions of flying over the fields. She said the North Star beckoned her. “In my dreams and visions, I seemed to see a line, and on the other side of that line were green fields, and lovely flowers, and beautiful white ladies, who stretched out their arms to me over the line, but I couldn’t reach them no-how. I always fell before I got to the line.” This movement portrays Harriet’s recurring dream of flying to freedom. It introduces two west African instruments that will return in future movements, marimba and kalimba (thumb piano). It also introduces the musical symbol of the North Star played by the marimba.

Movement 2 – Steal Away (Chain gang style, steal/steel) 3:57

This newly composed work song uses the text of “Steal Away” in the first part and the actual spiritual in the second part. It also quotes the last part of the spiritual, “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child.” It is set in a 5/4 meter to emphasize the awkwardness and pain of having to work while shackled to each other. A chorus of angels eventually joins the work song and adds a ray of hope for the chain gang.

Movement 3 – Go Down, Moses (Escape) 3:50

The Spiritual, “Go Down Moses,” was sung by Tubman as a signal to slaves who were waiting to escape. She changed some of the words and tempos to indicate whether it was safe or not to come out of hiding. “Her husky voice was beautiful even when it was barely a murmur borne on the wind.” At the appropriate time, Harriet may have directed the escaping slaves to “Wade in the Water” as soon as she could, she would go back to the eastern shore of Maryland and lead her family North, too. She knew the way now.

Movement 4 – Swing Low/Follow the River (Self-Rescue) 4:48

This Spiritual had special meaning when an escape plot was in the air (Southern, p. 130). At the age of 17, she learned that she was to be sold to a chain gang very soon. She knew that she “would be free or die” trying to be free. During her escape, a farmer offered to carry her concealed in his cart all night. In one account, at dawn, he told her to “follow the river.”

Movement 5 – Follow the River/Epilogue (Rescuing others) 5:15

Harriet’s moment of exultation at having escaped quickly passed. She writes: “There was no one to welcome me to the land of freedom. I was a stranger in a strange land, and my home after all was down in the old cabin quarter with the old folks, and my brothers and sisters.” When she thought of her family, left behind, all of them slaves, her joy in having escaped rapidly left her. She decided that as soon as she could, she would go back to the eastern shore of Maryland and lead her family North, too. She knew the way now. The movement opens in the dream state of the first movement because the vision to her head produced dreams and visions for the rest of her life. The movement opens with quotes from many of the spirituals from the journey and a reprise of “Follow the River.” A duet with the angels follows and is introduced by a rolled chord from the first movement played by the marimba that portrays the twinkling of the North Star that Harriet used to find her way northward to freedom.

TOTAL MUSIC TIME 19:03

SPIRITUAL GENRES IN “THE JOURNEY OF HARRIET TUBMAN”

“Steal Away – Code, Sorrow”

“Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child” – Sorrow (“...a long way from home”)

“Go Down, Moses” – Alerting, Call and Response, Code, Sorrow

“Wade in the Water” – Code

“Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” – Alerting, Call and response, Code, Freedom

“Ooh Freedom” – Jubilee Song

INSTRUMENTS USED

1. Kalimba (Mbira) – thumb piano from sub-Saharan Africa used to communicate with ancestors
2. Marimba – American adaption of the balafon from west Africa.

I composed a melody on the farmer’s instruction to “follow the river.” I chose to accompany this melody with two instruments of west-African origin, marimba (related to the balafon) and the kalimba (thumb piano, also referred to as mbira). West Africans play the kalimba when they want to connect with their ancestors for spiritual guidance. I thought it would be appropriate for Harriet to ask for help from her ancestors while following the river to freedom.

Each of these instruments plays an independent ostinato (repeated melodic/rhythmic fragments) that, when combined, helps to portray an image of floating up-river to freedom.

I have chosen Spirituals and the texts of Spirituals that scholars know were sung in the years 1849-1858. These are the years that Harriet Tubman was helping fellow slaves to escape. Scholars do not know exactly how the Spirituals were performed, but they agree that there was probably little or no harmony. My goal was to compose and arrange music in a style that is evocative of the slave’s frame of mind based upon their west African musical heritage using the following characteristics as a guide:

1. Rhythm is the most important element – more important than melody
2. The love of bright sonorities (using one’s outdoor voice)
3. Ostinatos (repeated melodic/rhythmic fragment) layered in one at a time
4. Polyphonic texture (multiple independent voices)
5. Call and Response (soloist leads, group follows)
6. Ecstacy/Transcendence (Getting “lost” in the music/losing sense of time and place)
7. Music is interwoven with dance (movement).
1. Introduction / Follow the River

Traditional African-American Spiritual

Ron Kean

Dreamy \( \frac{d}{3} = 64 \)

*Marimba

Solo

S.A.

Mrba.

Solo

S.A.

Mrba.

* Only the Marimba part is provided in the choral score to serve as an aid in learning the music. The full Marimba and Kalimba parts are available separately, P8003.

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Solo
follow, follow, follow the river

S.A.
follow the river

Mrba.
gently rolled Kalimba

Solo
home.
follow, follow the river

S.A.
home.
follow, follow the river

Mrba.
gently rolled Kalimba
2. Steal Away

Traditional African-American Spiritual
Arranged by Ron Kean

Labored \( \frac{4}{4} = 88 \)

Solo
(Harriet)

Sop. 1

Sop. 2

Alto

Ten. 1

Ten. 2

Bass 1

Bass 2

Ain’ got time to stay here,

Steal a-way, wuh! Steal a-way, wuh! Steal a-way, wuh!

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B. 1

ain’ got time to stay here, ain’ got time to stay he-yuh, wuh!

B. 2

Steal a-way, wuh! Steal a-way, wuh! Steal a-way, wuh!

B. 1

wuh! Ain’ got time to stay here, ain’ got time to stay here, wuh!

B. 2

Steal a-way, wuh! Steal a-way, wuh! Steal a-way, wuh!

B. 1

ain’ got time to stay he-yuh, wuh! wuh!

B. 2

Steal a-way, wuh! Steal a-way, wuh! Steal a-way, wuh!
With assurance

My Lord _ calls _ me, _

Ain’ got time _ to stay here,  

Steal a-way, wuh! Steal a-way, wuh!  

Don’t ya know, my Lord _

Don’t ya know, my Lord _

he-yuh, _ wuh!  

Ain’ got time _ to stay here,  

Steal a-way, wuh! Steal a-way, wuh!
calls me, calls me by the thunder! Don't ya know,
calls me, calls me by the thunder! Don't ya know,
ain' got time to stay here, ain' got time to stay he-yuh wuh!
Steal a-way, wuh! Steal a-way, wuh! Steal a-way, wuh!
calls me, calls me by the light nin',
calls me, calls me by the light nin',
Ain' got time to stay here, ain' got time to stay here, ain' got time to stay
Steal a-way, wuh! Steal a-way, wuh! Steal a-way, wuh!
*Release the “m” of home with an audible “muh.” This is true for all parts throughout the piece.
Steal a way home. (muh!) Steal a way home.

no, wuh! Ain’ got time to stay here.

Ain’ got time to stay here, wuh!
The Angels

Steal away home.

Steal away home. (muh!)

Ain’t got time to stay here, no, wuh!

Ain’t got time to stay here, no, wuh!
S. 1
36

a
way.

S. 2

a
way.

A.

a
way.

T. 1

_stea_l a-way home._

T. 2

_stea_l a-way home._

B. 1

no, _wuh!

B. 2

Ain’ got time _to stay here_, no, _wuh!_
40

S. 1

home.

Steal a-way home.

S. 2

home.

Steal a-way home.

A.

home.

Steal a-way home.

T. 1

(muh!) Steal a-way home. (muh!) Steal a-way home.

T. 2

home. (muh!) A long way from

B. 1

home. (muh!) A long way from

B. 2

long way from home. (muh!) A
Steal a way home. (muh!) Steal a way home. (muh!) A long way from home. (muh!) A
A long way from home. (muh!) A long way from home. (muh!)
The Angels

Stately}\quad J = 72

Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus.

(muh!) A long way, A long way, A long way from home.

Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus.

(m) (muh!)
Steal a-way, steal a-way home. I ain't got long to stay here.

Oh, my Lord. Oh, my Lord.

Steal a-way to Jesus.
Voices of angels will guide me.

S.1: ain't got long to stay here.

S.2: ain't got long to stay here.

A.: ain't got long to stay here.
3. Go Down, Moses

Traditional African-American Spiritual
Arr. by Ron Kean

When Is\(\text{rael was}\)____ in \(\text{Egypt lan'}\),____ let my peo\(\text{ple}\)

\(\text{j = 64}\)

\(\text{secretive but passionate}\)
\("\text{sung as a murmur borne on the wind}\"

\(\text{Solo}\) \(\text{p}\)
Go down, go down, go down,

Let my people go.

Go down, go down, go down, Moses.
Go down, go down, go down, go down, Moses.

Go down, go down, go down, go down, Moses.

Go down, go down, go down, go down, Moses.
Solo

S. mf
go.
Oppressed so hard they could not stan',

A.

f

T. mf
go down, Mo- ses.
Go down, go down, go down, Mo- ses.

B. mf
go down, Mo- ses.
Go down, go down, go down, go down, Mo- ses.

Solo

S. f emphatically
let my peo- ple go, wuh! Go down,

A. f emphatically
let my peo- ple go, wuh! Go down,

T. f emphatically
Go down, go down, go down, Mo- ses.
Go down,

B. f emphatically
Go down, go down, go down, go down, Mo- ses.
Go down,
Much slower $\frac{4}{4} = 48$

Solo

S.

Mo-ses,

way down in E-gypt lan'.

pp “scared to death”

A.

Mo-ses,

way down in E-gypt lan'.

pp “scared to death”

T.

Mo-ses,

way down in E-gypt lan'.

pp “scared to death”

B.

Mo-ses,

way down in E-gypt lan'.

26 a tempo

Solo

27

28 accel.

S.

Tell old____

Phar-aoh____ to let my peo-ple

A.

Tell old____

Phar-aoh____

let my

T.

Tell old____

Phar-aoh____ to let my peo-ple,

B.

Tell old____

Phar-aoh____
For Review Only
Solo
in the water, children! Go wuh! Go wuh!

S.
Go______ and wade______ in the wa______ ter, child______ ren.

A.
Go______ and wade______ in the wa______ ter, child______ ren.

T.
go down, Mo______ ses. Wade in______ the wa______ ter, in the wa______ ter.

B.
— go down, Mo______ ses. Wade in______ the wa______ ter, wade,

Solo
C.
Ain’______ got long to stay______ here, no,______ no.

S.
Time to wade______ in the wa______ ter, child______ ren.

A.
Time to wade______ in the wa______ ter, child______ ren.

T.
wa______ ter, in the wa______ ter. Wade in______ the wa______ ter.

B.
— wade in the wa______ ter. Wade in______ the wa______ ter, wade,
It’s time to wade

Go and wade in the water, children. Wade in the water, wade,

water, children. Wade in the water, wade,

Wade in the water, children.

Wade in the water.

Wade in the water.

Wade in the water, wade.

Wade in the water.

Wade in the water.

Wade in the water.

Wade in the water.

Wade in the water.

Wade in the water.

Wade in the water.

Wade in the water.

Wade in the water.

Wade in the water.

Wade in the water.

Wade in the water.

Wade in the water.

Wade in the water.

Wade in the water.

Wade in the water.

Wade in the water.

Wade in the water.

Wade in the water.
Wade in the water, wade, wade in the water.

Wade in the water, all my children.

let my people go; to lead the Hebrew

Wade in the water, wade, wade in the water.
Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt land.

Much slower $J = 48$
For Review Only
Freely, but passionately, “sung as a murmur borne on the wind” $\frac{3}{4} = \text{ca. 64}$

Solo

Swing low, sweet chariot,

Marimba

gently rolled

Solo

comin’ for to carry me home.

Marimba

Solo

chariot, comin’ for to carry me home.

B.

Oh, Lord!

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Swing low, sweet...

Oh, Lord!

Swing low...uh!

Swing low, com-in' for to carry me

Swing low...uh!

Swing low...

Swing low...uh!
Swing low, sweet swan.
home.
Swing low, swing low.
chariot, comin' for to carry me home.
Swing low, swing low.
Swing low, swing low.
Follow the river, follow the river,

Follow the river, follow the river,

Follow the river to the promised land.

Follow the river, follow the river,

Follow the river to the promised land.
all the way home. Follow the river to the promised land.

looked over Jordan and what did I see? Com' in' for to carry me

Angels will guide you, angels will guide you, angels will guide you to the

urgent and sweet

An-gels, an-gels, an-gels, an-gels, an-gels, an-gels,
com-in' to take me home.

promised land.

Lord! Oh, Lord!

Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord!

Swing low, uh!

Swing low, uh!

Swing low, uh!

Swing low, uh!

Swing low, uh!

Swing low, uh!

Swing low, uh!

Swing low, uh!

Swing low, uh!

Swing low, uh!

Swing low, uh!

Swing low, uh!

Swing low, uh!

Swing low, uh!
Lord, my Lord.

Oh, Lord,

Swing low uh!

Swing low uh!

carry me home.

Oh, Lord!

Swing low uh! Swing low uh! Swing low uh! Swing low uh!

Yes, Lord, to the Promised land.

Swing low uh! Swing low uh!

Swing low uh!

swing low, swing low.

Swing low uh! Swing low uh!

Swing low uh! Swing low uh!

Swing low uh! Swing low uh!
Swing low, sweet chariot, comin’ for to carry me
home. Swing low, sweet chariot, comin’ for to carry me

Swing low, sweet chariot, comin’ for to carry me
home. Swing low, sweet chariot, comin’ for to carry me

Swing low, sweet chariot, comin’ for to carry me
home. Swing low, sweet chariot, comin’ for to carry me

Swing low, sweet chariot, comin’ for to carry me
home. Swing low, sweet chariot, comin’ for to carry me

Swing low, sweet chariot, comin’ for to carry me
home. Swing low, sweet chariot, comin’ for to carry me

Swing low, sweet chariot, comin’ for to carry me
home. Swing low, sweet chariot, comin’ for to carry me

Swing low, sweet chariot, comin’ for to carry me
home. Swing low, sweet chariot, comin’ for to carry me

Swing low, sweet chariot, comin’ for to carry me
home. Swing low, sweet chariot, comin’ for to carry me

Swing low, sweet chariot, comin’ for to carry me
home. Swing low, sweet chariot, comin’ for to carry me
Solo

S. com-in' for to carry me home. (muh!) Swing low, sweet

A. com-in' for to carry me home. (muh!) Swing low, sweet

T. com-in' for to carry me home. (muh!) Swing low, swing low,

B. com-in' for to carry me home. (muh!) Swing low, swing low,

Mrba.

53 Swing low, my Lord, 
54 Swing low, my Lord, 
55 Swing low, my Lord, 

56 Swing low, my Lord, Swing low, my, my Lord.

57 Swing low, my Lord, Swing low, my Lord.

58 Swing low, swing low, swing low, swing low, swing low,

For Review Only
Swing low, my Lord.

Swing low, sweet chariot, comin’ for to carry me

Swing low, swing low, swing low, swing low, carry me, carry me

Swing low, swing low, swing low, swing low, carry me, carry me

Lord, sing it to me one more time.

Swing low, my Lord.

Swing low, sweet chariot, comin’ for to carry me

Swing low, swing low, swing low, swing low, carry me, carry me

Swing low, swing low, swing low, swing low, carry me, carry me

Swing low, swing low, swing low, swing low, carry me, carry me
Swing low, my Lord.
Swing low,
Chariot, comin' for to carry me
Swing low, swing low, swing low, swing low,
Swing low, swing low, swing low, swing low,
Swing low, swing low, swing low, swing low,
Swing low, sweet
Swing low, swing low, swing low, swing low,
Swing low, swing low, swing low, swing low,
Swing low, swing low, swing low, swing low,
my Lord, swing low, swing low! Carry me, carry me
chariot, comin' for to carry me
swing low, swing low! Carry me, carry me
swing low, swing low! Carry me, carry me
Lord. home.
home. home.
home.
Solo

S.

A.

Mrba.

Kalimba continues

Solo

Kmba.

Lord, I'm free, I'm free!

Solo

Kmba.
5. Epilogue / Follow the River

Traditional African-American Spiritual
Arr. by Ron Kean

Dreamy $\frac{3}{4} = 64$

Sop. Solo

Small Group

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Marimba

T. $f$

B. $f$

Mrba.

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Steal a way,

Steal a way, steal a way to Jesus.

Voices of angels will guide you.

Steal a way home.
I hear my people crying, I must go home.

Voices of angels will guide you

home.

Follow the river,

all the way home.

Follow the river to the promised land.
Oh, my Lord!  My Lord!

Promised land.

My Lord!

Voices of angels will guide you.

I hear the call of my people. I hear the call of my people and I must go to the promised land.

Voices of angels will guide you to the promised land.
I hear the call of my people calling me home.

Voices of angels will guide you, all the way home.

Anchors will guide us to the promised land.

If
you get to heaven before, before I do, _

urgent and sweet

Angels will guide you, angels will guide you,

An-gels, an-gels, an-gels, an-gels,

Comin' for to carry me _ home.

tell

Angels will guide you to the promised land.

An-gels, an-gels, com-in' for me, com-in' for me,
Mrba.

S. Solo

S.A.

T.

B.

An gels will guide you all the way home.

Angels, angels, angels, angels, angels,

An gels will guide you to the promised land.

An gels will guide you to the promised land.

com in' for to car ry me home.

Car ry me home, oh, Lord!

For Review Only
Lord! Oh, Lord, mah Lord!

Freedom uh!

Oh, freedom over me!

And be -

Oh, freedom over me!

And be -

Freedom uh! Freedom uh!

Over me uh, over me uh!

Freedom uh! Freedom uh!

Over me uh, over me uh!

Freedom uh! Freedom uh!

Over me uh, over me uh!
S. Solo

Oh, Lord, carry me home.

Group

Freedom uh! Freedom uh! Freedom!

for I'd be a slave I'd be buried in my grave, and go

S.

fore I'd be a slave I'd be buried in my grave, and go

A.

fore I'd be a slave I'd be buried in my grave, and go

T.

Freedom uh! Freedom uh! Freedom uh! Freedom!

B.

Freedom uh! Freedom uh! Freedom uh! Freedom!

Mrba.

Freedom uh! Freedom uh! Freedom uh! Freedom!
yes, Lord, to the promised land.


home to my Lord and be free.


Sing in'!
fore I'd be a slave I'd be buried in my grave, and go
Sing in'!
Sing in'!
Sing in'!
Sing in'!
Sing in'!
Sing in'!
Home, Lord, home, Lord, and be free uh!
home to my Lord, and be free uh!
home to my Lord, and be free uh!
Home, Lord, home, Lord, and be free uh!
Home, Lord, home, Lord, and be free uh!
Home, Lord, home, Lord, and be free uh!
Oh, free-dom, my Lord!
Oh, free-dom, my Lord,

Free-dom uh!

Oh, free-dom!
Oh, free-dom!

Free-dom uh! Free-dom uh! Free-dom uh!

Free-dom uh! Free-dom uh! Free-dom uh!

Free-dom uh! Free-dom uh! Free-dom uh! Free-dom uh!

Free-dom uh! Free-dom uh! Free-dom uh! Free-dom uh!
Vocal score:

S. Solo

my Lord,

Group

Freedom uh!

Oh, freedom over me.

S

And be

A.

Oh, freedom over me.

T.

Freedom uh! Freedom uh! Freedom uh!

B.

Freedom uh! Freedom uh! Freedom uh!

Mrba.
My Lord, my Lord,

Freedom uh! Freedom uh! Freedom!

fore I'd be a slave I'd be buried in my grave, and go

Buried in my grave, and go

Freedom uh! Freedom uh! Freedom uh! Freedom uh!

Freedom uh! Freedom uh! Freedom uh! Freedom uh!

Freedom uh! Freedom uh! Freedom uh! Freedom uh!

For Review Only
Home, Lord uh! Home, Lord uh! Home, Lord uh!

Home, Lord uh! Home, Lord uh! Home, Lord uh!

Home, Lord uh! Home, Lord uh! Home, Lord uh!

Home, Lord uh! Home, Lord uh! Home, Lord uh!
Repeat as many times as desired for “Ring Shout.”
Solo may be improvised.

For Review Only
Carry me, carry me, carry me home,

Oh, freedom! Oh, freedom!

Carry me, uh! Carry me, uh! Carry me, uh! Carry me, uh!

Carry me, uh! Carry me, uh! Carry me, uh! Carry me, uh!

Carry me, uh! Carry me, uh! Carry me, uh! Carry me, uh!

Carry me, uh! Carry me, uh! Carry me, uh! Carry me, uh!

Carry me, uh! Carry me, uh! Carry me, uh! Carry me, uh!

Carry me, uh! Carry me, uh! Carry me, uh! Carry me, uh!
Broadly $J = 54$

S. Solo

Carry me home!

S.

Carry me, carry me home!

A.

Carry me, carry me home!

T.

Carry me, carry me home!

B.

Carry me, carry me home!

Mrba.

let ring after the choir cuts off