

I Heard the Angels Singing-Southern Spiritual

Plan by Brian Burnett

Preset instruments to F pentatonic, triangle.

Objective: Melodic improvisation with syncopation.

Rhythmic building blocks: Text-one morning, singing softly, all around, soon.

Use a four-box grid or just random placement on visual to show the text without rhythms. You could add the rhythm symbols as soon as you like. Give an example of stringing together the building blocks to create a rhythm sentence. The pattern must include “one morning” somewhere. Next, transfer the rhythm pattern to movement gestures to create a body percussion example. Then have two students show an example and then let each student construct their own. Share with a partner and link the two together to form a longer phrase if you like.

Present the song with patschen on the bordun’s ostinato. Transfer the bordun immediately to your lowest sounding instrument to set the tonality. Add snaps to the text “soon” for a color part and transfer to glocks and soprano instruments set in F pentatonic. Complete the setting with the triangle and move on to melodic improvisation to create a B section. Demonstrate an example for the students to show scale-wise motion and cadences to create Q/A form. Make sure to use the syncopation at least twice. Then give a rubric that gives an extra point for using the syncopation rhythm. The student’s body percussion patterns may be used as alternative B sections or as interludes.

Review the syncopation, bring to symbolic level and read in another song. Perhaps “Shake the Papaya Down” or “Alabama Gal.”