

All-State SSA Repertoire Notes for Teachers & Singers

Stardust – B.E. Boykin

Style & Character

- Lush, contemporary choral writing with a reflective, dreamy tone. The piece draws from imagery of night skies and celestial wonder, emphasize warm, blended tone and legato phrasing.
- Aim for a shimmering sound—think “vocal velvet.”

Vocal Technique & Interpretation

- Focus on vowel unification for blend; sustain tall, pure vowels on long phrases.
- Encourage controlled breath support for long, arching lines.
- Use dynamics to paint the text, crescendo into moments of awe and decrescendo to moments of stillness.
- Dynamics and tempo should ebb and flow organically, like stars “twinkling.”

Teaching Tips

- Begin rehearsals with slow, vowel-only singing to align pitch and resonance.
- Discuss text meaning to help singers connect emotionally to the imagery of stardust and wonder.
- Explore connections between this piece and Langston Hughes’s poetry for deeper context.

Juego a Que Me Quemo – Julián Gómez Giraldo

Style & Character

- A passionate Colombian piece full of rhythmic vitality and emotional depth. ‘Juego a que me quemo’ translates to metaphorically exploring love, risk, and emotion.

Vocal Technique & Interpretation

- Bright, forward vowels and crisp diction in Spanish are essential. (*please IPA attached*)
- Keep tone light and agile, especially during faster passages.
- Emphasize articulation of text—the rhythm of the language should propel the piece.
- Observe stylistic nuances: syncopation, dynamic flare, and subtle tempo shifts.

Teaching Tips

- Begin with pronunciation drills and IPA review to ensure accuracy and confidence.
- Have students speak the text rhythmically before singing.
- Use body percussion to internalize rhythmic groove.
- Encourage expressive faces and storytelling—this piece should sizzle with energy

Dance - Robert T. Gibson

Style & Character

- A vibrant, rhythm-driven piece with a message of joy and freedom. Rhythmic precision and crisp diction bring the text to life.

Vocal Technique & Interpretation

- Maintain forward energy in articulation, avoid heavy consonants but keep clarity.
- Use light, buoyant tone, especially in faster passages to convey movement and joy.
- Dynamic contrasts are key: shape phrases so the music truly “dances.”

Teaching Tips

- Warm-up with rhythmic patterns in 2s and 3s to reinforce syncopation.
- Encourage singers to physically feel the pulse—add simple movement or clapping exercises.
- Isolate challenging rhythmic sections and rehearse them on neutral syllables before adding text.

STEEP INSTRUCTIONS (Please visit alfred.com to view an instructional video.)

GROUP 1: Soprano I

GROUP 2: Altos

GROUP 3: Soprano II

After the Rain – Sarah Quartel

Style & Character

- A tender, lyrical piece that captures renewal, hope, and the calm that follows life’s storms.
- The tone should be warm, introspective, and fluid—imagine the peaceful stillness after rain.

Vocal Technique & Interpretation

- An Understanding of triplets will help students experience success with this piece.
- Focus on smooth, connected phrasing with unified vowels and consistent tone color.
- Encourage singers to listen across the ensemble for balance and blend, especially in soft dynamics.
- Shape phrases with breath and intention, each line should feel like it’s gently unfolding.
- Pay attention to word stress to preserve the natural rhythm of the poetry.

Teaching Tips

- Discuss the emotional narrative: what does *after the rain* symbolize for the singers personally?
- Use imagery in warm-ups (rain falling, renewal, reflection) to set the mood before rehearsing.
- Practice phrasing on neutral syllables (e.g., 'loo' or 'noo') to strengthen legato connection.
- Encourage expressive facial connection—this piece thrives on sincerity and emotional honesty.

Who I Want to Be – Coty Raven Morris

Style & Character

- A powerful contemporary choral anthem centered on identity, self-worth, and affirmation. This piece should feel personal, reflective, and empowering.

Vocal Technique & Interpretation

- Use warm, expressive tone and clear diction to deliver the text authentically.
- Focus on phrasing that highlights the emotional arc, from introspection to empowerment.
- Encourage natural, speech-like rhythm and connection to text, avoid over-singing.

Teaching Tips

- Have singers journal or discuss what the lyrics mean to them; connect the message to real life.
- Incorporate moments of reflection before singing to unify emotional intention.
- Shape dynamics carefully—build toward moments of confidence and hope.
- Aim for emotional honesty over polish; the authenticity of expression is the heart of this work.

Walk in Jerusalem – Rollo Dilworth

Style & Character

- A vibrant arrangement of a traditional spiritual, energetic, rhythmic, and full of gospel spirit. It celebrates joy, faith, and the assurance of salvation.

Vocal Technique & Interpretation

- Maintain clear, resonant tone with rhythmic precision.
- Add stylistic elements, gentle swing, syncopation, and dynamic shaping true to gospel style.
- Encourage expressive text delivery every phrase should feel testified, not just sung.

Teaching Tips

- Begin rehearsals with call-and-response warm-ups to foster ensemble connection and style.
- Discuss the cultural and historical roots of spirituals to deepen understanding.

- Focus on diction, especially final consonants and lifted vowels for clarity.
- Encourage singers to move naturally with the rhythm, body engagement helps stylistic authenticity.