BY AN’ BY
I’m Gonna Lay Down My Heavy Load

Unison/Opt 2-part accompanied

Lynn Shaw Bailey and Becki Slagle Mayo

Range:

Language: English
Use: General
Time: Approx. 2:24
*Difficulty: Moderate
Performance Notes

While African-American spirituals and gospel songs are rich in cultural and historical meaning, they are perhaps treasured most for their unique ability to bring hope and joy to the deepest levels of the despairing human soul. Their origins are thought to be a fusion of eighteenth and nineteenth century American slave melodies, western harmonies and Christian faith, along with the syncopated rhythms and segmented melodies of African music.

Established in 1867, much credit for preserving and popularizing sacred African-American folk songs throughout the world is owed to the leaders of the historically black Fisk University. George L. White (1838-1895), an anti-slavery activist, served as Fisk University’s first treasurer and music director. Seeking a solution to the university’s growing financial difficulties, White gathered and skillfully trained a small student chorus to go on tour in order to earn money for the university. Between 1871 and 1880, the Fisk Jubilee Singers embarked on a series of fund-raiser concerts that introduced black spirituals to audiences in the United States, England and Europe. Their success helped keep the university open. Today the Fisk Jubilee Singers continue their traditions of singing African-American spirituals around the world.

John Wesley Work, Jr. (1873-1925), a Fisk University graduate and music professor, is often recognized as the first collector of African-American folk songs and spirituals. His work, along with his brother, Frederick J. Work (1871-1925), links us to many of the songs from this genre.

By and By is typical of a class of spirituals with an upbeat syncopated and segmented melody. Utilizing a pentatonic scale, the rhythm features a swing feel. The verses of this song were likely sung in a “call and response” style, another characteristic of spirituals.

When the Morning Comes was written by Charles Albert Tindley (1851-1933), an African-American Methodist minister and composer. Also known by the title We’ll Understand It Better By and By, this gospel jewel is one of his best-known songs. Sources also trace the history of the 1950s and 1960s Civil Rights Movement anthem We Shall Overcome, in part, to the lyrics of Tindley’s gospel song, I’ll Overcome Someday.

When singing By an’ By the unified execution of vowels will do much to produce a pure sound and improve intonation. Among these, diphthongs can be the most troubling. In the word “by,” the two vowel sounds found in the ‘long-I’ (IPA: aɪ) are “AH+ee.” Sustain the “AH” portion of the diphthong, then move quickly and away from the vanishing sound “ee.”

African-American composer and arranger, Harry Thacker Burleigh (1866-1949), is credited with introducing the concept of the spiritual as an art song, making them known to the finest musicians. His recommendations:

Success in singing Folk Songs is primarily dependent upon deep spiritual feeling. The voice is not so important as the spirit, and then rhythm. Their worth is weakened unless they are done impressively, for through all of these songs there breathes a hope, a faith in the ultimate justice and brotherhood of man. The cadences of sorrow invariably turn to joy, and the message is ever manifest that eventually deliverance from all that hinders and oppresses the soul will come, and man—every man—will be free.

About the Arrangers


Becki Slagle Mayo has been a church musician and music educator for more than 30 years. As a composer/arranger, she has published over 100 songs, choral anthems and piano arrangements. www.beckimayo.com.
By an’ By
(I’m Gonna Lay Down My Heavy Load)
for Unison, opt. Two-Part Treble Voices with Piano

Traditional (alt.)

LYNN SHAW BAILEY and BECKI SLAGLE MAYO

With rhythmic energy \( (\textit{q} = 110-116) \)

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Part 1

\[ \text{Oh by' an' by, by' an' by,} \]

Part 2

\[ \text{Oh by' an' by, by' an' by,} \]

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I’m gonna lay down my heavy load_ Oh by’ an’ by,

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BL848
by an' by, I'm gonna lay down my heavy load.

1. Oh, one fine morning, I'll...
When the Morning Comes, Charles Albert Tindley, 1905

By an' by when the morn-in' comes;
when the saints of


fly like angels in the air.
I'm gonna lay down my

no one there to turn me out.
I'm gonna lay down my

heavy load.
Oh, heavy load.
By an' by,

heavy load.
Oh, heavy load.
By an' by,


heav'n are gathered home, we will tell the story how we've overcome. And we'll understand it better by an' by. Yes, we'll understand it better by an' by.

by an’ by, by an’ by
by an’ by an’ by an’ by.

I’m gonna lay down my heavy load.
Oh
I’m gonna lay down my heavy load.
Oh

by an’ by, by an’ by,
by an’ by an’ by an’ by.

For Preview Only
I'm gonna lay down my heavy load. 

Heav - y load! 

I'm gonna lay down my heavy load.