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Foreword

It is difficult to overstate the impact that Michael Jackson and the songs in this collection have had upon popular culture. There are many explanations for this, some endearing and some hard-nosed, the main reasons being the strength of the songs and Jackson's brilliance as a vocal performer. I hope you enjoy this opportunity to get stuck into three of his most iconic songs, all of which require energetic and charismatic performances.

This collection runs in chronological order of release, *ABC* being the second Jackson 5 single, released in 1970. One could not wish for a song with more memorable hooks and fun, youthful lyrics – perfect material for the highly business-minded Motown Records founder, Berry Gordy, to market at the young singles-buying public. Musically, this means *ABC* is immensely catchy. Try to work on tight 'doo-dap' style articulation and on creating a rhythmic feel that is wickedly infectious but disciplined!

The first five Jackson 5 singles were written by The Corporation – a Motown in-house hit factory team of Freddie Perren, Alfonzo Mizell, Deke Richards and Berry Gordy. An ingenious mix of song-writing craft and canny business practice ensured that *I'll Be There* sold six million copies worldwide. The vocal arrangement is based strongly on the gospel-soul tradition, its history a blend of West African folk and white Methodist harmony and antiphony. Again it is the greatness of the song itself that endures. Enjoy the shapely legato phrases, gospel triads and uplifting lyrics. Build the soulful feel from the opening *p* to the bold *f* of bar 64 onwards. In bar 72 strong performers may feel moved to interject pastor-style with 'Just look over your shoulders, honey – ooh!'

Billie Jean is one of Jackson's own songs from his hit 1982 album *Thriller*. Its prowling feel betrays his love of dance grooves. The massive success of Jackson's solo career was down to a move to the Epic label, an excellent production team headed by Quincy Jones, the birth of MTV, and most importantly Jackson's huge talent, determination and a desire to assert himself as he came of age. *Billie Jean* is a landmark song – its success forced MTV to change their policy of not screening black artists. It also remains one of his most personal and defining musical achievements. Sing this song dramatically and with punchy pronunciation.

Finally, you may notice some extra percussion parts in *ABC* and *Billie Jean*. These are a vital part of their feel and groove and should be rehearsed simultaneously with the vocal parts so they are absorbed into the performance. If you find yourself a-clapping and a-clicking, you may well find yourself dancing too – enjoy!

Simon Lesley, May 2008

Editorial notes

Choral Basics has been devised to provide arrangements and original pieces specifically for beginner choirs.

Vocal ranges: the arrangements don't explore the extremes of the voice, but aim to stretch the vocal range from time to time in the context of a well-placed musical phrase. Small notes indicate optional doubling within a part.

Breathing: singers should aim to follow the punctuation of the text and breathe accordingly. However, commas above the staff suggest places to breathe where not provided for in the text.

Piano accompaniments: the simple yet imaginative piano parts have been written to support the vocal lines. Small notes in the piano part are intended to help support singers while learning the piece; however, once more confident you may choose to omit the notes, or just to play them very gently.

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ABC

Words and Music by Alphonso Mizell, Freddie Perren,
Deke Richards and Berry Gordy Jr
arr. Simon Lesley

Happy funky gospel ♩ = 84

TAMBOURINE

HAND CLAP

SOPRANO

PIANO

You

3 ALL: continue tambourine and hand claps

S.

went to a school to learn, _ girl Like _____

A.

What you nev-er ev-er knew be-fore, _

5

I be-fore E_ And why 2 plus 2 makes 4. Now _____

ex-cept af-ter C 2 plus 2 makes 4. _____

I'll be there

Words and Music by Berry Gordy, Hal Davis,
Willie Hutch and Bob West
arr. Simon Lesley

Moderately, but not too slow ♩ = 90

S. A. *mf*

SOPRANO/
ALTO

PIANO

SOLO (opt.)

17 *pp* *p*

woo_ woo_ 'n' I'll be there. And ooh

p 3

Just call my name I'll be there.

cresc. e più ritmico

21 *mp* *p*

I'll be there_ ooh

mf

I'll be there to com-fort you, Build my world_ of dreams a-round you, I'm so

separated

mp

meno Ped.

24 *mp* *mf*

ooh I'll be there_

glad that I found you. I'll be there with a love that's strong, I'll be your

Billie Jean

Words and Music by Michael Jackson
arr. Simon Lesley

Quietly cool, urgently prowling ♩ = 112

SOPRANO

ALTO

PIANO

mf

ch k - ch

mf

ch sh shh

Quietly cool, urgently prowling ♩ = 112

mp

pp

slightly detached

sim.

5

mp

S.

A.

ba ba ba ba ba ba ba

mp

9

A. *mp*

bap She was more like a beau - ty queen from a mo - vie scene.

mp

11

S. A. *mp*

S.

I said don't mind, but what do you mean, I am the one

mp

13 S. A.

— who will dance on the floor_ in the round?

15 S. S. A.

— (d)* She says I_ am the one_ who will dance

18

on the floor in the round? — (d)

21 ALL: finger clicks to bar 28

S. *mf*

She told me her name was Bil - lie Jean, And she caused a scene

A. *mf*

ba ba ba ba

*heavily annunciate the 'd' of 'round' on the fourth quaver of the bar every time (to coincide with the piano chord)