

DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE

Three-Part Mixed, with optional Baritone, accompanied

Traditional Spiritual

Arranged by
LON BEERY and PAMELA PEREC LEE

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Range:



Time: Approx. 2:40

*Difficulty: Moderate

Performance Notes

Down by the Riverside is one of the most beloved of all African-American spirituals. Spirituals are among the most important American folk songs. Written by slaves prior to the Civil War, these songs are often full of faith and hope in the midst of some of life's most difficult circumstances. Many spirituals have more than one meaning. Behind some of the religious texts are often coded messages meant to communicate with other slaves about escaping to freedom. Because of the recurring phrase, "I ain't gonna study war no more," this spiritual has become especially popular during times of war, especially among those politically opposed to the current war.

It is not absolutely clear what is meant by going "down by the riverside." Certainly a riverside might be a place where slaves might have gathered for a baptism following a conversion. However, it may be that the author was thinking more figuratively, possibly referring to death where the believer looks forward to "crossing the river" to go to Heaven. Or, it might be referring to a time in the future where many look forward to a time of universal peace, as when the Biblical writers wrote, "They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore." (Isaiah 2:4, Micah 4:3 NIV). Whatever the exact meaning of the song, it is hopeful, joyful, and energetic. That should come across to the audience especially through each choir member's joyous facial expression. As this arrangement is in a gospel style, you may want to sway back and forth using a simple step-touch with the feet and adding some hand claps on beats two and four, perhaps beginning at the key change at measure 40. Have fun!

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Contemporary gospel style (♩ = 92)

Piano introduction in contemporary gospel style. The music is in B-flat major, 4/4 time, with a tempo of 92 beats per minute. It features a strong bass line and a melodic line in the right hand, starting with a fortissimo (f) dynamic.

4 *mf*

Gon-na lay down my sword and shield,— Down by the
 join hands with ev - 'ry one, — *mf*

Down by the *mf*

Down by the

Vocal and piano accompaniment for the first verse. The vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, and Bass) enter with the lyrics "Gon-na lay down my sword and shield,— Down by the". The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support, with a dynamic of mezzo-forte (mf).

riv-er - side, Down by the riv-er - side, Down by the
 riv-er - side, Down by the riv-er - side, Down by the
 riv-er - side, Down by the riv-er - side, Down by the

riv-er - side, Gon-na lay down my sword and shield, Down by the
 Gon-na join hands with ev - 'ry one, Down by the
 riv-er - side, Down by the

16

riv-er - side, And stu- dy war no more, no more...
 riv-er - side, And stu- dy war no more, no more...
 riv-er - side, And stu- dy war no more, no more...

20

— Stu- dy war no more, stu dy war no more,—
 — Stu- dy war no more, stu dy war no more,—
 — I ain't gon-na stu- dy war no more,— I ain't gon-na stu dy war no more,—

Mel.

Stu- dy war no more.

Stu- dy war no more.

I ain't gon-na stu- dy war no more,

Stu- dy war no more. Stu- dy war no more,

Stu- dy war no more. Stu- dy war no more,

I ain't gon-na stu- dy war no more. I ain't gon-na stu- dy war no more,

32

stu - dy war no, war no more...

stu - dy war no, war no more...

I ain't gon-na stu - dy war no more...

36

1. 2.

Gon-na Gon-na

Gon-na

40

ring out a song of joy,— Down by the riv-er - side,—
f
Down by the riv-er - side,—
f
Down by the riv-er - side,—

The musical score for measures 40-43 features a vocal melody in the upper staff and piano accompaniment in the lower staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The vocal melody begins with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a half note C5. The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note bass line in the left hand and chords in the right hand. The dynamic marking *f* (forte) is present in measures 41 and 42.

44

Down by the riv-er - side,— Down by the riv-er - side,— Gon-na
Down by the riv-er - side,— Down by the riv-er - side,—
Down by the riv-er - side,— Down by the riv-er - side,—

The musical score for measures 44-47 continues the vocal melody and piano accompaniment. The vocal melody in measure 44 includes the words "Gon-na" at the end. The piano accompaniment maintains the same rhythmic pattern. The dynamic marking *f* is not explicitly shown in this section but is implied from the previous measures.

48

ring out a song of joy,— Down by the riv-er - side,— And
Down by the riv-er - side,— And
Down by the riv-er - side,— And
Down by the riv-er - side,— And

f

52

stu - dy war no more.
stu - dy war no more, no more.
stu - dy war no more, no more. I ain't gon-na

56

Stu- dy___ war no more,___ stu- dy___ war no more,___

Stu- dy___ war no more,___ stu- dy___ war no more,___

stu- dy___ war no more,___ I ain't gon-na stu- dy___ war no more,___ I ain't gon-na

The musical score for measures 56-59 is written for four staves. The first three staves are vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, and Bass) in G major. The lyrics are: "Stu- dy___ war no more,___ stu- dy___ war no more,___" for measures 56-57, and "stu- dy___ war no more,___ I ain't gon-na stu- dy___ war no more,___ I ain't gon-na" for measures 58-59. The fourth staff is a piano accompaniment. Measures 56-57 feature a piano introduction with a 7-measure rest in the right hand and a steady eighth-note bass line. Measures 58-59 continue the piano accompaniment with a 7-measure rest in the right hand.

60

stu- dy___ war no more.

stu- dy___ war no more.

stu- dy___ war no more. I ain't gon-na

The musical score for measures 60-63 is written for four staves. The first three staves are vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, and Bass) in G major. The lyrics are: "stu- dy___ war no more." for measures 60-61, and "stu- dy___ war no more. I ain't gon-na" for measures 62-63. The fourth staff is a piano accompaniment. Measures 60-61 feature a piano introduction with a 7-measure rest in the right hand and a steady eighth-note bass line. Measures 62-63 continue the piano accompaniment with a 7-measure rest in the right hand.

64

Stu- dy___ war no more,___ stu- dy___ war no more,___

Stu- dy___ war no more,___ stu- dy___ war no more,___

stu- dy___ war no more,___ I ain't gon-na stu- dy___ war no more,___ I ain't gon-na

68

stu- dy___ war no more, no more.____

stu- dy___ war no more, no more.____

stu- dy___ war no more, no more.____ I ain't gon-na

72 2.

more. Gon - na lay down my

more.

more.

2.

f

75

sword and shield, _ Down by the riv - er - side._

Down by the riv - er - side._

Down by the riv - er - side._

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