

LESSON PLAN: LEARNING THE SONG “LEAD WITH LOVE” BY MELANIE DEMORE

INTRODUCTION

Melanie DeMore, guest artist for the 2024 WITNESS concerts, wrote “Lead with Love” the day after the 2016 elections. The song reflects the dynamic musical sounds of the Gullah-Geechee culture with energetic rhythm and call and response phrases at the heart. In this lesson, students will respond to a recorded performance, learn to sing it, and **be ready to sing with the combined choirs and audience during the WITNESS concert**. Song notation, lyrics, and access to recordings are included with this lesson.

PREPARE

Select a performance video of “Lead with Love” from the three listed below to view in class. Make copies of the *First Impressions of a Song Worksheet* for student responses. Have the lyrics visible for students to read and follow.

FIRST LISTENING

Tell students that a song inspired this year’s WITNESS concert theme: “Lead with Love” by Melanie DeMore. Introduce the song by viewing one of the videos listed below.

- A camp singalong led by Melanie:
https://youtu.be/jJEFXpS_xPs?si=afD1O8cl9jKmvMzv
- A church choir:
<https://youtu.be/PynkBWUB0IQ?si=Mnzyq552s06bNB3G>
- Melanie singing solo:
<https://youtu.be/9w22S8foSbk?si=CurJcELq3Hwl2BlQ>

LISTEN FOR DETAILS

1. Introduce the *First Impressions of a Song Worksheet*. Then listen again and direct students to focus on the song’s details in the performance you select. Tell them to write down their thoughts and impressions about the song on the worksheet.
2. After listening, discuss what they heard and noticed about the song and the performance. Ask them to share their written responses as well as any new “Ahas!” You might ask:
 - **who** was singing?
 - **where** are they?
 - **what** did you notice about the energy and spirit of the music?
 - **what’s** the song’s message?
 - **anything** else?
3. Listen again and ask students to sing the responses along with the recording.

“A song can hold you up when there seems to be no ground beneath you.”

- Melanie DeMore

MINNESOTA STATE STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

ARTS: MUSIC

Respond

Analyze and construct interpretations of artistic work.

Connect

Integrate knowledge and personal experiences while responding to, creating, and presenting artistic work.

Perform

Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for performance.

REFLECT ON THE MEANING OF THE SONG

Read the lyrics of the three verses out loud with the students participating. Then prompt them to discuss the meaning of the words.

- What do you think “put one foot in front to the other” means? Or to “lead with love”?
- What is Melanie saying to us through the song?

SING OUT!

The vitality and power in Melanie’s song immediately draws listeners into participating. Students can look at the score to understand the structure of the piece, but will quickly learn to sing it orally, with its **call** and **response** form. The oral tradition (also known as “rote”) of learning songs develops the ability to listen, recall, and respond.

1. Display the lyrics from the printable lyrics page (page # 4 of this lesson), or make copies for students. If you wish to use the song’s notation, a copy is included with this lesson on page # 5. You can also find it at the Justice Choir website, <https://songs.justicechoir.org/LeadwithLove> and display electronically.

Note: for choirs who wish to learn the extended choral arrangement that includes multiple harmony parts, you can purchase scores at <https://www.jwpepper.com/Lead-with-Love/11317834.item>.

2. Listen and follow the song notation.
 - Display all the verses and the refrain/chorus. Ask what they notice about the structure of the song; how is it put together?
 - o The chorus is also called the **response** in African American music. It is sung by the whole group.
 - o The verses, or **call**, are initially sung by one solo voice, then answered by the group. This is the traditional ‘call and response’ form.
 - Listen again and sing the **responses** that answer the **call**.
3. Finally, encourage students to:
 - **Sing** all the song lyrics with the recording.
 - **Add** body percussion (clap, snap, and taps to the beat, off beat, or rhythm patterns), or even larger movements as you sing.
4. Display all the verses and stand up and sing. Ask a small group (or half of the class) to sing the call each time, and direct the rest of the class to sing the responses.
5. Tell students that they will sing this song at the WITNESS concert along with the choirs and hundreds of other students at Orchestra Hall!

“LEAD WITH LOVE” SONG LYRICS

CHORUS (always sing 2x)

*You gotta put one foot in front
of the other and lead with love,
Put one foot in front of the other,
and lead with love.*

VERSE 1

*Don’t give up hope,
You’re not alone.
Don’t you give up,
Keep movin’ on.*

CHORUS (2x)

VERSE 2

*Lift up your eyes,
Don’t you despair.
Look up ahead,
The path is there.*

CHORUS (2x)

VERSE 3

*I know you’re scared,
Well I’m scared too.
But here I am,
Right next to you.*

CHORUS (2x)

NOTES FROM THE PUBLISHED SCORE

Written in answer to a call for connection in troubled times, this song is about persistence, community, and moving ahead. “One foot in front of the other” is a metaphor for determination and forward motion. The composer speaks of “love warriors” like Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa, and Gandhi — all of whom started their movements out of love for their people, not out of hatred of someone else.”

(J.W. Pepper Publishers)

CREATE MOVEMENT

1. Divide students into groups and assign each of them one of the three verses of the song, along with the chorus.
2. Ask each group to create group motions, bodily actions, tableau and movements for both their assigned verse, *and* the chorus. Make sure they can see the posted lyrics.
3. Regroup and ask each group to perform their movement sequence for each other. Encourage the entire class to clap along the steady beat (beats 2 and 4) while singing along each time. This will allow each group to share their movement sequence with the full backing of their classmates voices around them.
4. Keep this song alive in your classrooms. It is a great song for getting up out of your seats and generating energy and unity.

Call and response in music is an interactive form where a single voice or instrument issues a musical call, and a group of voices or instruments answer with a response. Here are other African American call and response songs:

- “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”
- “Angel’s Watching Over Me”
- “Michael Row the Boat Ashore”
- “Who Built the Ark?”

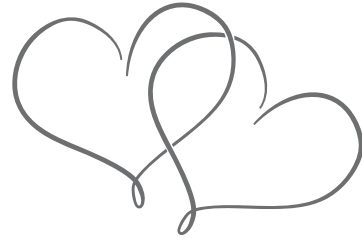
The copy of the song with this lesson comes from **The Justice Choir Songbook**, an outstanding resource for choirs, educators, and people who love the music of freedom and justice. Last updated on 02/15/23 here is the link to investigate and download other songs: <https://www.justicechoir.org/songbook/>



One of the choruses that will sing “Lead with Love” at the WITNESS Concert is the VocalEssence Singers Of This Age (SOTA). It is a dynamic group of 40 young people from Twin Cities high schools who sing, dance, write their own music, rap, and—most importantly—reflect the diversity of our community in its membership. Under the visionary leadership of G. Phillip Shoultz, III, the students sing a wide range of music—from classical to hip-hop and everything in between, perform in world-class venues, awaken their creativity by studying voice, dance, theatre, and spoken word, rehearse at Augsburg University to provide exposure to life in college, and belong to an accepting community of peers from all walks of life.

VocalEssence SOTA is open to all high school students upon successful completion of an interview process. There is no cost to participate. Upon making a yearlong commitment, singers receive free transportation to and from rehearsals and performances, performance uniforms, dinner and snacks, complimentary concert tickets, and annual opportunities to tour to other regions. The program focuses its attention on high school students in the Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, and Saint Paul Public School systems.

LYRICS TO “LEAD WITH LOVE”
BY MELANIE DEMORE



CHORUS (always sing 2x)

*You gotta put one foot in front of the other and lead with love,
Put one foot in front of the other, and lead with love.*

VERSE 1

*Don't give up hope,
You're not alone.
Don't you give up,
Keep movin' on.*

CHORUS (2x)

VERSE 2

*Lift up your eyes,
Don't you despair.
Look up ahead,
The path is there.*

CHORUS (2x)

VERSE 3

*I know you're scared,
Well I'm scared too.
But here I am,
Right next to you.*

CHORUS (2x)

22. One Foot/Lead with Love

Words & Music by Melanie DeMore
Oakland, CA | 2016

Walking (♩ = 168) (swung: ♩ = ♩³♩)

REFRAIN (always sing twice)

You got - ta put one foot in front of the oth - er and lead with love.
(last time) We got - ta put

Put one foot in front of the oth - er and lead with love.

VERSES 1, 4

Leader:

All:

1., 4. Don't give up hope, (Don't give up hope) You're not a - lone. (You're not a - lone)

Don't you give up, (Don't you give up) Keep mov - in' on. (Keep mov - in' on)

To Refrain:

VERSES 2, 3

Leader:

All:

2. Lift up__ your eyes, (Lift up__ your eyes) Don't you__ de - spair (Don't you__ de - spair)
3. I know you're scared, (I know you're scared) And I'm__ scared, too. (And I'm__ scared, too)

Look up__ a - head, (Look up__ a - head) The path is there. (The path__ is there)
But here__ I am, (But here I am) Right next__ to you. (Right next__ to you)

To Refrain:

Performance Suggestions:

- Clap and/or stomp.
- Watch Melanie's YouTube video for inspiration.
- Try opening the Refrain with Leader only, then repeat All

Melanie writes: "I was inspired by the great movements that were started out of the love for their people, not out of the hatred of others."

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF A SONG

“Lead with Love” by Melanie DeMore

Describe what you hear and notice about the song.

What do you think the song’s message is?

What questions do you have?

What’s going on?
Who is singing? What do I hear
and see in the recording?

Does this song have a message?
What is it?

A question I have is..
I wonder...

NAME: _____ DATE: _____