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MEMPHIS' BLUES

(1913)

Words by GEORGE A. NORTON

Music by W.C. HANDY (1912)

Arrangement by DAVE BRINER

Intro freely

Tenor Lead

1 2 3

What a sound, — ga - ther 'round — while I tell ya 'bout a brand new

Bari Bass

Verse rhythmically

4 5 6

blues. — Hon - ey, I've been down, down to Mem-phis town,

Oh, hon - ey, down

7 8 9

where the peo-ple smile on you all the while. — Hos - pi - tal - i - ty, —

10 they were good to me. 11 I could - n't spend a dime, 12 I had the great-est time.

I I had

13 I went out a - dan - cin' with a 14 Ten - nes - see dear.

A

15 fel - la there named Han - dy had a 16 band you should hear.

Wah,

17 wah! While the dan - cers swayed, 18 those mu - si - cians played

19 real 20 21
real har - mo - ny. I nev - er will for - get the tune that

real

22 23 those low down
Han - dy called the Mem - phis Blues. those low down

Chorus 1

24 Mem - phis Blues. 25
Mem - phis Blues. They have a trum - pet man who plays like

26 27
no - bo - dy can. Oh, lord - y, how the danc - ers all sway.

Memphis Blues

28 And then the slide trom - bone

29

30 an - swers when the oth - ers

31 play, when the trum - pet and the

32 clar - i - net play.

33 It moans jus' like a

34 sin - ner on re - viv - al

35 on re - viv - al

Chorus 2

day. Hear the clar - i - net wail

36 37 38

Oh, hear him wail up an' down the day.

He noo - dles o - ver the scale. —
 scale. — Syn - co - pat - in',

39 40 41

He noo - dles o - ver the scale. —
 scale. — Syn - co - pat - in',

He noo - dles o - ver the scale. —
 Oh, boy, what

mod - u - lat - in', hear them play that razz - a - ma - tazz. — My
 joy to

42 43 44

mod - u - lat - in', hear them play that razz - a - ma - tazz. — My
 joy to

heart feels gay — to hear them play — the Mem - phis Blues, It's got a rhy - thm
 It's got a

45 46 47

heart feels gay — to hear them play — the Mem - phis Blues, It's got a rhy - thm
 It's got a

A# = Bb

48 and a rhyme. — Let me hear old Han - dy one more time. —

49

50

51 Let — me hear the Mem - phis — Oh, what a sound! —

52

53

54 Ba - lues.

Performance Notes

William Christopher "W.C." Handy (1873-1958) was a bandleader, composer and music publisher in Memphis, Tennessee. He was one of the originators of the blues genre, which entered the music scene at the peak of the ragtime era. *Memphis Blues* was his first big hit, published in 1912 as an instrumental. The following year lyrics were added by George A. Norton. This piece became a jazz standard and was recorded in 1927 by Ted Lewis, in 1944 by Harry James. It was also sung in the 1958 film *St. Louis Blues* by Nat "King" Cole and Eartha Kitt. Other hit compositions by W.C. Handy were *Beale Street Blues*, *Careless Love* and the most famous (and most recorded) blues ever written, *St. Louis Blues*.

Dave Briner first wrote his arrangement of this tune in 1968 for the **Pacificaires**, and in the early-70s Earl Moon sang it with his medalist quartet, the **Far Westerners**. Earl added his own magic touches to it, which are incorporated herein. It has been sung by various quartets over the years, most recently by **A Cappella Gold**, 2001 Sweet Adelines International queens of harmony. Dave has many arrangements in the BHS catalog, including **Freddie Feelgood**, **Basin Street Blues** and **Sh-Boom**.

The blues genre is characterized by the 12-measure form of the chorus, and blues songs can be either happy or sad. This piece is happy blues, and after the freestyle intro, the tempo should be kept steady to the end, with a swingy, cheerful feeling. Devise your own personal plan to add variety to the dynamics.

As a final note: Questions about the contest suitability of this or any song/arrangement should be directed to the judging community and measured against current contest rules. Ask *before* you sing.