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Product: *Road to Freedom*
What: Festival service for upper or mixed voices
Price: £4.95 (RSCM affiliate/member: £3.71)
From: RSCM
Contact: www.rscm.com
 0845 021 7726, musicdirect@rscm.com

Road to Freedom is a service in the form of a sequence of gospel songs, spirituals and readings. The choral items include new arrangements of traditional songs such as *Amazing Grace* and spirituals



such as *Go Down Moses* and *Oh when the Saints*. The readings include a contemporary account of life on a 19th century tobacco plantation and an extract from Martin Luther King's 1963 'I have a dream' speech.

This work is suitable for either pupils or adults age 11+, and tackles issues that should be brought to the fore, especially considering that next year represents the two-hundredth anniversary of the first Act of

Parliament abolishing slavery. The sense of harmony which the various composers have created in this resource of songs and readings will hopefully help to instil similar harmony amongst school communities.

There are attractive syncopated rhythms and effective harmonies that can be adapted, and the fact that individual works can be taken out and used independently without loss of impact is very positive. The recurring 'Kum ba yah' theme is used as a reflection to great effect, when considering the overall impact of the collection as a whole. Important for many will be the fact that the main melodic themes are placed in accessible keys for both singers and instrumentalists.

There is certainly a noble aim behind this collection – beyond simply providing an 'uplifting and inspirational musical experience', the RSCM's Esther Jones says that the institution aims 'to challenge those taking part to think about the injustice of the slave trade and the struggle of the civil rights movement'. I think with the right performance, *Road to Freedom* could certainly do this.

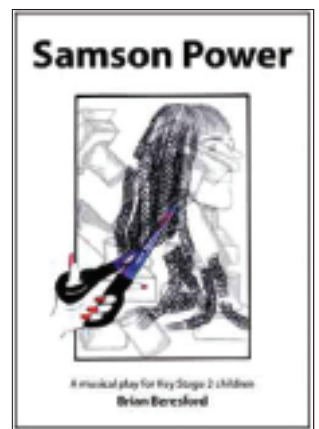
Keith Brown
 Head of Music, Yarm School, Stockton

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Product: *Samson Power*
What: Musical for Key Stage 2 by Brian Beresford
Price: £35 for pack
From: One More Time!
Contact: www.onemoretime.biz / info@onemoretime.biz

This is a top quality resource which has clearly been thought out in great detail by someone who is familiar with everything that can make life easier for the teacher and pupils undertaking to present a performance of a musical play.

First let me comment on the presentation of the package. I like the way it comprises a number of separate units within a quality hard wearing folder. There is a song book just containing lyrics, a play script, the musical score including orchestration and guitar chords – conveniently in ring binder format rather than a book, a CD with the full material and a separate CD with the backing tracks alone. Easily usable and produced with attention to detail.



The quality of the material is suitably impressive. The songs are catchy and most impressive of all are performed by children. No matter how good the material, the majority of children are put off by posh adult voices singing it. It is in my opinion the biggest failing in songbook CDs and a big selling point for this one. The songs provide a range of musical skills for the teacher to explore with the children. There are opportunities for two-part singing, syncopation and even whispering and spoken lyrics for children who may not have found their voice yet. There are some challenging intervals in one of the songs, but the children will enjoy these songs and therefore will easily further their skills. The CD tracks are played using real instruments rather than synthesizers and again that is great to see – or rather, to hear.

This has been written and produced with a real knowledge of music teaching. It is a resource that will inspire teachers and pupils alike.

Dave Thorpe

PS This is not a criticism of the production but something that sprung to my mind when listening to the I Cut His Hair song. There used to be an old pub bet that went along the lines of giving someone a Bible and betting them they couldn't find the reference where Delilah cuts off Samson's hair. If they can't do it then they buy the beer all night, but if they can they have drinks bought for them all month. If you don't know the answer to this then look for the reference yourself – BUT NEVER TAKE THE BET!!