

Song Title: **IF I CAN DREAM**

Rating: **YES: Caution**

IMPORTANT: If you are submitting an arrangement of this song that is not already in the SED, IT IS REQUIRED that you submit full research. Please see note below Reviewers' Note.

REVIEWERS' NOTE

Reevaluation: May 22, 2023: change from YES to YES: Caution

This song is admissible because it does not have racist content and in fact its message is the opposite. However, ensembles should proceed with caution and deliberation in the selection and performance of this song. The lyrics are based upon excerpts from Martin Luther King Jr.'s speeches—inspiring words springing from African Americans' struggle with racism and oppression. When an ensemble performs a song with such a strong and specific social justice message, yet has little-to-no representation of the affected marginalized group, an audience member might wonder if the ensemble truly understands the message of the song and if it is making consistent and impactful DEI efforts in educating its members and in community outreach.

This is *not* to say that only Black people may authentically perform this song. After all, there were many non-Black allies active in the civil rights movement (continuing through today's social justice work) and the song was written and popularized by White men (W. Earl Brown and Elvis Presley). But consider the optics of an all/mostly-White-appearing ensemble performing a song whose message is based upon the oppression of a marginalized group when there is no *visible* evidence of the ensemble having made efforts of inclusion (regardless of whether or not that is actually the case--this is all an audience has to go by). Especially in this circumstance, context through **thoughtful MC work** is highly recommended. If this is not possible (e.g. on the regional or international semi-finals contest stage) ensembles should give careful consideration as to whether or not the song is appropriate for them in that setting and if they can authentically convey its message.

Ensembles performing this song must **ensure that all members understand and respect the origin of the song** and the feeling being conveyed by its lyrics and message, rooted in African Americans' civil rights struggles which continue today. Careful consideration should be given to how the song may be presented with context and a **respectful musical style**, consulting outside DEI resources as needed (e.g., community resources, Regional DEI group, SA's DEIC). [Elvis Presley](#) and [Della Reese](#) each provide examples of performances with depth and emotion.

This due-diligence is critical in order for the ensemble's performance to be more likely perceived—especially by those personally connected to the struggle from which the song originated—as authentic, true to the song's message, and as having the appropriate *gravitas* of a dream yet to be realized, rather than simply a grooving, breezy, feel-good “Why don't we all just get along?” song. If a performance misses this mark, it can be perceived by some as the ensemble making light of the meaning of the lyrics and not truly understanding its message.

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This research document has been inadvertently deleted.

The SAT has suffered the loss of around 400 research documents, including this one. We anticipate it may take up to two years to recreate all the missing research documents.

We welcome members to help out by voluntarily submitting the research for this song, **but IMPORTANT: If you are submitting an arrangement of this song that is not already in the SED, IT IS REQUIRED that you submit full research.**

- If you are submitting an arrangement that is not already in the SED of this **SINGLE SONG**, please submit full research by selecting “pertains to” **option (A) Song is not in SED, and I have an arrangement**
- If you are submitting a **MEDLEY that has this song as a component**, please submit the medley arrangement as you usually would, selecting “pertains to” option (D). But you must also submit full research for this song by selecting “pertains to” **option (B) Song is not in SED, and I don't have an arrangement.**

Please see full instructions for submitting through the SAT here: [Questions in the SAT Form](#).

And please note that it is *highly unlikely* that the rating for this song will change. ***We apologize for the inconvenience caused by this data loss.***