I’LL TELL MY MA
SATB divisi with Piano and Body Percussion

Arranged by
Erik Jones
About the Work

I've always loved the combination of body percussion and choral singing. Whether for dramatic effect using the fingers and hands to simulate rain, or the wonderful hoedown in Mack Wilberg's Cindy, body percussion can add a new dimension to vocal art.

I came up with the idea for I'll Tell My Ma watching my young son play on the playground. There was a pair of girls playing patty-cake and singing a nonsense rhyme, the cadence of which reminded me of the old Irish children's song, I'll Tell Me Ma (see full text on page 23). I wondered what it would be like to arrange that song while the singers played patty-cake, and the idea quickly morphed into a tour-de-force of different combinations of movement and singing.

This arrangement is flexible, and I encourage you to experiment with what works best in your choir. There are six distinct vocal lines, and I recommend even, three-part splits among the men and the women. Ideally, all members of the choir will both sing and perform the body percussion. The top (highest) men and women should perform Body Percussion Group 1, the middle men and women the Body Percussion Group 2, and the bottom (lowest) men and women Body Percussion Group 3. If you perform it that way, I recommend arranging the choir with the Group 1 on the left, Group 2 in the middle, and Group 3 on the right.

You could divide things in other ways, such as assigning the body percussion to a smaller group of singers, or pulling in non-singers to perform the body percussion. But the arrangement works to great effect if everyone can sing, clap, and stomp, especially when you get to the percussion-only section in the middle of the work.

I'll Tell My Ma works very well as a concert closer. In my experience, it's a guaranteed standing ovation. I consider the piano part optional, as I have performed it many times a cappella.

-Erik Jones

Body Percussion Key

The singers should be split into three body percussion groups.
See below for the body percussion key.
Additionally, view the performance of I'll Tell My Ma at waltonmusic.com
to see how the body percussion should be performed.

The bottom space of the percussion staff is foot stomping,
always with the right foot.

The second space of the percussion staff is thigh slapping.
L indicates to slap with the left hand, R with the right hand.
No indication means to slap with both hands.

The third space of the percussion staff is hand clapping.

The fourth space of the percussion staff is hand clapping with a partner.
Whenever the top notes appear (which happens rarely),
everyone in that group should find a partner and turn to face them.
L means to hit left hands together, R means to hit right hands together.
No indication means to hit both of your partner's hands at once.

This is a basic "patty-cake" pattern that many will remember from childhood.

Visit waltonmusic.com/WW1550 for printable single-page body percussion charts to use in rehearsal.

Duration: Approx. 3:30
I'll Tell My Ma

SATB divisi with Body Percussion and Optional Piano

Irish Children's Song

Arranged by
ERIK JONES (b.1971)

Body Percussion
(Group 1)

Solo

Body Percussion
(Group 2)

Body Percussion
(Group 3)

Soprano*

I'll tell my ma when I get home, the boys won't leave the girls alone. They

Alto*

Piano (optional)

Tutti

pull my hair and they steal my comb, but that's all right 'til I get home. I'll

* Split sopranos and altos into 3 equal groups throughout.
tell my ma when I get home, the boys won't leave the girls alone. They
tell my ma when I get home, the boys won't leave the girls alone. They

pull my hair and they steal my comb, but that's alright 'till I get home.
pull my hair and they steal my comb, but that's alright 'till I get home.
She is handsome, she is pretty, she is the belle of Belfast city.

She is courtin' one, two, three, please won't you tell me who is she?
Albert Mooney says he loves her, all the boys are fight-in' for her.

Knock at the door and ring the bell, hey, my true love are you well?

* Split tenors and basses into 3 equal groups throughout.
Albert Mooney says he loves her, all the boys are fightin' for her.

Knock at the door, ring the bell, hey, my true love are you well? I'll
tell my ma when I get home, the boys won't leave the girls alone. They
tell my ma when I get home, the boys won't leave the girls alone. They

pull my hair and they steal my comb, but that's alright till I get home.
pull my hair and they steal my comb, but that's alright till I get home.
She is handsome, she is pretty, she is the belle of Belfast city.

She is courtin' one, two, three, please won't you tell me who is she? Then

(Sop. 2 only)
Out she comes as white as snow, rings on her fingers and bells on her toes. Our

Jenny Murry says she'll die if she don't get the fellow with the rovin' eye. Then
Ah  Ah  Ah  Ah  Ah
out she comes as white as snow, rings on her fingers and bells on her toes. Our

Ah  Ah  Ah  Ah  Ah

Jenny Murray says she'll die if she don't get the fellow with the rovin' eye.
Oh I'll tell my ma when I get home, the boys won't leave the girls alone. They pull my hair and they steal my comb, but
that's alright 'till I get home. She is handsome, she is pretty.

that's alright 'till I get home. She is handsome, she is pretty.

Ah

Oh she is handsome, she is pretty.

Ah

Oh she is handsome, she is pretty.

she is the belle of Belfast city. She is courtin' two, three,

she is the belle of Belfast city. She is courtin' two, three,

she is the belle of Belfast city. She is courtin' two, three,

she is the belle of Belfast city. She is courtin' two, three,
Oh let the wind and the rain and the hail go high with the

Oh let the wind and the rain and the hail go high with the

Oh let the wind and the rain and the hail go high with the

Oh let the wind and the rain and the hail go high with the

snow come a-tum-bl-in' down from the sky. Oh she's as sweet as my ma's apple pie and she'll

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snow come a-tum-bl-in' down from the sky. Oh she's as sweet as my ma's apple pie and she'll
soon get a new fellow by and by. The wind and the rain and the hail go high with the

snow come a-tum-bl-in' down from the sky. Oh she's as sweet as my ma's apple pie and she'll
Ah Ah Solo
soon get a new fellow by and by. When she gets a lad of her own she

soon get a new fellow by and by.

soon get a new fellow by and by.

soon get a new fellow by and by. Hm

won't tell her ma when she gets home. Let them all come as they will, it's

Hm Hum
Albert Mooney she loves still. I'll tell my ma when I get home, the

boys won't leave the girls alone. They pull my hair and they steal my comb, but
that's all right.

She is handsome, she is pretty, she is the belle of Belfast city.
She is courtin' one, two, three, please won't you tell me who is she?

Ah

She is handsome, she is pretty, she is the belle of Belfast ci-ty.
She is court-in' one, two, three, please won't you tell me

She is court-in' one, two, three, please won't you tell me

She is court-in' one, two, three, please won't you tell me

She is court-in' one, two, three, please won't you tell me

who is she?
I'll Tell My Ma
Irish Children's Song

I'll tell my ma when I get home,
the boys won't leave the girls alone.
They pull my hair, and they steal my comb,
but that's alright, 'till I get home.

She is handsome, she is pretty,
she is the belle of Belfast city.
She is courtin' one, two, three,
please won't you tell me who is she?

Albert Mooney says he loves her,
All the boys are fightin' for her.
Knock at the door and ring the bell,
hey, my true love are you well?

Then out she comes white as snow,
rings on her fingers and bells on her toes.
Our Jenny Murry says she'll die
if she don't get the fellow with the rovin' eye.

Oh, let the wind and the rain and the hail go high
with the snow come a-tumblin' down from the sky.
Oh she's as sweet as my ma's apple pie
and she'll soon get a new fellow by and by.

When she gets a lad of her own
she won't tell her ma when she gets home.
Let them all come as they will,
it's Albert Mooney she loves still.

About the Arranger

Erik Jones (b. 1971) is the Director of Choral Activities at Shepherd University in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, where he directs the Chamber Singers, the Masterworks Chorale, the Women’s Camerata, and the Vocal Jazz Ensemble. He is also the founder and artistic director of the Master Singers of Virginia, which won the 2012 Choral Excellence Award for Most Creative Programming. He received his Bachelor of Music degree summa cum laude in vocal music education at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Erik went on to receive his Master of Music degree in choral conducting at the University of Cincinnati, and his Doctoral degree in choral conducting at the University of Maryland at College Park.

While his conducting takes him all over the Washington, DC region performing music from medieval times onward, he has a particular love for a cappella choral music of the 20th and 21st centuries. The Master Singers have been invited to perform at numerous festivals and conferences, including a 2005 summer conference of the American Choral Directors Association. Erik is also an avid choral composer, with over twenty works to his credit, most of which have been premiered by the Master Singers. Erik is in high demand at festivals and competitions around the Washington, D.C. region.


For more information on Erik, visit choralmusic.org.