Steven Snowden

Take This Hammer

Tuba-Euphonium Quartet
While contemplating the prospect of writing for tuba-euphonium quartet, I knew that I wanted to focus on two concepts. First, I wanted to explore the vast, but frequently overlooked, technical and musical capabilities of these instruments. Secondly, I wanted to address the working-class roles that these instruments often occupy and how this character trait could be brought to life in such an ensemble.

The “work song” has been a vital part of African culture for centuries. In many societies, these songs encouraged efficiency and quality of work, however, in the harsh conditions of American plantations these songs took on a different kind of importance. The steady unison rhythms kept any one person from being singled out and severely punished for working slower than the rest. This practice continued on into the middle of the 20th Century in the slave labor conditions of southern U.S. prisons. While many of these songs were used all throughout the workday, the traditional work song *Take This Hammer* was most often reserved for driving iron spikes during railroad construction.

The lyrics below come from a version of the song by Huddie “Leadbelly” Ledbetter, a prisoner at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in the 1930’s.

*Take this hammer and carry it to the captain*
*Take him I’m gone.*
*Tell him I was flying.*
*If he asks you “was I running”*
*If he asks you “was I laughing”*
*If he asks you “was I running”*
*If he asks you “was I laughing”*
*Tell him I was flying.*
*Tell him I was crying.*

**Approximate Duration:** 6:30

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Take This Hammer
for Tuba-Euphonium Quartet

Steady and Mechanical $\frac{\nu}{4} \approx 90$

Euphonium 1

Euphonium 2

Tuba 1

Tuba 2

Euph. 1

Euph. 2

Tuba 1

Tuba 2

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Euph. 1

Euph. 2

Tuba 1

Tuba 2

aggressive

ff

ff

sempre staccato

ff
Take This Hammer
Take This Hammer

Euph. 1

Tuba 1

Tuba 2

articulate as indicated

Euph. 2

articulate as indicated

f

40

8
Take This Hammer

Euph. 1

Euph. 2

Tuba 1

Tuba 2

52

54

half valve

slap horn's body
Take This Hammer

**Euph. 1**

- Start with a steady groove
- Slap horn's body, pop m.p., with palm
- Marked mp

**Euph. 2**

- Slap horn's body, pop m.p., with palm
- Marked mp

**Tuba 1**

- Marked p
- Pop m.p., with palm

**Tuba 2**

- Marked mp

**Tuba 1**

- **Tuba 2**

- Slap horn's body, pop m.p., with palm
- Marked mp

- Natural

- **Tuba 1**

- pp

- **Tuba 2**

- Marked p

- **Tuba 2**

- Slap horn's body, pop m.p., with palm
- Marked mp

- **Tuba 2**

- Marked f

**Tuba 2**

- Slap horn's body, pop m.p., with palm
- Marked mp

- **Tuba 2**

- Marked f
Take This Hammer

Euph. 1

Euph. 2

Tuba 1

Tuba 2

4

72

75

growl

natural

pitch bend

growl
with anticipation

Euph. 1

Euph. 2

Tuba 1

Tuba 2

Take This Hammer
Take This Hammer

Euph. 1

Euph. 2

Tuba 1

Tuba 2

violent
menacing and grotesque
Take This Hammer

Euph. 1

Euph. 2

Tuba 1

Tuba 2

sinister
Take This Hammer