In 1787, Botany Bay, an inlet on the coast of New South Wales (now surrounded by the southern suburbs of Sydney, Australia), became the destination for transport of prisoners from Britain to Australian penal colonies. The British initially used North America as a penal colony and it is estimated that some 50,000 British convicts were sent to colonial America. After the American Revolution however, that option was no longer available and Britain began using parts of Australia as penal settlements. The "First Fleet" of eleven ships sailed with 504 male and 192 female convicts. Civil officers, marines, wives and children (including some wives and children of prisoners) made up the remainder of the 1044 passengers. Over 80 years, more than 165,000 convicts were transported to Australia.

The song "Botany Bay" is from a musical burlesque titled "Little Jack Sheppard". The show was a comedy about an infamous London robber, burglar and thief. It was staged in London in 1885 and in Melbourne in 1886, long after transportation of prisoners ended. The song became popular and is heard often today as a folk song. It is particularly well known in Australia.

The lyrics describe the period from 1788 through 1840 when even a small crime in England could get you a sentence of seven years and shipped off to Australia. Convicts were deported to Australian penal colonies by the British government to serve their sentences as an alternative to incarceration in severely over-crowded British prisons. For convicts and often the free settlers, that life was cruel, desperate and hard in a strange, inhospitable land. In spite of this, the song shows a great spirit of optimism, which even today typifies the character of Australians. This spirit is emphasized by the chorus:

Singing Too-ral li-oo-ral li-addity, Oh we're bound for Botany Bay

In this arrangement, the song "Botany Bay" is presented initially as a "fo'c's'l" shanty, a song sung by sailors when their work was done and they clustered on the forecastle. This is interrupted by a "short-drag" shanty as the ship's crew trims a sail. A playful version of this work shanty follows but quickly gives way to a version of Botany Bay as passengers dream of a life they would like to live. We return to the main theme to bring the selection to a close, but this time with the work shanty as a counter melody.
Botany Bay
For Concert Band

Arrangement by
Patrick Dolan

Score

With Spirit
One only

For Concert Band

Botany Bay

Arrangement by
Patrick Dolan

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Fl.
Ob.
Bsn.
B♭ Cl. 1
B♭ Cl. 2
B. Cl.
A. Sx. 1
A. Sx. 2
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
B♭ Tpt. 1
B♭ Tpt. 2
Hn.
Tbn.
Bar.
Bar.
Tuba
Bass
Timp.
Drums
T. Dr.
Tamb.
Botany Bay

Score

10

Fl.
Ob.
Bsn.
B♭ Cl. 1
B♭ Cl. 2
B♭ Cl.
A. Sx. 1
A. Sx. 2
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
B♭ Tpt. 1
B♭ Tpt. 2
Hn.
Tbn.
Bar.
Tuba
Bass
Timp.
Drums
T. Dr.
Tamb.