

Down to the River to Pray

*A Song of Celebration for SATB Chorus and Piano,
or Brass Quintet and Percussion*

Traditional American Gospel Song

G. Walker, alt.

Gwyneth Walker

At a jubilant yet stately walking tempo ♩ = 60

swing eighths (♩ = $\frac{3}{4}$ ♩)

with anticipation and growing excitement

Piano

with pedal

4 All singers **A**
mf stately, yet with joy

Unis. Chos.

As I went down to the riv - er to pray,

7

Unis. Chos.

stud - y - ing a - bout the good old way. And who shall wear the

Note setting and format by Gwyneth Walker Music Productions

10

Unis.
Cho.

star - ry crown? _____ Good Lord, show me the

13

Unis.
Cho.

way. _____

16

B (*mf*) gently, but enthusiastically

S O my sis - ters, let's go down, — let's go down,

(mf) gently, but enthusiastically

A O my sis - ters, let's go down, — let's go down,

B

20

S come on down. O my sis - ters, let's go down, —

A come on down. O my sis - ters, let's go down, —



23

S *p* go - in' down to the riv - er, go - in' down to the riv - er to

A *p* down to the riv - er, — go - in' down to the riv - er to



26 *mf*

S pray (*mf*) as before down... down to the riv - er to

A

T As I went down to the riv - er to pray,

B



29

S
A

stud - y, in the good old way.

T
B

stud - y - ing a - bout the good old way. And who shall wear the



32

S
A

star - ry crown? Good Lord, show me,

T
B

star - ry crown? Good Lord, show me,



35

S
A

show me, show me the way.

T
B

show me, show me the way.



D*(mf)* with strength

39

T B

O my broth - ers, let's go down, let's go down,

D

cue-sized right-hand notes for rehearsal only

(play left-hand notes)

p

43

T B

come on down. O my broth - ers, let's go down,

mf

cue-sized right-hand notes for rehearsal only

mf

(play left-hand notes)

46

T B

down to the river, down to the riv - er, down to the riv - er to

p

49 (mf) **E**

S A
As I went down to the riv - er to pray,

T B
pray. down... down to the riv - er to

52

S A
stud - y - ing a - bout the good old way. And who shall wear the

T B
stud - y in the good old way.

55

S A
star - ry crown? Good Lord, show me,

T B
star - ry crown? Good Lord, show me,

58

S
A

show me, show me the way.

T
B

show me, show me the way.

61

F Celebratory interlude

64

68

71 Optional Claps (or taps) by the Chorus as a background during this interlude

Chorus part 1 (measures 71-73). The vocal line consists of a single note (G4) with a cross symbol above it, indicating a clasp or tap. The piano accompaniment features a melody of eighth notes in the right hand and a bass line of quarter notes in the left hand.

Chorus part 2 (measures 74-76). The vocal line continues with a single note (G4) and a cross symbol. The piano accompaniment features a melody of eighth notes in the right hand and a bass line of quarter notes in the left hand.

Solo part (measures 78-82). The vocal line (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) features a melody of eighth notes. The piano accompaniment features a melody of eighth notes in the right hand and a bass line of quarter notes in the left hand. The lyrics are: "O lift your head my wea - ry friend, and".

Piano part (measures 83-85). The piano accompaniment features a melody of eighth notes in the right hand and a bass line of quarter notes in the left hand. The lyrics are: "O lift your head my wea - ry friend, and".

81

S taste the plea-sure that heav-en will send. Let noth-ing cause you

A taste the plea-sure that heav-en will send. Let noth-ing cause you

T taste the plea-sure that heav-en will send.

B taste the plea-sure that heav-en will send.

(reh. only)

dramatic pause of anticipation – Conductor may turn to the audience to heighten the curiosity of what comes next

84 *rit.*

S to de-lay... but *pp*

A to de-lay... but... *pp*

T to de-lay... but... *pp* *mp*

B de-lay... but... *pp* *p* *mp*

has-ten on the good old, has-ten on the good old,

rit. (reh. only)

p *(p)* *mp*

Start slowly and accel. (swing eighths)

(accel.) **With energy** $\text{♩} = 66$ H

87 *mf* *div.* *f*

S has - ten on the good old way. down...

A has - ten on the good old way. down...

T has - ten on the good old way. As I went down to the riv - er to

B has - ten on the good old way. As I went down to the riv - er to

(accel.) **With energy** $\text{♩} = 66$ H

(reh. only) *mf* *f* *f* *gliss.*

90 *unis.*

S down to the riv - er to stud - y, in the good old way.

A down to the riv - er to stud - y, in the good old way. And who shall wear the

T pray, stud - y - ing a - bout the good old way. And who shall wear the

B pray, stud - y - ing a - bout the good old way. And who shall wear the

unis.

94

S star ry crown? Good Lord, show me, show me, show me,

A star - ry crown, star - ry crown? Good Lord, show me, show me, show me,

T star - ry crown? _____ Good Lord, show me, show me, show me,

B star - ry crown? _____ Good Lord, show me, show me, show me,

p

p

p

p

p

with pedal

98 *cresc. poco a poco*

S show me, show me show me, show me, show me, show me, show me, show me the *div.*

A *cresc. poco a poco* show me, show me, show me, show me, show me, show me, show me, show me the

T *cresc. poco a poco* show me, show me, show me, show me, show me, show me, show me, show me the

B *cresc. poco a poco* show me, show me, show me, show me, show me, show me, show me, show me the

cresc. poco a poco

102 *f* *rit.* *ff*

S way, the way, the way!

A way, the way, the way!

T way, the way, the way!

B way, the way, the way!

f *div.* *ff*

f *cresc.* *ff*

Leo.

July 16, 2015
New Canaan, Connecticut
3:30

Program Notes

Down to the River to Pray originates as an American gospel song with a simple message of faith and baptism, going “down to the river.” However, it is thought that the song was composed by a slave, with reference to the river and the “starry crown” (North Star) as a route and guide to freedom.

Usually the song is performed a cappella, and slowly, prayerfully. However, the walking aspect of the lyrics might suggest a different approach – one of swing rhythm in duple meter. Here the focus is on the journey, the joy of the pilgrimage, and the hope for freedom.

The accompaniment (either piano, or brass and percussion) plays a featured role, especially as rhythmic force. The song now becomes one of triumphant progression, hastening on the “good old way!”

Available editions:

- Octavo: ECS Catalog No. 8476
- Full Score: ECS Catalog No. 8476A
- Parts: ECS Catalog No. 8476B

\$2.25



6 00313 48476 6