

## Program Notes

This song is an arrangement of a traditional African American spiritual. There are two central images: *breaking bread together* in communion (with both liturgical and community references) and *falling on one's knees* in prayer (again, with both liturgical and community references). The first image speaks the message of healing, and the second reflects humility.

Verses one and two are familiar: *Let us break bread together... Let us love one another*. A new verse is added: *Let us rise up together all as one*. These words were added in a time of great divisions in our country, when there is a need for strength through unity.

The piano accompaniment contributes significantly to the musical expression, from the opening “falling tears” motive, to the repeated chords (as if to say, *Lord have mercy*), to the strong ascending scales beneath *Let us rise up together*.

The climax comes with the final repetitions of the refrain *O, Lord, have mercy*, marked “with intensity.” The vocal line rises, while the piano provides added-tone “chords of strength.” And then the music fades into a quiet ending...*and bring us peace*.

This work is dedicated to Heather Heyer of Charlottesville, Virginia, who gave her life for our mission of tolerance—of *breaking bread together*.

### Available editions

SATB Chorus and Piano, No. 8646

SSAA Chorus and Piano, No. 8647

T FBB Chorus and Piano, No. 8648

Solo Voice (High) and Piano, No. 8649

Solo Voice (Low) and Piano, No. 8650

*Dedicated to Heather Heyer—Charlottesville, Virginia*

# Let Us Break Bread Together

*for SATB Chorus and Piano*

African American spiritual  
Additional words by G. Walker

African American spiritual  
Gwyneth Walker

**Moderate tempo** ♩ = 108  
*peacefully, as gently falling rain*

Piano

The piano introduction consists of two staves in 4/4 time. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth notes and quarter notes, while the left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes. The piece begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes a *ped.* (pedal) marking.

5

S  
A

T  
B

*unis. p peacefully*

Let us

*unis. p peacefully*

The vocal staves for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B) are shown. The Soprano and Alto parts have a melodic line with a final note on 'us'. The Tenor and Bass parts have a lower melodic line. The instruction *unis. p peacefully* is written above the Soprano staff.

as if expressing the words:

*"Lord, have mer - cy on us. Lord, have mer - cy on us."*

Let us

The piano accompaniment for the interlude consists of two staves in 4/4 time. The right hand plays chords and the left hand plays a steady accompaniment. The instruction *with pedal* is written below the first staff.

9 **A**

S  
A

T  
B

break bread to - geth - er on our knees. Let us

break bread to - geth - er on our knees. Let us

The vocal staves for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B) are shown. The lyrics are: "break bread to - geth - er on our knees. Let us". A first ending bracket labeled **A** is placed above the Soprano staff.

**A**

The piano accompaniment for the first ending consists of two staves in 4/4 time. The right hand plays chords and the left hand plays a steady accompaniment. A first ending bracket labeled **A** is placed above the first staff.

13

S  
A

break bread to - geth - er on our knees. When I

T  
B

break bread to - geth - er on our knees. When I

17 **B**

S  
A

fall on my knees, with my face to the ris - ing sun, O

T  
B

fall on my knees, with my face to the ris - ing sun, O

**B**

21

S  
A

Lord, have mer - cy on me.

T  
B

Lord, have mer - cy on me.

*“Lord, have mer - cy on us.*

25

(unis.) *mf*

C

T  
B

Let us love one an - oth - er on our

*Lord, have mer - cy on us."*

*mf* flowing

*ped.* with pedal

29

*mf*

S  
A

Let us love one an - oth - er on our

T  
B

knees.

33

D

S

knees. Ah,

A

knees. Ah,

T  
B

(*mf*)

When I fall on my knees, with my

D

37

*mf*

*unis.*

S Ah, \_\_\_\_\_ O Lord, have mer - cy on \_\_\_\_\_

A Ah, \_\_\_\_\_ O Lord, have mer - cy on \_\_\_\_\_

T B face to the ris - ing sun, O Lord, have mer - cy on \_\_\_\_\_

41

S me. \_\_\_\_\_

A me. \_\_\_\_\_

T B me. \_\_\_\_\_

"Lord, have mer - cy, Lord, have mer - cy, Lord, have mer - cy, Lord, have mer - cy"

*cresc. poco a poco*

*Ped.* \_\_\_\_\_ *Ped.* \_\_\_\_\_

45 *mf*

S Lord have mer - cy, Lord have mer - cy,

A Lord have mer - cy, Lord have mer - cy,

T *(mf)* Lord have mer - cy, Lord have mer - cy,

B *(mf)* Lord have mer - cy, Lord have mer - cy,

*mf*

E

48 *f with strength and conviction*

S mer - cy. Let us rise up to - geth - er all as

A *unis.* mer - cy. Let us rise up to - geth - er all as

T *unis.* mer - cy. Let us rise up to - geth - er all as

B *unis.* mer - cy. Let us rise up to - geth - er all as

*f*

E

51

S one. \_\_\_\_\_ Let us rise up to - geth - er all as

A one. \_\_\_\_\_ Let us rise up to - geth - er all as

T one. \_\_\_\_\_ Let us rise up to - geth - er all as

B one. \_\_\_\_\_ Let us rise up to - geth - er all as

55

S one. \_\_\_\_\_ Ah, \_\_\_\_\_

A one. \_\_\_\_\_ Ah, \_\_\_\_\_

T one. \_\_\_\_\_ When I rise from my knees, with my

B one. \_\_\_\_\_ When I rise from my knees, with my

**F** (*trembling background chords*)

59

S *f*  
Ah,

A *f*  
Ah,

T *f with intensity*  
face to the ris - ing sun, O Lord, have mer - cy.

B *f with intensity*  
face to the ris - ing sun, O Lord, have mer - cy.

*f with intensity*

63

S *f with intensity*  
O Lord, have mer - cy.

A *f with intensity*  
O Lord, have mer - cy.

T  
O Lord, have mer - cy.

B

*f with intensity*

*rit.*

**G** More slowly, grandly

67

S  
A  
T  
B

O Lord, have

*rit.*

**G** More slowly, grandly

71

S  
A  
T  
B

mer - cy, have mer - cy, have mer - cy, have mer - cy,  
mer - cy, have mer - cy, have mer - cy, have mer - cy,  
Mmm  
Mmm

(*rit.*)

(*rit.*)

74

S  
A  
T  
B

*And.*

77

S  
A  
T  
B

*(p)* and bring us peace. *rit.* *pp* peace.

*(p)* and bring us peace. *pp* peace.

*rit.*  
*peacefully*  
*pp*

*And.*