

Gwyneth Walker

Down to the River to Pray

a song of celebration for SATB Chorus,
Brass Quintet and Percussion (or piano)

premiered by the Warwick Valley Chorale
Stanley Curtis, Music Director
December 4, 2015
Middletown, NY

commissioned by the Warwick Valley Chorale (Warwick, NY) in celebration of their 75th season: 1940-2015; Stanley Curtis, Director

Down to the River to Pray

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Traditional American Gospel Song
G. Walker, alt.

Gwyneth Walker

At a jubilant yet stately walking tempo $\text{♩} = 60$

swing eighths ($\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{♩}$)

Trumpets (in C)* 1 2
Horn in F
Trombone
Tuba
Percussion (1 player)
(Triangle, Tambourine, Suspended Cymbal, 4 drums of descending pitch [2 Bongos, 2 Tom-Toms])

High Bongo

p *mp* *mf*

p *mp* *mf*

p *mp* *mf*

p *mp* *mf*

Unis. Cho.
Tpts. 1 2
Hn.
Tbn.
Tuba
Perc.
Triangle
High Bongo

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

As I went down to the riv - er to pray, stud - y - ing a - bout the

A

3

*B♭ Trumpet parts are also available

8

Unis. Cho. good old way. And who shall wear the star - ry crown? — Good Lord, show me the

Tpts. 1 2 *a2*

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

Perc. (High Bongo) (Tri.)

3

13

Unis. Cho. way.

Tpts. 1 2

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

Perc.

B

17 *(mf) gently, but enthusiastically*

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

A *(mf) gently, but enthusiastically*

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

B Hand over Bell (*quasi muted*)

Tpts. 1 2

Hn. Hand over Bell (*quasi muted*)

Tbn. Hand over Bell (*quasi muted*)

Tuba

Perc. High Bongo *mf* 3

22

S let's go down, — go - in' down to the riv - er, go - in' down to the riv - er to

A let's go down, — down to the riv - er, — go - in' down to the riv - er to

(Hand over Bell)

Tpts. 1 2 *p*

Hn. *sfp*

Tbn. (Hand over Bell) *sfp*

Tuba *sfp*

Perc. Low and Medium Tom-Toms *p* 3 3 Low Bongo High Bongo 3

26 *mf* C

Soprano: pray. *(mf) as before* down... down to the riv-er to stud-y, on the

Tenor: As I went down to the riv-er to pray, stud-y-ing a-bout the

Tpts. 1 *mf* C

Hn. *mf* *Open*

Tbn. *mf* *Open*

Tuba *mf*

Perc. *mf* Tri. High Bongo

30

Soprano: good old way. star-ry crown? Good Lord, show me,

Tenor: good old way. And who shall wear the star-ry crown? Good Lord, show me,

Tpts. 1 *mf*

Hn. *mf*

Tbn. *mf*

Tuba *mf*

Perc. *mf*

35

S
A

show me, show me the way.

T
B

show me, show me the way.

Tpts. 1
2

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

Perc.

*4 Drums

(Tri.)

40

(mf) with strength

D

T
B

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

D

Tpts. 1
2

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

Perc.

2 Snare Sticks tapped together (dry sound)

mf p mf

*4 Drums of descending pitch arranged high to low. (High Bongo, Low Bongo, Medium Tom-Tom and Low Tom-Tom)

45

T B

let's go down, down to the river, down to the riv-er, down to the riv-er to

p

Tpts. 1 2

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

Perc.

p

49

S A

As I went down to the riv-er to pray, stud-y-ing a-bout the

pray. down... down to the riv-er to stud-y in the

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

High Bongo

mf (*mf*)

8

3

3

3

53

S
A
T
B

good old way. And who shall wear the star - ry crown? Good

good old way. star - ry crown? Good

1
2

Tpts.

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

Perc.

57

S
A
T
B

Lord, show me, show me, show me the way.

Lord, show me, show me, show me the way.

1
2

Tpts.

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

Perc.

Drums
(mf)

Tri.

F Celebratory interlude

Musical score for measures 62-65. The score is for a brass and percussion ensemble. The instruments are Trumpets (Tpts.), Horns (Hn.), Trombones (Tbn.), Tuba, and Percussion (Perc.). The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor). The time signature is 4/4. The music is in a celebratory mood. The first two staves (Tpts. 1 and 2) play a melodic line starting with a triplet of eighth notes. The Horns and Trombones play a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The Tuba plays a simple bass line. The Percussion part features a suspended cymbal with a snare stick tap at the crown, creating a dry sound. The dynamic markings are *f* with energy for the trumpets and *mf* in the background for the horns, trombones, and tuba.

Musical score for measures 66-69. The score continues from the previous page. The instruments are Trumpets (Tpts.), Horns (Hn.), Trombones (Tbn.), Tuba, and Percussion (Perc.). The key signature is one flat. The time signature is 4/4. The music continues with a celebratory mood. The first two staves (Tpts. 1 and 2) play a melodic line. The Horns and Trombones play a rhythmic accompaniment. The Tuba plays a simple bass line. The Percussion part features a High Bongo drum. The dynamic markings are *f* with energy for the trumpets and *mf* in the background for the horns, trombones, and tuba. The High Bongo is played with a dynamic of *f*.

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

Cl. *mf*

Tpts. 1 *mf in the background*

Tpts. 2 *mf in the background*

Hn. *mf in the background*

Tbn. *f with energy*

Tuba

Perc. *mf* *Susp. Cym. tap at crown*

74

Cl. *f*

Tpts. 1 *f*

Tpts. 2 *f*

Hn. *f*

Tbn. *f*

Tuba *f with energy*

Perc. *f* (Susp. Cym.)

unis. rit.
78 *mf* **G Slower (straight eighths)** *p gently, reflectively*

S
A
T
B

O, lift your head my wear - y friend, and taste the plea - sure that

O, lift your head my wear - y friend, and taste the plea - sure that

mf *unis.* *p gently, reflectively*

G Slower (straight eighths) *rit.*

1
2

Tpts. 1
2

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

(Susp. Cym.)

Perc.

82

S
A
T
B

heaven will send. Let nothing cause you to delay... but...
heaven will send. to delay... but... has-ten on the good old,

rit. *pp* *p*

pp *p*

rit. *p*

Start slowly and accel. (swing eighths)

Start slowly and accel. (swing eighths)

1
2

Tpts. 1
2

Hn.

Tbn.

Tuba

Perc.

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

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

S
A
T
B

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

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

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

Tpts. 1
2
Hn.
Tbn.
Tuba

Perc. Tambourine (held high for the audience to see) *mf* *f*

90
S
A
T
B

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

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

Tpts. 1
2
Hn.
Tbn.
Tuba

Perc.

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for a choir and orchestra. The page is numbered 11 in the top right corner. It features vocal parts for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B), and instrumental parts for Trumpets (Tpts. 1 and 2), Horns (Hn.), Trombones (Tbn.), Tuba, and Percussion (Perc.). The score is in 2/4 time and begins at measure 86. The tempo is marked '(accel.)' and the metronome is set to 66. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The music is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 86-89, and the second system covers measures 90-93. The vocal parts have lyrics: 'has - ten on the good old way. down...', 'has - ten on the good old, has - ten on the good old way. As I went down to the riv - er to', 'down to the riv - er to stud - y, in the good old way. And who shall wear the', and 'pray, stud - y - ing a - bout the good old way. And who shall wear the'. The instrumental parts include a Tambourine part with the instruction '(held high for the audience to see)'. Dynamics include *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *f* (forte). There are also performance markings like 'With energy' and 'H' in a box. The score includes various musical notations such as accents, slurs, and articulation marks.

102 *div.* *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!

Tpts. 1 *f* *rit.* *ff*

2

Hn. *f* *ff*

Tbn. *f* *ff*

Tuba *f* *ff*

Perc. *f* *ff*

Susp. Cym.

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!”