

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

TTBB Chorus and Piano, No. 8648

Solo Voice (High) and Piano, No. 8649

Solo Voice (Low) and Piano, No. 8650

Let Us Break Bread Together

for Women's Chorus (SSAA) and Piano

African American spiritual
Additional words by G. Walker

African American spiritual
Gwyneth Walker

Moderate tempo ♩ = 108
peacefully, as gently falling rain

Piano

p

Ped.

5

S *unis. p peacefully*
Let us

A *unis. p peacefully*
Let us

as if expressing the words:

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

with pedal

9 **A**

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

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

13

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

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

17 **B**

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

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

B

21

S
Lord, have mer - cy on me.

A
Lord, have mer - cy on me.

"Lord, have mer - cy on us.

25

A
Let us love one an - oth - er on our
Lord, have mer - cy on us."

unis. mf [C]

mf flowing

Ped. *Ped.* with pedal

29

S
Let us love one an - oth - er on our
knees.

unis. mf

33

S *p* Ah, _____

A *(mf)* When I fall on my knees, with my

D

37

S *unis. mf* Ah, _____ O Lord, have mer-cy on

A *unis.* face to the ris - ing sun, O Lord, have mer-cy on _____

41

S me. _____

A me. _____

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

cresc. poco a poco

Ped. _____

45 *mf*

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

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

mf

48 *f with strength and conviction* **E**

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

A 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

55

S1
one. _____ Ah, _____

S2
one. _____ Ah, _____

A1
one. _____ When I rise from my knees, with my

A2
one. _____ Ah, _____

F (*trembling background chords*)

59 *f with intensity*

S1 Ah, O Lord, have mer - cy.

S2 Ah, O Lord, have mer - cy.

A1 face to the ris - ing sun, O Lord, have mer - cy.

A2 Ah, O Lord, have mer - cy.

f with intensity

63

S1 O Lord, have mer - cy.

S2 O Lord, have mer - cy.

A1 O Lord, have mer - cy.

A2 O Lord, have mer - cy.

rit.

G More slowly, grandly

67

S1
— 0 Lord, have —

S2
— 0 Lord, have —

A1
— 0 Lord, have —

A2
— 0 Lord, have —

rit.

G More slowly, grandly

71

S
mer - cy, have mer - cy, have mer - cy, have mer - cy, — *p*

A
mer - cy, have mer - cy, have mer - cy, have mer - cy, — *p*

