

Gwyneth Walker

Suffrage Songs

songs to celebrate the centennial of the
Women's Right to Vote: 1920-2020

for Contralto and Piano

won't you celebrate with me
Sister, Come by Here!
Never Sit Down!

Total duration: 7:35

Suffrage Songs were composed in honor of the centennial of the passage of the 19th amendment, recognizing the Women's Right to Vote: 1920-2020. The texts range from contemporary to traditional (adaptations of traditional spirituals), all with the same message of strong women.

"won't you celebrate with me" is based on a poem by Lucille Clifton (1936-2010). The poet, a *non-white* (African-American) woman was born into a life with no model for achievement. Nevertheless, she found the strength to conquer adversity, *one hand holding tight the other hand*. Life may have tried to kill her spirit. **It failed!** Her resilience echoes that of the Suffragettes.

"Sister, Come by Here!" is an adaptation of the spiritual "Jesus, Won't You Come by Here?" The early women's rights advocates were few in number. But they were able to draw in others to join them. One can almost hear them calling out to new supporters: *Sister, won't you raise your voice...you have a choice...come celebrate...come agitate (!), Sister won't you come by here?*

The spiritual, "Sit Down, Sister!" is revisited with a Suffragette theme. These strong women were far too busy to rest. They were energetic, motivated and restless, as reflected the *up-beat tempo* of this song. References are made to Women's Rights pioneers Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and Lucretia Mott. They were paving the way for 20th-century activists, and for the eventual passage of the Women's Right to Vote amendment. These songs are dedicated to them, and to all those men and women who so bravely stood for women's rights.

Suffrage Songs

for Contralto Solo and Piano

1. won't you celebrate with me

Lucille Clifton (1936–2010)

Gwyneth Walker

At a moderate tempo ♩ = 120
with energy and swing

Piano

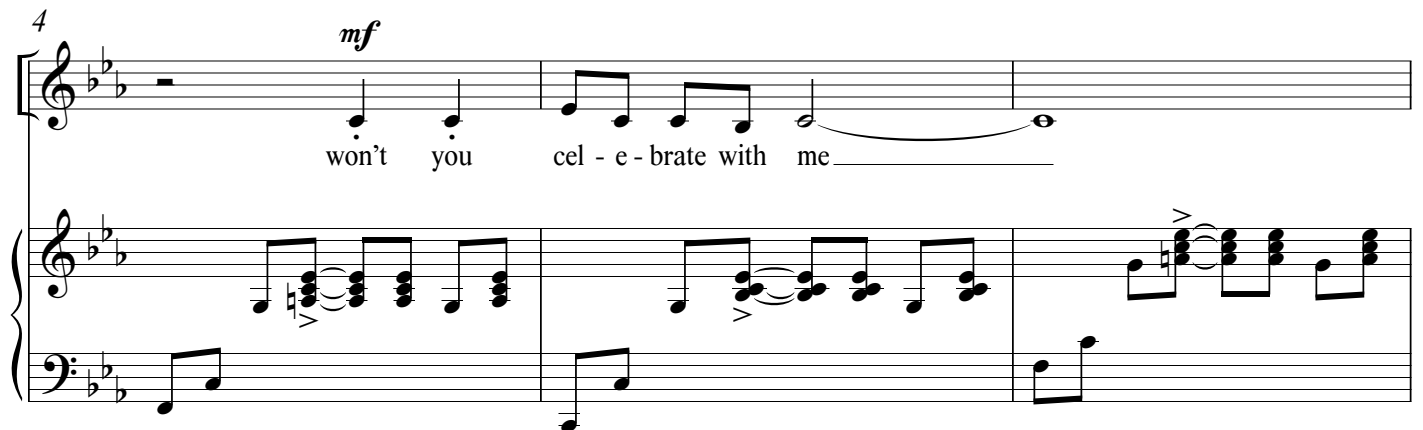


mf

with pedal

The piano introduction consists of three measures in 4/4 time, featuring a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes in the right hand and quarter notes in the left hand. The music is in a minor key with two flats.

4



mf

won't you cel - e - brate with me

This system contains the first line of the song. The vocal line begins at measure 4 with the lyrics "won't you cel - e - brate with me". The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic pattern as the introduction.

7

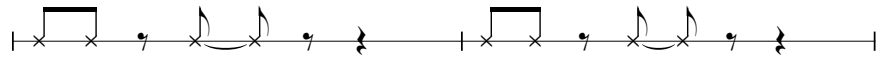
Singer claps in celebration



won't you cel - e - brate with me

This system contains the second line of the song. At measure 7, the singer claps in celebration, indicated by 'x' marks on the vocal staff. The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic pattern.

(claps)



10

won't you

13

cel - e - brate with me what I have shaped in - to a kind of life?

16

i had no

19

mod - el. _____ born in bab - y - lon* _____

22

rit. *f* *p* (as an aside)
recited (on G or C)

both non - white and wom - an what did I see to be except myself?

26

a tempo (♩ = 120) *p*

mm _____ come

*in exile, homeless

Slower, more recitative
straight eighths

cresc. poco a poco (to m. 38)

30

cel - e - brate, cel - e - brate, cel - e - brate... I made it up

Slower, more recitative
straight eighths
cresc. poco a poco (to m. 38)

33

(cresc.)

here on this bridge be - tween star - shine and clay,

(cresc.)

Ped.

35

(cresc.)

my one hand hold - ing

"starshine" motive

(cresc.)

(Ped.)

*gaining energy and determination
swing eighths*

37 *(cresc.)* *mf* ,

tight my oth - er hand. come cel - e - brate with me,

(cresc.) *mf* *8va-* , *gaining energy and determination
swing eighths*

(Ped.)

40 (claps)

come cel - e - brate with me, won't you

f

43

**Free measure
straight eighths**

cel - e - brate with me that ev - ery - day some - thing has tried to kill me and has failed.

emphatically

**Free measure
straight eighths**

f *ff* *8va-*

(Ped.)

Singer cuts off piano with determination

2. Sister, Come By Here!

Based on the spiritual "Jesus, Won't You Come by Here?"
G. Walker, alt.

♩ = 120 or slightly faster
with energy, but not rushed (swing eighths)

mf as a warm welcome
with pedal

The piano introduction consists of three measures in 4/4 time. The right hand features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and chords, while the left hand provides a simple bass line. The tempo is marked as 120 or slightly faster, with a swing feel for the eighth notes.

VERSE 1

Singer beckons other women to join the "Suffrage Cause"

4 *mf*
Sis - ter, won't you come by here?_

The first line of the verse begins at measure 4. The vocal line starts with a whole rest, followed by the lyrics "Sis - ter, won't you come by here?". The piano accompaniment continues with the established rhythmic pattern.

7
Sis - ter, won't you come by here?_ Sis - ter, won't you come by

The second line of the verse begins at measure 7. The vocal line continues with "Sis - ter, won't you come by here?" and then "Sis - ter, won't you come by". The piano accompaniment features a more active eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand.

11
here?_ We're work-in' for the right to vote,_ or-gan-

The third line of the verse begins at measure 11. The vocal line continues with "here?" and then "We're work-in' for the right to vote,_" and "or-gan-". The piano accompaniment maintains the rhythmic accompaniment.

15

(Optional descant)

i - zin' for our right to vote. _ Sis - ter, won't you come by

19

Singer cups hand to ear as if listening to the "Call to action"

here? _____ the "Call to action"

VERSE 2

23

(mf)

[Listen]

[Listen]

Sis - ter, won't you heed the call? _ Sis - ter, won't you heed the call? _

27

Sis - ter, won't you heed the call? _ We're

(Optional lower notes)

31

ask - ing for the right to vote. NO, DE - MAND - ING our right to vote!_

35

Sis - ter, won't you heed the call?_

(Optional descant)

39

p INTERLUDE

I'm fall - ing down, down, down, on my

p trembling in prayer

43

poco cresc.

knees in prayer. Lord, won't you help me, bring me

47 *mf* *p*

cour - age for the fight. I'm fall - ing down, down, down, on my

51 *cresc.*

knees in prayer, pray - in' for con - vict - ion for

55 (*cresc.*) *f* **VERSE 3**

VO - TING IS OUR RIGHT! Stand up, now it's vo - tin' time, - stand

59

up, now it's vo - tin' time. — Sis - ter, won't you

62

stand in line? — We're here, — and we're

resolutely

66

read - y to vote, — all here, — and we're read-y to vote. —

(opt. 8va) *or: (you can count our votes!)

*alternate lyric

69 *accel. poco a poco* (to m. 85)
p cresc. poco a poco

Sis - ter, won't you join the throng? Sis - ter, won't you sing a - long?_

accel. poco a poco (to m. 85)
p cresc. poco a poco

73 **Slightly faster** (*accel.*)
mp (cresc.)

Sis - ter, won't you raise your voice?_ Sis - ter, now you have a choice!_

Slightly faster (*accel.*)
mp (cresc.)

77 **Faster yet** (*accel.*)
mf (cresc.)

Sis - ter won't you heed the call?_ Sis - ter, won't you stand up tall?_

Faster yet (*accel.*)
mf (cresc.)

Quickly (accel.)

81

(cresc.)

Sis - ter, won't you cel - e - brate? Sis - ter, won't you ag - i - tate?

Quickly (accel.)

(cresc.)

Very quickly (♩ = 184)

85

f

Sis - ter, won't you > come > by, — > come > by, — come by

Very quickly (♩ = 184)

f

[On beat 4, singer holds up 2 fingers in "V for victory" symbol.]

89

here?

15ma-
8vb-

3. Never Sit Down!

[a tribute to the Suffragettes]

Based on the spiritual "Sit Down, Sister!"

G. Walker, alt.

♩ = 132 (*swing eighths*)

The piano introduction is in 4/4 time with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). It features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The melody consists of eighth notes and quarter notes, with some accents. The bass line is primarily quarter notes. The dynamic marking is *mf*.

with slight pedal

REFRAIN

4 *mf* with restless energy and determination

Oh, won't you sit down? No! I can't sit down. Oh, won't you

The first line of the refrain starts at measure 4. The vocal line begins with a quarter rest, followed by the lyrics. The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic pattern as the introduction.

7

sit down? No! I can't sit down. Oh, won't you sit down? No! — I

The second line of the refrain starts at measure 7. The vocal line continues with the lyrics. The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic pattern.

10

can't sit down, cause I'm work-in' for the vote, keep a-mov-in' a-round. —

The third line of the refrain starts at measure 10. The vocal line continues with the lyrics. The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic pattern, ending with a triplet in the bass line.

13

Musical score for measures 13-16. The top staff is a vocal line with a long note and rests. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

VERSE 1

(Optional lower notes if preferred)

17

p (a quiet question)

f (enthusiastic response)

Musical score for measures 17-19. The vocal line includes lyrics: "Who's that yon - der dressed in red? _ Must be the lead - ers of the". The piano accompaniment includes dynamics *p* and *f*, and an *8va-* marking.

20

p

f

Musical score for measures 20-23. The vocal line includes lyrics: "Suf - fra - gettes! Who's that yon - der dressed in green? The". The piano accompaniment includes dynamics *p* and *f*, and a *loco* marking.

REFRAIN

23

bra - vest wom - en I've ev - er seen! They'd nev - er sit down! —

26

They'd nev - er sit down! — They'd nev - er

29

sit down! No! They'd nev - er sit down, - 'cause they were work - in' for the vote,

32

keep a - mov - in' a - round. —

VERSE 2

35 *p*

Who's that yon - der dressed in white?

39 *f* *p*

Must be the wom - en fight - in' for their rights!

Who's that yon - der

42 *f*

dressed in black! Must be the hyp - o - crite a - turn - ing back!

45 *p* *f*

Who's that yon - der wav - ing at me? _ I think I see Su - san B. _

48 *p* *f*

An - thon - y!* _ Who's that yon - der dressed in blue? E - liz - a - beth Ca - dy

loco *p* *f* *8va-*

52 **REFRAIN**

Stan - ton* too! _ She'd nev - er sit down! _ She'd nev - er

*19th century Women's Rights Activist
Walker | *Suffrage Songs* | 3. Never Sit Down!

55

sit down! ___ She'd nev - er sit down! ___

58

'cause she was work-in' for the vote, work-in' for the vote,

61

work-in' for the vote, ___ keep a - mov - in' a - round. ___

INTERLUDE

[Singer may move around the stage, or sort and organize papers (on the piano) – i.e. being useful!]

64

67

70

poco rit. **Slower** ♩ = 120
p

I'm gon-na

poco rit. **Slower** ♩ = 120

73

cresc.

make this world what I want it to be. — Gon-na stand up for my e -

p *cresc.*

76

mf

qual - i - ty! — Gon-na raise my voice LOUD AND CLEAR, for Lu -

mf

79

cre - tia Mott* has been vis - i - ting here, - vis - i - ting here, -

82 *exclaimed with reverence and delight*

LU - CRE - TIA MOTT! She'd nev - er

REFRAIN

a tempo (♩ = 132)

86

sit down! She'd nev - er sit down!

*19th century Women's Rights Activist – the visit by Lucretia and James Mott to Seneca Falls, New York in 1848 prompted the first Womens's Rights Convention.

89

She'd nev - er sit down! ___ 'cause she was

92

work-in' for the vote, ___ it's tak - ing years to get the vote, ___

95

rit.
(straight eighths)

Slowly, emphatically

DE - TER - MIN - A - TION for the vote. ___

rit.
(straight eighths)

Slowly, emphatically

(swing eighths)

accel.

98

p

Vocal line for measures 98-100. The melody consists of eighth notes in a B-flat major key signature. The lyrics are: "Keep a-mov-in', keep a - mov-in', keep a-mov-in', keep a - mov-in', keep a-mov-in' a - round. _"

(swing eighths)

accel.

p

Piano accompaniment for measures 98-100. The right hand has a melodic line with grace notes. The left hand has a bass line with chords and a 'Ped.' marking.

a tempo (♩ = 132)

101

f

Vocal line for measures 101-102. The melody continues with a long note in measure 102. The lyrics are: "And I'll"

a tempo (♩ = 132)

f

Piano accompaniment for measures 101-102. The right hand has a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The left hand has a bass line with chords and a 'Ped.' marking.

104

non rit.

Vocal line for measures 104-106. The melody consists of quarter notes. The lyrics are: "NEV - ER SIT DOWN!"

non rit.

8va-

Piano accompaniment for measures 104-106. The right hand has a melodic line with accents and a 'Ped.' marking. The left hand has a bass line with chords.